

**AN INTEGRATED SERVICE-LEARNING PRAXIS APPROACH  
FOR FLOURISHMENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN  
COMMUNITY-HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS**

by

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## DECLARATION

I, **Karen Elizabeth Venter (student number: 1983624915)**, declare that the thesis, AN INTEGRATED SERVICE-LEARNING PRAXIS APPROACH FOR FLOURISHMENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN COMMUNITY-HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS (five interrelated, publishable articles), submitted for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy with specialisation in higher education studies at the University of the Free State, is my own, independent work.

All the sources I used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references (see full details in list of references).

I further declare that this work has not previously been submitted by me at another university or faculty for the purpose of obtaining a qualification.



**SIGNED**

6 September 2022

**DATE**

## ABSTRACT

Universities and communities should embrace engaged scholarship for sustainable development challenges, through co-creation of responsive knowledge for the public good. Therefore, academics have infused community engaged service-learning (CESL) into the functions of teaching-learning and research, to deliver engaged scholarship in democratic community-higher education partnerships. However, sustainable CESL practice and partnership development are challenged by the complex process of institutionalisation. This five-articles-style thesis explored the contribution of an integrated service-learning praxis approach towards the flourishing of engaged scholarship in community-higher education partnerships. The approach combined CESL, appreciative inquiry and appreciative leadership, to advance the praxis of engaged scholarship. The study was demarcated in the field of higher education, applied in the discipline of nursing education, and contextually bound to three interrelated action research cycles and settings – for international, national and local level engagement. The study followed a transformative paradigm and qualitative, strength-based action research design of appreciative inquiry. Participants were conveniently and purposefully selected, based on their practical, career-bound wisdom of engaged scholarship. Data was co-generated in paired appreciative conversations, which were followed by collective data analysis in small and large-group format and guided by a 5D-process-driven (define, discovery, dream, design and delivery/destiny) semi-structured interview protocol. The research contributed to practical theory development, by providing five articles for improved CESL practice towards positive change. These articles comprised (1) a practical framework towards an integrated model for advancing engaged scholarship; (2) best practices for national support of engaged scholarship; (3) a community-university research partnership model, which affiliated with the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL), to reward reciprocal action learning in parallel with academic certification; (4) a set of principles for becoming globally competent citizens; and (5) the WHOLE model for engaged scholarship, balanced by social justice values-in-action, to co-create action-oriented knowledge for a better future for all people, the economy and the environment.

**Keywords:** appreciative inquiry; community-higher education partnerships; engaged scholarship; integrated service-learning praxis

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Bloemshelter, for it is no longer a shelter, “it is a house of hope and love, a training and research centre in the community for the community”, as declared by a community member-participant in the study.

In memory of Izak Botes, the founder of Bloemshelter, co-researcher, friend, and brother in the family of God, who passed away on 4 February 2019: **A poem ...**

*You are not gone, Izak ...you remain here beside us, in a spiritual form. We will find you when we reflect on the seeds of God’s love that you planted in the HEART of Bloemshelter to set the norm. In those moments when we feel alone, we will find you in all that we know, feel and do ... in the sweet memories that burn strong in a storm.*

*Every time tears form in our eyes, we will look up to the heavens, and there we will see you, smiling down from the beautiful sky ... sharing with passion another story about God’s glory. May you rest, Izak, to see how we flourish, so that, in turn, we can plant love-seeds to nourish, right from the start, to eventually re-share with your care, deep from the Father’s HEART.*

When we reflect on our learning journey, we can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love (Romans 5:3–5). For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Three things will last forever – faith, hope, and love – and the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13: 8–10, 13).

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND/OR ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 ORIENTATION OF THE THESIS.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH.....	1
1.1.1 The non-traditional format and organisation of this article-style study .....	3
1.2 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE RESEARCH.....	4
1.2.1 Concepts and context of the envisioned ISLP approach .....	5
1.2.2 Underpinning theories of the research.....	11
1.3 RESEARCH DEMARCATION.....	13
1.4 RESEARCH CHALLENGE, PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, QUESTIONS AND CONTEXT .....	16
1.5 OVERARCHING RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	23
1.6 VALUE OF THE ACTION RESEARCH.....	25
1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	26
1.8 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS .....	28
Article 1 .....	28
Article 2.....	28
Article 3 .....	28
Article 4.....	28
Article 5 .....	28
1.9 CONCLUSION .....	29
REFERENCES.....	30
<b>CHAPTER 2 (ARTICLE 1).....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>A PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK TO FLOURISH THE PRAXIS OF ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP IN COMMUNITY HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>36</b>

2.1	INTRODUCTION.....	37
2.2	CONTEXTUAL-CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....	39
2.2.1	Community engagement.....	39
2.2.2	Community engaged scholarship .....	40
2.2.3	Community–higher education partnerships.....	41
2.2.4	Integrated service-learning praxis approach.....	41
2.3	METHODOLOGY .....	46
2.4	FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION .....	50
2.4.1	The positive core of engaged scholarship .....	50
2.4.2	A practical framework to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship.....	56
2.5	CONCLUSION .....	64
2.5.1	Practical framework to advance the praxis of engaged scholarship.....	65
2.5.2	Significances, limitations, challenges, and contradictions .....	66
2.5.3	What next? Dreaming into the future .....	67
	REFERENCES .....	68
<b>CHAPTER 3 (ARTICLE 2) NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ENGAGED SCHOLARS IN HIGHER EDUCATION .....</b>		<b>75</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>		<b>75</b>
3.1	INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH.....	76
3.2	CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	79
3.2.1	The integrated service-learning praxis approach.....	79
3.2.2	Theoretical framework .....	80
3.3	METHODOLOGY .....	81
3.4	RESEARCH PROCESS AND FINDINGS .....	82
3.4.1	Phase 2: Discovery .....	85
3.4.2	Phase 3 and 4: Dream and Design.....	93
3.4.3	Phase 5: Delivery/Destiny .....	95
3.5	REFLECTIVE CONCLUSION .....	95
	REFERENCES .....	96
<b>CHAPTER 4 (ARTICLE 3) DEVELOPING AND REWARDING COMMUNITY-LED ACTION LEARNING THROUGH ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP IN A COMMUNITY UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP .....</b>		<b>101</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>		<b>101</b>
4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	102
4.2	CONCEPTUAL, CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	103
4.3	METHODOLOGY .....	105
4.4	FINDINGS .....	109
4.4.1	Discovery of the positive core .....	109

4.4.2	Co-constructing and implementing the ‘Pathway to holistic development’ .....	112
4.4.3	Co-construction of a PRAY model .....	115
4.4.4	Celebration and rewarding of community-led action learning .....	117
4.5	CONCLUSION: REFLECTING AND APPRECIATING THE LESSONS LEARNED, PITFALLS ENCOUNTERED, AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES ...	118
	REFERENCES .....	123

**CHAPTER 5 (ARTICLE 4) ADVANCING HOLISTIC POSTGRADUATE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP IN A COMMUNITY–UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP.....129**

**ABSTRACT.....129**

5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	130
5.2	THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH.	132
5.3	METHODOLOGY .....	135
5.4	DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	137
5.4.1	Developing multidimensional intelligences, virtues, and character strengths ...	137
5.4.2	Development of global competencies .....	141
5.4.3	Postgraduates’ perspectives on developing principles for the development of global competencies .....	142
5.4.4	Increased postgraduate well-being .....	143
5.5	CONCLUSION .....	144
5.5.1	Holistic development.....	144
5.5.2	Lessons learned .....	145
5.5.3	Limitations.....	145
	REFERENCES .....	146

**CHAPTER 6 (ARTICLE 5) A WHOLE MODEL: TOWARDS FLOURISHMENT OF ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP IN COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS.....151**

**ABSTRACT.....151**

6.1	INTRODUCTION.....	152
6.2	CONCEPTS, CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS .....	153
6.2.1	The ISLP approach in an a CURP .....	154
6.2.2	Context and synthesis of findings .....	157
6.2.3	Theoretical framework .....	159
6.3	RESEARCHER POSITIONING.....	160
6.4	METHODOLOGY .....	162
6.5	FINDINGS .....	163
6.5.1	Action research process .....	163
6.5.2	Scholarly journey .....	164
6.6	CONCLUSION .....	166

REFERENCES .....	170
<b>CHAPTER 7 EPILOGUE.....</b>	<b>175</b>
7.1 INTRODUCTION.....	175
7.2 SYNOPSIS OF FIVE INTERRELATED ARTICLES .....	175
7.2.1 Article 1 .....	176
7.2.2 Article 2 .....	177
7.2.3 Article 3 .....	178
7.2.4 Article 4.....	180
7.2.5 Article 5 .....	182
7.3 FUTURE RESEARCH.....	183
7.4 CONCLUSION .....	183
7.5 REFERENCES .....	185
<b>APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE.....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: LANGUAGE EDITOR’S LETTER .....</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: ARTICLE 1 – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: ARTICLE 1 - DATA ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>APPENDIX F: ARTICLE 2 - INFORMED CONSENT .....</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>APPENDIX G: ARTICLE 2 - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .....</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>APPENDIX H: ARTICLE 3 - INFORMED CONSENT .....</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>APPENDIX I: ARTICLE 3 - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>APPENDIX J: ARTICLE 4 – INFORMED CONSENT.....</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>APPENDIX K: ARTICLE 4 – SERVICE-LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE .....</b>	<b>248</b>
<b>APPENDIX L: ARTICLE 4 – THEMATIC DATA ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>256</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework for the envisioned ISLP approach in expanded CHEPs ....	5
Figure 3.1: SAHECEF’s appreciative inquiry summit 5D process .....	84
Figure 3.2: SAHECEF's positive core map of engaged scholarly praxis .....	86
Figure 4.1: Community-led ‘Pathway to holistic development’ (‘phd’) .....	112
Figure 4.2: The PRAY Model to cascade the community-led ‘phd’ .....	116
Figure 5.1: The community university research partnership model .....	132
Figure 6.1: Framework of the ISLP approach in a CURP .....	153

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Appreciative inquiry principles .....	12
Table 1.2: Research matrix, as related to five interrelated articles .....	19
Table 4.1: The participants' positive character strengths, in alignment with the VIA classification framework of Peterson and Seligman (2004) .....	110
<b>Table 6.1: A WHOLE model to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship in a CURP</b> .....	<b>168</b>

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND/OR ACRONYMS**

ARC	Action research cycle
CESL	Community engaged service-learning
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHEP	Community–higher education partnership
CoP	Community or practice
CURP	Community-university research partnership
DoE	Department of Education
GULL	Global University for Lifelong Learning
HEI	Higher education institution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
ISLP	Integrated service-learning praxis
NGT	Nominal group technique
NPC	National planning committee
NPO	Non-profit organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRF	National Research Foundation
‘phd’	‘Pathway to holistic development’
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SAHECEF	South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum
SoN	School of Nursing

UFS	University of the Free State
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VIA	Values-in-action
VUCA	Volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity
WHO	World Health Organisation
WHOLE	Well-being, holistic, opportunities, learning-leading-living-loving, engaged

# CHAPTER 1      ORIENTATION OF THE THESIS

## 1.1    INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

At the University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa, community-engaged service-learning (CESL) advocates acknowledge continuous global challenges, which, in turn, require proactive transformation of learning in higher education institutions (HEIs) (UFS 2006; UFS 2020). This transformed learning demonstrates social responsibility, by addressing societal challenges through sharing expertise and knowledge for the common good of society (RSA DoE 1997; RSA DHET 2013; UFS 2020). By transforming, HEIs infused CESL into academic programmes and curricula across disciplines and utilised its transformative pedagogy and value-laden philosophy as an “academic entry point” for institutionalising community engagement (Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna and Slammat 2008:62). To implement CESL, academics established long-term, triad-sector community-higher education partnerships (CHEPs), by including partners from communities, the service sector and HEIs (UFS 2020: section 1.8).

Transformation aims to address challenges and create a society that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable (RSA NPC 2012; UNDP 2015). Such transformation implies promoting accessible, equal, lifelong learning and quality education (RSA 1997; RSA DoE 1997; RSA DHET 2013; UNDP 2015; UFS 2020). Transformation of higher education can be advanced through social construction of action-oriented, relevant knowledge with partner-communities, and by demonstrating democratic acknowledgement of multiple forms and sources of knowledges, lived realities, and methods for achieving positive future change (UFS 2020:3.8; Wood 2020).

However, after early pedagogical pioneers of CESL had reflected on sustaining the future of the field, more than three decades after the onset of the movement, they advised CESL advocates to strengthen the field’s “practice” (Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999:216). The field’s “grandfather” shared the following practical wisdom in this regard (Duley, cited in Stanton et al. 1999:219):

*My fear and joy is that service-learning is riding the crest of a wave. We're at tidal wave height right now, but unless we continue the work ... of making the case for the legitimacy of service-learning as a coin of the realm in higher education ... we're not going to be here very long. The whole business of dealing with the theory of how people learn is critical. We need a holistic approach that includes the hard work of learning. There is a lot of theoretical work that needs to be done as to why service-learning is an important dimension of higher education.*

In embarking on a doctoral degree in higher education studies, I was inspired by this advice for “dealing with the theory of how people learn ... to make a case for the legitimacy of service-learning as a coin of the realm in higher education” (Duley cited in Stanton et al. 1999:219).

In addition, drawing from previous CESL scholarship and practitioner experience, I observed a dual challenge in the practice of CESL at the UFS, namely a fragmented approach and the construction of strong partnerships (see 1.4 for full discussion). Therefore, I had the idea to develop an *integrated service-learning praxis (ISLP) approach for flourishing of professional development of all partners in community-higher education partnerships (CHEPs)* (Venter 2014; Venter and Seale 2014; Venter, Erasmus and Seale 2015). I postulated that a praxis-based approach could enable and emphasise the “interdependence and integration – not separation – of theory and practice, research and development, thought and action” (Zuber-Skerritt 2009:113). In line with this definition of praxis, I envisioned the ISLP approach as one that could enable an interdependence and integration of service-learning *theory* and *practice*, and appreciative inquiry, as a strength-based genre of collaborative *action research* (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018). This combination of service-learning (Kuh 2008; Shumer, Stanton and Giles 2017) and appreciative inquiry could enable the co-construction of practical theory in CHEPs, to legitimise the CESL field. While engaging at the heart of a CHEP, all partners could connect, to also integrate thought (reflection), feelings, beliefs and action/service (head, heart and hands). Such engagement could promote mutually beneficial, reciprocal and self-directed learning for inclusive and holistic development. In CHEPs, partners

can embrace praxis to liberate themselves with a positive sense of hope to co-create a better future for the common good of society (Freire 1970; Wood 2020). With regards to the construction of strong CHEPs, I planned to explore the expansion thereof, to further strengthen the platform of practice in the CESL field.

The main intention of this first chapter is to provide a brief orientation to the thesis as a whole, with special reference to the following: Introduction and background to the research (see 1.1) and non-traditional format/organisation of the article-style study (see 1.1.1); an integrated conceptual-contextual-theoretical framework for the envisioned ISLP approach in expanded CHEPs (see 1.2); research demarcation and paradigm (see 1.3); research challenge, purpose, objectives, questions and context (see 1.4); overarching research design and methodology (see 1.5); value of action research for the CESL field (see 1.6); ethics considerations (see 1.7) and an outline of the articles, as presented in Chapters 2–6 (see 1.8). Finally, this chapter will be concluded (see 1.9) with an appreciative reflection on the research. To clearly understand the research, I will briefly describe the non-traditional format and organisation of this article-style study.

### **1.1.1 The non-traditional format and organisation of this article-style study**

“Traditional approaches to learning and research are inadequate for today’s knowledge needs” (Zuber-Skerritt 2009:1). In addition, Bringle, Clayton and Hatcher (2013:342) advise that research on service-learning (which is the focus of this thesis) should “describe activities that reflect convergence of theory, design, measurement and practice”. Shumer (2000:79) adds the necessity to tell the authentic story of service-learning in detail, “as it plays out in the lives of students, community sponsors, administrators, faculty and other notable contributors to the process”.

Therefore, the presentation of this doctoral thesis differs from the traditional format in five ways. These five differences (described below) could provide the reader with a background of the study. Firstly, the thesis includes five interrelated and publishable articles (UFS 2015). Secondly,

this action research study (Zuber-Skerritt 2015) is presented across seven chapters, alongside a cyclical action research process involving planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Zuber-Skerritt 2009; Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Zuber-Skerritt, Wood and Louw 2015; Wood 2020). The study commences with Chapter 1, which provides an outline of the thesis (*plan*). After this, an outline for Chapters 2–6 will follow, which consists of five interrelated and publishable articles (*act and observe*). Chapter 7 will present a summary of findings, contributions, emergent learning and development, and finally, the vision for future research (*reflect*). Thirdly, the thesis did not follow a traditional deficit-based problem-solving format, but instead followed a strength-based action research genre of appreciative inquiry. The value of this carefully selected genre for this study lies in the generation of action-oriented (practical) knowledge, that is intended to improve the praxis of engaged scholarship and bring about change for the common good of society (Reed 2007; Cooperrider et al. 2008; Grieten, Lambrechts, Bouwen, Huybrechts, Fry and Cooperrider 2017; Stavros and Torres 2018). Fourthly, true to the participatory nature of action research (Wood 2020), I will report from a first-person, insider stance, through a narrative format that underpins the appreciative inquiry theory (Stavros and Torres 2018; Stratton-Berkessel 2020). Fifthly, I applied a narrative structure of reporting that is conversational and “accessible to a wide readership” (Zuber-Skerritt 2009:10).

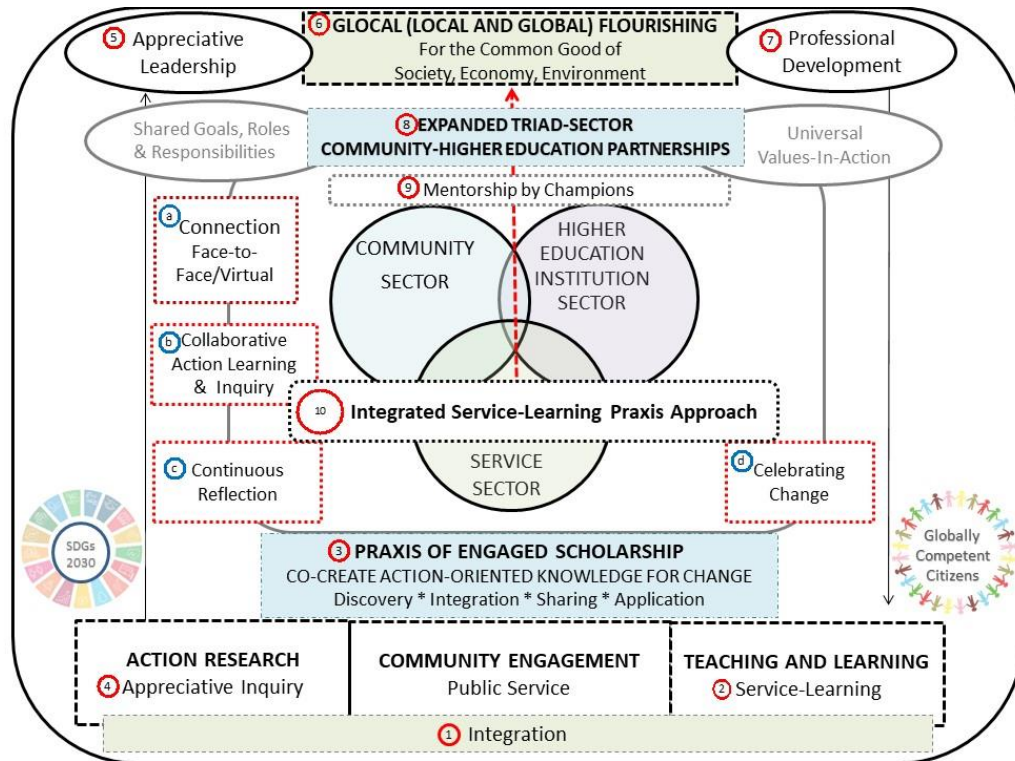
Due to the article-style format, the thesis does not include a dedicated section for definitions and a literature review, as would be the case for a comprehensive traditional thesis. Instead, these elements are presented in an integrated conceptual-contextual-theoretical framework (see 1.2).

## **1.2 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE RESEARCH**

I will, firstly, outline the clarifying concepts of the envisioned ISLP approach and the proposed expanded CHEP application context (see 1.2. 1.1–1.2.1.10) that were researched. Then the description of the theoretical framework will conclude the section (see 1.3).

## 1.2.1 Concepts and context of the envisioned ISLP approach

This section will describe the concepts and context of the envisioned ISLP approach [see/cf. 1.1]. Due to the abstract notion of developing an envisioned approach, the description will be supported by a visual display (see Figure 1.1).



**Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework for the envisioned ISLP approach in expanded CHEPs**

(Source: Author's own, adapted from Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015:21)

As illustrated in Figure 1.1, the envisioned ISLP approach includes several building blocks (see 1-10) and knowledge sharing principles to guide the process of learning in a CHEP (see a-d). These building blocks and the principles will be discussed and confirmed with literature.

### 1.2.1.1 Integration

In the ISLP approach, integration refers to the higher education functions of community engagement, teaching-learning, and research (RSA DHET 2013), as well as theory and practice, to deliver an actively engaged scholarship in the context of a CHEP (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015; Higher Education Public Purpose 2021:Online). In addition, teaching-learning should include dimensions of holistic learning and development, such as the CHEP-partners' human learning dimensions of "heart, feelings, emotions, spirit, and soul, as well as mind ... active, self- and community-directed and committed to helping others learn and grow" (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015:3). Furthermore, when perceived from the traditional Boyer model (1996; 2016), the ISLP approach envisions the interlocking of knowledge discovery, integration, sharing (teaching-learning), and application, to address pressing challenges relating to knowledge solutions for the public good. When applied in a CHEP, this integrative learning can be implemented through service-learning (Shumer et al. 2017).

#### *1.2.1.2 Service-learning*

As already mentioned [see/cf. 1.1], service-learning is an experiential pedagogy that is applied for the implementation of academic, curricular community engagement. Furthermore, service-learning is value-driven, to advance the development of socially responsive citizenship, democracy, and social justice (Shumer et al. 2017). The practice of service-learning is aimed at addressing pressing sustainable development challenges. This intent gives the pedagogy a bigger purpose, and a value-driven philosophy, with the intention to make a positive difference in society (Stanton et al. 1999; Petersen and Osman 2013; Ramsay 2017; Shumer et al. 2017). A modest description of service-learning comes from the person who coined the term, who advises scholars to "think of it more as a way of living and learning, than as an educational technique – though it is that as well" (Ramsay 2017:66). This author describes the moral trajectory of service-learning as "not self-seeking ... not paternalistic ... eager to learn from those being served" (Ramsay 2017:66). In the ISLP approach, service-learning, thus, enables reciprocal, relational, real-life learning, aimed at integration of theory (knowing), reflective practice (thought and action), beliefs (values), and feelings (empathy) for delivery of praxis (Shumer et al. 2017; Wood 2020).

### *1.2.1.3 Praxis*

In the ISLP approach, praxis refers to the “interdependence and integration – not separation – of theory and practice, research and development, thought and action” (Zuber-Skerritt 2009:113). This description of praxis is aligned with the vision of combining service-learning and appreciative inquiry (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015).

### *1.2.1.4 Appreciative inquiry*

Appreciative inquiry requires engagement in appreciative conversations (interviews). As a specific genre of action research, appreciative inquiry involves “a strength-based approach, used to “discover the best in people, organisations, and the people around them” (Stavros and Torres 2018:119). An appreciative inquiry follows a collaborative and inclusive 5D process (define, discover, dream, design and deliver/destiny) (Stavros and Torres 2018) [see/cf. 1.5]. Moreover, appreciative inquiry is a “radical approach to understanding the social world ... challenging us to rethink our ideas on how people work, how change happens, and how research can contribute to this process” (Reed 2007:2). Additionally, the continued practice of appreciative inquiry can enable the development of appreciative leadership (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader 2010).

### *1.2.1.5 Appreciative leadership*

For the envisioned ISLP approach, specifically regarding collaboration in CHEPs, appreciative leadership refers to the use of appreciative leadership strategies (inquiry, inclusion, integrity, inspiration, illumination) that could transform leading, learning, and serving with integrity among all partners (Whitney et al. 2010). Appreciative leadership also involves the “relational capacity to mobilise creative potential and turn it into positive power – to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance” (Whitney et al. 2010:3). The development of appreciative leaders in CHEPs, thus, offers potential to contribute to partner-flourishment.

### *1.2.1.6 Flourishment*

Within the envisioned ISLP approach, flourishing should create an enabling environment beyond mere sustainability, to foster professional development for the benefit of all partners in CHEPs. Also, the enabling environment would require building blocks as portrayed by the PERMA rubric, which refers to **P**ositive emotion, positive **E**ngagement and flow, positive **R**elationship, positive **M**eaning and purpose, and positive **A**ccomplishment of goals (Seligman 2011). These ‘PERMA-blocks’ could also serve as a reflection guideline to evaluate the range of professional development gained by partners who engage for learning and inquiry through applying the ISLP approach in CHEPs.

#### *1.2.1.7 Professional development*

Professional development can occur among partners at the interface of CHEPs. Zuber-Skerritt (2015:6) adds that professional learning involves “learning in the widest sense, is work related, and specialised in a particular area or field of one’s choice”. Within the envisioned ISLP approach, the pedagogy of service-learning can enable professional learning, which can progress towards professional development (Stanton et al. 1999; Shumer et al. 2017). Professional development is a “process of self-directed, lifelong learning from the simplest to the highest levels” (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:6). In a CHEP, especially when engagement is applied for learning and inquiry, the literature describes such a collaborative learning environment as a “community of practice” (CoP) (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015:Online). Here, “groups of people share a passion for something that they know how to do, and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better”. Communities of practice can provide a helpful perspective on knowing and learning in a CHEP.

Each sector of the triad-sector CHEP-model (community, service and HEI) can operate as a CoP. By specifically emphasising the dual effect of knowledge sharing in a service-learning partnership on curriculum development, McMillan (2008:73) theorises how partnerships display an “activity system”. Activity is reflected at the interface between CoPs, where joint activities occur in the system. The interface of these other CoPs can serve as potential sites for “challenge, new learning opportunities and new knowledge” (McMillan 2008:73). I believe that these

possibilities of McMillan's (2008) 'interfaces' have not been appreciated to the full in the context of expanded CHEPs at the institution where the study was done.

#### *1.2.1.8 Expanded CHEPs development*

At the UFS, current triad-sector CHEPs often only include community members (community sector); non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or non-profit organisations (NPOs) (service sector); and lecturers and students (HEI sector). Therefore, in this study, I propose that CHEPs could be expanded to improve collaboration, by including the following participants:

- Community sector: community members;
- Service sector: civil society, public and private business; and
- HEI sector: multidisciplinary, interprofessional, and transdisciplinary.

Partnership collaboration in these sectors can progress into relationships and possess qualities such as closeness, equity, and integrity (Bringle, Clayton and Price, 2009: 1). In this thesis, the establishment of expanded CHEPs is guided by clear shared goals, roles and responsibilities, to enable well-structured partnership collaborations. In addition, knowledge sharing principles can guide the cyclical learning process of the CHEP, namely, to connect, collaborate, continuously reflect to co-create action-oriented knowledge and celebrate positive change (Venter et al. 2015).

Venter et al. (2015:15) embrace service-learning as an "affective heart-field", which, without a doubt, also initiates knowledge sharing in the affective domain. Therefore, in the CHEPs envisioned for this research, partners should appreciate the partnership values that underpin the CESL field, such as closeness, equality, integrity, reciprocity, respect for human rights, and trust (Bringle et al. 2009; Shumer et al. 2017). These values-in-action (VIA) can be clustered as six universal virtues, namely wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance/prudence and transcendence (Peterson and Seligman 2004). Each virtue can be aligned towards holistic development of multiple intelligence domains, such as cognitive, emotional, social, community, protective and spiritual. These virtues and intelligences include specific, related clusters of character, forming 24 innate character strengths (Peterson and Seligman 2004). In the envisioned ISLP approach, these virtues, intelligences, and character strengths are required to guide

engagement in CHEPs, such as roles modelled by CESL champions which could be further developed to foster the common good (Wood 2020).

#### *1.2.1.9 Champions as role models*

A CESL champion is someone “knowledgeable” and “[t]he practice of service learning champions portrays a standard of excellence. They care unconditionally for others and share their expertise to change society towards a common good for all” (Venter et al. 2015:153). Champions could be situated in any of the sectors in CHEPs, and could come from a glocal (local to global) CESL context (Venter et al. 2015). In this sense, champions could serve as appreciative leaders who guide the application of the novel ISLP approach in expanded CHEPs. After explaining the concepts and context of the envisioned ISLP approach, it is relevant to briefly summarise its definition, purpose and context.

#### *1.2.1.10 Definition and purpose of the envisioned ISLP approach*

As portrayed in Figure 1.1 and drawing from the description of the ISLP approach and context (see 1.2.1.2–1.2.1.9), I briefly summarise the envisioned ISLP approach and purpose as follows:

*An interdependence and integration – not separation – of action research, community engagement and teaching-learning, combines service-learning and appreciative inquiry in the context of democratic triad CHEPs (communities, service-sector and HEIs). Here, through being mentored by champions, engagement should be guided by shared goals, roles and responsibilities and rooted in universal values-in-action for social justice. Driven by a sustainable development agenda, partners can connect, collaborate, continuously reflect, co-create and celebrate action-oriented knowledge for positive change. By interlocking knowledge discovery, integration, sharing and application, partners can deliver the praxis of engaged scholarship. Also, partners can engage in lifelong learning for professional development, towards becoming globally competent citizens. By applying the ISLP approach in CHEPs, partners can develop appreciative leadership and contribute to glocal*

*flourishment for the common good of society, the economy and the environment. Such commitment can lead to continuous engagement aimed at creating a better future for all.*

To complete the description of the integrated framework, I will describe the underpinning theories of the research.

### **1.2.2 Underpinning theories of the research**

The development of the envisioned ISLP approach was uniquely grounded within a praxis-frame [see/cf. 1.2.1.3], by combining the pedagogy of service-learning with the methodology of appreciative inquiry [see/cf. 1.2.1.4] to strengthen the practice of service-learning.

Service-learning is a pedagogy that evolved into a movement and, therefore, it is not classified as a learning theory. Most of the early service-learning pioneers rooted the engaged pedagogy in the experiential learning field, which followed reflective learning principles from theorists such as Dewey, Kolb and Freire (Stanton et al. 1999). Some of the pioneers also followed constructivist theorists, such as Vygotsky and Bandura, while another group of pioneers grounded pedagogy in the field of action research, thereby following organisational development theorists, such as Argyris, Schön and Revans (Stanton et al. 1999). More recent, modern-day theories, such as situated learning theory (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015), activity theory (McMillan 2008) and other theories, have since been added to the theoretical foundation of service-learning.

Appreciative inquiry involves a collaborative search for the best in human systems (Stavros and Torres 2018), to discover its best practices and values (also known as the positive core) when human systems (such as CHEPs) are most effective and able to bring positive change in human, economic and environmental terms (Cooperrider et al. 2008; Whitney et al. 2010; Stavros and Torres 2018). The inclusion of appreciative inquiry in the envisioned ISLP approach could strengthen the practice of service-learning and enable flourishing of partners' professional development in expanded CHEPs (Stavros and Torres 2018). Therefore, in this study I propose that *social constructionism and generativity* should be added to the theoretical framework of

service-learning, because appreciative inquiry is grounded in these theories (Bushe 2007; Cooperrider et al. 2008; Gergen and Gergen 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018). Appreciative inquiry is further rooted in *positive psychology* (Peterson and Seligman 2004; Seligman 2011), which situates *social constructionism* in a positive context. The latter assumes that ‘knowing’, requires collaborative, interactive, reflective dialogue for “conversations worth having”, to construct knowledge for change (Stavros and Torres 2018:10).

*Generativity*, in turn, can spark collaborative learning characterised by positive energy, and generate novel re-imagined knowledge for improved practice, which, in turn, can bring about positive change for the common good of society (Bushe 2007; Reed 2007; Gergen and Gergen 2008; Ludema and Fry 2008). Appreciative inquiry is underpinned by positive theoretical principles that move ‘theory into practice’ for praxis and, therefore, these principles can enrich the pedagogy of service-learning (see Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1: Appreciative inquiry principles**

<b>Principles</b>	<b>Slogans</b>	<b>Description</b>
Constructionist	Words create worlds	Reality is socially constructed
Simultaneity	Inquiry creates change	Pose questions to direct the change
Poetic	We can choose what we study	What we study makes the difference
Anticipatory	Images inspire action	Positive imagination shapes the future
Positive	Positive questions, positive change	Momentum for change requires positive affect and social bonding and amplifies the positive core
Wholeness	Wholeness brings out the best	Connecting stakeholders inspires creativity
Awareness	Be conscious of underlying assumptions	Be aware of underlying assumptions, therefore continuously reflect about practice and relationship

Free choice	Free choice liberates power	Commitment requires free choice and stimulates positive change
Narrative	Stories are transformative	We live in constructed stories
Enactment	Acting ‘as if’ is self-fulfilling	Imagined change should be a living model of an ideal future

(Source: Center for Appreciative Inquiry 2021)

When applying appreciative inquiry, framing questions positively can have a positive neurophysiological effect on partners in CHEPs (Cooperrider et al. 2008:10; Stavros and Torres 2018). Positive emotions can stimulate higher-order thinking (metacognition), creativity, empathy, cooperation, resilience, and connection (Fredrickson 2006).

As mentioned [see/cf. 1.2.1.4], the inclusion of appreciative inquiry into the ISLP approach enabled engagement in appreciative conversations for data generation (Stavros and Torres 2018). These conversations were not depreciative and critical, because such a frame can bring about destructive conversations that do not benefit positive knowledge generation. Hence, when implementing problem-based research, the focus is on problem-solving. However, although engagement in appreciative conversations requires partners in a CHEP to identify the problem/challenge, the challenge should be flipped into a positive ‘frame of opportunity’. Thereafter, actions for positive change can be envisioned. A positive frame can also inspire “curiosity, imagination and engagement” to generate knowledge for future change (Stavros and Torres 2018:47). The following section will describe the research demarcation and paradigm, to provide clarity for delivery of praxis.

### 1.3 RESEARCH DEMARCATION

The research *is demarcated* in the broad field of higher education studies, with a specific focus on the strategic function of community engagement as one of the three functions of HEIs (RSA DHET 2013). Within engaged scholarship, the focus was on the pedagogy of service-learning, as

applied at the core context of the research, in the nursing discipline (health sciences), and more specifically, the sub-field of nursing education.

As advised by literature, I, as a researcher working in a transformative paradigm, mostly engaged as a full participant in the study, which led to holistic and whole-system transformation (Wood 2020). Therefore, in this researcher positioning, by forming part of the system, I acknowledged and documented how my “beliefs, worldviews, assumptions, experiences, fears and hopes influence the process” (Wood 2020:144) of my own and other participants’ learning and development. Thus, it was essential at the onset of this thesis to position myself “as a writer/researcher/co-participant” (Wood 2020:145), and I continued to do that throughout the study – from a personal, as well as political, professional, reflexive, and meta-reflective stances.

From a *personal stance*, my identity and life philosophy are rooted in Christianity, for I believe in the trinity of God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (*The Living Bible* 1971:808). God created humanity, non-human beings, and the planet we live on (*The Living Bible* 1971:4). In this sense, I believe that, as humans, we are created to connect and build relationships, share a sense of belonging, compassion, and communion. Being curious to explore my unique identity in search of who I am, I love to learn and serve, and I aim to make a positive difference, to achieve the common good and well-being of all in society. As a South African citizen, I respect the constituted human right to freedom of religion, belief, and opinion, and I do not discriminate against others’ religions (RSA 1996). This personal stance is essential to declare, considering that most of the long-term engagement in research took place in a local CHEP context within a faith-based organisation. Although the organisation’s constitution is rooted in Christianity, its services involve people with diverse religious orientations [see/cf. Chapter 4, Article 3].

From a *professional engaged practitioner-scholar stance*, in my professional career capacity during this study, I first worked as a part-time service-learning lecturer at the SoN, UFS (2009–2016). In 2016, my career progressed, and I was appointed as the head of the service-learning division, in the Directorate of Community Engagement, UFS, where I still work today. Following the educational philosophy of service-learning, I respect the constituted values of good citizenship, democracy, social justice, as well as human rights and responsibilities (RSA

1996), which align with a transformative learning paradigm. Therefore, in each action research set, I respected underlying issues of power and privilege that might emerge from my researcher position. As a middle-aged white woman working in a leadership position at the UFS, I constantly stayed mindful about power and privilege differences. In addition, I worked from a strength-based, appreciative frame, which involved notions of appreciation, empathy, reciprocity, respect, illumination of strengths, human dignity, and integrity (Stavros and Torres 2018). As an action researcher working in the field of service-learning, I continuously aspire to make a positive difference in the world by establishing community university research partnerships (CURPs) and by co-creating action-oriented knowledge geared towards the common good.

From a *self-reflexive stance* (Tracy 2013; Wood 2020), I constantly question my biases and carefully interacted with and treated the participants as co-researchers in the study. This stance reminded me that my ‘work’ as a researcher was to ask questions and listen deeply to the ‘what and how’ answers when I engaged in and reported on the research. Furthermore, the service-learning principle of reciprocity; the importance of openness; the establishment of a trusting relationship; and the use of appreciative inquiry principles [see/cf. 1.2.2], supported self-reflexivity. These principles also guided collaborative learning and inquiry. In this self-reflexive stance, I drew from my personal philosophy, professional practice, and engaged scholarly stance, and primarily reflected from an appreciative frame. As research facilitator, it mattered that I was constantly mindful of how I acted, related to, thought about, and considered the discourse I used to communicate when co-creating knowledge with partners in the action research sets.

From a *meta-reflective stance*, I had to review my thoughts about my knowledge, feelings, beliefs, values, and actions in a holistic manner. I viewed the research through the theoretical lens of social constructionism (Gergen and Gergen 2008; Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Wood 2020), and all the participants jointly brought our lived realities into the research process to enrich our collective knowledge. Such reflection required openness and honesty, and declaration of our vulnerabilities, which had the potential to create tension and discomfort. Yet, that was in order, for such knowledge tensions not only deepened our collaborative learning and relationship

building, it also enhanced our creativity to co-create authentic and relevant knowledge (Tracy 2013; Seale and Venter 2018).

Due to it being framed as a strength-based genre of action research, appreciative inquiry often receives critique for using ‘seemingly’ only positive assumptions to search for positive change solutions (Stavros and Torres 2018). Therefore, it is noteworthy that appreciative inquiry does place itself in a critical frame, but from an *appreciative stance* (Cooperrider et al. 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018). Thus, by making use of appreciative inquiry, I focused on the discovery of the extraordinary, ordinary, and tragedy in human systems (CHEPs). Our inquiry, thus, either built on best practices and moral virtues for the common good or reframed the reality of tragedy into collective positive actions-and-knowledge for societal change (Cooperrider et al. 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018; Cooperrider and Fry 2020). In this sense, the research challenge, purpose, objectives, questions and context, required further description.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH CHALLENGE, PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, QUESTIONS AND CONTEXT**

As explained in the introduction and background to the research [see/cf. 1.1], the practice of CESL at the UFS held a dual challenge. *The first appeared to be the traditional, fragmented presentation of the three core higher education functions*, namely community engagement, teaching-learning, and research. Working in silos could hinder the practice of service-learning. In contrast to traditional education strategies, service-learning requires an integrated learning environment that unites the mentioned core functions.

*The second challenge appeared to stem from the construction of a CHEP* [see/cf. 1.2.1.8]. The UFS followed the triad-sector CHEP model for implementing service-learning, which includes communities, the service sector and HEI sector. However, the service sector often lacked inclusion of diverse partners. It seemed that most CHEPs only included NGOs, whereas the service sector could additionally include government organisations/departments, businesses, industry and enterprises. Also, the CHEP-structure did not appear to include multiple disciplines.

Lastly, it appeared that CHEP networking lacked collaboration across local, regional, national, international and the global contexts. These challenges could hinder the practice of service-learning for delivery of quality professional learning and inclusive development in CHEPs.

Therefore, the *purpose* of the research was to develop an envisioned ISLP approach to flourishing of professional development, and to include all partners in expanded CHEPs [see/cf. 1.1 and 1.2]. The focal *objective* was to gain an understanding of the role and effect of the ISLP approach to flourishing of professional development after its application in expanded CHEPs. In alignment, the focal *research question* was: *How can the ISLP approach enable flourishing of all partners' professional development within expanded CHEPs?*

The focal research question was supported by five sets of subsidiary research objectives and questions. Each set contributes to a specific, interrelated article, which, in turn, aligns to the contextual level of an ARC and specific selection of participants. To provide a snapshot, these elements are summarised in Table 1.2. In addition, although it will only be described in the next section (see 1.5), the research design and methodology are briefly mentioned in Table 1.2, to provide a concise research matrix.

**Table 1.2: Research matrix, as related to five interrelated articles**

Article	Research objective	Research question	Contextual level of ARC and participant selection	Methodology
<p><b>Key:</b> Action research cycle (ARC); Action research set (ARS); Level (L): International (I)/National (N)/Local (L); Sampling (S): Convenience (C)/Purposeful (P); South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF)</p>				
<p><b>Article 1</b> <b>Title:</b> A practical framework to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship in CHEPs</p>	<p>Appreciate the reflections from participants towards the development of the ISLP approach to flourishment of engaged scholarship in expanded CHEPs.</p>	<p>How can the ISLP approach enable flourishment of engaged scholarship in expanded CHEPs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First ARC, (L=I), (S=P)</li> <li>• Six pioneering CESL champions [see/cf. 2.3.1]:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- engaged scholarly expertise in CESL field</li> <li>- long-term career role models and mentors</li> <li>- knowledgeable about the institutionalisation of engaged scholarship</li> <li>- share practical wisdom to develop the ISLP approach</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design: Qualitative Action Research</li> <li>• International conferences/via Skype</li> <li>• November 2015–May 2016</li> <li>• Appreciative inquiry conversations, following a 5D process in semi-structured interview protocol [see/cf. 2.4 and Appendix D].</li> <li>• Qualitative data analysis and coding [see/cf. 2.3]</li> <li>• Researcher drafted the article, shared it with participants for blind peer review and applied their constructive feedback</li> </ul>

Article	Research objective	Research question	Contextual level of ARC and participant selection	Methodology
<p><b>Article 2</b></p> <p><b>Title:</b> National support for professional development of engaged scholars in higher education</p>	<p>Explore the reflections of SAHECEF board members (national champions) regarding the application of the ISLP approach to evaluate quality and usability</p>	<p>How can SAHECEF become a flourishing community of praxis towards national support of professional development for engaged scholars?</p>	<p>Second ARC, (L=N), (S=C, P)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARS: Eleven SAHECEF board members (including myself [see/cf. 3.3.2]:</li> <li>- willing to apply the ISLP approach to evaluation of quality and usability</li> <li>- career role models and mentors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design: Qualitative Action Research, using the strength-based genre of Appreciative Inquiry</li> <li>• June 2016</li> <li>• Appreciative inquiry summit method</li> <li>• Paired appreciative conversations for collective data generation; following the 5D process in semi-structured interview protocol [see/cf. 3.3.4, 3.3.5 and Appendix G]</li> <li>- Applied small and whole-group reflective dialogues/appreciative conversations for collective data report and analysis [see/cf. 3.3]</li> </ul>
<p><b>Article 3</b></p> <p><b>Title:</b> Developing and rewarding community-led action learning through engaged scholarship in a community university research partnership</p>	<p>Explore the reflections of community member participants regarding the effect of the ISLP approach on their professional development, in a local Bloemshelter-UFS CURP</p>	<p>How did the ISLP approach effect community-led development in the CURP?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third ARC, (L=L), (S=C, P)</li> <li>• ARS: Bloemshelter–UFS CURP in affiliation with the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) to reward community-led collaborative action learning</li> <li>• ARS: 24 participants in total:</li> <li>- thirteen community members, the leader of the Bloemshelter, researcher (full participant),</li> <li>- class of nine postgraduate nurse educator CESL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design: Qualitative Action Research - Appreciative Inquiry</li> <li>• June 2016 and final action evaluation in December 2019</li> <li>• Data collection via observations, appreciative inquiry interviews (5D process), semi-structured interview protocol [see/cf. 4.3 and Appendix I]; individual and group-reflection documents, meeting documents, audio-visual recordings</li> <li>• Collective data generation and analysis [see/cf. 4.3]</li> <li>• Nominal group technique</li> </ul>

Article	Research objective	Research question	Contextual level of ARC and participant selection	Methodology
			students [see/cf. 4.1] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To highlight community member participants' voice – the nurse educator CESL students inquiry was reported on in Article 4</i></li> </ul>	
<b>Article 4</b>  <b>Title:</b> Advancing holistic postgraduate development through engaged scholarship in a community–university research partnership	Explore postgraduate nurse educator students' reflections to evaluate the effect of the ISLP approach on their professional development in a CURP model	How did the ISLP approach effect postgraduate development in the CURP?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third ARC (the same as Article 3)</li> <li>• (L=L), (S=C, P)</li> <li>• ARS: 24 participants in total:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- thirteen community members, the leader of the Bloemshelter, researcher (full participant),</li> <li>- class of nine postgraduate nurse educator CESL students [see/cf. 4.1]</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>To highlight student voice – the community members, leader of Bloemshelter and researcher were excluded from this inquiry</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design: Qualitative</li> <li>• Qualitative data generation in 2018 via post-implementation service-learning module questionnaires (see Appendix K)</li> <li>• Applied VIA classification framework; and PERMA rubric for <i>thematic analysis</i> of the data [see/cf. 5.3 and Appendix L]</li> </ul>

Article	Research objective	Research question	Contextual level of ARC and participant selection	Methodology
<b>Article 5</b>  <b>Title:</b> A WHOLE model: Towards flourishing of engaged scholarship in community-university research partnerships	Propose the implementation of the ISLP approach to flourishing of engaged scholarship in CURPs, beyond the study's context at the UFS	How can the ISLP approach flourish engaged scholarship in community university research partnerships (CURPs), beyond the existing CURP at the UFS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-perspective approach, portraying first, second and third ARC synthesis of findings</li> <li>• Self-reflection on the usability and implementation readiness of the ISLP approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design: Qualitative Action Research</li> <li>• Meta-reflection on the research process and synthesis of the findings [see/cf. 2.5, 3.4, 4.4 and 5.4]</li> </ul>

(Source: Author's own 2021)

As portrayed in Table 1.2, each of the five articles contributed to achieving an objective, each article was driven by a specific, contextually bound research question, which, in turn contributed to the qualitative design and methodology for the research.

## **1.5 OVERARCHING RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

As indicated in Table 1.2, the study followed a *qualitative* action research design, more specific, the strength-based genre of appreciative inquiry, which was also explorative and descriptive (Reason and Bradbury 2008; Tracy 2013; Mertens 2015). I applied the 5D appreciative inquiry process (define, discover, dream, design and delivery/destiny) (Stavros and Torres 2018) [see/cf. 1.2.1.4]. This 5D process required engagement in appreciative conversations, first in paired and then in large groups.

Across the different ARCs, we *defined* the appreciative inquiry; *discovered* the participants' character strengths and values (known as the positive core); dreamed of an ideal future; *designed* action plans; and enacted the plans for delivery/destiny of action to achieve the desired change. The pedagogy-methodology combination thus enabled the delivery of praxis [see/cf. 1.2.1.3].

This praxis choice was made because appreciative inquiry serves as a modern-day strength-based genre of action research (Venter 2016). Thereby, appreciative inquiry also served as a theory of organisational change, development, and collaborative research methodology (Cooperrider et al. 2008; Zuber-Skerritt 2015:27; Stavros and Torres 2018). The pedagogy of service-learning and methodology of appreciative inquiry align with each other. Both constructs encompassed 'common good' goals for collaborative learning, action/service, joint inquiry, living, shared leadership and underpinning universal moral VIA (Petersen and Seligman 2004; Wood 2020). Consequently, the service-learning and appreciative inquiry design involved a methodology that required "group reflection, action, evaluation and improved practice ... innovative processes and publishing the action research results" (Zuber-Skerritt 2011:137).

The qualitative design and methodology of the study were contextually bound to three specific levels of action research ARCs, namely international, national and local (see Table 1.2). Each

ARC portrayed a different form/level of participation. In the first ARC (see Article 1), I applied a practical “type of inquiry” (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:119) to appreciate the reflections from participants (international service-learning champions) towards the development of the envisioned ISLP approach to flourishing of engaged scholarship in expanded CHEPs. I encouraged these participants to incorporate self-reflection into the practical wisdom they had gained from lifelong careers in service-learning. The action research was only co-operative (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:119), for the initial data generation and analysis was not fully collaborative, due to geographical distance, different time zones and lack of time, due to their full work schedules. However, after I had compiled a first draft of the article, the participants reflectively engaged with the knowledge, verified whether they agreed, approved and provided constructive feedback via blind peer review. I worked their feedback into the article for completion.

The second ARC (see Article 2) included national community engagement champions, while the third ARC (see Article 3) involved local community members as participants. In both these ARCs, the action research was truly collaborative, because I served as a full participant who facilitated organisational/system transformation (see Table 1.1). The research responsibilities were shared equally by participants.

However, in the context of Article 4, although the research involved participant engagement for application and evaluation of the the ISLP approach in a CURP model, in the context of ARC 3, the evaluation was only of a qualitative nature (see Appendix M). This choice was probably the result of inexperience regarding the useability of appreciative inquiry for participatory evaluation at the time I planned the study. I only found this insight through reflection and hindsight after completing the study. Nevertheless, I applied the VIA classification framework (see Appendix L), and the PERMA rubric for qualitative thematic analysis (see Appendix L), to ground the findings in the science of positive psychology.

Finally, Article 5 involved the action of scholarly meta-self-reflection, which focused on the synthesis of the findings that emerged from the three ARCs that addressed the study. When reflecting on the value of the research, I focused on the aim of action research, namely, to improve practice for social change for the common good of society.

## 1.6 VALUE OF THE ACTION RESEARCH

The action research developed practical theory to strengthen the practice of the CESL field. The practical knowledge products/actions comprised the following:

- A practical framework for a theoretical integrated model to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship in CHEPs [Article 1, see/cf. 2.5.5 and 2.6.1];
- By applying the ISLP approach, the SAHECEF established best practices for national support of engaged scholarly professional development [Article 2, see/cf. 3.5];
- A CURP model was established that allowed for the co-construction of a community-led ‘Pathway to holistic development’ (‘phd’), which, in affiliation with the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL), provided true reciprocal reward and recognition of community learning [Article 3, see/cf. 4.4.7];
- Holistic development and increased well-being, guided by postgraduate directed emergent principles towards becoming globally competent citizens and change agents for the common good [Article 4, see/cf. 5.4 and Appendix L]; and
- A generic WHOLE model for holistic and inclusive development to achieve flourishing of engaged scholarship in CURPs, through co-creation of knowledge for change to address future sustainable development for the common good [Article 5, see/cf. 6.4]

The intent of the research was not to generalise the use of the ISLP approach, but to co-construct action-oriented knowledge for positive change in society through improvement of service-learning practice. However, the in-action evaluation of the ISLP approach affirmed its offering of flourishing of professional development for all partners in democratic CURPs, for engagement underpinned by socially just VIA for the common good. This study provides an authentic example across the applied context of the three ARCs, for the future implementation of the ISLP approach to advance the praxis of engaged scholarship in a CURP model.

## 1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Faculty of Education's Ethics Board granted clearance for the research (HSD2016/0200) (see Appendix A). In Table 1.2 I briefly explained how participants had been selected, for the broad context of the study. As research facilitator and co-participant, I applied an appreciative self-reflexive stance, by capturing my thoughts, feelings, and actions for learning in a reflection journal. This documentation of learning contributed to the final meta-reflection on delivery of praxis (informed action). The praxis strengthened the process of data analysis and sense-making and allowed continuous development of subjectivity to complete the research from a whole-system perspective (Reed 2007; Tracy 2013; Mertens 2015; Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015; Wood 2020).

Across the three ARCs we (all the participants) pre-invested time to build and establish mutually beneficial collaborative learning and trusting *relationships*, before commencing with the research (Wood 2020). We thus followed a relational approach to research ethics and were deeply aware of possible power relations. Therefore, we valued principles of inclusivity and reciprocity. This approach to relational ethics was underpinned by the values discussed in the outline of the thesis [see/cf. 1.2.1] (Peterson and Seligman 2004; Wood 2020).

Concurrently, we negotiated ethics contracts to establish democratic, diverse and inclusive CURPs to sustain socially just, engaged scholarship. We determined shared visions and set clear goals; declared VIA for the common good; and defined all participants' roles and responsibilities. We also allowed dedicated sessions for continuous *reflection* throughout the research process, to ensure adherence to or to adjust the research as and when required (Wood 2020).

Literature guided the ethical considerations of the research with regard to three aspects, namely *respect for persons, beneficence and justice* (Mertens 2015:61; Wood 2020). Firstly, as co-researchers, we treated each other with *respect* with regard to autonomy of informed decision-making, to enable an inclusive, shared and safe space, and to allow for continuous, honest engagement in reflective dialogue. We respected each other as co-researchers across the relevant

ARCs and thereby respected the autonomy of participants to make decisions regarding the whole research process, while also aspiring to protect all participants from potential harm (Wood 2020).

Secondly, we applied the *beneficence* principle, to maximise mutually beneficial and reciprocal learning outcomes. We respected different knowledge sources (community and university) as equal for addressing relevant challenges, and for co-creating community-driven knowledge solutions to enable positive social change. We recognised the value of different knowledges in science and society. Therefore, we respected co-ownership of knowledge, as described and demonstrated in each article of the research.

Thirdly, for fairness/*justice*, we provided written informed consent for voluntary participation. I ensured that participants understood the background and consequences of the research and explained the option to withdraw at any time, if someone wished to. Also, we collectively anticipated potential issues resulting from power relations and tension, to avoid unnecessary *risk and harm for anyone*. The nature of the research was collaborative and we did not enforce confidentiality during the fieldwork. However, in writing up the thesis, I ensured the anonymity of the participants, as we negotiated across the ARCs. Furthermore, regarding the *justice* principle, I conveniently and purposefully invited the participants, because they could share practical career wisdom and could inform the ARCs through in-action reflection, by drawing on past and current actively engaged CESL experiences [see/cf. 2.3.1; 3.3.2; 4.1; 6.4]. We carefully ensured, through negotiation, that the methods we used were inclusive, non-exploitive and fair. The participation was voluntary, and the participants did not receive remuneration. However, we *recognised* the knowledge, learning and development of all participants at a graduation ceremony [see/cf. 4.4.7] and knowledge dissemination through publication [Wood 2020]. The accomplishment of holistic development was proof of the authenticity and outcome validity of the research (Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Wood 2020). The following section (see 1.8) will briefly outline the chapters making up the related articles.

## **1.8 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS**

To address the purpose of this research [see/cf. 1.3], five articles were formulated. Each of the five articles is briefly outlined through its title, as follows:

### **Article 1**

Title: A practical framework to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship in community higher education partnerships (see full details in Chapter 2).

### **Article 2**

Title: National support for professional development of engaged scholars in higher education (see full details in Chapter 3).

### **Article 3**

Title: Developing and rewarding community-led action learning through engaged scholarship in a community university research partnership (see full details in Chapter 4).

### **Article 4**

Title: Advancing holistic postgraduate development through engaged scholarship in a community–university research partnership (see full details in Chapter 5).

### **Article 5**

Title: A WHOLE model: Towards flourishing of engaged scholarship in community-university research partnerships (see full details in Chapter 6).

## 1.9 CONCLUSION

This first chapter started with an introduction and background to the entire study, by confirming that the practice of CESL is well established at the UFS [see/cf. 1.1]. To share the purpose of the thesis, I explained the need to strengthen both the practice and the application context (CHEPs) of service-learning. In addition, I promoted the case for the legitimacy of the pedagogy by exploring its unique holistic learning and inclusive development benefit in a CHEP and its aim of advancing the common good of society. Therefore, I formulated an idea for the thesis to develop an ISLP approach that promoted flourishing of professional development for all partners who engaged in learning and inquiry at the interface of expanded CHEPs.

Then, an overview of this non-traditional thesis followed [see/cf. 1.1.1]. I explained that, in applying the strength-based action research genre of appreciative inquiry, I would use a narrative, first-person, insider voice, and a process format for the report across five articles. The integrated conceptual-contextual-theoretical framework [see/cf. 1.2] provided a holistic picture of the thesis. Here, I clarified the concepts and CHEP-context [see/cf. 1.2.1.1-1.2.1.9], provided a definition and purpose [see/cf. 1.2.1.10] and explains the underpinning theories of the ISLP approach [see/cf. 1.2.2]. Then, I explained the research demarcation and democratic, transformative paradigm [see/cf. 1.3]; provided an outline of the research challenge, purpose, objectives, questions and context [see/cf. 1.4]; and described the qualitative action research design and qualitative, collaborative methodology [see/cf. 1.5]. Furthermore, I elaborated on the value of the action research and the ethical considerations taken into account [see/cf. 1.6 and 1.7]. Finally, I provided the titles of the articles, as will be presented in Chapters 2–6 [see/cf. 1.8].

In conclusion, I realised the breadth of the complexity of the task involved in reporting on the multitude of layered elements that encompassed this five-article thesis format. Furthermore, during co-creation of the diverse knowledge pathways for strengthening the practice of the CESL field, I experienced what the true ‘messiness’ of action research really means. However, the

prism of praxis eventually converged these pathways into a ray of bright light – that of informed practice for sustainable social change.

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## CHAPTER 2 (ARTICLE 1)

# A PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK TO FLOURISH THE PRAXIS OF ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP IN COMMUNITY HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

**Proposed journal:** *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Engaged scholarship provides a significant public collaborative learning platform for development of society, the economy, and the planet. This article introduces a practical framework that offers to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship in community-higher education partnerships. Six international community-engaged service-learning champions participated in an appreciative inquiry on this topic. They co-constructed a practical framework by drawing on their practical wisdom and the framework was grounded in generative and social constructionist theories (Stavros and Torres 2018). The framework dually aligns with the integrated theoretical model (Sandmann et al. 2016) and an integrated service learning praxis approach, by integrating community engaged service-learning as pedagogy, appreciative inquiry as research-and-change model and the strategies of appreciative leadership. Such integration promises to advance the career of future engaged scholars, guide institutional engagement, and change organisational culture, so that the praxis of engaged scholarship can flourish in higher education.

**Keywords:** appreciative inquiry, engaged scholarship, community-higher education partnerships, integrated service-learning praxis

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<sup>1</sup> <https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, higher education institutions (HEIs) have institutionalised community engagement and, by implication, community engaged service-learning (CESL) (Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999; Shumer, Stanton and Giles 2017; Higher Education Public Purpose 2021:Online). The practice of CESL can promote professional learning and development and, consequently, the praxis of engaged scholarship (Boyer 1996; 2016; Erasmus 2014; Ma and Tandon 2014; Sandmann, Saltmarsh and O’Meara 2016; Shumer 2017; Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Wood 2020).

Using CESL in community–higher education partnerships (CHEPs) is well established as a transforming pedagogy to develop engaged scholarship (Duley 2017). The pedagogy of CESL, integrates meaningful community service with instruction/teaching and reflection for learning. This type of integration enables whole-person (holistic) learning and also teaches active citizenship to achieve social justice and community development for a more humane world (Duley 2017; Stanton et al. 1999).

However, continuous change in society and higher education poses challenges that could inhibit the flourishing of CESL practice and its contribution to develop the praxis of engaged scholarship. The study reported on in this article, explored how the development of an integrated service-learning praxis (ISLP) approach, might ensure that engaged scholarship in community–higher education partnerships flourishes. The ISLP approach combines the pedagogy of CESL and the strength-based action research genre of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018), to deliver praxis. Praxis refers to the “interdependence and integration – not separation – of theory and practice, research and development, thought and action” (Zuber-Skerritt 2009:113). From a moral frame, praxis invokes political change. In this sense, praxis unlocks the thoughts and actions of the oppressed, so that they can liberate themselves with a pedagogy of hope, to create a common good for all in greater society (Freire 1970; 1994; Wood 2020).

Traditional action research often uses a problem-based deficit approach (Stavros and Torres 2018). These authors highlighted that when the focus is on problems, an inquiry could expose even more problems, and the opportunity to focus on discovering existing best practices could be missed. These best practices are often delivered by CESL champions, who act as role models for others in the field (Erasmus 2007; Venter and Seale 2014). The best practices of these CESL champions can serve as a foundation to inform future developments in the field.

In contrast to traditional action research, scholars can make use of appreciative inquiry to enable positive organisational development, research, and change management (Cooperrider et al. 2008). The action for change builds on best practices, and the result demonstrates a flourishing practice. Such action can bring about goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience (Fredrickson 2006).

Considering the praxis of engaged scholarship in a CHEP, community practitioners and academic scholars (hereafter called engaged scholars) can aim to achieve a flourishing environment - to enable social well-being, as a step beyond sustainable development (Bushe 2013; Cooperrider et al. 2008; Fry 2014; Ludema and Fry 2008; Reed 2007; Zandee and Cooperrider 2008). To demonstrate this argument, the growth of a tree can be used as a metaphor. In an environment that supplies soil and enough water, the growth of a tree can be sustained. Likewise, an environment that is directed by policy to institutionalise the function of engaged scholarship and its practice, even if only sporadically, can sustain the establishment of engaged scholarship. However, for a tree to flourish, it needs a favourable environment in which it is cared for and nourished with compost, so that it bears fruit, and drops seeds for future trees to grow.

With reference to the tree metaphor, a recent theoretical integrated model for advancing engaged scholarship (Sandmann et al. 2016) proposes the establishment of 'academic homes', to (1) prepare future engaged scholars; (2) practice the scholarship of engagement; (3) institutionalise the scholarship of engagement; and (4) adopt an institutional change model. When they are integrated, these 'academic homes' can offer a flourishing future for the development of engaged scholars. Although the model (Sandmann et al. 2016) (hereafter called the theoretical model) has

significant integrative elements that can bring about change, it does not include a practical framework for action to deliver praxis.

Hence, the purpose of the article is to dually offer a practical framework for the theoretical integrated model (Sandmann et al. 2016) and for the development of the ISLP approach, which promises flourishing of engaged scholarship in expanded CHEPs. This article will demonstrate the practical application of an appreciative inquiry that delivered the practical framework.

I conducted an appreciative inquiry with six international service-learning champions, who co-constructed a practical framework for the ISLP approach. They were purposefully chosen to share their expertise, which they did by answering the following question: **How can the ISLP approach enable flourishing of engaged scholarship in expanded CHEPs?**

The next sections provide the contextual-conceptual framework of the research (see 2.2), the methodology (see 2.3) and an integrated report on the findings and discussion (see 2.4). The article concludes (see 2.5) with a reflection on learning from the findings, namely the co-constructed practical framework, a taxonomy for professing the praxis of engaged scholarship (see 2.5.1), as well as the significance, limitations, challenges and contradictions (see 2.5.2) of the study. Finally, further research is recommended (see 2.6).

## **2.2 CONTEXTUAL-CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The umbrella term of community engagement includes scholarship in which the community is engaged. Due to the unique missions and cultures of different HEIs, many definitions exist to describe the concept of community engagement. In the next section, I provide a description of community engagement and related concepts, for the specific context of this study.

### **2.2.1 Community engagement**

This article follows the definition of the Carnegie Foundation, which describes community engagement as “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger

communities (local/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Higher Education Public Purpose 2021:Online). Community engagement aims to enrich teaching-learning and research, and foster education about citizenship, democracy and social responsibility to address societal issues for the public good.

The literature explains that community refers to a group of people who are united by at least one common characteristic, such as geography, shared interests, values, experiences, or traditions (Tandon and Hall 2015). Being part of a community provides a “sense of belonging” (Tandon and Hall 2015:1) in relationships and can also refer to a place or an institution.

Engagement involves academics who build relationships with a community to accomplish shared goals. This engagement can include learning, researching, knowledge sharing, or creating new courses, which are done with the community. Engagement can include educational interaction with community practitioners; and involve social innovation with students to address social challenges. When community–university engagement is research driven, the engagement leads to community engaged scholarship.

### **2.2.2 Community engaged scholarship**

Many definitions have evolved from the original model of engaged scholarship (Boyer 1996; 2016). The following is a clear and concise definition, provided by Tandon and Hall (2015:13):

*Community engaged scholarship is the teaching, discovery, integration, application, and engagement that involves faculty members in a mutually beneficial partnership with the community.*

Tandon and Hall (2015) add to this definition that community engaged scholarship should be characterised by “clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation, reflective critique, rigor and peer-review” (Tandon and Hall 2015:13). Therefore, community-engaged scholarship embraces an integrated, reciprocal and mutual two-

way exchange of resources (Zuber-Skerritt 2015). Additionally, the application context that is required for the implementation of the ISLP approach, involves CHEPs.

### **2.2.3 Community–higher education partnerships**

In South Africa, a CHEP involves a triad partnership model that represents three sectors, namely communities, HEIs, and service sectors (Stanton and Erasmus 2013:76-78). Within this triad partnership, engaged scholars share mutual learning with others, who are from diverse cultures and disciplines (Stanton et al. 1999:1; Shumer, Stanton and Giles 2017:5).

Additionally, long-term partnerships are underpinned by four practices, namely, having (1) guiding principles (shared accountability, equality, equity, responsibility, reciprocity, respect), (2) quality processes (communication, evaluation and feedback). (3) accomplishment of meaningful outcomes (flourishment for the common good and well-being of society, the economy and the environment), and (4) transformative experiences (CCPH 2013). Before starting the collaboration, engaged scholars should agree on logistics, such as drafting an agreement, clarifying a shared set of values (e.g. appreciation, integrity, honesty, openness, mutual trust) and philosophy, vision, mission, goals, roles, and responsibilities, to ensure the sound implementation of the ISLP approach.

### **2.2.4 Integrated service-learning praxis approach**

The combined concept of integrated service-learning praxis is self-constructed. The concept draws from my self-reflection on existing best CESL practices, as an engaged scholar involved in doctorate-level studies, as well as from my position as head of a CESL division at a South African HEI and my focus on CESL as an enabler of an integrated, engaged scholarship. Hence, the aspect of integration needs clarification (see 2.2.4.1).

#### 2.2.4.1 *Integration of the three functions of higher education*

Some HEIs still tend to practice teaching-learning, research, and community engagement in silos (Wood 2020). In contrast, the approach offers to integrate these functions through combining service-learning and appreciative inquiry.

#### 2.2.4.2 *How does community-engaged service-learning contribute to engaged scholarship?*

Community engaged service-learning (CESL) has made significant contributions to the implementation of engaged scholarship (Furco and Root 2010; Shumer 2017; Stanton et al. 1999), as described in the following definition:

*A course or competency-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in mutually identified service activities that benefit the community, and (b) reflect on the 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 personal values and civic responsibility (Bringle and Clayton 2012:114–115, adapted from Bringle and Hatcher 1996).*

The practice of CESL involves a bidirectional integration of “thinking and acting, linking service to the community while reflecting on experiences in a conscious and disciplined way ... as a pattern for lifelong learning” (Ramsay 2017:46). Thus, the ISLP approach finds structure in the pedagogy of CESL, through which it aligns with theories that emphasise reflective learning, such as constructivism, experiential learning, progressive education, self-efficacy, social justice, and action research (Stanton et al. 1999:4). These pedagogies advance the development of the praxis of engaged scholarship (Stanton et al. 1999:110).

Additionally, principles for good practice guide engaged scholars to respect CESL activities that (1) allow those in the community with learning needs to define their needs; (2) engage people in responsible and challenging actions to promote the common good; and (3) articulate service and learning goals for all stakeholders involved in service-learning partnerships (Sigmon 2017).

As with CESL, the ISLP approach is rooted in three foundational pillars: (1) service or action to achieve the common good; (2) engagement in civil society; and (3) moral, value-driven experiential learning. Therefore, this ISLP approach demands infinite reflection on service or action, to gain a deeper understanding of the linkage between curriculum content and community dynamics, as well as to achieve personal growth and a sense of social responsibility. Furthermore, the ISLP approach shares three common strands with action research (Reason and Bradbury 2008). Both designs (1) involve reflection on service or action to enable learning from experience; (2) have the practical aim to co-create positive change in society; and (3) support collaborative learning and inquiry for the development of praxis. As mentioned [see/cf. 2.1], the ISLP approach includes the model of appreciative inquiry.

#### *2.2.4.3 Relevance of appreciative inquiry for the ISLP approach*

Appreciative inquiry is a contemporary, strength-based genre of action research, that is mostly applied in the context of business environments. As it is embedded in the field of positive psychology (Peterson and Seligman 2004; Fredrickson 2006; Seligman 2011), appreciative inquiry encourages strength-based organisational research, development and change (Cooperrider et al. 2008:12). As an inquiry strategy, appreciative inquiry identifies best practices and enables the design and implementation of development plans. For example, participants who engaged in an appreciative inquiry on global sustainable development, generated solutions for related challenges in the so-called triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit (UNDP 2015; Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader 2010:24). Appreciative inquiry involves the following:

*cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organisations, and the world around them. It involves the discovery of what gives life to a living system when it is most effective, alive, and constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms (Cooperrider et al. 2008:3).*

Appreciative inquiry is rooted in learning theories relating to generativity and social constructionism (Bushe 2007; Cooperrider et al. 2008; Gergen and Gergen 2008; Gergen 2015; Grieten, Lambrechts, Bouwen, Huybrechts, Fry and Cooperrider 2017; Ludema and Fry 2008;

Stavros and Torres 2018; Zandee and Cooperrider 2008). Social constructionism involves the idea that a social system, for example the group of engaged scholars, creates its reality collectively. In turn, generativity involves the collective discovery and co-creation of new things, thereby positively altering a collective future. By being grounded in positive psychology, appreciative inquiry places social constructionism in a positive context.

#### 2.2.4.4 *Why are appreciative inquiry principles important for the ISLP approach?*

Five core appreciative inquiry principles (also known as phrases or assumptions) underpin the learning philosophy of appreciative inquiry (Bushe 2013; Cooperrider et al. 2008:8-10; Appreciative Inquiry Commons:Online). The slogans that describe these assumptions are indicated to the reader by single quotation marks and cursive text. The constructionist principle assumes that *'words create worlds'*. This principle indicates that co-constructed knowledge by engaged scholars in a CHEP eventually becomes the destiny of the inquiry [see/cf. 2.5.1 and 2.5.5]. The simultaneity principle assumes that *'the first question asked is fateful'* – in this study, the question that defines the inquiry being reported on [see/cf. 2.5.1]. Additionally, the poetic principle involves the assumption that engagement in a CHEP is *'like an open book'*, co-authored by engaged scholars at the heart of it. For example, engaged scholars who deliver praxis at the core of a CHEP can become role models for demonstrating such praxis [see/cf. 2.5]. The anticipatory principle assumes that engaged scholars can *'act as if'*, therefore, the ideas they imagine, can serve to inspire their future action. These imaginations of engaged scholars can create promising practices to encourage engagement [see/cf. 2.5]. The positive principle assumes that *'positive questions lead to positive change'*. This is the most important and compelling of the five core principles, because it embraces the idea that positive emotions and attitudes stem from a positive question, which, in turn, can lead to positive action that leads to future change [see/cf. 2.5.1].

As demonstrated in the methodology section (see 2.3), appreciative inquiry involves an infinite and iterative 5D process (define, discover, dream, design and delivery/destiny). Continuous practice of appreciative inquiry within this 5D process can encourage engaged scholars to develop appreciative leadership (see 2.2.4.5).

#### *2.2.4.5 Why appreciative leadership is important for the ISLP approach?*

Appreciative leadership involves five strategies, namely, inquiry, illumination, inclusion, inspiration, and integrity (Whitney et al. 2010:1–2). When they are applied in a CHEP, these strategies can lead the creative potential of engaged scholars to co-creation of knowledge that can effect change. These strategies help to develop character strengths, such as confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance, to "make a positive difference in the world" (Whitney et al. 2010:3).

As with the appreciative inquiry principles, the strategies of appreciative leadership are described by creative phrases. These phrases are indicated to the reader by single quotation marks. First, to develop the ‘wisdom of inquiry’, engaged scholars should ask positive and powerful questions; using the ‘art of illumination’ requires of an engaged scholar to focus on the best practices that are delivered by other engaged scholars in a CHEP. For applying the ‘genius of inclusion’, engaged scholars can collaborate to co-create actions that improve future practice. To demonstrate the ‘courage of inspiration’, engaged scholars can awaken a creative and positive spirit of scholarship in the CHEP. Lastly, to follow the ‘path of integrity’, engaged scholars can make wise choices about their practice that contribute to the common good of all. The good practice service-learning actions professed by service-learning scholars who have championed for engaged scholarship can portray such “practical wisdom” (Duley 2017:33).

#### *2.2.4.6 Why are CESL champions valuable for the ISLP approach?*

A CESL champion is “someone who is knowledgeable. The practice of (community engaged) service-learning champions portray a standard of excellence. They care unconditionally for others and share their expertise to change society towards a common good for all” (Venter et al. 2015:153). In their study on knowledge sharing for the development of champions for CESL, Venter et al. (2015), determined that champions can be situated in any of the triad of sectors in the CHEP-model mentioned earlier, or may come from abroad, mainly North America, where CESL was pioneered, and initially informed CESL in South Africa, and still informs it (Venter et al. 2015). Their experiential learning, gained from engagement in CESL can be shared as

lessons, to inform best practice for engaged scholarship. Thus, mentorship by champions in triad CHEPs, can spawn new champions who can implement the ISLP approach.

### **2.3 METHODOLOGY**

In this study, I applied a qualitative action research design, underpinned by a transformative paradigm (Mertens 2015; Wood 2020). This praxis oriented research, gained from appreciating the participants' reflections on their CESL practice-wisdom (the objective of this research), was especially well suited to answer the research question, namely: **How can the ISLP approach enable flourishing of engaged scholarship in expanded CHEPs?**

The use of appreciative inquiry allowed for the integration of theory (i.e. the knowledge shared by the participants), and practice (research into practice) (Reed 2007). This research design aligns with scholarly advice about research on CESL, which suggests research should converge “theory, measurement, design and practice” (Bringle, Clayton and Hatcher 2013:342).

With regards to recruitment of participants, in terms of geography, five CESL champions were selected from the United States of America, and one from the Asia-Pacific region. Three of these champions are early pioneers of CESL (Stanton et al. 1999) and are still very active in the development of the field, as demonstrated by their willingness to serve as mentors and to participate in this study. The fact that I recruited the participants at international conferences, also demonstrates their active engagement towards future development of the field. Inclusion criteria for being selected as a CESL champion in this study, comprised of expertise in research on the CESL field and being actively involved in the institutionalisation of engaged scholarship at HEIs. Despite the involvement of diverse disciplines (i.e. education, community development, psychology, and social sciences), the CESL champions had a common denominator, namely, a commitment to advancing the praxis of engaged scholarship, and this element contributed to the validity of the study (Mertens 2015).

To generate data, I conducted appreciative inquiry conversations with the participants, guided by a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix D). The appreciative inquiry conversations

took place, either in person at international conferences or electronically via Skype. I aligned the interview questions with the 5D appreciative inquiry process (define, discover, dream, design, destiny/delivery) to ensure the validity of the findings. Ideally, an appreciative inquiry requires a process of collective data generation by participants in one setting, and by means of one-to-one paired conversations (Cooperrider et al. 2008). However, the entire partnership proved to be a challenge due to the demographic distance, differing time zones, and high-profile work schedules of the participants, who were situated across the globe. As a result, I facilitated the inquiry and my researcher positionality was underpinned by a relationship of mentorship-apprenticeship, continuing from previous scholarship (Venter et al. 2015). Hence, multiple social realities collected from the six participants' career-life stories, who also represented different disciplines and diverse cultures, were acknowledged as a collective resource of practical wisdom/tacit knowledge (phronesis) (Tracy 2013; Wood 2020).

Before the onset of the inquiry, I shared the self-constructed idea, of developing an ISLP approach in expanded CHEPs, with each of the participants. By being guided by the constructionist principle [see/cf. 2.2.4.4], this step assisted in a collective determining regarding the topic of inquiry. *Phase 2 (Discovery)* involved discovering the participants' positive core, namely the best practices, character strengths, and values. *Phase 3 (Dream)* required of the participants to reflect on the discovery of their positive core (as identified in Phase 2). As a result, the participants, who represented diverse disciplines, were requested to place their discoveries in a broader context, namely, "to create more interdisciplinary conversations" (Boyer 2016:22). These interdisciplinary conversations contributed to an in-depth understanding of the discoveries, and to imagine what a proposed framework for the approach might look like. In *Phase 4 (Design)*, the participants built on the discovery of the positive core (in Phase 2) and collective dream (in Phase 3), which contributed to their collective design/creation of a practical framework for the ISLP approach. *Phase 5: Destiny/Delivery* of appreciative inquiry is an ongoing phase, which aims to continue and sustain "the dynamic learning cycle into the future" (Cooperrider et al. 2017:102), and concludes the phases of defining, discovery, dream and design.

The dialogue in the appreciative conversations called for me to listen actively while the participants shared stories of their successful CESL careers. I experienced a sense of connectedness, as if I could enter their worlds metaphorically. In addition, I experienced a sense of excitement and inspiration, characterised by positive thinking, feelings of joy, hope, and resilience (Cooperrider 2013; Fredrickson 2003). These appreciative emotions challenged me to remain focused during the inquiry. Therefore, I maintained a self-reflexive stance, continuously grounded my interpretations in the transcribed data, which I viewed through the theoretical lens of social constructionism and confirmed by relevant literature.

Another challenge that emerged during data generation in one of the appreciative conversations, was the necessity to reframe negative thoughts and to create opportunities for improved practice (Grieten et al. 2017). Through such reframing, the relevant knowledge could be generated to plan action for achievement of positive social change (Cooperrider et al. 2008:55). Keeping the challenge in mind throughout the research process, when building trust between engaged scholars in a CHEP is essential (Stavros and Torres 2018). For example, one of the participants challenged me about the absence of a sixth ‘D’ element, such as “difficulties/disappointments/dangers” (*P6*) in the 5D appreciative inquiry process. I considered this challenge and allowed the participant to continue the conversation in this direction freely, as this was a ‘lived reality’. However, by naming the situation, I overturned the challenge into actions/opportunities for positive change (Stavros and Torres 2018) [see/cf. 2.2.2].

With regards to data analysis, the appreciative inquiry methodology ideally requires a collaborative analysis process (Grieten et al. 2017). However, as a facilitator of the appreciative inquiry, I applied a qualitative step-by-step data analysis process (Mertens 2015:511–514). Step 1 involved data transcription of each interview, which I did myself; this enabled me to engage actively with the data. The transcription of each conversation was sent to the relevant participant via email, to apply member checking for accuracy of data analysis (Mertens 2015). Steps two and three involved data exploration and reduction. As mentioned earlier, the alignment of processes and the prompting questions in the interview protocol served as guides to organise the data. I compared the data generated for each question to find, code, categorise and create themes

from the ideas and concepts that emerged from the data. During these analysis stages, meaningful quotes that supported the themes were highlighted.

To ensure trustworthiness, three experienced researchers supervised the qualitative analysis and interpretation process (Mertens 2015). I collected verbatim quotes to validate the construction and dual design of the practical framework for the theoretical model of Sandmann et al. (2016) and the ISLP approach. For triangulation of the findings, I integrated the six expert voices of the participants, to form a “prism” of collective perspectives (Mertens 2015:518).

As facilitator of the inquiry, I maintained a self-reflective stance (Zandee and Cooperrider 2008:191) by capturing my thoughts, feelings, and actions in a reflection journal. Journaling enabled me to apply progressive subjectivity while documenting the process of analysis and interpretation of the data. Finally, each of the participants (Mertens 2015) conducted a peer review of the draft article, which provided their collective constructive feedback (as an appreciated benefit). I applied this feedback towards the final completion of the article.

Ethical clearance (see Appendix A) was granted for the research (Faculty of Education, UFS-HSD2016/0200). The participants were contacted individually via email to invite their participation. I applied ethical principles of respect, beneficence and fairness/justice (Mertens 2015; Wood 2020) [see/cf. 1.6]. With regard to *respect* and *fairness/justice*, I ensured I obtained voluntary *informed consent* for participation (see Appendices C, F, H, J). In addition, with regard to the principle of *beneficence*, I ensured “good outcomes for science, humanity, and the individual research participants”, while avoiding creating unnecessary risk or harm (Mertens 2015:61). Furthermore, drawing from CESL principles, the moral values of democracy, social justice, and reciprocity, also known as the ‘principle of the golden rule’ (treating others as you want to be treated), underpinned the appreciative inquiry (Mertens 2015; Wood 2020). The next section report on the findings and discussion thereof (see 2.4).

## 2.4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings included two main themes, namely, the positive core of engaged scholarship (see 2.4.1) and a practical framework to advance an integrated engaged scholarship (see 2.4.2). I applied an in-action learning perspective for reporting, by referring to *Participant 1*, *Participant 2*, *Participant 3*, and so forth, with verbatim quotes that validate the findings. In addition, the findings and discussion are integrated, while supported with relevant literature

### 2.4.1 The positive core of engaged scholarship

The discovery of the positive core (best practices, character strengths and values) revealed the following elements: knowledge, skills, and attitudes, situated in the following domains: cognitive intelligence (intellect and reasoning), emotional intelligence (emotions and feelings), practical intelligence/wisdom (experience), and spiritual intelligence (values and beliefs). A detailed appendix (see Appendix E) provides a summary of these findings. A discussion of these learning domains follows below.

#### 2.4.1.1 Cognitive intelligence (intellect and critical reasoning)

Various cognitive competencies, as reported on by the participants, emerged from the findings (see Appendix E). *All the participants* reported on having acquired discipline-specific knowledge in their fields of expertise, and reported on having the competencies of creativity, critical thinking/reflection, and critical reasoning. A recent report on the future of jobs (World Economic Forum 2018) pointed out that such intellectual knowledge and cognitive competencies are critical for coping with societal challenges of an uncertain future world of work, particularly considering the technology-enhanced fourth industrial revolution. In addition, *all the participants* reported that they contributed to the development of the field of engaged scholarship, through the publication and dissemination of their work. They also served as CESL champions and mentored other active scholars.

#### 2.4.1.2 Emotional intelligence (emotions and feelings)

The participants portrayed a high level of emotional intelligence (Goleman 2002), in line with self-development and the ability to establish social relationship for partnership development. When analysed from the frame of Goleman's emotional intelligence model (Goleman 2002), the emotional skills and competencies of *all the participants* (see Appendix E) included elements of self-awareness and self-regulation, social skills, development of empathy (care and compassion), and inner motivation for learning. Participant 5 portrayed the aspect of courage and the willingness to take risks (*P5*). In line with these elements, the report on the future of jobs (World Economic Forum 2018) emphasises the significance of continuous skilling and reskilling of people, with regards to emotional literacy. It appeared that being engaged in CESL, while serving as champions of engaged scholarship, provided the participants with an excellent platform for developing the skill of emotional intelligence.

#### 2.4.1.3 Practical intelligence/wisdom (experience)

With regards to practical intelligence/practical wisdom, the participants collectively portrayed the following set of skills and competencies (see Appendix E): practical experience/active practice of engaged scholarship and the ability to profess the praxis of engaged scholarship (*all participants*); commitment to the task at hand (*P2*), creativity and curiosity (*all participants*), judgment (*P1*), love of learning and valuing quality education (*P1, P4, P6*); the ability to see the bigger picture (*all participants*), naiveté (*P6*), patience, persistence, perseverance, and resilience (*P1, P2, P3, P4*). All the participants highlighted that they did not perceive CESL and engaged scholarship only as careers. Instead, all of them valued the practice of engaged scholarship as a philosophy of life. Additional competencies/elements that emerged from the findings comprised of adaptability, flexibility, hope, humour, leadership, and teamwork (*all participants*). The participants also portrayed the ability to connect (network) (*P1, P4*), collaborate (*P2*), communicate (*P6*), coordinate, organise and plan (*P1, P4*), and to practice the scholarship of engagement (discover, integrate, share and apply knowledge) (*all participants*). These characteristics can be categorised as elements of emergent learning (Zuber-Skerritt, Wood and

Louw 2015:116). Such understanding grows from engagement in the practical world and leads to gaining both knowledge and practical wisdom (Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Wood 2020).

By being prompted to reflect on and discover their positive core (best practices, character strengths and values (during the appreciative conversations), the participants could transform their tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. Such practical knowledge/wisdom can inform current and future learning programmes and practice for engaged scholars, to develop praxis (informed action). This valuable practical knowledge could have easily been missed, if a traditional deficit and problem-based inquiry approach was followed.

#### *2.4.1.4 Spiritual intelligence (beliefs and values)*

The participants portrayed a diverse set beliefs and values (see Appendix E). All the participants believed in the principle of reciprocity (living by the so-called golden rule), for this is the principle that underpins CESL (Stanton et al. 1999). This value of reciprocity leads to actions that make a positive difference in society. Other beliefs and values reported on and portrayed by all the participants, included the elements of democracy, inclusion, integrity and social justice. These beliefs and values guided their interactions and professing the praxis of engaged scholarship for the common good, which portrays the life purpose to make a positive contribution to society, also known as the notion of transcendence (Peterson and Seligman 2004).

Participant 1 captured a summary of the participants' collective voices by stating the following:

*[I]t is all about people working together in harmony, respecting one another, and using lifelong learning to develop wisdom ... the goal is teaching for wisdom, not only knowledge ... trying to teach people to become wise and not just knowledgeable (P1).*

Participant 2 also valued aspects of relationships and commitment by stating,

*I have devoted my professional life to establishing and building a movement for socially responsible education ... driven by values of partnership, collaboration, and service-learning (P2).*

Likewise, Participant 6 aspired to make a difference:

*The values that I have are because I believe in what I am doing; the make a difference philosophy is fundamental because I believe that everyone can make a difference if they are eager to change (P6).*

An explanation by Berkowitz (1987), in a study about people who serve others for the common good, confirms the participants' shared perspectives and states that the first step of commitment to the common good is the willingness, as a personal choice, to act and make a difference in society. In addition, relevant literature (Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen and Daloz Parks 1996; Duley 2017; Venter and Seale 2014) confirm the perspectives shared by two of the participants (P2, P6).

In a longitudinal study about the positive social impact of learning through CESL, Duley (2017) reported on three elements that correspond with the findings of the inquiry. Firstly, CESL enables transformational learning and development of social justice to create a more humane world for the common good (*all participants*). Secondly, the affective domain (emotions, feelings, values and beliefs) is key to living for the common good, as perceived by all participants, yet in different dimensions of emphasis [see/cf. 2.5.2.1–2.5.2.4].

After reflecting on the findings of the inquiry [see/cf. 2.4.1.4] and drawing from Duley's argument for deeper exploration regarding the positive influence of the affective domain embedded in CESL (Duley 2017), I paid particular attention to Shulman's "table of learning" (2002:38). When Shulman compiled this taxonomy for engaged pedagogies, he emphasised the development of the affective domain. Shulman based his perspectives on experience gained from being actively involved in community-engaged learning. Shulman's taxonomy comprised of the following assumptions on active learning, became essential for further discussion on the findings:

*Learning begins with student engagement, leading to knowledge and understanding. Once someone understands, he or she becomes capable of performance or action. Critical reflection on one's practice and understanding lead to higher order thinking in the form of a capacity to exercise judgment in the face of uncertainty and create designs in the presence of constraints and unpredictability. Ultimately, the exercise of judgment makes possible the development of commitment. In commitment, we become capable of professing our understandings and values, our faith and our love, our skepticism and our doubts, internalizing those attributes and making them integral to our identities. These commitments, in turn, create new engagements possible and even necessary (Shulman 2002:38).*

Additionally, Shulman (2002:43) invited scholars to consider elements missing from the taxonomy, such as "emotion, collaboration and the centrality of trust". He asked an important question about the taxonomy, namely: How might it be revised or interpreted to remind those who use it, of the centrality of the emotions in the motivation to learn, the exercise of reason, and the development of character – all legitimate and necessary aspects of any vision of the well-educated person (Shulman 2002:43).

Hence, drawing from the findings related to the positive core of engaged scholarship [see/cf. 2.4.1.1 -2.4.1.4], I 'played' with this taxonomy of Shulman (2002:44), as advised, to balance the elements of affective/emotional, cognitive, practical and spiritual learning against the values and beliefs that emerged from the participants' stories related to the positive core of engaged scholarship. I adapted Shulman's "table of learning" (Shulman 2000:38) for engaged pedagogies as follows:

*Learning emerges from engaged scholarship experiences, which in turn leads to the holistic development of cognitive, emotional, practical and spiritual intelligence. Holistic development leads to an empathetic understanding of self and others, required to develop practical wisdom. To establish practical*

*wisdom, someone should engage in collaborative learning to gain competence in the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ethics required for inter-acting, inter-connecting, inter-being (co-existing), inter-depending, inter-feeling, inter-knowing, inter-thinking. Continuous reflection on our feelings, thoughts, and actions leads to higher-order thinking. It allows for the development of collective judgment on how to cope with challenges and find opportunities in the face of uncertainty. In turn, collective judgment is needed for the co-creation of knowledge for innovative future designs in the presence of constraints and unpredictability. Ultimately, the exercise of collective judgment makes possible the development of commitment. Through commitment, we become capable of professing our practical wisdom and values, faith, hope and love, trust, as well as our doubts and skepticism, internalizing those attributes and making them integral to our identities. In turn, commitment makes new engagements possible and even necessary leading to social justice for change.*

This adapted taxonomy reminds engaged scholars about “the centrality of the emotions in the motivation to learn, the exercise of reason, and the development of character – all legitimate and necessary aspects of any vision of the well-educated person” (Shulman 2002:43). From an Aristotelian perspective, the virtue of practical wisdom calls for making the right choice, for the proper purpose, in a particular context, with a particular person, at a particular time.

In contrast to the good practice of engaged scholarship, which is guided by ethical values reported on in the findings, Participant 6 reflected on the ‘unwell/ill’ state of current global challenges, such as that demonstrated by the UNDP (2015): *[We see] quite a lot of countries where people are very polarised ... they have different rules. They have fights, arguments, and conflicts – but they do not settle down and start to think about what they can do together to end that (P6).*

Participant 2, suggested that the practice CESL should be related to engaged scholarship, declaring as follows: “I turned the notion of research – at \*[university], where particularly for graduates it is all about student achievement – into one of seeing research as service-learning (P2). Duley (2017) confirmed this notion that the practice of CESL should be related engaged scholarship.

The second theme that emerged from the findings, relates dually to a practical framework for an integrated theoretical model of Sandmann et al. (2016), as well as a practical foundation for the ISLP approach. The participants proposed actions for the practical framework, specifically for flourishing the praxis of engaged scholarship.

#### **2.4.2 A practical framework to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship**

The participants recommended actions to flourish the development of engaged scholarship, which aligned with the theoretical engaged scholarship model described in the introduction (Sandman et al. 2016) and the ISLP approach. These actions proposed for flourishing the praxis of engaged scholarship, were organised into two categories, namely, (1) the development/socialisation of engaged scholars; and (2) actions to flourish the institutionalisation of engaged scholarship at HEIs.

The ISLP approach offers a model of appreciative inquiry for change management that is supported by appreciative leadership strategies [see/cf. 2.2.4.3-2.2.4.5] to advance the institutionalisation process of engaged scholarship (Sandmann et al. 2016). By using this framework, engaged scholars can “legitimise not only the use of knowledge produced in the academy but also the practitioner’s generation of actionable knowledge” (Schön 1995:34). By keeping in mind that the practical framework can contribute to the eventual co-construction of societal wellness (Whitney et al. 2010:201), it can inform policies needed for flourishing the praxis of engaged scholarship.

#### 2.4.2.1 Professional development/socialisation of engaged scholars

The findings revealed the following actions to guide engaged scholars to profess praxis on their career pathway of professional development/socialisation. Participant 2 suggested that **establishment of long-term CHEPs** is necessary to advance the praxis of engaged scholarship to develop long-term partnerships (P2). A CHEP provides a collaborative learning platform where engaged scholars can learn and develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes-in-action to profess praxis. Keeping the intent and environment for engaged scholarship in mind, Participant 2 recommended the following: *If we are serious about service and development, we must invest in this work with our partners for the long term (P2).*

Our practice tends to become too much of a quick, one-sided, student, educational, and personal development offering. Therefore, Participant 2 expressed the following: *It is my concern that our [service-learning] field may be losing its community development focus in the mad rush to institutionalise it in the academy. In this social innovation/entrepreneurship time, there seems to have developed a lack of interest in and focus on the importance of long-term relationships in development and change. Quick in-and-out projects benefit our students and campuses more than communities and skim the surface of what students need to know and understand about community change and development (P2).*

In contrast to quick engagement, a long-term commitment requires that higher education institutions allow for broader service-learning practice that is underpinned by values of collaboration and partnership. For this reason, Participant 2 advised that engaged scholars should return to the roots of service-learning to allow for engagement in their surrounding communities. Engagement can, thus, become the means to and goal of engaged scholarly learning (Shulman 2002:40). To enable active learning, engaged scholars should plan “how to negotiate with different communities who have different ways of thinking and knowing” (P3).

Engaged scholars should also develop the courage to enter a “constructive enlarging engagement” (Parks Daloz et al. 1996:63) with the community – across the margin of their own “tribe” of comfortable isolation, within higher education institutions or the community. Then,

they can learn with and from each other how to “address global societal challenges” (P1). These challenges are currently addressed by the proposed 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) being achieved by 2030 (UNDP 2015). Such engaged practice provides opportunities for engaged scholars to reflect on and inquire about their service experiences continuously.

To **reflect and inquire continuously**, Participant 2 indicated that engaged scholars could find an opportunity to learn “how to do development, by doing it in the context of continuous reflection and inquiry” (P2). Concerning such practice, the value and character indicators reported on in the discovery phase (Phase 1) can inform practice for engaged scholars. For learning to be transformative, critical self-reflection (habits of the mind) is needed for the specific attitudes and assumptions engaged scholars may hold. Such reflective practice is needed to enable higher-order thinking, which is, in turn, required for making wise decisions that facilitate the delivery of praxis (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:88-94; Shulman 2002). Engaged learning and inquiry call for a step-by-step, asset-based developmental approach.

Additionally, to **follow an asset-based developmental approach**, Participant 3 proposed using a step-by-step, asset-based developmental approach to flourish the development of the praxis of engaged scholarship. The same participant advised that active scholars should know that true reciprocity is the core principle of engaged scholarship and that we should value it as such. In this sense, all engaged scholars in a CHEP have something they can contribute to the “table of learning” (Shulman 2002:38) to guide engaged scholarship.

In line with reciprocity, the principles of appreciative inquiry [see/cf. 2.2.4.4] can motivate engaged scholars to co-create knowledge that can address societal challenges and bring positive change. When scholars in a CHEP use appreciative inquiry, the assumption is that the topic they study can grow in the direction of the change they desire (called the heliotropic principle) (Cooperrider et al. 2008:16, 19, 376). Therefore, Participant 3’s vision for the development of dynamic scholarly praxis confirms the appreciative intent embedded in the approach: *To be successful, everyone must contribute; and we need to tap into the talents, experience, knowledge, and expertise of all the partners who are involved* (P3).

However, Participant 3 warned engaged scholars to be mindful of refraining from establishing the approach from an advanced state. Therefore, they should be aware that a developmental learning process might take many years to cultivate, because high-quality practice requires adequate skills development (P3).

The learning domains that emerged from the discovery phase (Phase 1) can be applied to guide engaged scholars when they integrate their beliefs and values (habits of the heart) into their professional identities (Shulman 2002). Participant 3 recommended that engaged scholars develop the ability to balance the complex convergence of diverse skills, attitudes, and perspectives shared by various stakeholders in a CHEP (P3). This participant noted, specifically, that, in practice, "that is part of the learning". Participant 3, furthermore, advised as follows: *It would just need time, and they must navigate and swim in that sea of uncertainty for a while before they know how to swim well and navigate the ocean because it could feel like they are drowning* (P3). Considering that such learning is complex and dynamic, the approach calls for mentorship by champions for engaged scholarship.

To **seek mentorship**, Participant 6 pointed to the importance of mentorship by service-learning champions: *I hope that for the future, service-learning champions can work together to promote the values that we embrace*. Additionally, mentorship by champions for engaged scholarship is required during implementation. Knowledge-sharing in CHEPs can provide a platform for engaged scholars to learn in-action. The learning content could include elements of the approach's history, heritage, practices, principles, and future (Stanton et al. 1999). Participant 6, furthermore, suggested that champions of engaged scholarship should connect globally to promote ethical values for training the next generation (P6). Hence, a global network for engaged scholarship should be established.

Engaged scholars can focus on challenges and share best practices within a **glocal network**, from local to global contexts. Participant 5 suggested that engaged scholars should belong to a global network that supports learning and development. Examples of these networks are the Campus Compact Network, the International Association for Research on Service learning and

Community Engagement, the Talloires Network, Global Service learning, the Higher Education Service Learning Listserv and the Global University Network for Innovation.

In addition, by using global networks and conferences to share best practices, the union of strengths can do more than merely help engaged scholars to perform in practice – it can transform their practice and help them to move into large-scale applications of engaged scholarship (Grieten et al. 2017:105, 111). By applying the strengths-based component of the approach, engaged scholars can move away from a problem-based approach and address trauma, anger, and fear (Grieten et al. 2017:105). Then, they can apply the strength of mindfulness to develop resilience (Fredrickson 2003).

Furthermore, such networking can elevate, magnify, and refract strengths (Cooperrider and Godwin 2011; Cooperrider 2012; Grieten et al. 2017:108–109) and flourish engaged scholarship. Therefore, lessons learned about developing the field of engaged scholarship through global networks should be published.

To **publish engaged research** was confirmed by Participant 4, who suggested that more work on best practices of engaged scholarship should be published in journals and books; and presented at conferences. In addition, there is a need for students and community partners to co-author publications on engaged scholarship. This participant recommended that existing publications should become information resources that generate improved, good quality research (*P4*). Participant 4 also promoted the generation of "better quantitative research on service-learning" (*P4*). Therefore, literature advises that quality research should reflect a convergence of theory, measurement, design, and practice (Bingle et al. 2013).

Moreover, conducting research and evaluation studies on the impact and development of service-learning should advance the evolution of service-learning so that it keeps up with the rapid and dynamic global change that characterises the twenty-first century (Permaul 2017:97). The ISLP approach has appreciative inquiry as a methodology, which allows for the reframing of evaluation studies (Preskill and Catsambas 2006). Drawing from its integrative and praxis nature,

it seems that the ISLP approach might enable the convergence of all the recommendations mentioned above, to deliver quality research.

**Developing a portfolio that guides reward and promotion** is essential to capture the hard work involved in learning and the development of engaged scholarship. Participants 5 and 6 both indicated that a reformed reward and promotion structure and system is needed to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship (P5, P6). Participant 6 referred to this need as follows: *We are still not on the main track for ranking because, most of the time, management ignores the practice of service-learning, and by implication, engaged scholarship (P6)*. Engaged scholars should, thus, develop a portfolio of work. This approach even makes it possible to acknowledge the often-hidden positive core of engaged scholars, who engage, specifically, in the complex and dynamic process of “walking the village” (P5).

The quest to reform promotion, managing the reward of engaged scholarship, and how to promote and reward engaged scholarship have for long been topics debated in literature (Giles 2016; O'Meara, Eatman and Petersen 2015; Sandmann et al. 2016). Moreover, many discipline-specific professional organisations have started to include the attribute of public service in their graduate requirements (Sandmann et al. 2016). This requirement provides an opportunity to advance the scholarship of engagement as a required graduate attribute and a criterion for reward and promotion.

In addition to professional development/socialisation of engaged scholars, the practical framework proposes actions for the institutionalisation of engaged scholarship (see 2.5.4.2).

#### *2.4.2.2 Institutionalisation of engaged scholarship*

The participants suggested the following actions should be taken to enable the institutionalisation of engaged scholarship.

**True institutional commitment to engaged scholarship** was pointed out by Participant 2 to be the first action needed. Additionally, Participant 2 stressed the underpinning intent of community well-being, development and social justice needed by the approach. This participant stated: *Unless our institutions and programs are genuinely committed to and engaged with*

*communities, to help ensure their long-term health and development, we cannot hope to teach our students how this works (P2).*

University leadership also has a crucial role to play in shaping and moulding the engaged scholarship agenda. Leadership should inspire, guide, mentor, and support the engagement process by providing the proper orientation for all efforts/activities related to engaged scholarship (Tandon and Hall 2015). Conversely, if the commitment to engaged scholarship only relies on the support of leadership, what could happen when leadership changes or leaves? If the commitment to engagement is internalised into the identity and culture as the core of an HEI and ingrained into the epistemology of an HEI (Schön 1995), engaged scholarship can withstand the test of time and change, and even lead to an infinite process of new engagements (Shulman 2000). Nevertheless, institutional change is complex, because HEIs encompass a confluence of functions, systems, processes, and structures. Moreover, if the required change involves implementing an integrated approach, the change should be driven by a robust theory of change (Sandman et al. 2016).

**Adoption of a change theory.** Participant 6 advised that establishing engaged scholarship ideally needs to “have the buy-in from the whole university” for institutionalisation (*P6*). The reason for this requirement is that engaged scholarship requires whole-system change. Examples of where change is needed are curricula, pedagogies, research epistemologies, ontologies, designs, methodologies, and methods of data collection and dissemination, as well as a change in infrastructure and funding models (Sandmann et al. 2016; Hall and Tandon 2017; Wood 2020). The ISLP approach offers the powerful positive “change theory” (Sandmann et al. 2016) of appreciative inquiry to enable such change. Appreciative inquiry promises to deliver changes to institutional culture through a whole-system approach. Moreover, as a genre of action research, it is fit for the ‘new epistemology’ that is required for the praxis of engaged scholarship (Schön 1995). Such institutional change requires the development of an engaged scholarship policy.

**The development of an engaged scholarship policy** should align with development policies on international, national, provincial, and local levels and with the institutional vision, mission and strategy for practice, and related teaching–learning, research, and governance policies (*P6*).

Moreover, the policy “should ensure that adequate resources and infrastructure, as well as funding allocation, is addressed in the policy” (P6). This policy should be supported by a clear promotion and reward policy, which should provide criteria for guiding the praxis of engaged scholarship. Such action can support engaged scholarship across the institution and disciplines and revise institutional culture and structures (Sandman et al. 2016).

By placing engaged scholarship at the core that complements the functions of research and teaching, HEIs worldwide can become a “vibrant and dynamic force” for transformation in their societies (Talloires Network 2018). Such practice requires the establishment of engaged research centres.

Participant 6 suggested that **engaged research centres** should be set up to enable learning for and development of engaged scholarship (P6). Coordination and teamwork are essential for collaborative learning and inquiry. In turn, Participant 5 proposed that HEIs “establish and fund such a training and research center in the community, driven by the community” (P5). In these centres, engaged scholars can “share information, write about it and learn about it from one another” (P6). Such shared resources can provide a “new architecture of knowledge that allows co-construction of knowledge between intellectuals in academia and intellectuals located in community settings” (Hall and Tandon 2017:17).

Considering the complex nature of the approach, Participant 6 emphasised the importance of **establishing an engaged scholarship strategy**. By emphasising the undertaking of strategic planning, Participant 6 advised that “we need to have a detailed action plan of what you want to achieve”. Because the ISLP approach includes the model of appreciative inquiry, it provides an alternative approach to strategic planning. By using the ISLP approach, engaged scholars can make use of the SOAR analysis (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and resources or results) (Stavros, Cooperrider and Kelley 2003) instead of the usual SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). To ensure effective planning, ample time should be set aside for purposeful and productive meetings. Actions should be well planned, practical, and measurable, and, therefore, a sound quality assurance system is required.

Participant 6 recommended establishing a **quality assurance system**, by advising that “we need to ensure quality in the whole process” (P6). Thereby Participant 6 underlined three elements needed for effective quality assurance. The elements are delivering a high standard for programmes, continuous communication and feedback between faculties and departments and internal and external stakeholders, and, lastly, acknowledging and supporting the hard work of engaged scholars. Such praxis can be coordinated by leadership at the research centres proposed by the ISLP approach (P5, P6). Since engaged scholars from different sectors and disciplines deliver the praxis of engaged scholarship, and an inclusive leadership model is required, such as appreciative leadership.

Participant 5 valued the notion of inclusion and integrity, thereby indicating the importance to **follow an appreciative leadership model**. Literature advises that engaged scholars should broaden their perspectives and think from outside of "simply a service-learning orientation" (Permaul 2017:99) – this is what the ISLP approach aims to achieve when the appreciative leadership strategies of *inquiry, illumination, inclusion, inspiration, and integrity* are followed (Whitney et al. 2010:1-2). Appreciative leadership enables interconnection, interdependence, and positive relationship-building, even on a global level. In combination with the core service-learning values of reciprocity, social responsibility, and citizenship, such appreciative leadership can contribute to action that achieves social change and creates a balance between the so-called triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit (Whitney et al. 2010:24).

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

Continuous change in society and higher education might challenge future sustainability of community engaged service-learning (CESL) and its contribution to develop the praxis of engaged scholarship. Literature recently shared a theoretically integrated model to advance engaged scholarship, offering to prepare engaged scholars for professional development/socialisation while fostering the institutionalisation of engaged scholarship (Sandmann et al. 2016). However, the theoretical model of Sandman et al. (2016) does not

include a practical framework, for delivery of praxis. To address this challenge, the article reported on a qualitative action research study, more specific, an appreciative inquiry, which explored how an integrated service-learning praxis approach, can enable flourishing of engaged scholarship in expanded community higher education partnerships. Drawing from data generated through appreciative inquiry conversations with six pioneering international service-learning champions, guided by a semi-structured protocol, a practical framework was co-constructed, which dually supported a theoretical integrated model (Sandman et. al 2016) and the development of the ISLP approach. The significance of the ISLP approach is rooted in the integration of CESL and appreciative inquiry.

### **2.5.1 Practical framework to advance the praxis of engaged scholarship**

The practical framework holds dual promise to flourishing of both the (1) career of an engaged scholar and the (2) institutionalisation of engaged scholarship. The following actions can guide engaged scholars in professing praxis once they inhabit a discipline-specific academic home of choice, namely (1) Establish long-term CHEPs for reciprocal engagement in high-quality collaborative learning; (2) Reflect and inquire continuously on improving practice; (3) Follow a strength-based developmental approach to achieving holistic development; (4) Seek mentorship by champions for engaged scholarship, to guide and support the implementation of the ISLP approach; (5) Connect to a glocal network and share best practices to strengthen and scale up practice; (6) Publish engaged research to legitimise the field; and (8) Develop a learning portfolio to portray praxis and achieve reward and promotion.

Concerning actions for flourishing of true/real *institutionalisation of engaged scholarship*, the inclusion of appreciative inquiry serves as a multipurpose model for bringing about institutional development, research and change management. The following recommendations for actions emerged from the findings: (1) Genuine institutional commitment to the institutionalisation of the praxis of engaged scholarship; (2) Establishing a funding model and infrastructure (physical and human resources) to enable engaged scholars to do the work; (3) Adopting a change theory; (4) Compiling a policy for promotion and reward of engaged scholarship; (5) Establishing

engaged research centres, in both the university and the community; (6) Establishing an engaged scholarship strategy and quality assurance system; and (7) Following an appreciative leadership model to advance engaged scholarship.

In final reflection, it seems that practical wisdom can only come to life at the nexus where positive habits of the mind and heart meet, especially when it is aimed at a lifelong commitment to the development of identity of both engaged scholars and higher education institutions that profess the praxis of engaged scholarship.

However, moving through “the open door” for engaged scholarship (Sandman et al. 2016) calls for interdependent and integrated thoughts, feelings and actions. Therefore, it is necessary for HEIs to rethink and reframe the structures of their house, to provide academic homes that include a heart for engagement, with open doors for engaged scholars to enter. Then, engaged scholars can inhabit multiple academic homes and profess the praxis of engaged scholarship, which is the *raison d'être* (reason for the existence) of higher education learning and development. Participant 2 framed this action in a significant way by sharing the following proposal:

*Perhaps a reframing of higher education is needed – from a commodity, one needs for financial and other personal achievements – to training and development for socially responsible citizenship in a just and democratic society.*

## **2.5.2 Significances, limitations, challenges, and contradictions**

The research offered a valuable knowledge contribution, for it enabled the idea of the ISLP approach to ‘come to life’ through a practical framework for proposed flourishing engaged scholarship (see 2.6.1). The research benefit was mutual, because the participants achieved their goal of stewardship for the advancement of the field, while their practical wisdom informed the research purpose [see/cf. 1.3]. From a broader perspective, the notion of engaged scholarship benefits humanity by addressing social challenges for the public good (Boyer 1996; 2016), while

the development of the ISLP approach offered to advance both the development and institutionalisation of engaged scholarship in an institutional context.

The inquiry appreciated only the voices of pioneering, international CESL champions and this could be a limitation of the study. However, the approach taken here was to, first, successful benchmark praxis with these individuals. In this way, it was possible to engage with those who were the first to experience and know the complex and dynamic “process of walking the village” (P5), regarding the practice of CESL for engaged scholarship.

During the development of the ISLP approach, some internal contradictions arose through the awareness of current challenges concerning the ideal destiny that champions strive to achieve. These contradictions are manifestations of external ideological limitations placed on what could be deemed ‘Utopian’ ideals in all sectors of society. The concept of praxis infers that unequal societies will require a political struggle against power and privilege to achieve social justice. However, through the positive, appreciative ISLP approach, it becomes possible to turn contradictions into creative tensions by re-imagining society and the role of higher education in society. Doing so requires the coordination of the ideologically with the Utopian through constantly invoking a positive vision of the future, where actual actions become drivers of change through mechanisms created by collaborative, engaged scholarship (Erasmus 2014:115).

The ISLP approach is complex and requires a great deal of time and transformation to implement. Therefore, it requires a step-by-step developmental process, guided by mentors and shared in a global network to scale up best practices. However, by complementing the theoretical model (Sandmann et al. 2016) with the practical ISLP approach, flourishing for the praxis of engaged scholarship could be enacted [see/cf. 2.2.2}.

### **2.5.3 What next? Dreaming into the future**

When asked to envision future successes after the application of the approach for one year, Participant 5 said, “*Well, clearly the global spread of the ISLP approach*”. I share this dream to achieve further development and glocal implementation. The future action research cycle should

therefore aim to invite the voices of South African champions to benchmark the ISLP approach in community-university research partnerships.

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**CHAPTER 3      (ARTICLE 2)**

**NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF  
ENGAGED SCHOLARS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Proposed journal: South African Journal for Higher Education<sup>2</sup>**

**ABSTRACT**

Although most South African universities have institutionalised community engagement, research indicates that academics need national support for professional development of engaged scholarship. This article focuses on addressing this need, by sharing the findings of a qualitative action research study, undertaken by 11 board members of the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF). The study followed an appreciative inquiry summit method to explore the usability of an integrated service-learning praxis (ISLP) approach, offering to flourish professional development in engaged scholarship. They defined the inquiry with this question: How can SAHECEF become a flourishing community of praxis towards national support of professional development for engaged scholars? Guided by a semi-structured interview protocol, collective data generation took place through paired appreciative conversations, while data analysis occurred in small and large group dialogues. This engagement resulted in SAHECEF, designing a 5R action plan to deliver national support for engaged scholarship: (1) Reframe and Reform service for inclusive development: #SilosMustFall; (2) Reflection and Relationship for enabling an supportive learning environment, guided by mentorship from champions; (3) Regenerate CHEPs to Revitalise CURPs, serving as development and network pathways; 4) Re-focus and Re-publish engaged scholarship in an open access journal to reach a wider readership; and (5) Recognise and Reward engaged scholars who profess the praxis of engaged scholarship.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.journals.ac.za/index.php/sajhe/about/submissions>

**Keywords:** Appreciative inquiry; Engaged scholarship; Professional development; Service-learning, South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH**

Today, most South African universities institutionalise community engagement as mandated by government and, by implication, community engaged service-learning (CESL), as an academic strategy for implementation (RSA DoE 1997; RSA DHET 2013). However, a recent review on the progress of the field, indicated the need for a national support system for advancement of engaged scholarship at universities (Favish and Ngcelwane 2013; Favish and Simpson 2016). The absence of a national support system to establish career pathways for engaged scholars, might hamper quality delivery of community engagement (RSA CHE HEQC 200; Zuber-Skerritt, Wood and Louw 2015).

The practice of community engagement is spread across the functions of teaching-learning and research, as confirmed by this global definition (Higher Education Public Purpose 2020):

*collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity ... to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.*

As mentioned in the above definition, community engagement requires partnerships to serve as a network-platform for uniting diverse stakeholders, societal sectors, institutional functions, processes, structures, and systems, from local to global (Sandmann, Saltmarsh and O'Meara 2016). Hence, research suggests that the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF), due to their networking ability, should explore and share a best-practice solution regarding national support for career development of engaged scholars

(Favish and Simpson 2016). Since SAHECEF was launched in 2009, the organisation has been the only national champion to support professional development in the field. The service of SAHECEF is regulated by a board comprising community engagement leaders and representatives of all South African public universities. As board members, they share leadership for the organisation's management and functioning (SAHECEF 2020). The service of SAHECEF is guided by three constituted objectives that involve: (1) Advocating, promoting, supporting, monitoring, and strengthening community engagement at South African universities; (2) Furthering community engagement at South African universities in partnership with all stakeholders with a sustainable social and economic impact on South African society; and (3) Fostering an understanding of community engagement as integral to the core business of higher education (SAHECEF 2020).

From a South African perspective, community engagement is defined as “initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community” (RSA CHE HEQC 2004:24). In its broadest context, in South Africa, community engagement involves a “combination and integration of teaching and learning (e.g. service-learning), professional community service by academic staff and participatory action research applied simultaneously to identified community development priorities” (Bender, Daniels, Naude and Sattar 2006:11). As an academic pedagogy for community engagement, service-learning refers to learning gained from reflection on service experiences that address specific community-directed needs; such knowledge is integrated into the curriculum. It “could be credit-bearing and assessed and may occur in a work environment” (RSA CHE HEQC 2004:37). Community engaged service-learning (CESL) is underpinned by the principle of reciprocity and philosophy of citizenship, democracy, social justice and social responsibility (Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999; RSA CHE HEQC 2004:37; Petersen and Osman 2013; Shumer et al. 2017).

When unpacking these definitions, the question that might arise in the mind of an emerging scholar, unfamiliar with the mission of community engagement, could be: What is the difference between traditional and engaged scholarship? In traditional scholarship, knowledge creation is

aimed purely at growing the knowledge bed of scientific disciplines. Traditional scholarship is driven by a postpositivist paradigm that is disengaged from the situational context to affirm objectivity. Therefore, the ‘researcher’ does not involve the so-called ‘subjects’ being studied in the research process (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015).

In contrast, the nature of an engaged scholarship requires that it is practiced at the heart of community–university research partnerships (CURPs). In CURPs, engagement involves the process of relationship building, as well as the co-creation of action-oriented knowledge for the common good of society (Tandon and Hall 2015). The engaged scholarship thus requires an interlocking of extended knowledge functions, namely discovery, integration, sharing, and application (Boyer 1996; 2016). Although not always the case, but usually so in South Africa, by being practiced in a collaborative, democratic, and transformative paradigm, engaged scholarship involves people whose lives are negatively impacted by inequality, poverty, and unemployment, to enable them to self-emancipate through knowledge (Tandon and Hall 2015; Wood 2020).

The practice of engaged scholarship should integrate community engagement, teaching–learning (e.g. CESL), and research, to unite the academic’s responsibilities to deliver actively engaged, inclusive, and holistic scholarship (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015). However, like traditional scholarship, engaged scholarship should be characterised by “clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation, reflective critique, rigor and peer-review” (Tandon and Hall 2015:2).

Considering the complex context of CESL, professional development for engaged scholars should not be provided by outside experts (Zuber-Skerritt 2015). Such an approach might lead to a disconnect between theory and practice (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015; Wood 2020). Without active engagement, scholars cannot inquire into their practice, which is key to professing praxis (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015). Instead, engaged scholars should self-direct their professional development career pathways. To become “truly professional”, an involved scholar should engage in goal-driven and work-related lifelong learning to develop praxis (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:123). Engaged scholars require a praxis-based professional development approach that facilitates an “interdependence and integration – not separation – of theory and practice, research

and development, thought and action” (Zuber-Skerritt 2009:113; Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015). The integrated service-learning praxis (ISLP) approach is an example of such a praxis-based approach, for it offers professional development to engaged scholars in the context of CURPs [see/cf. Chapter 2, Article 1].

This article reports on the application of the ISLP approach, to evaluate its learning quality and usability in the context of SAHECEF (see 3.2.2) and in answer to the following research question: **How can SAHECEF become a flourishing community of praxis towards national support of professional development for engaged scholars?** The next section describes the related concepts, context and theoretical framework of the research. Thereafter, I describe the methodology, followed by an integrated report on the research process, findings and discussion. The article concludes with a reflection on the findings and challenges.

## **3.2 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The next section briefly describes the ISLP approach (see 3.2.1), and the underpinning theoretical framework of the study (see 3.2.2).

### **3.2.1 The integrated service-learning praxis approach**

By nature, the ISLP approach is praxis-oriented. Its praxis is situated in the interdependence of three foundational building blocks, namely (1) *Service-learning* pedagogy and philosophy (Shumer, Stanton and Giles 2017); and (2) *Appreciative inquiry*, as a strength-based action research genre for organisation change, development, and research (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018); and the (3) *Application context* of a CURP. The integration of these three building blocks is made possible by the following four enabling structures:

- (a) A practical framework that offers actions for flourishing of engaged scholarship;

- (b) An integration of the three academic functions/responsibilities (community engagement, teaching-learning and research for holistic engaged scholarship (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015);
- (c) Interlocking of engaged scholarship's knowledge functions (discovery, integration, sharing, application) to address pressing societal challenges to promote the public good (Boyer 1996; 2016); and
- (d) Rubrics of Values-in-action (VIA) (Peterson and Seligman 2004) and PERMA (positive emotions, engagement, relationship, meaning and purpose, accomplishment) (Seligman 2001) for evaluation of character development and flourishing of engaged scholarship [see/cf. 1.2.1.6].

It is, furthermore, essential to clarify the concept of *engaged scholars*, as it is used interchangeably in this article. When viewed from a bigger perspective, the concept of engaged scholars refers to university academics who practice engaged scholarship. More specific, from a collective insider perspective, the concept refers to the participants, whose vocation as engaged scholars is to lead, and practice engaged scholarship in the South African higher education institutions.

### **3.2.2 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of this research involves the learning theories of *social constructionism and generativity*, which underpins the design of appreciative inquiry (Bushe 2007; Gergen and Gergen 2008; Cooperrider et al. 2008; Tracy 2013; Mertens 2015; Stavros and Torres 2018). *Social constructionists* focus on issues of power and privilege, cultural diversity, democracy, social justice, historical context, and use of specific language/discourse (Gergen and Gergen 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018). *Generativity* involves a collective discovery of information, to co-create new ideas for improved future scholarly practice (Bushe 2007; Stavros and Torres 2018). These two theoretical lenses embrace the concept of knowledge democracy, which values using multiple knowledge forms, sources, lived realities, and collaborative methods (epistemology, ontology, methodology) (Tracy 2013; Mertens 2015). These two theories also

foster relationships and partnerships, which are crucial to engaged learning and an appreciative inquiry design for the study.

### 3.3 METHODOLOGY

I selected appreciative inquiry as the most suitable design for answering the research question: **How can SAHECEF become a flourishing community of praxis towards national support of professional development for engaged scholars?** Appreciative inquiry is a strength-based form of action research and is therefore guided by a transformative paradigm (Cooperrider et al. 2008; Tracy 2013; Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015; Stavros and Torres 2018; Mertens 2015; Wood 2020). Appreciative inquiry is further rooted in the field of positive psychology (Peterson and Seligman 2004; Cooperrider et al. 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018).

I invited the SAHECEF board to participate in the study. This choice was based on their expertise, knowledge, mentorship, and practical wisdom, which they had gained from their careers of active engagement in the CESL field, and their vocational position as leaders of community engagement at various South African universities. This leadership implied SAHECEF's board members' commitment to establishing a career in engaged scholarship. They also worked in diverse disciplines, each at their own university. Hence, their participation, as information-rich engaged scholars, notably contributed to the credibility of the research (Tracy 2013; Mertens 2015; Wood 2020).

Regarding my *researcher positionality* in this SAHECEF case study, I performed a dual role, serving both as engaged doctoral scholar who facilitated the research, and as a fully participating board member. As an engaged scholar facilitating the research, I was mindful of ethical considerations, which differs from traditional disengaged objective methods (Wood 2020). The UFS's Faculty of Education provided *ethical clearance* to conduct the research (UFS-HSD2016/0200). Before the onset of the appreciative inquiry summit, I held an interactive start-up workshop to share relevant information on the background of the research [see/cf. 3.2]. I was one of 11 board members who *voluntarily* signed informed consent (see Appendix F) to

participate, which respected the ethical principle of *justice* regarding the selection of suitable participants (Mertens 2015). This negotiation for justice was followed by establishing an ethical contract that clarified the shared vision, values, goals, roles, and responsibilities regarding the conduction of the SAHECEF case study (Wood 2020).

As fellow board members, we had established trusting relationships before the onset of the research, which enabled *democratic engagement* and mutual benefits for *reciprocal* development of engaged scholarship (Wood 2020). Due to the collaborative nature of the research, the principle of *confidentiality* did not apply to the in-action data generation.

To minimise the risk of *harm*, we acknowledged the dual position of serving as community engagement leaders at respective universities, and as a result, also serving on the board. I was mindful about the *accountability to respect* anonymity in both contexts when reporting on the study. As such, we constantly reflected on the potential to do harm, no matter how unintended. I kept *conflict of interest* in mind, for the sake of both SAHECEF and me, as an engaged doctoral scholar. As a full participant, I continuously kept a self-reflexive stance, and was deeply aware that my past experiences, points of view, and researcher position impacted my “interactions with, and interpretations of, the research scene” (Tracy 2013:2; Mertens 2015). The research was authentic, for the change envisioned was achieved (Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Wood 2020).

### **3.4 RESEARCH PROCESS AND FINDINGS**

An *appreciative inquiry summit method* was applied (Cooperrider et al. 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018). This method was inclusive, integrative and collaborative, and followed a whole-system approach. We held a start-up workshop as introduction to the research process. As a facilitator of the workshop, I shared relevant information regarding my doctoral study, which, in reciprocity, also provided SAHECEF with an appreciative inquiry summit method embedded in the ISLP approach. Using this method, SAHECEF was able to explore and deliver a best-practice solution, thereby ensuring that all of us were on par with the appreciative inquiry summit method, both in theory and practice. In this sense, the start-up workshop also served as an in-action professional

development workshop on engaged scholarship, for our mutual benefit. During this workshop, time was also invested in relationship and team building, strengthening collaboration and group cohesion, and generating positive energy for creative learning and inquiry.

An appreciative inquiry holds the assumption that organisations are heliotropic, by having an inherent tendency to grow into the direction of what they study (Cooperrider et al. 2008). The use of appreciative inquiry is underpinned by guiding *appreciative inquiry principles* [see/cf. 2.2.4.4], namely constructionist, simultaneity, positive, poetic, anticipatory, narrative, awareness, wholeness, and free choice principles. These principles strengthen the application of appreciative inquiry in practice and, therefore, will be explained in-action. For example, we were inspired to engage in “anticipatory learning ... indicating a kind of learning in the direction of positive anticipatory images of the future” (anticipatory principle) (Grieten, Lambrechts, Bouwen, Huybrechts, Fry and Cooperrider 2017:105). This learning required the appreciative inquiry 5D process for data generation and analysis.

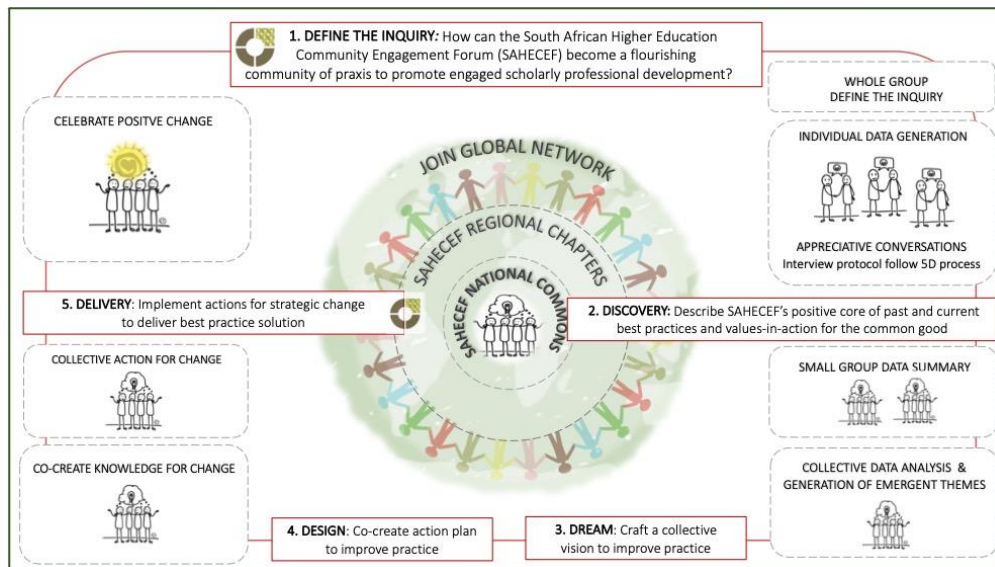
Drawing from reflection at the end of the start-up workshop, one of the board members summarised our newly gained knowledge about the appreciative inquiry, with the following inspiring poem, thereby also setting the stage for the 5D appreciative inquiry research process:

*I have a dream; who said that? Looking back, projecting forward, stepping  
back, stepping forward, dream, dream, dream ...  
SAHECEF is a river of merging ideas and dreams of many streams,  
moving into one, flowing together, emerging into a sea of  
possibilities ...  
We are a dream and we can action our dream with the 5Ds – define,  
discovery, dream, design and delivery ...*

The participants’ paired appreciative conversations were guided by a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix G) that was based on the 5D appreciative inquiry process (define, discovery, dream, design, and delivery/destiny) (Stavros and Torres 2018). The whole group defined the inquiry, which was followed by individual data generation through paired

appreciative conversations. On completion of the discussions, two small groups were formed for a collectively data summary. Then followed a whole-group data analysis, by using reflection dialogue to generate emergent themes (Wood 2020). Here, we applied the free choice principle, which alerted us that *free choice liberates positive power*. People are more committed when they can choose how they contribute. Therefore, we conducted a democratic voting approach, which involved each of us receiving three sticky notes to vote for three selected themes (Wood 2020). We counted the votes and prioritised the emergent themes accordingly. The following section will report on the 5D appreciative inquiry process and findings from an in-action perspective and in an integrated manner (see 3.4).

The research process and related findings are described from a collective-insider perspective, using an in-action perspective and an integrated manner. Therefore, I will present the report using concepts such as *us, ours, the group, board members, and SAHECEF* (Mertens 2015; Wood 2020). Thereby, the report includes verbatim quotes, discussion, and supporting literature. In the first phase of the research process, we defined appreciative inquiry (see Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1: SAHECEF’s appreciative inquiry summit 5D process**

(Source: Adapted from Stavros and Torres 2018:89)

## Phase 1: Define

The group jointly defined the inquiry. We applied the constructionist principle, reminding us that *our words can create future worlds*. The simultaneity principle inferred that the *first question we ask is fateful*. We also followed the positive principle, promising us that a *positive question brings positive change*. In action research, the whole group set the research question. Therefore, the question initially set out in the research proposal, *What are the possibilities of the ISLP approach for flourishing of professional development in expanded CHEPs of (SAHECEF) board members?* was reframed by the group. We thus defined the inquiry as follows: **How can SAHECEF become a flourishing community of praxis for engaged scholarly professional development?** The moment we asked the question, the change process began, and we progressed to the discovery phase.

### 3.4.1 Phase 2: Discovery

In the discovery phase, we inquired into the positive core of SAHECEF, which comprised the organisation's best practices and values. We applied the narrative principle *because the stories we share are transformative*. We co-created a positive core map to capture SAHECEF's positive core discovery as a foundation for further inquiry (see Figure 3.2).



**Figure 3.2: SAHECEF's positive core map of engaged scholarly praxis**

(Source: Co-created by leading engaged scholars in SAHECEF)

Three integrated and interdependent themes emerged from the discovery phase, namely (1) a national learning ‘commons’ for engaged scholarly professional development; (2) the praxis of

engaged scholarship; and (3) long-term CURPs as pathways to profess the praxis of engaged scholarship.

#### *3.4.1.1 National learning ‘commons’ for engaged scholarly professional development*

We found that the action of SAHECEF to form a national organisation to advance the community engagement field was *a best practice*. Therefore, the first theme that emerged from the findings was the concept of a national learning ‘commons’, which refers to a shared academic home for engaged scholarly professional development (Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen and Daloz Parks 1996; Shumer et al. 2017). The ‘commons’ provided a space to hold regular meetings to engage in *reflective dialogue* to share our passion for community engagement. As part of our meeting agenda, we reported on the best practices and shared challenges in the field as experienced by academics at each public university. This practice provided a space for learning in-action about the praxis of engaged scholarship.

As part of our service delivery, SAHECEF established national working groups to support the function of community engagement, namely for teaching–learning (e.g. service-learning), research, volunteerism, partnerships, management and governance and marketing. Whenever we met in the ‘commons’, we *collaborated* to accomplish the objectives of SAHECEF. However, we also created time for informal teambuilding and fun, to have a balance between work and life. This informal interaction deepened our relationship to a level of friendship (Wood 2020).

The ‘commons’ provided a space for establishing a “democratic, authentic, trusting and supportive” *relationship*, which was key to engaged scholarly professional development (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015; Wood 2020:33). As a result (as depicted in Figure 3.2), we found that the *relationship* was characterised by organisational strengths of care, fun (humour), love (for others and self), nurturing, positive energy, respect, reciprocity, *ubuntu*, support, and trust. One of us [P1], to confirm the sense of trust, said “I found a tribe that I can trust”. Another board member [P2] pondered about the positive power of care and kindness to develop the relationship and stated, “There was no venom in SAHECEF’s meetings”.

To sustain this relationship, we applied SAHECEF's *values*, which embrace the practice of citizenship, democracy, intercultural diversity, equality, inclusion, integrity, and respect for human rights. SAHECEF, furthermore, valued the development of lifelong learning, mentorship by elders, reciprocity, partnership, openness, and honesty. Moreover, we found that our shared leadership and social responsibility contributed to our behaviour, which was characterised by social justice, solidarity, unity, teamwork, and trust. These are life-giving values in action that fostered the common good of society (Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Wood 2020). These values also mimic the strategies of appreciative leadership (inquiry, illumination, inclusion, inspiration, and integrity) (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader 2010). Such shared leadership provided SAHECEF with the “relational capacity to mobilise creative potential and turn it into positive power – to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance – to make a positive difference in the world” (Whitney et al. 2010:3). This democratic relationship, underpinned by SAHECEF's values, formed a sound foundation to profess the praxis of engaged scholarship.

#### *3.4.1.2 Profess the praxis of engaged scholarship*

To profess the praxis of engaged scholarship, SAHECEF followed a praxis-based approach (Tracy 2013; Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015). It was part of our meeting agenda to engage in the process of *continuous* (self and collective) *reflective dialogue* (Wood 2020). In this sense, we followed the awareness principle of appreciative inquiry by gaining a deep awareness about our practice. In this process, we exchanged and shared *knowledge* about the best practices, challenges, and concerns experienced from working in the field (action) (Zuber-Skerritt 2015). However, we reflected on our best practices and explored the concerns, complexities, doubts, skepticism, and openness that we experienced while working in public universities across South Africa. This reflective learning process enabled us to become reflexive practitioners (Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Wood 2020). Thereby, we gained *knowledge* and shared our *understanding* (see Figure 3.2) about the praxis of engaged scholarship (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015). In this sense, we internalised these attributes. Thereby we demonstrated our commitment to profess the praxis of engaged scholarship (Shulman 2002).

We found that the ‘commons’ also offered a democratic space to voice *diverse intercultural perspectives* with confidence. When debating the praxis of engaged scholarship, we listened well, and acknowledged and respected each other’s knowledge. This recognition of different knowledges created a sense of dignity and worthiness. In the ‘commons’, we also shared the courage to ask *difficult questions* that challenged the status quo about pressing societal challenges that hinder the well-being of society, such as inequality, injustice and poverty (Tandon and Hall 2015). Here, we applied the awareness principle, which told us to be mindful and reflective during interaction with others and self, especially about our underlining assumptions. We took responsibility and ownership when building relationships, constantly learned to develop and re-construct relationships for improved actions, and constantly learned to develop and reconstruct relationships to achieve improved partnerships, as confirmed in literature (Wood 2020).

Therefore, when our peers answered the difficult questions we asked, we listened with deep respect, to learn from their diverse intercultural perspectives. We were also mindful of the silence in the room. This reflective listening invoked mixed emotions of anger, care, compassion, empathy, excitement, and passion, which converged into creative tension (Berkowitz 1987:331). We questioned the harmful impact of pressing challenges on society and knew that we had to act in service of the common good. This tension invoked the urgent desire and drive to reframe these challenges as promising opportunities to co-create action-oriented knowledge to achieve positive change in society (Tandon and Hall 2015; Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Wood 2020).

Whenever we experienced tension in the room, we applied positive conflict management, underpinned by the virtues of wisdom and temperance, and being curious, open-minded, humble, self-disciplined, and prudent (self-regulation) (Petersen and Seligman 2004). An elder board member [P3] wisely captured the level of maturity and skill for positive conflict management as follows:

*We had lots of diverse perspectives, but we never had conflict about it, because we engaged in dialogue and listened to all the voices. We did not allow power*

*to create conflict, because we collaborated and compromised to maintain harmony. We did not respect people for the sake of their positions, but for their commitment to make a difference, driven by our shared goal of community engagement for the common good of society.*

Another board member [P4] addressed the issue of power and privilege, by referring to the essence of fairness and justice as critical values for effective relationship development, and stating that “*equalities dismantle holy cows*”. Although the function of community engagement was nationally mandated (RSA White Paper 1997), it was a challenge to champion its practice at uniiversities. Ironically, in contrast with social justice, the function of community engagement was situated at the margins of universities, without national policy support and funding for the service-learning field (Favish and Simpson 2016). However, as leading engaged scholars, we voluntarily had a personal and professional *commitment* to the mission of SAHECEF because we shared passion for the field in its broadest context. Therefore, we professed the praxis of engaged scholarship.

Although we were knowledgeable about the practice of engaged scholarship, by drawing from engaged scholarly *experience* gained in our specific disciplines, we acknowledged and appreciated the diverse intercultural perspectives shared by our peers. We were always willing to learn more and serve better. In the ‘commons’, we thus self-directed our lifelong learning and professional development according to our learning needs, and found the sweet spot that each of us appreciated individually. In addition, we gained mutual benefit from our collective learning (Zuber-Skerritt 2015).

Due to the practical nature of engaged scholarship, our *knowledge and understanding* also projected an element of “emergent learning” (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:116). Such emergent learning reached beyond the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, and enabled the real-life awakening of practical *wisdom* (Taylor 2011; Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Wood 2020). This *wisdom* involved a “form of noble intelligence – in the presence of which no one is resentful and everyone appreciative” (Peterson and Seligman 2004:24). By engaging in continuous reflective dialogue about our

engaged scholarly experiences, our learning evolved into holistic (whole-person) development, including the use of “sensing, feeling, imagination, metaphor ... and analysis, logic, strategy, and application” (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:116).

We found that the real heartbeat of our engaged and transformative learning emerged from affective, humane building blocks, such as the “development of a positive mindset” and “a willing attitude to learn and serve”. Our learning involved the development of universal virtues and multiple intelligences (Peterson and Seligman 2004). Because we engaged in a continuous reflective inquiry into practice, the questions invoked a spark of curiosity (cognitive); the skill of empathy, compassion, humanness, and the courage to ask difficult questions (emotional); a sense of belonging and care (social; protective); respecting human rights (community); and the advancement of community engagement, portrayed by the virtue of transcendence, and being committed to contribute to change for the mutual benefit of others, beyond our self (spiritual). Most of all, an appreciative imagination creates new ways of thinking, feeling, and doing (Zuber-Skerritt 2015).

We established collective wisdom by sharing our practical (personal/tacit) knowledge in the ‘commons’ (Zuber-Skerritt 2015). We tapped into this collective wisdom when we had to make moral decisions (wise judgment) to co-create knowledge products, such as policies and strategies to flourish the future of engaged scholarly praxis (Shumer et al. 2017; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015:Online). We documented the collective wisdom as a resource for future improvement of practice. SAHECEF thus became a living library and provided a unique source of tacit/personal knowledge. Drawing from our collective practical wisdom, we facilitated, generated, managed, and disseminated this tacit knowledge. As a result, SAHECEF established a national community engagement resource centre that provided access to the history and continuous practice of engaged scholarship as applied in a South African context.

As part of SAHECEF’s service, we facilitated the organisation of national and international community engagement conferences, workshops and seminars, to provide platforms for debate about best practices, challenges and evaluation of the progress of the field. However, professing

the praxis of engaged scholarship required the establishment of long-term CHEPs (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015).

#### *3.4.1.3 Established CHEPs for networking*

As leading engaged scholars, we also ventured outside the borders of the ‘commons’. As the only national networking organisation for advancement of the field, SAHECEF explored opportunities for collaboration between South African universities and other national and international stakeholders, to encourage the establishment of CHEPs. In addition, we networked with like-minded scholars, across disciplines, in different societal sectors and from local to global (glocal). SAHECEF aligned its objectives, applied at the interface of CHEP projects, with inclusive development and transformation agendas. In this context, SAHECEF’s service advanced the balance of the so-called triple bottom line, which intends to flourish society, the economy (workplace), and the planet (RSA NPC 2012; AUC 2015; UNDP 2015).

SAHECEF played a significant role in advocacy, agency, and solidarity to promote community engagement and service-learning in South African higher education. As leading engaged scholars, we co-created policies to promote engaged scholarly professional development career pathways, as informed by evidence-based practice. We also announced national higher education policy to advance and strengthen the field. For example, SAHECEF advocated for mandatory community engagement in the latest White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (RSA DHET 2013:39). In addition, one of SAHECEF's exceptional best practices involved negotiation with the National Research Foundation (NRF) to provide funding support to establish the field of engaged scholarship. In reflection on these best practices, we were reminded about the topic of inquiry, which was to provide a best practice solution to deliver engaged scholarly professional development. We progressed to the next phase: co-create a collective dream to reach the best practice solution.

### 3.4.2 Phase 3 and 4: Dream and Design

The statement in the interview protocol (see Appendix G) that inspired data generation for the dream phase requested the following: **Imagine the service delivery of SAHECEF in the future, after becoming a flourishing community of praxis. How does it differ from the current practice?** Because the action plan's design emerged from the dream's foundation, the reporting on the collective dream and design is integrated. In these two phases, we applied the wholeness principle, for it reminded us that *wholeness brings out the best in organisations*, because it sparks creativity and builds collective capacity.

Therefore, we crafted a collective dream and design, which were built on the themes that emerged from the discovered positive core of SAHECEF to improve service delivery to achieve a best-practice solution to promote engaged scholarly professional development [see/cf. 3.4.2.1–3.4.2.3]. The action plan involved five responsive (5R) actions, described by creative, future-oriented provocative propositions, namely to (1) *Reframe and Reform: #Silo's must fall* (2) *Reflection and Relationship*; (3) *Regenerate and Revitalise* (4) *Re-focus and Re-publish*; and (5) *Recognise and Reward*.

#### 3.4.2.1 Reframe and Reform for inclusive development: #SilosMustFall

The participants envisioned that SAHECEF should *reframe* its service structure “to widen access to inclusive development by establishing six regional chapters (divisions)”. Thereby, SAHECEF can cascade its existing engaged scholarly professional development support from national to local levels. For quality assurance, the new inclusive ‘commons’ can be managed by regional and local champions, mentored in action by national champions that serve on the board of SAHECEF. In line with widened access to the inclusive learning ‘commons’, SAHECEF advocates “#SilosMustFall”, as voiced by one of the elder board members. Rather than using national working groups to support university functions in silos [see/cf. 3.4.2.1], the participants envisioned that SAHECEF should *reform* its approach, towards “uniting the functions of teaching–learning, research, and public service”, for the development of engaged scholarship.

#### *3.4.2.2 Reflection and Relationship to develop the praxis of engaged scholarship*

The participants suggested that “SAHECEF should provide a supportive and engaged learning and inquiry environment” in the inclusive learning ‘commons’ (see Figure 3.2), offering mentorship from champions. The learning would be collaborative, engaged, experiential, reciprocal, reflective and relational, allowing for knowledge co-creation across diverse cultures, disciplines and sectors. By applying the ISLP approach (see/cf. 3.2.1), scholars can engage in continuous *reflective* dialogue through appreciative inquiry into best *practices*, challenges, and character strengths, to gain collective practical wisdom. Such integrated learning, would be underpinned by principles of reciprocity, reflection, relationship and shared leadership (see Figure 3.2), motivating scholars to become reflexive practitioners, to profess the praxis of engaged scholarship in the context of CURPs (Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Shumer et al. 2017; Stavros and Torres 2018; Wood 2020).

#### *3.4.2.3 Regenerate CHEPs to Revitalise CURPs as pathways to profess praxis*

According to the participants, SAHECEF should regenerate existing CHEPs through the integration of scholarship to establish long-term CURPs that can serve as platforms to profess praxis. Also, SAHECEF should strengthen glocal networking for engaged scholars, to benchmark and scale up practice. The participants planned to “host an international conference every two years”, where SAHECEF can support the capacity development of engaged scholars to present and publish their work to profess praxis. In addition, the participants anticipated that the organisation could support accredited “continuous professional development in regional chapters” through webinars, workshops, and seminars.

#### *3.4.2.4 Refocus to Re-Publish for a wider readership*

The participants voiced that SAHECEF should refocus on “establishing an open-access journal for publishing engaged scholarship”, which caters for a glocal readership at the interface of science and society (see Figure 3.2 – ‘the book’). In addition, the journal should publish the work of all partners who engage in CURPs. The journal can mobilise co-created knowledge for the common good and well-being of society.

#### *3.4.2.5 Recognise and Reward*

One of the participants stated that SAHECEF should “support engaged scholars in developing portfolios for recognition and reward” in relation to professing the praxis of engaged scholarship. By applying the ISLP approach, academics can establish self-directed lifelong learning career pathways, guided by an engaged learning taxonomy, to profess the praxis of engaged scholarship. As part of the 5R action plan, we established an evaluation date (i.e. December 2019) for the delivery of actions for a best practice.

### **3.4.3 Phase 5: Delivery/Destiny**

The delivery phase represented the conclusion of the 5D appreciative inquiry process and the beginning of an evolving appreciative inquiry learning culture for SAHECEF (Cooperrider et al. 2008:200). This phase required the commitment of task groups to delivering action.

When we evaluated the delivery of actions, we could see the value of the research. SAHECEF accomplished the first three actions. However, SAHECEF did not accomplish the last two actions, but continue to alert engaged scholars about opportunities for and recent publications via its updated website and newsletters. Continuous reflection on learning will support SAHECEF to reach these outcomes.

### **3.5 REFLECTIVE CONCLUSION**

The absence of national support for the professional development and promotion of engaged scholars opened an action research agenda for the SAHECEF to explore and share a best-practice solution (Favish and Ngcelwane 2013; Favish and Simpson 2016) [see/cf. 3.1]. The article described how an appreciative inquiry - as an embedded action research genre of the ISLP approach - helped SAHECEF to create a best practice solution in support of engaged scholarship development [see/cf.3.2].

A collective of 11 SAHECEF board members participated in the appreciative inquiry summit. They delivered a 5R action plan (Reframe and Reform; Reflection and Relationship; Revitalise and Regenerate; Re-publish; Recognise and Reward) [see/cf. 3.4.3] to provide a best-practice solution. SAHECEF adopted a strategic shift in the existing service-delivery of the organisation regarding professional development support for engaged scholars. SAHECEF cascaded its existing support for professional development of engaged scholars from national to local. Due to its established networks - entry into these regional SAHECEF Chapters, can enable engaged scholars to develop transdisciplinary, cross-sectorial, and glocal networks to scale up the practice of engaged scholarship. Here, academics can find a collaborative learning community; mentorship by champions; establish research-partnerships; join a global network; and apply the ISLP approach to start a self-directed lifelong learning career-pathway guided by a taxonomy to profess the praxis of engaged scholarship committed to the common good of society.

**Limitation of the study and suggestion for future action research.** The fact that the appreciative inquiry only included the voices of national leaders of community engagement, and no community members and students to apply and evaluate the quality and usability of the ISLP approach, might be a limitation of the study. However, the integrated nature of the ISLP approach is complex, which first required a ‘safe’ application context, that could be championed by engaged scholars in the national context of SAHECEF. in the engaged scholarship,

After considering the findings, the next application context for future research of the SLP approach, could be in a local CURP. Then, we can learn in true reciprocity how to improve practice by listening to their stories of practical wisdom.

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**CHAPTER 4 (ARTICLE 3)**  
**DEVELOPING AND REWARDING COMMUNITY-LED ACTION**  
**LEARNING THROUGH ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP IN A**  
**COMMUNITY UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP**

**Proposed journal:** Educational Research for Social Change Journal<sup>3</sup>

**ABSTRACT**

Within community university research partnerships (CURPs), emerging, engaged scholars receive credit-bearing reward for academic service-learning. However, action learning, gained in reciprocity by community members, remains unrecognised and unrewarded. The article reports on a qualitative action research study, conducted in a CURP, comprising of Bloemshelter (a non-profit organisation providing shelter to the homeless community) and the University of the Free State, in affiliation with the Global University of Lifelong Learning (GULL). Using an appreciative inquiry design and transformative paradigm, the study evaluated the effect of applying an integrated service-learning praxis (ISLP) approach towards flourishing engaged scholarship in the CURP. Qualitative data was collectively generated and analysed by the participants, using group reflection and the nominal group technique. They co-constructed and completed a four-year long community-led action learning ‘Pathway to holistic development (‘phd’) (spiritual, personal, professional) in-action, as well as a PRAY model (Pray, Reflect, Act, Yield) to cascade self-directed action learning know-how into new projects. These actions brought about holistic social change and well-being in the livelihood of the participants, moving from dependence on others to establishing viable multiple micro-enterprises. Being verified by evidence in a work-portfolio, GULL certified their action learning with a Professional Bachelor’s degree.

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<sup>3</sup><http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/index.php?id=2>

**Keywords:** Appreciative inquiry; Community-university research partnership (CURP); Lifelong action learning; Community development; Integrated service-learning praxis; Engaged scholarship; Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL).

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In line with the South African government's development goals, an essential purpose of engaged scholarship in higher education is broad-based community development (RSA DHET 2013). More explicitly, the global sustainable development goal (SDG) of education envisions the delivery of inclusive and equitable, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, supported by global partnerships (UNDP 2015).

Engaged scholarship can improve community development to achieve positive social change through the co-creation of action-oriented knowledge, in the context of community university research partnerships (CURPs) (Tandon and Hall 2015). Engaged scholarship requires collaboration between larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) and universities, as well as mutual, reciprocal knowledge sharing and learning benefits for all (Higher Education Public Purpose 2021:Online). In a CURP, the knowledges of science and society merge to collectively address pressing societal challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the significance of engaged scholarship, now more than ever, for advancing the future of greater society's social, economic, and environmental development (Farnell 2020).

The progression of engaged scholarship in South African higher education over the past two decades is acknowledged (Favish and Simpson 2016). However, while emerging, engaged scholars receive credit-bearing rewards for completing academic learning, the recognition and reward for action learning attained by community members - which take place alongside engaged scholars' learning in CURPs - is mostly absent. Such a one-directional, non-reciprocal reward for learning raises a heartfelt ethical concern (Wood 2020).

The article addresses the absence of rewarding community members' learning in CURPs, by reporting on the findings of a qualitative action research study conducted from 2016 to 2019.

Having a dual objective, the study evaluated the effect of an integrated service-learning praxis (ISLP) approach to flourishing of engaged scholarship and explored the expansion of an already existing triad-sector CURP. The CURP affiliated with the Global University of Lifelong Learning (GULL) (GULL 2020a) to reward community-led action learning. The research question that directed the study, was set as follows: **How did the ISLP approach effect community-led development in the CURP?**

For providing a detailed background, the next section of the article explains the conceptual, contextual and theoretical framework of the study. Then, it presents the methodology, followed by an integrated findings and discussion section. The article ends with a reflective conclusion, sharing the lessons learned, pitfalls encountered and recommended future research.

#### **4.2 CONCEPTUAL, CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section outlines the concepts that underpin the ISLP approach, describes the application context of the expanded CURP and highlights the theoretical framework of the research. The ISLP approach was developed for flourishing engaged scholarship in community-higher education partnerships (CHEPs) (see Chapter 2, Article 1).

In brief summary, the ISLP approach integrates four key learning components, namely: (1) The pedagogy of community engaged service-learning (CESL), which integrates knowledge-driven service/action with reflection on service/action, driven by values of citizenship, democracy, reciprocity, social justice and social responsibility for the common good (Shumer, Stanton and Giles 2017; UFS 2006: 2020; Zuber-Skerritt 2013b); (2) Appreciative inquiry, a strength-based action research genre, which also serves as strategy for partnership development and change management (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros 2008); (3) Appreciative leadership, including inquiry, illumination, inclusion, inspiration and integrity as strategies for the “relational capacity to mobilise creative potential ... to make a positive difference in the world” (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader 2010); and (4) the application context of a CURP, for gain of practical knowledge (integrating theory and practice for praxis) (UFS 2006; 2020). By combining these

four components of learning, inquiry, leadership development and a CURP context, the ISLP approach offers an integration of the three academic functions (teaching–learning through CESL), research (appreciative inquiry), and community engagement, to deliver the praxis of engaged scholarship (Zuber-Skerritt, Wood and Louw 2015). In this sense, the ISLP approach also offers to interlock the knowledge functions of Boyers’ model of engaged scholarship (Boyer 1996; 2016), namely the scholarships of discovery, integration, teaching, and application [see/cf. 1.2.1.1].

For application of engaged scholarship, the UFS usually follows a triad partnership model, including the sectors of community, service and university (UFS 2006; UFS 2020). Serving as such an example, the Bloemshelter-UFS partnership has more than 10 years of engagement history, providing a collaborative CESL platform to enhance mutual, reciprocal teaching, learning and research. Bloemshelter is a Christian-oriented non-profit organisation serving the homeless community in the geographical area of greater Mangaung. On an annual basis, various groups of UFS students engage in the Bloemshelter-UFS CURP to address community-driven knowledge-related service needs, while gaining credit for achievement of their academic learning outcomes.

For the purpose of this study, the Bloemshelter-UFS CURP was expanded through an affiliation with GULL, which uses three generic frameworks for rewarding community members’ action learning: a Professional Bachelor’s, a Master’s, and a Doctor’s pathway. These pathways comprise two foundation levels (Bachelor Level 1 Entry and Level 2 Certificate) and progression levels. The participants applied the Professional Bachelors pathway.

In line with the described ISLP approach and the expanded CURP, the theoretical framework of the study integrated lifelong action learning (Teare 2018; Zuber-Skerritt 2013b), social constructionism (Gergen and Gergen 2008) and generativity (Bushe 2007; Cooperrider et al. 2008; Gergen and Gergen 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018).

The nature of lifelong action learning is self-directed; action-oriented, interdisciplinary and authentic (Teare 2018; Zuber-Skerritt 2013b). Furthermore, lifelong action learning is accessible,

collaborative, cooperative, contemporary, culturally aware, inclusive, informal, socially just, and self-directed, and involves learning and inquiry in a group (Zuber-Skerritt 2013b).

Social constructionism (Gergen and Gergen 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018) assumes that a social system, such as the participants in the CURP, can create its group reality by acknowledging the different sources and multiple forms of knowledge. Social constructionists perceive the nature of reality as co-constructed, dependent on a specific context, history, cultural diversity, time, and place. From a social constructionist view, the co-created knowledge and reality are maintained through social interaction and by establishing a trusting relationship.

Generativity (Bushe 2007; Stavros and Torres 2018) serves as a critical element in support of the 5D process (Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Delivery/Destiny) of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al. 2008). Through generativity, the collective discovery and co-generation of new ideas, like an envisioned dream and design of action for a preferred future, positively alter the desired collective future (Bushe 2007). Both theories of social constructionism and generativity are rooted in the field of positive psychology, leading to generation of positive action for social change (Fredrickson 2006; Seligman 2011).

The next section describes the methodology of the study, in answer to the research question:  
**How did the ISLP approach effect community-led development in the CURP?**

### **4.3 METHODOLOGY**

The study followed a qualitative, appreciative inquiry design, as a strength-based form of action research, underpinned by a transformative paradigm (Stavros and Torres 2018; Mertens 2015; Wood 2020). This paradigm requires a subjective understanding of reality, gained from multiple socially constructed perspectives; acknowledges multiple knowledge sources and forms; uses collaborative, interconnected and participatory methods to generate and analyse data; and considers historical context, cultural diversity, language and power dynamics, underpinned by values of democracy, reciprocity, respect, social justice and trust - for the common good.

Appreciative inquiry does not focus on finding problems and trying to solve them, rather, it follows an opportunity-centric change process to design an ideal future state in a human system (such as the CURP) (Stavros and Torres 2018).

Being applied in the Bloemshelter–UFS CURP [see/cf. 4.2], the study included a whole group of 24 participants, who were conveniently and purposefully selected (Mertens 2015). This whole group represented inclusion from the community, service and university sectors, namely: (1) A community action learning group consisting of 15 participants (2016 - 2019), incorporating the leader of Bloemshelter, 13 residents from Bloemshelter and myself, in the dual role as research facilitator (doctoral student) and full participant; and (2) a full class of nine (9) postgraduate nurse educator students (2018) from the School of Nursing (SoN), Faculty of Health Sciences, UFS. With its *focus on the development and reward of community-led action learning*, this article only reports on the findings generated by the core action learning group, while the findings that relates to the nurse educator students' engagement, are reported on elsewhere (see Chapter 5, Article 4).

At the onset of the study, we held a start-up workshop to share information regarding the research background and context [see/cf. 4.2] and provided the participants with training on the principles and process of appreciative inquiry. We (the participants) applied the five core principles of appreciative inquiry (Bushe 2007; Cooperrider et al. 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018) to guide the data generation as follows:

- The constructionist principle guided the words that created the world we envisioned.
- The simultaneity principle guided the moments when we asked questions to create the change we envisioned.
- The poetic principle guided us to choose wisely what we enquired into, when we co-created the envisioned future change.
- The positive principle reminded us that, by asking positive questions, we could create positive change.
- The anticipatory principle reminded us that the vision we anticipated, inspired our actions.

We also applied the collaborative, 5D appreciative inquiry process (Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Delivery/Destiny) to create action and knowledge for positive social change (Cooperrider et al. 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018). Hence, we *defined* the topic of inquiry, which aligned with the research question [see/cf. section 4.2]. In the *discovery-phase*, each participant shared a story which demonstrated personal and professional developmental of themselves and others. We collectively generated and analysed audio-recorded qualitative data, utilising reflective group discussions to reach consensus regarding the *discovery* of the group's collective positive core (values, character strengths and best practice experiences). For scientific identification of the action learning group's collective positive core (character strengths and virtues), we applied the values-in-action (VIA) classification framework of Peterson and Seligman (2004).

By reflecting on and building on the foundation of the collective positive core, we generated individual dreams, followed by group reflection for the co-generation of a collective *dream*, whereafter we *designed* (co-created) criteria/learning outcomes for an action-oriented curriculum to *deliver/implement* a community-led Pathway to Holistic Development ('phd'). We further applied the PERMA rubric (Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning and Purpose, Accomplishment) (Seligman 2011) to guide structured reflection, for documenting self-directed action learning in a reflection diary, which contributed to the completion of a portfolio of learning evidence.

The co-construction and implementation of the community-led 'phd' were supported by engagement from different groups of CESL students, joining the CURP on an annual basis, and both the leader of Bloemshelter and I served as the main action learning coaches and facilitators (GULL 2020b). In addition, to meet specific criteria for progression on the community-led 'phd', required support from other supporters, during engagement in an annual learning festival hosted by the Bloemshelter-UFS partnership. These supporters included representatives from the service sector, such as government departments (Department of Education), other networking NPOs, and private businesses.

As the last assignment of the research, we (the participants) engaged in a nominal group (NGT) (Stavros and Torres 2018; Zuber-Skerritt 2013a; Wood 2020), to evaluate the holistic development brought about after applying the ISLP approach in the expanded CURP. The evaluation was based on the following prompt: **Write down your thoughts and actions which lead to holistic development, after applying the ISLP approach in the expanded CURP.** As a proven qualitative inquiry method, the NGT served as a thinktank and comprised of four stages (Seale and Venter 2016), namely: (1) presenting the prompt for silent mapping of the participants' individual ideas; (2) each participant shared their ideas in a round-robin feedback, until all the ideas were captured on a flip chart; (3) collective clarification and clustering of the ideas took place through a group discussion; and (4) each participant individually prioritised the ideas in privacy, whereafter voting took place accordingly, to provide a collective group decision of prioritised findings.

Finally, using the GULL tracking system (GULL 2020c), the action learning was only certified when sufficient evidence of achievement was presented in the participants' learning portfolios. The action learning was verified and signed off by the leader of Bloemshelter and me – we served as main facilitators and coaches for the community-led 'phd', guided by GULL's code of practice and affiliation criteria (GULL 2020b). When evidence of learning was incomplete, the participants did not 'fail', but continued the action learning process until sufficient evidence was presented, as pre-determined by criteria aligned with the GULL pathway.

Ethical clearance for the study was granted by the Faculty of Education (UFS-HSD2016/0200). The study adhered to the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence and fairness/justice (Wood 2020). Each participant voluntarily signed informed consent, thereby respecting the autonomy of participants to make their own decisions, ensure a fair selection of participants and to ensure anonymity. In itself, the appreciative intent of the inquiry was to cocreate action for positive social change, thereby aspiring to do no harm and achieve beneficence. We compiled an ethical contract to formalise the collaboration. This contract clarified the purpose of the inquiry; shared values and vision; roles and responsibilities; common goals, objectives, outcomes; logistics, financial costs and the CURP's anticipated mutual benefit

of learning and knowledge-products that could emerge from the engaged scholarship. Furthermore, the contract addressed practical issues of risk management, ethical dilemmas; a plan for publicity, the handling of social media, and a plan for role-taking towards the publication of the joint activities.

The action learning and research took place at the physical site of Bloemshelter. To allow for effective research facilitation from the onset of the study in 2016, the core group of 15 participants) connected for group meetings at the shelter - once a week for three to four hours each time - until the study was completed in 2019. As full participant, I also stayed at the shelter for two days, to gain an insider sense of learning and living at the shelter. This interactive stay contributed to the validity of the study.

#### **4.4 FINDINGS**

Due to the lengthy time frame (2016 - 2019) of the study and the broad extent of data generation, this article only reports on the findings related to the co-construction and implementation of the community-led ‘phd’, which was rewarded with a Professional Bachelor degree pathway, certified by GULL. I also report on the co-construction and implementation of the PRAY model (Pray, Reflect, Act, Yield), which guided the action learning process and cascading of the community-led ‘phd’, to others in new projects. The findings, more specific, related to the discovery of the positive core of character strengths, are supported by verbatim “words” shared by the participants’ reflections, and integrated with a discussion and relevant literature review.

##### **4.4.1 Discovery of the positive core**

The first theme that emerged from the findings was the discovery of the positive core (character strengths and best practices). Table 4.1 presents the positive character strengths reported by the participants in *cursive text*, in alignment with the VIA classification framework of Peterson and Seligman (2004).

**Table 4.1: The participants’ positive character strengths, in alignment with the VIA classification framework of Peterson and Seligman (2004)**

<b>Intelligence domains</b>	<b>Virtues</b>	<b>Positive character strengths</b>
Cognitive	Wisdom	Creativity, curiosity, judgment, love of learning, perspective <i>Creative, critical thinker, go-getter, knowledgeable, loves to learn, sound mind, intelligent, inquisitive, skilled, sees the bigger picture, reasoning capacity</i>
Social	Humanity	Love, kindness, social intelligence <i>Caring, compassionate, emotionally intelligent, empathetic, friendly, kind, generous, good listener, good with people, helpful, loving, good relationship person, warm hearted</i>
Community	Justice	Teamwork, fairness, leadership <i>Add value, good citizen, team worker, coach, delegate, fair, faithful, good organiser, leader, loyal, hard worker, non-judgmental, obedient, sharing, socially responsible</i>
Protective	Temperance	Forgiveness, humility, prudence, self-regulation <i>Careful, disciplined, forgives others, humble, independent, inspires others, neat, organised, patient, selfless, willing</i>
Emotional	Courage	Bravery, perseverance, honesty, zest <i>Complete a task, energetic, enthusiastic, keeps a promise, honest, passionate, perseverance, resilient, sincere, trustworthy, values integrity</i>
Spiritual	Transcendence	Appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humour, spirituality, or a sense of purpose <i>Dedicated to church, thankful, grateful, hopeful, integrity, light-hearted, makes people laugh, mindful, meditates, perfectionist, playful, positive, prays, purpose-driven, reflective, religious, spiritual, strengths spotter, spends time with God</i>

(Source: Author’s own 2021, adapted from Peterson and Seligman 2004)

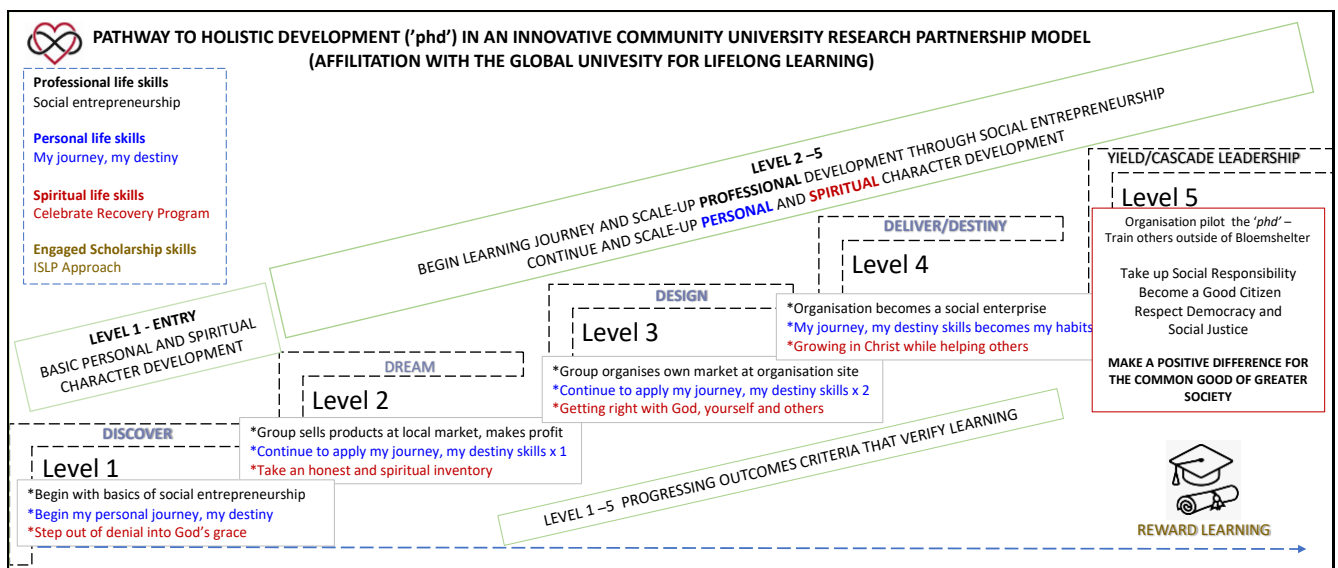
As displayed by the cursive text (verbatim words) in Table 4.1, the participants reported on having an array of positive character strengths, such as being “creative, inquisitive, caring, positive, hopeful, honest, organised, spiritual” and having “perseverance” and “integrity”, to name but a few. Using the VIA classification framework (Peterson and Seligman 2004) enabled the participants to scientifically align their self-discovered positive character strengths, with 24 universal positive character strengths - classified as cognitive strengths under the virtue of wisdom, emotional strengths (courage), social and community strengths (humanity and justice), protective strengths (temperance), and spiritual strengths (transcendence). Although each person’s outline of these strengths differs (Peterson and Seligman 2004), the discovery of collective strengths in the action learning group served as a strong foundation for the development of the community-led ‘phd’. Research on positive character strengths and virtues, revealed that identification and cultivation of character strengths, can improve well-being of self and others, support the development of positive relationships and lead to development of positive social change (Peterson and Seligman 2004; Seligman 2011).

In addition, as part of the positive core, the participants reported on having a collective of practical knowledge and skills (best practices) from different professions. These included best practices such as administrative office work, bookkeeping, advertising and marketing; making arts and crafts; baking and cooking; carpentry; basic literacy and numeracy; caring for animals, for children and the elderly; driving a car; fundraising and collecting donations; gardening; hairdressing; handyman work; domestic household; ministry, nursing, event organising; managing an NPO; running a small business; research and writing; sewing and needlework, teaching for pre-school and post-school and assisting children with homework. These professionalisms are underpinned by essential 21st-century life skills gained from practical life-and-work-related experiences, which include character strengths such as care, creativity, coaching, collaboration, commitment, communication, compassion, competence, connection (networking), and coordination (Peterson and Seligman 2004). Practical know-how and skills concerning the different professionalisms served as a foundation for the dream, design, and delivery of the community-led’ ‘phd’. This positive core of the group, also served as a strong

foundation for the in-action co-generation and implementation of the community-led ‘phd’, of which action learning was required to be attained, and after completion, rewarded and certified by GULL (see 4.5.2).

#### 4.4.2 Co-constructing and implementing the ‘Pathway to holistic development’

Before the co-construction of the community-led ‘phd’, the participants set out their learning statements, which were directed to deliver a step-by-step implementation (praxis). The outline map in Figure 4.1 provides a snapshot of the community-led ‘phd’.



**Figure 4.1: Community-led ‘Pathway to holistic development’ (‘phd’)**

(Source: Co-constructed by the participants)

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, the pathway involved skills development in four domains, namely engaged scholarship, spiritual, personal and professional.

##### 4.4.2.1 Engaged scholarship skills: Applying the ISLP approach

During the start-up workshop, the participants were trained on the principles and process of appreciative inquiry, which correspondingly formed part of the ISLP approach. This application

of the ISLP approach in the CURP, supported practical learning of engaged scholarship skills in-action, such as the appreciative inquiry principles and process for data generation and analysis, knowledge co-creation and application of the self-directed community-led 'phd'.

Sternberg (2003) advises that learning should be aimed at gaining practical wisdom, beyond acquiring only theoretical content knowledge. Such wisdom includes analytical knowledge and skills, creative knowledge and skills, and practical knowledge (Sternberg 2003). The practical wisdom gained by the participants involved practical learning by doing (in-action), beyond theoretical knowledge acquisition (Shumer et al. 2017).

#### *4.4.2.2 Spiritual life skills: Celebrate recovery programme*

The spiritual development domain of the community-led 'phd' was based on Baker's *Celebrate Recovery* programme, to overcome bad habits, hang-ups, and hurts. This spiritual life skills learning was guided by four practical participant guides that align with the GULL framework of L1–4 levels of progression. The participant guides involved the following themes for self-directed application, both on an individual level and in group sessions:

- GULL Level 1: *Participant guide 1 – Stepping out of denial into God's grace* (Baker 2012a)
- GULL Level 2: *Participant guide 2 – Taking an honest and spiritual inventory* (Baker 2012b)
- GULL Level 3: *Participant guide 3 – Getting right with God, yourself and others* (Baker 2012c)
- GULL Level 4: *Participant guide 4 – Growing in Christ, while helping others* (Baker 2012d)

To attain GULL Level 5, the participants had to yield/cascade appreciative leadership, by training others outside Bloemshelter.

#### *4.4.2.3 Personal life skills: My journey, my destiny*

To develop the domain of personal life skills, the participants applied activities as guided by a workbook that was adapted from a specific textbook entitled *Life Skills: My Journey, My Destiny* (Van Heerden-Pieterse 2015). An additional learning source involved information about the *Eight Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey 1989; 2004). The participants aspired to become proactive; begin with the end in mind; put first things first; think win-win; seek first to understand, then to be understood; work in synergy; sharpen the saw for personal care; and, lastly, to find their voice and inspire others to find theirs. To evaluate their positive personal change of habits for verification of learning, the participants applied the Balance Sheet of Life (Teare 2013), which consisted of positive habits, described as assets, and negative habits, described as liabilities. To progress on the community-led ‘phd’, the participants had to establish a positive balance sheet.

#### *4.4.2.4 Professional life skills: Social entrepreneurship*

For professional development, the participants acquired the knowledge and skills of social entrepreneurship and financial literacy, as provided by the Young Entrepreneurs Foundation (2021). Although the programme was designed for a youth target, the participants adapted it to address their adult learning needs, as demonstrated in the following outcomes criteria:

- GULL Level 1: Begin with basics of social entrepreneurship.
- GULL Level 2: Work in a group to sell products at a local farmers’ market and make a profit.
- GULL Level 3: The group organises a market at Bloemshelter, supported by CESL students, and each participant presents a stall (mid-level social entrepreneurship).
- GULL Level 4: The group scales up to a higher level of social entrepreneurship. Bloemshelter becomes a service provider of the UFS, to co-present and manages food court at the annual three-day Father Heart Engaged Learning Festival.
- GULL Level 5: The group cascades leadership and pilot the community-led ‘phd’, by sharing it outside Bloemshelter. The group takes up social responsibility, become good citizens, respect knowledge democracy and social justice to make a positive difference for the common good of greater society (Shumer et al. 2017).

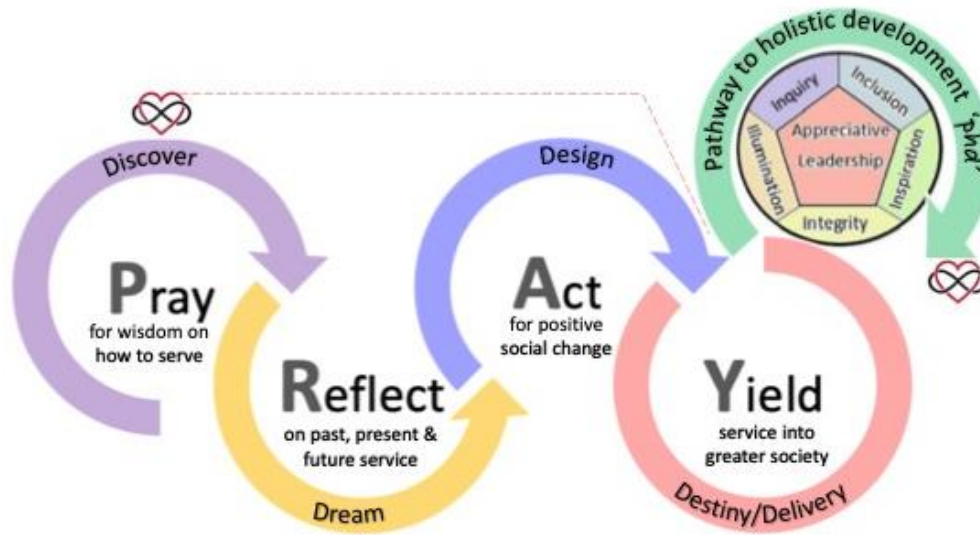
#### 4.4.2.5 Step-by-step stages design and duration

The participants aligned the integrated themes of the community-led ‘phd’ with the learning outcomes of the GULL framework (GULL 2020b), and in parallel with the appreciative inquiry process’ phases of Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver) (Cooperrider et al. 2008). The step-by-step stages required continuous progression for verification of skills development. In combination, the duration of GULL Levels 1–2 was one year (2016). Each progressing level of GULL Levels 3–5, comprised another year (2017 – 2019). The specific time frame of the five years in total (GULL Levels 1–5) to complete the integrated pathway, was self-determined by the participants, by following the guidelines of the GULL framework (GULL 2020b). The participants documented their self-directed reflection on the progression of action learning in a reflection diary, with the eventual goal of compiling a learning portfolio. The in-action implementation of the pathway enabled the *delivery* of praxis, to serve as proof for attained learning, so that it could be rewarded and certified by GULL (GULL 2020b).

#### 4.4.3 Co-construction of a PRAY model

From the findings of the NGT, which generated a list of ten elements, the highest four themes prioritised elements required for holistic development gained from application of the ISLP approach. These elements emerged to become an iterative holistic action learning process. The process involved four main stages, namely (1) pray/meditate, (2) reflect to plan action, (3) act for social change and (4) share/yield learning, gained from group reflection on action (with others in the action learning group).

Drawing on these findings, and the curriculum content of the community-led ‘phd’, the participants co-constructed a PRAY model (Pray, Reflect, Act, Yield), to guide the holistic action learning process and cascading of the community-led ‘phd’ beyond the CURP, into new projects. The PRAY model is visually represented in Figure 4.2.



**Figure 4.2: The PRAY Model to cascade the community-led ‘phd’**

(Source: Co-constructed by participants)

That the community-led ‘phd’ was rooted in spirituality, was confirmed by the vision and mission of Bloemshelter:

*Bloemshelter envisions the holistic transformation of vulnerable, homeless, abused and disabled members of society, enabling the creation of personal livelihoods through the provision of housing, nutrition, counselling, training and personal development opportunities. It is Bloemshelter’s mission to position itself in a manner that will guarantee dynamic, effective and efficient service-rendering to be a worthy and stable citadel glorifying the Kingdom of God” (Bloemshelter n.d.).*

This vision can be enacted through the PRAY model, in alignment with the community-led ‘phd’. Considering that the PRAY model was conceptualised from reflection on action [see/cf. 4.3], for its generation was prompted documenting the **“thoughts and actions which lead to holistic development, after applying the ISLP approach in the expanded CURP”**, the model

can guide step-by-step holistic development of community members towards attaining the community-led ‘phd’, in parallel with the discovery, dream, design and delivery/destiny process of appreciative inquiry (also a component of the ISLP approach).

The first step requires stepping out of denial, into God’s grace, *praying* for wisdom on how to serve; and *discovering* the positive core of individuals and the group. The second step requires taking an honest and spiritual inventory, *reflecting* on past, present and future service; and generating a collective *dream* of how to improve service. The third step requires setting things right with God, yourself, and others, to *act* as a group to co-create positive social change; and *design* knowledge products and services to address societal challenges. The fourth step requires growing in Christ while helping others, to *yield* service to the greater society; and to *deliver/reach* a destiny beyond oneself, by cascading the community-led ‘phd’ into a new project beyond the shelter.

By following the *five strategies of appreciative leadership*, which the participants demonstrated by completing and cascading the community-led ‘phd’ beyond Bloemshelter, they became change agents who made a positive difference by using *inquiry* to cultivate their character; *illumination* to liberate the creative potential of others; *inclusion* to foster collaboration; *inspiration* to design knowledge products/services, and *integrity* to facilitate positive change (Whitney et al. 2010). This co-construction of the PRAY model, demonstrated community-led knowledge co-generation.

#### **4.4.4 Celebration and rewarding of community-led action learning**

As the participants progressed on the community-led ‘phd’, they also became coaches and mentors to newcomers at Bloemshelter who entered into the pathway, to ensure sustainability through applying a cascade model. This cascade implied that when a participant reached L3, they became mentors to L1 and L2 participants. When they completed Level 4, they coached and mentored L3 participants. When they completed L5, they became facilitators, coaches, and mentors, ready to yield praxis and act as change agents to establish a new CURP outside of the

initial CURP. On completion of the community-led ‘phd’, the participants’ learning was rewarded with a Professional Bachelor’s pathway degree, certified and issued by GULL. Certification of learning took place at four stages (L2, L3, L4, and L5) (GULL 2020e), and was celebrated with a formal cap-and-gown session, hosted jointly with the UFS annual Community Engagement Ceremony (Teare 2019). Izak Botes, late leader of Bloemshelter, who facilitated and participated in the community-led ‘phd’, stated in his learning portfolio:

*“We have now researched and packaged the ‘Pathway to holistic development’. We would like to duplicate it in communities where unemployment is evident and rising every day. Through this action learning pathway, tremendous learning and development takes place, and holistic transformation is evident in the participants. This pathway creates action learning, job opportunities, markets and strong people”.*

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION: REFLECTING AND APPRECIATING THE LESSONS LEARNED, PITFALLS ENCOUNTERED, AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES**

This study explained the development and rewarding of a community-led action learning ‘Pathway to holistic development’ (‘phd’) in the context of an expanded CURP, through an affiliation with GULL. The significance of the study is that the GULL-affiliated reward system does not compete with, but aligns in parallel with the university reward system. Thereby, the study provides a solution to widening access for delivery of inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, supported by establishing global partnerships (Teare 2018).

We learned many lessons from the engaged scholarship. The praxis of engaged scholarship is dynamic and complex. It united us across the borders of community and university. In this connected space, we co-created knowledge for change to achieve the common good. We learned to be mindful of the opportunity to share positive power and privilege across different

worldviews, cultures, and disciplines. Therefore, the lessons involved pitfalls and possibilities, emerging from the heart of an expanded CURP.

*CURPs for partnership and relationship.* The choice of a longstanding CURP as a site for the study was wise, because it provided an already existing foundation based on a trusting relationship. However, the study could also be applied in a newly established CURP, with an emphasis on allowing enough time for establishment of relationship, before the onset of the action research (Wood 2020). Considering the participatory methodology and relational ontology underpinning the study, the positive core of engaged scholarship lies at the heart of relationship and partnership (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015). Authentic engaged scholarship requires “democratic, trusting and purposeful relationships” (Wood 2020:116) among the participants to foster knowledge democracy (Tandon and Hall 2015).

*Change contribution:* The change demonstrated in the participants' lives, which emerged from the co-construction and implementation of the community-led ‘phd’ brought about spiritual, personal, and professional viability, and the development of appreciative inquiry skills for flourishing of engaged scholarship. As verified in their learning portfolios, this change led to holistic transformation, as they moved from “exclusion to inclusion; unknowing to self-directed learning and knowledge co-creation; dependence and oppression to independence and freedom; self-consciousness to self-confidence; individualism to collectivism; self-centredness to other-centredness; and so forth” (Zuber-Skerritt 2013a:7). Most of the participants now have their own micro-enterprises, such as pancake baking, jewellery design, food catering, second-hand clothing, dressmaking, selling gospel-sharing soul stones, recycling, and others. As passionate GULL advocates, they cascaded their self-directed action learning know-how to others, which has led to the graduation of 30 people involved in the Bloemshelter-UFS CURP and three new pilot partnerships (Teare 2019). To achieve such transformation for change, the participants cultivated their positive character strengths and life skills [see/cf. 4.4.1] such as care, character building, change creation, coaching, collaboration, commitment, communication, compassion, competence, connection (networking), coordination, and creativity. I learned that all of these Cs,

as displayed in the positive core of the participants, are key to the positive practical outcome of the study.

*Funding, knowledge democracy and social justice.* The National Research Foundation (NRF) financially supported the study. However, funding was not allocated to finance the knowledge-based research services (time and resources, both human and physical, invested in the study, as provided by the participants and the leader of the NPO). Being confronted by the reality of knowledge democracy and social justice stimulated concerns; therefore, I ask the following question: *To who does this co-constructed knowledge belong? How will the community and university share it?* In South Africa's higher education and university systems, traditional measures of one-sided knowledge creation and ownership exist, mainly as a result of so-called mining for knowledge in the community (Tandon and Hall 2015; Wood 2020). The development of the CURP model is sure to challenge the traditional university reward system.

*Holistic development.* Drawing from the holistic development portrayed by the participants' personal, spiritual and professional livelihood, as verified in their learning portfolios, the affiliation with GULL progressed to developing a rewarding the community-led 'phd'. The fact that the community-led 'phd' was rooted in the three integrated strands of spirituality, personal and professional development, highlighted the essence of whole-person development. The inclusion of the spiritual strand was context specific, due to the Christian ethos of Bloemshelter's service. As an emerging, engaged scholar, I realised that social constructionism could not be distanced from diverse worldviews and group realities, which are situated at the heart of humanity, and hidden in the creative mystery of the human spirit (Cooperrider et al. 2008). In the context of this study, the spiritual foundation was necessary, due to Bloemshelter's ethos. This might not be applicable to other cases.

*Potential pitfalls.* Choosing community partners for the establishment of CURPs requires careful consideration. NPOs generally accept the opportunity to engage in scholarship with a university, especially for the benefit of mutual knowledge sharing and learning, in the context of "partnership and reciprocity" (Higher Education Public Purpose 2021:Online). Hence, NPOs host many projects simultaneously, which take up a great deal of time and could interfere with

daily routine and service delivery. However, if these issues are clarified at the onset of the project, knowledge-based collaboration opportunities can be coordinated and negotiated to serve as a web of support.

*Reciprocity, recognition, and reward.* The reciprocal compensation of recognised learning towards the community-led ‘phd’ attained by the participants redefined the meaning of reciprocity. Following the learning theories of lifelong action learning, social constructionism and generativity, the study reopened the challenge of agency to address often unintended power dynamics in CURPs. It is easy to add the theoretical construct of “reciprocity” to an ideal definition of engaged scholarship (Higher Education Public Purpose 2021:Online); yet, it is challenging to generate an inclusive and practical definition. The principle of reciprocity explicitly guides engaged scholarship, with other principles of “high-quality scholarship, identified community needs, boundary-crossing, and democratisation of knowledge” (Beaulieu, Breton and Brousselle 2018). Learning from participation in the study, I suggest that a practical definition might contend that all participants in a CURP hold agency and power when action-oriented knowledge is co-constructed. In this study, such co-construction of knowledge was underpinned by a relationship that portrayed qualities of closeness, integrity, and equity, such as described by Bringle, Clayton and Price (2009) and Conner (2011), which was guided by the establishment and application of an ethical contract [see/cf. 4.3]. Such a practical ethical contract supported this practical definition of reciprocity, to enhance true reciprocal relationships in CURPs, as is also confirmed by Barnard (2015:90), to “work towards a point of appreciative knowing in the (service-learning) relationship, where all knowledge contributions are seen as valuable, and partners show a willingness to learn and teach relevant knowledge”. The reward and recognition of action learning in the community-led ‘phd’ was a requirement for real reciprocity.

*Appreciative reflection:* The element that enabled the delivery of praxis for the community-led ‘phd’ was the practice of appreciative reflection and discussion, which involved the infinite attempt to “identify, understand, appreciate, amplify and respect the positive core of the self and others to improve the integration of life and the workplace” (Marchi and Ciceri 2011). The 5D

process of appreciative inquiry that was applied, strengthened by the strategies of appreciative leadership, was positively powerful. The focus of the investigation was to discover success and achievement, not just to focus on problems and failures, and trying to fix them (Cooperrider et al. 2008).

*Scholarship of application:* The development of the holistic and inclusive CURP model was an objective of a larger NRF-supported project, driven by the SoN, in the Faculty of Health Sciences, UFS. I am curious and concerned about whether the model will be allowed to be applied in the South African university system. The pilot affiliation with GULL provided the opportunity for community members to attain a post-school education without having a matric qualification and at a low cost – in contrast to the entry level of most post-school institutions’ learning and reward systems. The affiliation with GULL secured holistic learning for practical outcomes, such as personal growth in self-esteem, spiritual development and professional work-related development. The GULL participants advanced together in the group and then passed on their action learning expertise to other community members. I contend that the evidence-based case study of a pilot affiliation with GULL for the development of a holistic and inclusive CURP model can attempt to answer the following statement and question:

*Community engagement has been a concept with which the South African higher education system has grappled for more than a decade. The Ministry will encourage suitable feasibility studies and pilot programmes which explore the potential of community service to “answer the call of young people for constructive social engagement; enhance the culture of learning, teaching, and service in higher education, and relieve some of the financial burden of study at this level” (RSA DoE 1997:36).*

At the final evaluation of the study, one of the participants summarised the abovementioned quest as follows: “Bloemshelter is no longer a shelter. It is a house of hope and love, a training and research centre in the community for the community”.

*Recommended research:* In reflecting on this study, further research is recommended to scale up the emergent CURP model and develop a second-phase pilot affiliation with GULL (e.g. for institutional-level implementation). In addition, a research-based extension and evaluation of the model's effectiveness could enable the launch of multiple second-phase pilot affiliation case studies to develop an evidence-based CURP model at the UFS and other universities, from local to global (Teare 2018). Furthermore, applying the ISLP approach, as a holistic postgraduate development approach, requires further exploration (see Article 4).

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**CHAPTER 5      (ARTICLE 4)**  
**ADVANCING HOLISTIC POSTGRADUATE DEVELOPMENT**  
**THROUGH ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP IN A COMMUNITY–**  
**UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP**

**Proposed journal:** *Perspectives in Education*<sup>4</sup>

**ABSTRACT**

Universities are required to produce globally competent work-and-life-ready postgraduates. Such education should equip postgraduates with holistic attributes. This qualitative study evaluated whether a combination of community engaged service-learning (CESL) and appreciative inquiry could deliver the praxis of engaged scholarship for holistic postgraduate development. This holistic postgraduate development was demonstrated by the curriculum of a year-long practical nursing education module within a postgraduate advanced diploma in nursing education, which was applied in a community–university research partnership model. This partnership resulted in an affiliation between the University of the Free State, South Africa, and the Global University for Lifelong Learning, and took responsibility for reciprocal reward and community-led action learning certification. Nine postgraduate nurse educator CESL students were conveniently selected to participate, and qualitative data was generated and analysed by the Value-In-Action classification framework and PERMA rubric (**P**ositive emotions, **E**ngagement, **R**elationship, **M**eaning and purpose, **A**ccomplishment) model for thematic analysis. The findings revealed holistic postgraduate development characterised by integrating academic knowledge, virtues, character strengths, multidimensional intelligences, global competencies, and increased well-

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/pie/about/submissions>

being. Additionally, the participants co-constructed principles for developing global competencies to enable living and working for the common good of society.

**Keywords:** Integrated service-learning praxis; Postgraduate development; Nursing education; Community–university research partnerships; Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning and purpose, Accomplishment (PERMA) rubric

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is earmarked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) (OECD 2018; Wood 2020). In addition, the recent outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic rapidly disrupted society, the economy, and the environment (WHO 2021). Universities and communities can support society to embrace this era, which is characterised by abundant scientific knowledge and technology (OECD 2018), by equipping graduates to cope with the challenges they face, while co-creating solutions for a better future (OECD 2018). Additionally, professional bodies, the world of work, and greater society, constantly request universities to equip graduates with a holistic set of work-and-life-ready attributes (Barrie 2007; Griesel and Parker 2009; WEF 2020).

Holistic education requires learning for wisdom, to gain successful intelligence, beyond the mere acquisition of discipline-specific knowledge (Sternberg 2003; Shumer, Stanton, and Giles 2017). When knowledge is applied with wisdom for the common good, it can create well-being for a better future (Fullan 2021). Such practical wisdom calls for reflection on lived experiences (Sternberg 2003; Duley 2017; Wood 2020). Thus, holistic education should inculcate the motivation for lifelong and life-wide learning, towards the attainment of continuous development for reskilling and upskilling of people (UNDP 2015; UNESCO 2015; WEF 2020). Graduates also need to develop global competencies for dealing with 21<sup>st</sup>-century complexities; they must develop character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking (Fullan 2021). These global competencies can develop skilled, socially responsible global citizens who are willing to act as positive change agents to address sustainable development

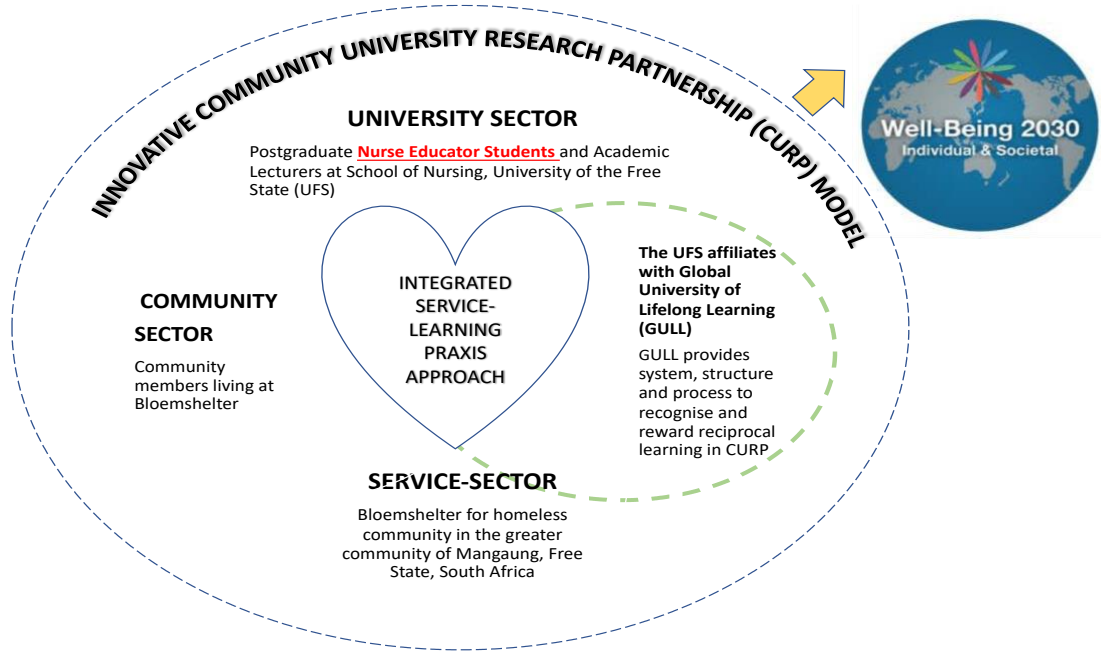
goals (RSA NPC NDP 2012; AUC 2015; UNDP 2015; UNESCO 2015). Fullan (2021) adds that academics might need to change the non-humanistic science-only paradigm, which characterises the current drivers for education, namely academic obsession, machine intelligence, economic austerity, and fragmentation. Such a paradigm change implies that academics should reimagine education as holistic and integrative, which requires new education drivers, such as well-being and learning, social intelligence, equality investments, and a whole-system approach, to make a difference through education for the global common good (UNESCO 2015; Fullan 2021).

However, conventional education strategies, which mostly separate discipline-specific scientific knowledge from humanity, might hinder this modern, integrated vision of education (Palmer and Zajonc 2010; UNESCO 2015; Zuber-Skerritt, Wood and Louw 2015; Shumer et al. 2017). In contrast to conventional education strategies, an integrated service-learning praxis (ISLP) approach was recently developed, applied, and evaluated for quality and usability [see/cf. Chapter 2, Article 1; Chapter 3, Article 2; Chapter 4, Article 3]. The ISLP approach offers flourishing of holistic development and reward for community-led action learning alongside academic learning, in the context of a community–university research partnership (CURP) model. The innovation lies in an affiliation with the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL), which rewards action learning pathways that lead to positive social change [see/cf. Chapter 4, Article 3]. In completion of the bigger picture of my (first author) doctoral study, the purpose of this article is to report on the same qualitative action research study [see/cf. Chapter 4, Article 3], but this time, with a focus on *holistic development of postgraduates*, who applied the ISLP approach alongside community members. The community members co-constructed and implemented a community-led Pathway to Holistic Development (phd’), in the CURP model. The question that directed the study was set as follows: **How did the ISLP approach effect postgraduate development in the CURP?**

The article commences with an explanation of the theoretical underpinnings and application context of the CURP model, followed by a justification of the research methodology and closes with a reflection on the findings, regarding lessons learned, limitations, and research recommended for the future.

## 5.2 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Figure 5.1 presents a visual overview of the relation between the three constructs of the CURP model, the ISLP approach and the practical Nursing Education module.



**Figure 5.1: The community university research partnership model**

(Source: Adapted from Tandon and Hall 2015; Teare 2018; OECD 2018)

As depicted in Figure 5.1, the CURP model comprised of three sectors (service, community, university). Bloemshelter, which represents the service sector, is a non-profit organisation (NPO) that provides shelter and skills development to homeless community members (community sector), based in Mangaung, the Free State, South Africa. The university sector is represented by postgraduate nurse educator CESL students (hereafter referred to as CESL students) and academics from the University of the Free State (UFS). The CURP was expanded through an affiliation with the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) (Teare 2018), to recognise and reward community-driven action learning.

As illustrated at the core of Figure 5.1, the ISLP approach was applied for learning in the CURP. The ISLP approach combines the pedagogy of community engaged service-learning (CESL) and appreciative inquiry, a strength-based genre of action research, for flourishing of engaged scholarship (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2008; Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015; Stavros and Torres 2018). Moral values of social justice drive praxis and reciprocity (Freire 1970; Shumer et al. 2017). Praxis involves the “interdependence and integration – not separation – of theory and practice, research and development, thought and action” (Zuber-Skerritt 2009:113). Zuber-Skerritt et al. (2015) add that engaged scholarship involves a three-way integration of research, teaching, and community engagement. Furthermore, Boyer (2016:19) confirms that engaged scholarship, when applied in the context of partnership and reciprocity, allows community members, academics, and students to co-create “solutions to the nation's most pressing civic, social, economic, and moral problems”.

The application of the ISLP approach required the context of the CURP, for mutually beneficial engaged scholarship and sharing of resources in a democratic manner to achieve sustainable development of society (Tandon and Hall 2015). At the same time of CESL student engagement in the CURP, community members co-constructed and implemented a community-led action learning ‘Pathway to holistic development’ (‘phd’) (2016 - 2019). This community-led ‘phd’, included an integrated, three-strand curriculum for holistic development (life skills, social entrepreneurship, spiritual), which after completion, was rewarded by GULL [see/cf. Chapter 4, Article 3]. The implementation of the community-led ‘phd’ was supported by a learning network (GULL 2020d), which comprised of CESL students from the School of Nursing (SoN), UFS. On a yearly basis, new groups of CESL students joined the CURP, to determine the learning needs of community members and address these needs by developing and presenting student-centred lessons (as part of their nurse educator curricular service-learning outcomes).

With the focus on postgraduate development, this article only reports on the 2018 class of nine CESL students’ engagement in the CURP. The ISLP approach was infused into the practical Nursing Education Module (NEM), presented by the UFS’s SoN, towards attaining a year-long

Postgraduate Advanced University Diploma in Nursing Education (NQF Level 7). The curriculum of the NEM involved the following learning outcomes:

- Establish a CURP and complete a collaboration document to clarify a shared vision and partnership goal, as well as identification of roles and responsibilities;
- Identify community members' learning needs, using the nominal group technique as a qualitative participatory method for data generation, analysis, and critical evaluation of information;
- Design a community-based curriculum and teaching unit to support self-directed action learning for the 'phd' of community members living at the shelter;
- Utilise educational technologies, such as internet searching and a PowerPoint design, for presenting a learner-centred lesson in a group format;
- Develop valid and reliable learner assessment tools and use these to assess learning effectiveness;
- Collaborate effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation or community in developing a community-based curriculum and teaching unit;
- Communicate effectively by using oral and written language skills during lesson presentations and when involved in the assigned community;
- Organise and manage self and the group's learning activities responsibly and effectively, and providing evidence in a learner portfolio for summative assessment;
- Compile a journal for continuous reflection to learn from service-learning engagement experiences;
- Evaluate the effect of the community members' application of the ISLP approach towards their holistic development, using the nominal group technique as a qualitative participatory method for data generation, analysis, and critical evaluation of information;
- Ensure that all activities, such as feedback on designed and presented lessons, educational material developed, reflections on service experiences, and the final curriculum developed for the community members serve as an evidence-based practice for completing the learning portfolio.

The CESL students thus provided learning support towards implementation of the community members' 'phd'. For the reciprocal benefit of the CESL students, the infusion of the ISLP approach into the NEM curriculum, offered a holistic, integrative, and transformative approach for learning (Kuh 2008; Petersen and Osman 2013; Myburgh 2016; Pitso 2016; Shumer et al. 2017).

The study applied the theoretical lenses of social constructionism and generativity (Bushe 2007; Gergen and Gergen 2008; Tracy 2013; Mertens 2015). Social constructionism holds the assumption that knowledge are socially created (Gergen and Gergen 2008; Stavros and Torres 2018). Generativity involves a collective discovery of information, for generation of new ideas to improve practice (Bushe 2007; Stavros and Torres 2018). The overarching research question for this qualitative study was set to the CESL students as follows: **How did the ISLP approach effect postgraduate development in the CURP?**

### 5.3 METHODOLOGY

The study followed a transformative paradigm (Tracy 2013; Mertens 2015). In my researcher position, as a white female, working from a social justice perspective (Wood 2020), I (first author) was deeply aware of cultural diversity and power relations that might emerge in the CURP. I believe that social justice-driven research can provide opportunities for democratic higher education transformation and development. In line with the transformative paradigm, the study applied the qualitative action research design of appreciative inquiry (Stavros and Torres 2018).

The study included a whole group of 24 participants, who were conveniently and purposefully selected (Mertens 2015). This whole group represented inclusion from the community, service and university sectors, incorporating the leader of Bloemshelter, 13 residents from Bloemshelter and myself, in the dual role as research facilitator (doctoral student) and full participant, as well as the full class of nine CESL students (2018). With its focus on postgraduate development, this article only reports on the findings generated by the CESL students. The findings that relate to

the engagement of the community and service sector, are reported on elsewhere (see Chapter 4, Article 3).

Hence, nine CESL students participated in the study. These convenient and purposefully selected participants were readily available, due to their engagement in the CURP. The participants generated qualitative data by completing post-implementation service-learning module questionnaires (see Appendix K), to evaluate their postgraduate development which stemmed from service-learning engagement in the practical Nursing Education module (NEM). I transcribed the data and applied the Values-In-Action (VIA) framework of Peterson and Seligman (2004) for thematic data analysis.

The VIA framework classifies 24-character strengths, with six intelligence domains (cognitive, social, community, protective, emotional, and spiritual) under six universal virtues (wisdom, humanity, justice, temperance/prudence, courage, and transcendence) (Peterson and Seligman 2004) (see Appendix J). In addition, I applied the PERMA rubric (**P**ositive emotions, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **M**eaning, and purpose; **A**ccomplishment) (Seligman 2011) for thematic analysis of the participants' well-being (see Appendix L). To achieve rigor, the data analysis was supervised by two experienced researchers.

After obtaining ethical clearance from the UFS Faculty of Education (UFS-HSD2016/0200) at the onset of 2018, I explained the background and application context of the research to the CESL students. The full class of nine CESL students signed voluntary informed consent. Thereby the study adhered to the ethical research principles (Mertens 2015) of respect for the participants' autonomy, to make their own decisions; and fairness/justice in participant selection. I offered to keep their identities confidential, by anonymous completion of the post-implementation service-learning questionnaires. We established a shared vision to honour a trusting and open relationship, underpinned by values of reciprocal respect and mutual beneficence (Wood 2020). This vision was evident in the group reflection sessions that we held after service-learning engagement activities in the CURP, to clarify any ethical, relational, learning, and logistical matters. Furthermore, I constantly kept a reflective stance, by staying

aware of unequal power relations that might develop between the participants and me (holding the dual role of lecturer and research facilitator).

## **5.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

I present the findings and discussions in an integrated manner, supported by verbatim quotes gained from completed post-implementation service-learning questionnaires (see Appendix K). A detailed summary of the findings is provided (see Appendix L). In ensuring the anonymity of the participants, I will refer to them as *P1*, *P2*, *P3* and so forth.

I describe the student' development, using the VIA framework of Peterson and Seligman (2004), as a guiding post for the report in the categories of multidimensional intelligences, virtues, and character strengths (see detail in 5.4.1).

### **5.4.1 Developing multidimensional intelligences, virtues, and character strengths**

The participants perceived their development as holistic and integrated across a multidimensional domain of intelligences, virtues, and character strengths.

#### *5.4.1.1 Cognitive intelligence*

Learning in the cognitive intelligence domain involved development under the virtue-category of wisdom, which were characterised by strengths of *creativity*, *curiosity* [I learned that we should always be willing to learn (*P5*)], *judgment* [I reflected every day after work and gained better insight (*P8*)]; *love of learning*, *open-mindedness* [I became open-minded about other people whose perspectives are different from us (*P4*)]; and *holistic life-perspective* [I learned to prepare my tasks in advance and to read all the time (*P6*)]. In addition, two of the participants reported that their collaborative learning seemed to empower the community with knowledge (*P3*, *P7*).

All the participants reported that their presentation skills improved; they were able to engage community members in the learning activities; they could mentor, coach, and facilitate learning in a group; they could identify community learning needs and manage their service-learning

group project. All the participants, furthermore, reported that they could integrate theory, practice, research, and development, which enabled them to deliver the praxis of engaged scholarship (Zuber-Skerritt 2015).

In reflecting on these shared postgraduate perspectives regarding learning for the development of wisdom, the literature confirms that wisdom requires integrating analytical, creative, and practical thought and action. Therefore, it seemed that the participants developed practical wisdom (*phronesis*) (Sternberg 2003; Shumer et al. 2017; Wood 2020), beyond the achievement of theoretical knowledge. This wisdom could have resulted from experiential learning after applying the ISLP approach.

The participants were asked to report on the value of reflection, regarding their practical experience to enable learning in the CURP. It emerged from the findings that the participants developed the habit of continuous reflection (thinking). Such reflection deepened learning and improved practice, as highlighted by participant (*P8*): “You grow as a person from reflection on every experience”. Participant (*P2*) echoed, “I need to reflect on being able to have insight so that I can do better next time”. The following statement provided additional confirmation of the benefit of reflection for judgement development: “Reflection enhanced my critical thinking and judgement” (*P9*). Another participant (*P5*) reported that reflection enabled them to learn from mistakes and to improve nursing education practice. This development, of continuous reflective practice, was enabled and prompted by the structured inclusion of reflection in the ISLP approach, due to the combination in the approach of reflective service-learning and appreciative inquiry [see/cf. 5.2.3]. For example, reflection for learning and assessment was captured in all participants' journals and learning portfolios [see/cf. 5.2.2].

When learning for holistic development, it matters how we *think, feel and act*, especially in the current and future uncertain state of living in this world (Wood 2020). The uncertain future might overwhelm postgraduates' ability to make sense and make wise decisions for the common good.

It is essential to develop positive thinking patterns to balance contradictions and complexities when integrating life-and-work (Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen and Daloz Parks 1996). In comparison to literature on reflection, it appeared that the participants developed five habits of mind (Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen and Daloz Parks 1996). First, the *habit of dialogue* alerted the participants that humans need continuous interaction for learning from and with others. This finding was evident when a participant reflected on the elements of engaged dialogue as key for learning, by saying: “I actively engaged and talked to people” (P6). Second, the *habit of interpersonal perspective-taking* enabled a participant to develop an empathetic understanding for others’ community challenges. Participant (P8) confirmed this finding as follows: “I developed empathy for the community partners and began to understand others’ behaviour”. Third, the *habit of critical systemic thought* a participant to see the connection between smaller parts and the bigger picture, stating: “After becoming involved in the community, I became aware of the linkage between the dynamics in the community and how that links to our work” (P6). Fourth, the *habit of dialectical thought* enabled identification and reframing of challenges into opportunities. Hence, a participant reflected, “After hearing from the community members about their challenges, I deeply thought about what I should do to support the situation” (P5). Fifth, the *habit of holistic thought* enabled a participant to see life as a whole interconnected system, as demonstrated by this powerful statement: “I will always remember that we are one” (P3).

#### 5.4.1.2 Social intelligence

In the social intelligence domain (Peterson and Seligman 2004) under the virtue-category of humanity, the participants perceived development, that was characterised by strengths of love, kindness, care, and connectedness. They established a partnership and built relationships among themselves. One participant referred to the development of kindness “because it’s never known what challenges others are facing” (P9). Regarding social intelligence, one participant (P7) explained that “you first have to understand yourself, before interacting with the group”. The learning about generosity was evident when a Participant 9 was surprised when the lecturer handed tokens of appreciation to community members in celebration of reciprocal knowledge sharing.

#### *5.4.2.3 Community intelligence*

Under the virtue-category of justice, the participants perceived that they developed in the domain of community intelligence (Peterson and Seligman 2004). The participants reported on the development of teamwork, collaboration, fairness (social justice), leadership, citizenship, social responsibility, and working towards the common good. All the participants reported that they were enabled to build partnerships. One participant (*P9*) learned that “being late, can jeopardise the whole day”. Another participant (*P3*) proudly reported on becoming “a team leader”, while *P2* became “actively involved and engaged in the community”, and realised it is a continuous responsibility. Another participant said that service should be “client-centred, not self-centred” (*P5*). The element of diversity emerged from the findings, as a participant (*P7*) realised that “we have different backgrounds,” while another (*P3*) stated that “some of us are more fortunate than others”. In the end, *P8* concluded that “working together is the way to go”.

#### *5.4.2.4 Protective intelligence*

In alignment with protective intelligence, the participants perceived development under the virtue-category of temperance, which were characterised by the strengths of humility, prudence, and self-regulation (Peterson and Seligman 2004). This finding became evident from a participant’s reflection on ceasing the habit of stereotyping, by remarking as follows: “We often think that less fortunate people are mostly drunkards who likes fighting, but after the engagement, to my surprise, I found that is not the case” (*P8*). This participant eight also reported being humbled, by saying: “I became humbled and realised that I should never look down on less fortunate people” (*P8*). Forbearance for and recognition of community knowledge was evident when a participant reported developing “tolerance for those with whom we work”, by bearing in mind that “someone next to you, knows something you do not” (*P1*). With regard to self-development, a participant aspired to achieve self-actualisation; they stated, “I became inspired to reach my full potential” (*P9*). Participant *P3* reported on the development of self-confidence and becoming independent. In turn, a participant emphasised the development of self-awareness, by realising that “I get emotionally involved in other people’s challenges, and have to

manage that better” (P4). Another participant confirmed that self-knowledge was crucial for developing protective intelligence, by stating that “I know myself better now” (P6).

#### *5.4.2.5 Emotional intelligence*

In the domain of emotional intelligence, the participants perceived development under the virtue-category of courage, as characterised by strengths of bravery, perseverance, honesty, and zest (Peterson and Seligman 2004). This finding is confirmed by the participants’ reports on the development of openness (P8); patience (P9); courageousness and enthusiasm (P3); passion for service-learning (P5), and the realisation that motivation is key to a collaborative learning process in a partnership (P4).

#### *5.4.2.6 Spiritual intelligence*

Regarding the domain of spiritual intelligence, the participants perceived development under the virtue-category of transcendence, which is typified by strengths of gratitude and a sense of purpose (Peterson and Seligman 2004). A participant (P2) reported about gratitude after learning in collaboration in the CURP, by stating: “I realised how privileged and fortunate I am”. Another participant (P4) reported as follows: “I became a good citizen and contributed to community development”, thereby portraying a sense of meaningful, purpose-driven service. Development across all these intelligence domains also contributed to the development of global competencies needed by 21st-century postgraduates.

### **5.4.2 Development of global competencies**

The participants reported on their perceived development of six global competencies for the 21st-century graduate (OECD 2018; Fullan 2021) (see Appendix L). These competencies include development of character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity [see/cf. 5.4.1–5.4.4]. The inclusion of both service-learning and appreciative inquiry in the ISLP approach, can significantly foster the development of these global competencies. Service-learning is rooted in promoting the common good, reflective learning from service experiences, and community engagement and, therefore, fostered graduate development of

socially responsive democratic citizenship, justice, and responsibility (Shumer et al. 2017). Appreciative inquiry is rooted in the science of positive psychology, which fosters positive education and leads to the development of character strengths and virtues (Seligman 2011; Seligman and Adler 2018).

The integration of service-learning and appreciative inquiry can enable an integration of theory and practice, research and development, thought and action for developing the praxis of engaged scholarship (Zuber-Skerritt 2009:113). This praxis was portrayed in the unintended (not inquired on specifically) ability of the participants to co-construct principles for development of global competencies (OECD 2018; Fullan 2021) (see Appendix L).

### **5.4.3 Postgraduates' perspectives on developing principles for the development of global competencies**

After reflection on applied ISLP experiences gained in the context of the CURP model, postgraduates spontaneously (by sharing their perspectives in the questionnaire, yet not specifically requested to provide principles), provided principles for gaining six global competencies (OECD 2018; Fullan 2021). These principles involved the following postgraduate perspectives [see/cf. 5.4. 1.1 – 5.4.1.6] (see Appendix L):

1. **Character:** Develop the character and unlock others' potential, guided by universal virtues of wisdom, humanity, justice, temperance/prudence, courage and transcendence.
2. **Citizenship:** Engage with others to create community and address global challenges for the common good of all.
3. **Collaboration:** Foster collaboration across different cultures; always remember we are one; and working together is the way to go.
4. **Communication:** First, understand yourself and develop agency to actively engage in appreciative dialogue, listen with empathy, and understand others' challenges.
5. **Critical thinking:** Reflect and inquire continuously from an appreciative stance to make wise decisions and act responsibly.

6. **Creativity:** Co-create knowledge solutions to solve challenges from local to global in commitment to the common good.

By developing and unlocking the potential of all the student participants in the CURP [see/cf. 5.1], the praxis of engaged scholarship, appeared to enable an increase in their holistic development and postgraduate well-being.

#### **5.4.4 Increased postgraduate well-being**

Using the PERMA rubric (Seligman 2011) to evaluate postgraduate well-being, the participants perceived an increase in their well-being. Seligman (2011) states that a holistic focus on the five building blocks of PERMA (**p**ositive emotions, **e**ngagement, **r**elationship, **m**eaning and a sense of purpose, and **a**ccomplishment), can increase happiness and well-being. A participant (*P8*) reported experiencing *positive emotions* of encouragement, happiness, motivation, relief, and satisfaction. In line with positive emotions, participants (*P6, P9*) reported that the “service-learning journey experience was beautiful”. A participant (*P2*) reported on the notion of *engagement*, as follows: “I actively became engaged in the community, realising it is a continuous responsibility”. Having developed positive *relationships*, a participant (*P5*) said: “We cared for, supported and respected each other, when learning in reciprocity”, while another (*P4*) “started to know the community members, fellow students, and lecturers on a personal level”. The *meaningful purpose* of knowledge sharing for the common good gave purpose to the participants’ learning. All the participants reported on the *accomplishment* of academic and civic learning outcomes [see/cf. 5.2.2] (see Appendix J). Two of the participants described their engagement in the module as worthwhile, which is evident in the following remarks:

“When you apply the work and commit yourself, you can succeed” (*P5*).

“I contributed to community development and served as a competent citizen, making a positive difference” (*P4*).

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

Literature advocates for educational transformation and moving away from traditional fragmented education strategies that separate scientific knowledge from humanity (Palmer and Zajonc 2010). In turn, new education drivers, such as well-being and learning, social intelligence, equality investments, and a whole-system approach, can lead to holistic graduate development (Fullan 2021). In alignment with these modern-day educational drivers, the study shared the effect of the ISLP approach on postgraduate student development, when applied in the context of a CURP model [see/cf. 5.2]. In conclusion, key findings will be highlighted.

### 5.5.1 Holistic development

Using the Values-In-Action (VIA) framework of Peterson and Seligman (2004) for thematic data analysis, the findings revealed that the ISLP approach can contribute to development of multidimensional intelligences (cognitive, social, community, protective, emotional, spiritual) [see/cf. 5.4], classified under six universal virtue-categories (wisdom, humanity, justice, temperance/prudence, courage, transcendence), and in further alignment, exemplified by a set of 24 character strengths (Peterson and Seligman 2004) [see/cf. 5.4]. Using the PERMA rubric (**p**ositive emotions, **e**ngagement, **r**elationship, **m**eaning and purpose, and **a**ccomplishment (Seligman 2011) for evaluation, the findings revealed an increase in postgraduate well-being [see/cf. 5.4].—The participants reported on their perceived development in a set of six global competencies (character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity) [see/cf. 5.4.1–5.4.4]. These competencies formed part of the strengths, characterised by the participants. Finally, the participants perceived development of the praxis of engaged scholarship and provided principles for the development of global competencies by drawing from practical experience gained in the CURP [see/cf. 5.4.3].

### **5.5.2 Lessons learned**

Drawing from the CESL students' provided principles for development of global competencies, the findings highlight that the application of the ISLP approach in the CURP, can provide a safe, collaborative learning environment for postgraduates to cultivate their characters and unlock the potential of community partners [see/cf. 5.4.3]. Through active engagement and citizenship, postgraduates can create a community to address sustainable development challenges. Postgraduates can foster collaboration and communication across cultural divides. When finding their inner voice and purpose, they can engage in appreciative dialogue, to learn and listen, and using empathy to understand societal challenges. By developing the habit of continuous reflection and applying appreciative inquiry, they can make collective decisions for the co-creation of knowledge to solve societal challenges, by working from local to global for the common good. The proposal is that the principles for the development of global postgraduate competencies should become habits of the heart. When integrated with habits of mind (dialogue; interpersonal perspective taking; critical systemic, dialectical, and holistic thought), these principles can flourish holistic development for postgraduates engaged in scholarly praxis.

### **5.5.3 Limitations**

In hindsight, the inclusion of only the 2018-year group of CESL students might be a limitation of the case study, because it only involved one discipline and a small group of CESL students [see/cf. 5.2.2]. The CURP project involved the co-construction and implementation of a community-led action learning 'phd', which took four years (2016 - 2019). During this time, the inclusion of each year's student groups, who served as a network of learning support in the CURP model, might have provided a longitudinal study, thereby creating space for comparison, to strengthen the findings. In addition, it might have been more appropriate to apply the 5D process (define, discover, dream, design, deliver/destiny) for engaged dialogue in appreciative interviews, instead of using the standard UFS service-learning module questionnaire (see Appendix K), because the application of the ISLP approach included an appreciative inquiry

methodology (see Chapter 2; Article 1). A group evaluation through engaged dialogue, might have been more interactive and participatory and provide reflective learning as a group, as an additional benefit to the learning and development process.

On final reflection, the application context of the CURP model provided a collaborative, reciprocal, and safe learning platform to create community for the mutual benefit of all the participants. While sharing and co-creating knowledge, we learned from community members, staff at the service sector, peers/fellow students, lecturers, and ourselves, as persons, concerning others, through reflection on service-experiences. When reflecting on the findings, there is no doubt that holistic and integrated development took place, which enabled true transformation in the personal, professional (academic), practical and social domains. Therefore, it is enlightening to find that one of the participants [P8] described the learning and development as a “beautiful experience”, and stating further, “I am happy, I enjoyed the service-learning experience, it was good, and if I had to do it again, I definitely will”.

The findings of study shared the significance of the ISLP approach in the offering of holistic and integrative postgraduate development. The approach appeared to flourish academic learning with human elements of well-being, social intelligence, reciprocity, reflection, relationship and a whole-system approach for learning in a CURP, to make a difference through the praxis of engaged scholarship for the common good. Being contextually bound, the application of the ISLP approach cannot be generalised. However, the detailed description of the study can serve as an example for implementation thereof across disciplines and societal sectors.

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**CHAPTER 6 (ARTICLE 5)**  
**A WHOLE MODEL: TOWARDS FLOURISHMENT OF ENGAGED  
SCHOLARSHIP IN COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY RESEARCH  
PARTNERSHIPS**

**Proposed journal: Journal for New Generation Sciences<sup>5</sup>**

**ABSTRACT**

The article presents a meta-reflection on a qualitative action research doctoral study. It reports on the holistic and inclusive development, achieved by an integrated service-learning praxis approach to flourishing of engaged scholarship in community–university research partnerships (CURPs). I (first author) share the academic journey, by reflecting on the learning captured in my reflection journal regarding the research process and a synthesis of the study’s findings, across the context of three action research cycles (ARCs). The findings of the meta-reflection shares a WHOLE model, offering a focus on **W**ell-being through quality education and lifelong learning, **H**olistic and inclusive development, **O**pportunities to address societal challenges, **L**earning-Leading-Living-Loving/Serving for responsible glocal citizenship and social justice for **E**ngaged scholarship to flourish, underpinned by values-in-action that fosters the common good. This article makes a case for the legitimacy of service-learning praxis towards its sustainability as a transformative educational strategy in higher education.

**Keywords:** appreciative inquiry; community-university research partnerships; engaged scholarship; flourishing; WHOLE model

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<sup>5</sup> <https://journals.co.za/journal/newgen/submit>

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

After the mandated implementation of community engagement in higher education institutions (HEIs), the University of the Free State (UFS) established an effective practice of community engaged service-learning (CESL) in community–higher education partnerships (CHEPs) (RSA 1997; RSA DoE 1997; Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999; RSA DHET 2013; UFS 2013; Shumer, Stanton and Giles 2017). However, when I (first author) reflected on the rapid transformation of higher education and society’s demands for 21st-century education, concerning established CESL practice, four themes emerged to be of concern regarding the future sustainability of CESL for advancing engaged scholarship at the UFS (UFS 2013; UNESCO 2015).

First, the *fragmentation* of community engagement, teaching–learning and research might challenge the improvement of CESL practice. Secondly, a *lack of inclusive* collaboration exists across diverse sectors and disciplines in CHEPs, which can be challenging to future partnership development. Thirdly, *community-led collaborative learning* alongside CESL students receives *no recognition or reward*, which leads to an ethical concern about the notion of true “reciprocity” (Higher Education Public Purpose 2021:Online) in a CHEP. Fourthly, as revealed by recent research, it is not only at the UFS that university academics voice the *need for national support to promote professional career development of engaged scholars* (Favish and Simpson 2016; Sandmann, Saltmarsh and O’Meara 2016).

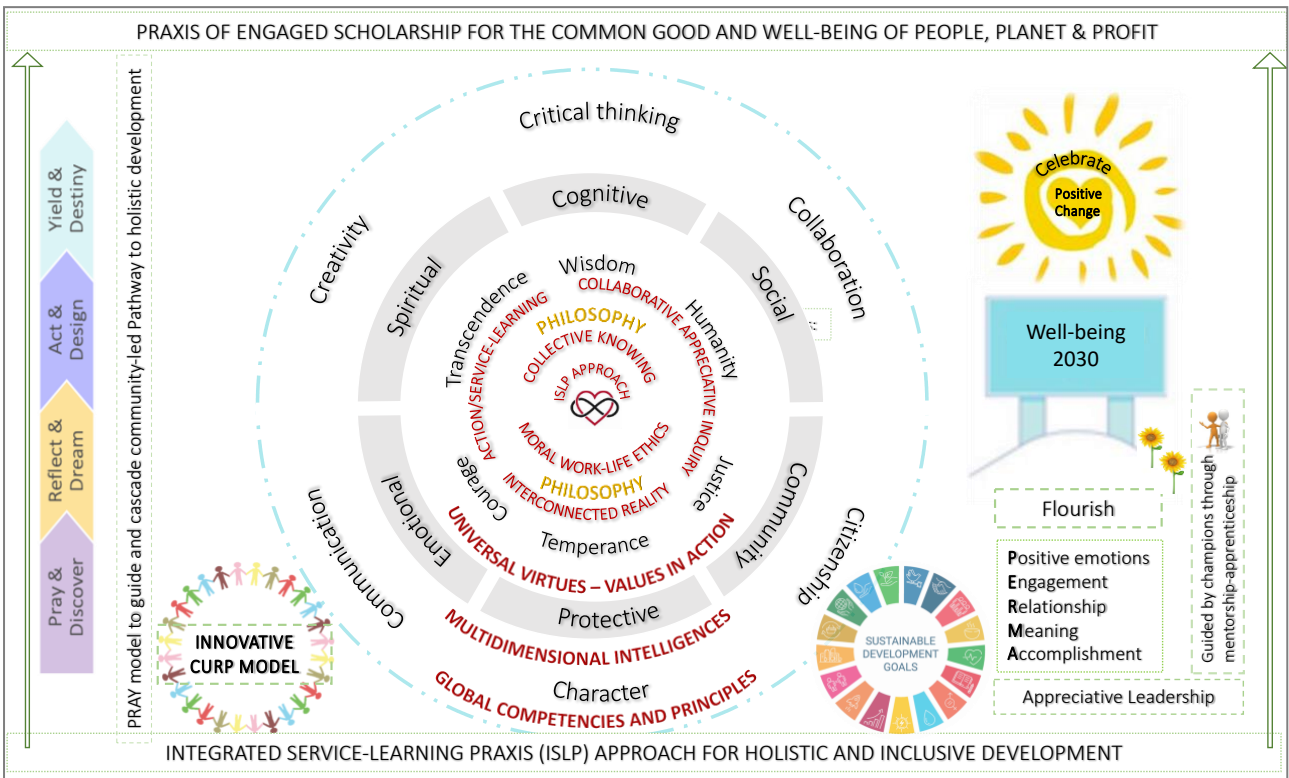
By building on previous scholarship for the development of the CESL field (Venter, Erasmus and Seale 2015), these challenges contributed to the initiation of my doctoral study. Using an action research design, the doctoral study explored the development, evaluation and implementation of an integrated service-learning praxis (ISLP) approach for flourishing of engaged scholarship, in a community-university research partnership (CURP) [see/cf. Chapter 2, Article 1; Chapter 3, Article 2; Chapter 4, Article 3; Chapter 5, Article 4].

This article, however, does not report on the findings of the doctoral study. Instead, the purpose of this article is to share the findings from my meta-reflection on the action research process and synthesis of the findings (across three action research cycles/ARCs), driven by the following

research question: **How can the ISLP approach flourish engaged scholarship in CURPs, beyond the existing CURP at the UFS?** To provide a detailed background for clear understanding of the meta-reflection, the next section outlines the conceptual, contextual and theoretical underpinnings of the doctoral study.

## 6.2 CONCEPTS, CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

In this section, I explain the concepts, context and theories which underpinned the study, supported by references to relevant, detailed findings and confirmed by the literature (Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Wood 2020). I provide a visual framework to lead the description (see Figure 6.1).



**Figure 6.1: Framework of the ISLP approach in a CURP**

(Source: Author’s own, adapted from Zuber-Skerritt, Wood and Louw 2015:21)

As shown in Figure 6.1, the construct of the ISLP approach comprised multiple components.

### **6.2.1 The ISLP approach in an a CURP**

The ISLP approach evolved from a self-constructed idea of combining CESL (Stanton et al. 1999; Shumer et al. 2017), appreciative inquiry (Stavros and Torres 2018) and appreciative leadership (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader 2010) for holistic and inclusive development to all partners in CURPs [see/cf. Chapter 1]. Such a praxis-combination allowed for an interdependence and integration of community engagement, teaching–learning, and research for engaged scholarship (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015). As portrayed in Figure 6.1, the concept of integration requires further explanation.

#### *6.2.1.1 Integration*

Integration, as embedded in the ISLP approach, combined several learning elements, such as *university functions* of community engagement, teaching–learning and research, to deliver engaged scholarship in the context of partnership and reciprocity (RSA DHET 2013; Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015; Higher Education Public Purpose 2021:Online). In addition, the ISLP approach integrated multi- and transdisciplinary *learning environments*, as well as the *learning domains* of theory and practice [see/cf. 5.4.1.1]. Moreover, on personal, professional, and social levels, such integrated holism combined human *learning dimensions* of “heart, feelings, emotions, spirit, and soul, as well as mind” (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015:3) [see/cf. 5.4.4]. Finally, when implemented, the ISLP approach required a *value* commitment of social justice and responsibility, as well as a willingness to include and support others’ holistic development.

The ISLP approach also enabled an interlocking of *knowledge functions*, namely discovery, integration, sharing (teaching–learning) and application, for engaged scholarship to address pressing challenges with solutions that foster the public good (Boyer 1996; 2016). More specifically, through the ISLP approach, CESL enabled transformative, high-impact and engaged learning, which also enhanced attainment of employability skills (Stanton et al. 1999; Kuh 2008; Shumer, Stanton and Giles 2017; Myburgh 2016; Pitso 2016).

### 6.2.1.2 *Community engaged service-learning*

The pedagogy of CESL is rooted in the common good and experiential learning by doing and applied in civil society (Shumer et al. 2017). Furthermore, CESL is value-driven towards the inculcation of socially responsive citizenship, democracy, and social justice [see/cf. 5.4.1.3]. Thereby, CESL holds a praxis-orientation, to link reflection with real-life practice to understand the dynamics of social challenges and the world of work (Shumer et al. 2017; Wood 2020) [see/cf. 5.4.1.1]. Because it is purpose-driven to make a positive difference for sustainable development and social justice, CESL was (and remains) an appropriate pedagogy and philosophy for the delivery of engaged scholarship (Ramsay 2017; Shumer et al. 2017) [see/cf. 5.4.4]. As demonstrated at the core of Figure 6.1, the practice of CESL was strengthened through the ISLP approach. The pedagogy was combined with appreciative inquiry.

### 6.2.1.3 *Appreciative inquiry*

Appreciative inquiry served as a strength-based genre of action research to “discover the best in people, organisations, and the people around them” (Stavros and Torres 2018:119). By applying appreciative inquiry, learning emerged from the discovery of best practices, character strengths, and values (the positive core) in human systems such as CURPs, when it functioned in a most successful frame for individual and collective learning and knowledge co-creation [see/cf. 3.2.1; 4.2; 5.2] (Cooperrider et al. 2008; Whitney et al. 2010; Petersen and Seligman 2004; Stavros and Torres 2018). Additionally, from the application of the ISLP approach, the continued practice of appreciative inquiry enabled the development of appreciative leadership (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader 2010).

### 6.2.1.4 *Appreciative leadership*

The appreciative leadership strategies of *inquiry, illumination, inclusion, inspiration and integrity* transformed the manner of leading, learning, living and loving/serving (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader 2010) [see/cf. 3.4.1.1; 4.4.3]. Appreciative leadership strategies set in

motion “positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance - to make a positive difference in the world” (Whitney et al. 2010:3) for wellbeing/flourishment.

#### *6.2.1.5 Flourishment*

Flourishment, included in the delivery of the ISLP approach, fostered holistic development for the benefit of all participants, underpinned by the building blocks of the PERMA rubric (**p**ositive emotion, **e**ngagement and flow, **r**elationship, **m**eaning and purpose, and **a**ccomplishment of goals (Seligman 2011). In the third ARC, these building blocks not only served as a data-analysis tool for reporting the applied effect of the ISLP approach by community member participants’ regarding progression on their community-led action learning oriented ‘Pathway to holistic development’ (‘phd’) [see/cf. 4.3]. The PERMA rubric also served to evaluate the applied effect of the ISLP approach on postgraduate well-being for holistic and inclusive development [see/cf. 5.4.4].

#### *6.2.1.6 Holistic and inclusive development*

In the third ARC’s CURP setting, holistic and inclusive development took place among partners [see/cf. 5.4]. For development to be experienced in this broadest sense, it should be “work related and specialised in a particular area or field of one’s choice” (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:6) and include learning “from the simplest to the highest levels” (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:6). The combination of service-learning and appreciative inquiry enabled holistic, inclusive, relevant, and self-directed professional learning and development (Stanton et al. 1999; Shumer et al. 2017), “from the simplest to the highest levels” (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:6). This holistic and inclusive development can be aligned with the sustainable development goals, for creating well-being of people, planet, and profit, towards a better future in society, the environment and the workplace (UNDP 2015) [see/cf. 2.4.2.1; 4.1; 5.1]. After this detailed description regarding the concepts that relate to the ISLP approach, it is relevant to describe the doctoral study’s context and related findings.

## 6.2.2 Context and synthesis of findings

The context of the doctoral study comprised *three action research cycles* (ARCs), each bound to a specific setting (international, national and local), phase of action research process, timeline, research question and findings.

The action research process started with the planning phase, namely the initial springboard of the thesis proposal (February 2015-October 2015), drawing from the context of my professional practice and position as engaged scholar [see/cf. 1.3]. The overarching question was set by asking: *How can the ISLP approach enable flourishing of all partners' professional development within expanded CHEPs?* I proposed a conceptual, contextual and theoretical framework for the ISLP approach to serve as foundation for further development of the ISLP approach [see/cf.1.2.]. Three ARCs followed, each underpinned by iterative phases to act, observe and reflect.

The first ARC (November 2015-May 2016) involved a set of six international CESL pioneering champions [see/cf. 2.2.4.6 and Table 1.2]. A CESL champion is “someone knowledgeable ... whose practice portrays a standard of excellence ... who cares unconditionally for others and share their expertise to change society towards a common good for all” (Venter, Erasmus and Seale 2015:153). In this sense, these participants provided appreciative leadership (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader 2010) at the onset of the study (first ARC). They answered the following research question: *How can the ISLP approach enable flourishing of engaged scholarship in expanded CHEPs?* They co-constructed a practical framework which dually aligned with an integrated theoretical model of Sandmann, Saltmarsh, and O’Meara (2016) and the ISLP approach - offering flourishing of engaged scholarship [see/cf. 2.5.5]; as well as a taxonomy to profess praxis [see/cf. 2.6.1].

The second ARC (June 2016 - December 2019) involved a set of eleven national community engagement leaders, serving as Board members on the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF) (including myself as research facilitator and full participant) [see/cf. 3.2.2 and 3.3.2]. We answered the question: *How can SAHECEF become a*

*flourishing community of praxis towards national support of professional development for engaged scholars?* The SAHECEF participants created a 5R plan [see/cf. 3.4.2]; established regional chapters/divisions, to cascade its existing professional development support from national to local levels; and held an International Conference to advance professional development of engaged scholars [see/cf. 3.4.3].

The third ARC (June 2016 - December 2019) took place in the Bloemshelter-UFS CURP, comprising 24 participants (13 community members, the late leader of Bloemshelter, a non-governmental organisation/NGO, myself and the 2018 class of nine postgraduate nurse educator CESL students). The CURP affiliated with the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) to reward community-led action learning [see/cf. 4.1]. The research question asked to the first mentioned 15 participants, was set as follows: *How did the ISLP approach effect community-led development in the CURP?* They co-created a community-led action learning oriented ‘Pathway to holistic development’ (‘phd’), enabling them to move from dependence to personal, spiritual and professional viability, using social entrepreneurship. On completion, GULL rewarded the four-year long community-led ‘phd’ [see/cf. 6.2.1.8]. The ISLP approach was infused into the curriculum of the postgraduate nurse educator CESL students (hereafter referred to as CESL students) (February 2018-November 2018) [see/cf. 5.2]. Among other CURP activities, the nine CESL students conducted two nominal groups to reach their curricular outcomes. The first nominal group determined the learning needs of community members, while the second determined the community-led learning and cascading process to share the community-led ‘phd’ with wider community, beyond the existing CURP. In response, the CESL students presented learner-centred lessons for the community-led ‘phd’ and assisted the community members to co-construct a ‘PRAY’ model (Pray, Reflect, Act, Yield) [see/cf. 4.4.4 and 4.4.5]. Therefore, as part of the third ARC, the following question was set to the CESL students: *How did the ISLP approach effect postgraduate development in the CURP?* As illustrated at the core of Figure 6.1, using the Values-In-Action (VIA) framework of Peterson and Seligman (2004) for thematic data analysis, the CESL students perceived development in alignment with a set of 24-character strengths, six multidimensional intelligences (cognitive, social, community, protective,

emotional, spiritual), underpinned by six universal virtue-categories (wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance/prudence, transcendence) [see/cf. 5.4.1]. The CESL students further perceived development of global competencies (character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity) [see/cf. 5.4.2]. In addition, drawing from reflection on learning experiences, the CESL students provided principles to guide development of global competencies [see/cf. 5.4.3]. Finally, using the PERMA rubric of Seligman (2011) (**p**ositive emotion, **e**ngagement and flow, **r**elationship, **m**eaning and purpose, and **a**ccomplishment of goals) for analysis of wellbeing/flourishment, the CESL students perceived an increase in postgraduate wellbeing.

After describing the concepts which underpin the ISLP approach, context and related synthesis of findings, it is relevant to explain the theoretical framework that underpinned the study.

### **6.2.3 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of the study comprised a combination of social constructionism and generativity (Bushe 2007; Cooperrider et al. 2008; Gergen and Gergen 2008; Peterson and Seligman 2004; Stavros and Torres 2018). These theories underpin the model of appreciative inquiry (Stavros and Torres 2018) and are situated in the field of positive psychology (Seligman 2011). Social constructionism assumes that actions/service, feelings, knowing, learning and inquiry, require interactive, reflective dialogue to engage in constructive conversations for knowledge co-creation (Stavros and Torres 2018:10). In line with social constructionism, the use of generativity sparks positive energy for the co-creation of knowledge, which is aimed at enhancing and improving CESL practice for flourishing that promotes the common good of society (Bushe 2007; Reed 2007; Gergen and Gergen 2008; Ludema and Fry 2008; Shumer et al. 2017). As shown in Figure 6.1, at its core, the ISLP approach was underpinned by a *praxis philosophy* (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015; Shumer et al. 2017), encompassing *collective knowing* (epistemology); *interconnected reality* (ontology); moral work-life ethics rooted in *universal virtues* (axiology); *action learning/CESL* (engaged pedagogy) and collaborative *appreciative inquiry* (methodology). As an engaged scholar, I believe that this praxis philosophy of the ISLP

approach, can make a case for the “legitimacy of service-learning as a coin of the realm in higher education” (Duley cited in Stanton et al. 1999:219).

### 6.3 RESEARCHER POSITIONING

When writing from a meta-reflective level, it is important to clearly identify researcher positionality (Wood 2020). As a CESL scholar, I realise how my attitudes, beliefs, norms and values, worldview, assumptions, experiences, feelings, and thinking influenced my own and co-researchers’/participants’ learning and development process (Wood 2020). Hence, at the onset of the action research, I positioned myself as a writer/researcher/co-participant and continued to do that throughout the study – from personal, political, professional, reflexive, and meta-reflective stances (Wood 2020).

From a *personal* stance, my identity and life philosophy are rooted in Christianity (*The Living Bible* 1971:808) [see/cf. 1.3]. Therefore, I follow the commandment of love, first for the Lord, and secondly, and equally important, for my neighbour as for myself (Matthew 22:36–39). Further, I believe that I should do for others what I want them to do for me, and I have a spirit of forgiveness (Mathew 7:12; Mark 11:25). From the onset of the research, I declared this stance, more specific for the third ARC (June 2016–December 2019), which took place in a local partnership context of a faith-based organisation, whose constitution is grounded in Christianity [see/cf. Chapter 4, Article 3]. Hence, throughout the research process, I was mindful to avoid bias in this regard, and I maintained a self-reflective stance. For the theme of spirituality, this was important, as it formed one of the strands for the community-led ‘phd’.

From a *political and professional* stance, in the capacity of an academic CESL practitioner-scholar, I honour democracy, social justice and respect human rights (RSA 1996). In reflection from a *professional career stance*, I worked as a CESL lecturer at the SoN, UFS (January 2009–May 2016). In June 2016, I was appointed as leader of the CESL division in the Directorate of Community Engagement, UFS, where I still work at the time of writing. Both the focus of my Master’s (2012–2014) and current doctoral study, was to advance the CESL field.

In each ARC, the research collaboration involved different sets of participants, drawing knowledge from specific sociocultural and economic backgrounds. In the contexts of the first and second ARCs and sets, there were no power issues. In the context of the third ARC and set, I openly declared my professional stance as a middle-aged, white woman working in a leadership position at the UFS. I was constantly mindful about power and privilege-related issues. Drawing from this praxis paradigm, I deeply respected each participant's uniqueness. Also, researching from an appreciative inquiry framework, enabled me to deeply value others' character strengths, human dignity, and recognition of different knowledges, while learning to develop an empathetic understanding. I applied the strategies of appreciative leadership, namely *inquiry, integrity, inclusion, illumination and inspiration* when engaging with co-researchers/participants. In addition, I applied the appreciative inquiry principles, to bring positive energy into the room, for co-creating knowledge for positive change. This appreciative stance enabled the establishment of strong relationships, built on trust and mutual research benefits for the common good (Mertens 2015; Stavros and Torres 2017; Wood 2020).

From a *reflexive* stance (Tracy 2013; Wood 2020), I constantly questioned my body language, thinking, biases, stereotyping, actions and words, when I interacted with co-researchers. I soon realised that my love for learning and knowledge-sharing, which is one of my character strengths, might not be the same as that of other co-researchers. It could either irritate them, if I shared too much/or repeated information, or might seem that I value my knowledge from a power-position perspective. Rather, I learned to ask positive and generative questions during constructive conversations, thereby, contributing to knowledge for positive change. For example, "please share a story about your experience when you were proud of what you achieved, when you've made a difference regarding personal and professional development of yourself and others" [see/cf. Chapter 4, Article 3]. I also learned to become a careful listener, even to the silence in the room, and related body language. I learned about the importance of collaboration, respect, responsibility, recognition of others' actions, knowledge, accountability, openness, trust, and trustworthiness. Also, I learned to apply appreciative inquiry principles (constructionist, simultaneity, poetic, anticipatory, positive, wholeness, awareness, free choice, narrative,

enactment) as well as the CESL principle of reciprocity, to become a reflexive scholar [see/cf. Table 1.1 and 1.2.2].

## 6.4 METHODOLOGY

As an engaged scholar, I specifically chose a transformative paradigm (Mertens 2015; Wood 2020) and the qualitative, strength-based action research design of collaborative appreciative inquiry (Reed 2007; Cooperrider et al. 2008; Grieten, Lambrechts, Bouwen, Huybrechts, Fry and Cooperrider 2017; Stavros and Torres 2018). I wanted to contribute to the generation of action-oriented (practical) knowledge, that could improve the practice of CESL, and by implication, engaged scholarship, to bring about social change for the common good (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015; Shumer et al. 2017). In answer to the research question, namely: **How can the ISLP approach flourish engaged scholarship in CURPs, beyond the existing CURP at the UFS?**, I used the method of meta-reflection. I drew from my reflection journal, focusing on the action research process and synthesis of the findings across three ARCs, to reflect beyond reflection and understand why I thought, acted, and felt the way I did (Wood 2020).

The Faculty of Education's Ethics Board granted clearance for the research (HSD2016/0200) (see Appendix A). In reflection on ethical considerations, it was good practice to compile an ethics contract at the onset of each ARC and action research set. Thereby, we set clear goals, shared values, and understood our roles and responsibilities. We ensured adherence or adjusted to the research as and when required (Wood 2020). We followed the principles of respect, fairness/justice, beneficence, and avoidance of risk and harm (Mertens 2015:61; Wood 2020). At the onset of each ARC and set, I provided background information regarding the ISLP approach, according to the context of the set of participants and the objective of the research. In the second ARC and set, we did not apply the principle of confidentiality while we engaged in the research process, for the research was collaborative. However, for writing up the research, I ensured the anonymity of the participants. The same applied for the third ARC and set, except for the CESL students, where the completion of questionnaires were anonymous. Regarding authenticity, the

achievement of holistic development was proof of the validity of the research (Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Wood 2020).

## 6.5 FINDINGS

The findings from the meta-reflection relates to the action research process and the synthesis of the findings, as generated across three ARCs and settings of the doctoral study [see/cf. 6.2.8].

### 6.5.1 Action research process

With regards to the first ARC and set, I questioned my thinking and actions about the chosen data generation method, namely appreciative conversations. *Was the data collection method of appreciative conversations collaborative or not, specifically in the way I conducted it on the participants?* I rationalised that the reason why I conducted the interviews, was due to geographical and time-zone differences across the globe. In hindsight, as an emerging scholar, I now realise that I followed a purely, traditional qualitative method for data collection (Wood 2020). Although I engaged with each of the participants before the onset of the research, to allow for informed consent, it was *me* who conducted appreciative conversations *on* and not *with* the participants to *collect*, analyse, code the data and draft an article [see/cf. Chapter 2, Article 1]. However, I think the action of sharing the draft article with each of the participants, provided them with a sense of the collective voices, as well as an opportunity for peer review and collective feedback, which I applied towards final completion of the first article of the doctoral study [see/cf. 2.4.2]. In line with this vein of critique, I question the design, asking: *Was this action research?* The answer is yes. The use of appreciative inquiry, a genre of action research, was infused into the interview protocol and therefore allowed for the generation of action-oriented knowledge, because it provided an action research process (define, discover, dream, design and deliver). *How could I improve data generation practice in future?* As alternative method for *collaborative data generation*, I could have used Zoom (Zoom 2016) to allow virtual collaborative, cloud-based videoconferencing in a main room, at a time some that supported all

the participants. The participants could enter into break-out rooms and conduct one-to-one paired interviews with each other for collective data generation, followed by collective data report, analysis and generation of findings in the main room.

### **6.5.2 Scholarly journey**

In meta-reflection on my scholarly learning, I focused on how the generated findings across the *three ARCs and sets*, informed each other, and by implication, my learning journey. Considering that the research topic was to develop an ISLP approach for flourishing of engaged scholarship in CURPs, the findings were applicable to me also, being an emerging engaged scholar.

In the *first ARC and set*, the practical framework [see/cf. 2.4.2] included actions to guide professional development of engaged scholars, namely to: (1) Establish long-term CHEPs for reciprocal engagement in high-quality collaborative learning; (2) Reflect and inquire continuously on improving practice; (3) Follow a strength-based developmental approach (such as the ISLP approach) to achieving holistic development; (4) Seek mentorship by champions for engaged scholarship, to guide and support the implementation of the ISLP approach; (5) Connect to a global network and share best practices to strengthen and scale up practice; (6) publish engaged research to legitimise the field; and (7) Develop a learning portfolio to portray praxis and achieve reward and promotion.

As an emerging engaged scholar, I applied these actions in the *second ARC and set*, where I established a long-term CHEP with the Board of SAHECEF, and implemented the actions mentioned above. In response to the research question that guided the second ARC, the SAHECEF Board participants designed a 5R action plan, namely to (1) *Reframe and Reform* engaged scholarship for inclusive and holistic development, by integrating teaching-learning, research and community engagement; (2) Apply and develop *Reflection and Relationship* for the praxis of engaged scholarship; (3) *Regenerate and Revitalise* CHEPs into CURPs; (4) *Re-focus and Re-publish* for a wider (open access) readership; and (5) *Recognise and Reward* professional

learning and development of all partners in a CURP, motivating them to document their work in a portfolio.

In the third ARC and set, I applied the actions of the practical framework generated in the first ARC, as well as the '5R plan' [see/cf. 3.4.2; 3.4.2], generated in the second ARC. I *reframed and regenerated* an existing long-term Bloemshelter-UFS CHEP into a CURP, and while applying the other four Rs mentioned above, conducted engaged scholarship for flourishing of all partners in the CURP. As full participant in the study, I co-constructed and implemented the community-led 'phd' and the PRAY model with the community members and leader of Bloemshelter participants. This experience introduced me to learning about social entrepreneurship, personal life skills and spiritual development.

In the second and third ARCs and sets, we applied an adapted taxonomy for engaged pedagogies, which was an adapted version of Shulman's "table of learning" (Shulman 2000:38), generated in the first ARC and set. The adapted taxonomy guided us to profess the praxis of engaged scholarship as follows [see/cf. 2.5.1]:

*Learning emerged from engaged scholarship experiences, which in turn led to the holistic development of cognitive, emotional, practical and spiritual intelligence. Holistic development led to an empathetic understanding of self and others, required to develop practical wisdom. To establish practical wisdom, we engaged in collaborative learning to gain competence in the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ethics required for inter-acting, inter-connecting, inter-being (co-existing), inter-depending, inter-feeling, inter-knowing, inter-thinking. Continuous reflection on our feelings, thoughts, and actions led to higher-order thinking, allowing for the development of collective judgment on how to cope with challenges and find opportunities in the face of uncertainty. In turn, we gained collective judgment for the co-creation of innovative future designs in the presence of constraints and unpredictability. Ultimately, the exercise of collective judgment made the development of*

*commitment possible. Through commitment, we became capable of professing our practical wisdom and values, faith, hope and love, trust, as well as our doubts and skepticism, internalising those attributes and making them integral to our identities. In turn, commitment made new engagements possible and even necessary leading to social justice for positive change.*

## **6.6 CONCLUSION**

From a meta-reflective stance for learning, I reflected on the research process across three ARCs and a synthesis of the findings of the study. I followed an epistemology that involved the social co-creative nature of knowing, which also included attainment of the social co-creative nature of learning and attaining of practical wisdom (phronesis) (Sternberg 2003; Wood 2020). This wisdom, gained from reflection on lived realities, required a balance of intrapersonal, interpersonal (co-researchers), and extra-personal (organisational, such as partnership/organisational) co-created knowledge, that was underpinned by values for the common good (Seligman 2011) [see/cf. 1.2.1.8].

To measure my own wellbeing/flourishment regarding professing the praxis of engaged scholarship, I made use of the PERMA (Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning and purpose, Accomplishment) rubric (Seligman 2011), which by implication, also contributed to the well-being of all the participants [see/cf. 4.4.7 ;5.4.4]. In this sense, I experienced the positive emotions of excitement, gratitude, and hope, while I learned with and from the participants in this study. I could not miss observing the changes in the participants' body language while we engaged in appreciative conversations. The participants were willing to share their practical wisdom, knowledge, and expertise, which filled me with a sense of awe and wonder, especially when I reflected on the co-created action-oriented knowledge that emerged from the study. This positive engagement and flow that emerged throughout the research process made me lose track of time and I was sparked by the positive energy, generated by following and sharing appreciative inquiry principles [see/cf. 1.1.2]. I built positive relationships that were

guided by values-in-action (Seligman 2001) which fostered the common good (Wood 2020). In these relationships, I observed the establishment of *rapid trust* as soon as we engaged in appreciative conversations. The positive purpose and meaningful shared learning experiences that emerged from conducting this study exceeded my expectations. As an engaged scholar, I realised that each participant, including me, contributed to making a difference in society for the common good, as portrayed by the findings reported on. Regarding *positive accomplishments*, I confirm that most of the planned actions were achieved in each related ARC and set. These *positive accomplishments* contributed to bring about social change for the common good.

Regarding my praxis as an engaged scholar, I developed as a whole being – personally, professionally, practically, politically and socially. I gained research related knowledge, understanding and skills, and developed values that foster the common good. After applying the ISLP approach in the second and third ARCs, I learned that holistic development involved *multidimensional intelligence domains*, namely the cognitive, emotional, social, community, protective, and spiritual domains, which align with six universal virtue-categories, namely wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance/prudence, transcendence) (Peterson and Seligman 2004). This holistic development transformed my academic identity, to become an *engaged scholar*.

However, in reflection on the *challenges* that emerged from the study, I must admit that the implementation of the ISLP approach was complex and required a great deal of time. Therefore, to implement the ISLP approach at the UFS and beyond, as I already envision doing, I will advocate for a step-by-step process that is guided by the actions set out in the practical framework [see/cf. 2.6.1]. These actions include the following for the flourishing of engaged scholarship, namely: true institutional commitment; establishment of a funding model and infrastructure (physical and human resources); adopting a change theory through implementing the ISLP approach; a policy for promotion and reward of engaged scholars; establishment of an engaged research center, to unite the university and community; establishment of an engaged scholarship strategy and quality assurance system; and by following appreciative leadership

strategies to advance engaged scholarship. In addition, the implementation of the ISLP approach will require guidance by mentors and global networking to scale up best practices.

In final reflection on writing for publication, I realised that I am still a novice. Compared to conducting the fieldwork, the writing for publication posed a definite challenge. The act of writing confronted me with my biggest challenge, namely time management. The reason for this challenge stemmed from my personality of perfectionism and the love of learning, which emerged to be my top VIA strength (Seligman 2011). Whenever I started writing, I ended up in an ever-deeper literature search, which hindered me from keeping to the planned writing timeline. I have learned that I still need to develop the strength of self-regulation and further realised that *academic writing is a skill that develops over time*. I prepared five articles on engaged scholarship for publication, to contribute towards the legitimisation of the field. These articles can be documented as evidence in a learning portfolio to portray praxis and achieve reward and promotion for professing the praxis of engaged scholarship. The writing of these articles contributed to the flourishing of my professional development as an emerging scholar and affirmed the vision to develop the ISLP approach.

In conclusion, in Table 6.1, I share a self-constructed generic model to portray the trends that emerged from the engaged scholarship in pursuit of strengthening CESL practice through the ISLP approach, namely the WHOLE model, which is self-explanatory.

**Table 6.1: A WHOLE model to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship in a CURP**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Integrated Service-learning Praxis approach in Community–University Research Partnerships (CURPs) informs the WHOLE model:</b></p> <p>Well-being through quality education and lifelong learning for a better future</p> <p>Holistic and inclusive development</p>
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Opportunities to address societal challenges

Learning-Leading-Living-Loving/Serving for responsible glocal citizenship and social justice

Engaged scholarship to flourish, underpinned by values-in-action that fosters the common good

(Source: Author's own 2021)

The implementation of the WHOLE model requires a *whole-system* shift, towards creating an enabling environment for academics to profess the praxis of engaged scholarship. Engaged scholarship is indeed the *raison d'être* (reason for the existence) of higher education learning and development. To support this statement, one of the participants in the study [see/cf. 2.6.1] shared the following significant proposal:

*Perhaps a reframing of higher education is needed – from a commodity, one needs for financial and other personal achievements – to training and development for socially responsible citizenship in a just and democratic society.*

Seeing myself as a novice champion who advocates for advancing the CESL field, I aspire to act and become a 're-framer' of higher education for social change, by being the first and inviting other like-minded engaged scholars to apply the WHOLE model (see Table 6.1).

The doctoral study strengthened the practice of CESL, by documenting useful practical theory/knowledge for improved praxis towards future flourishing of the field and makes a case for the "legitimacy of service-learning as a coin of the realm in higher education" (Duley cited in Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999:219).

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## CHAPTER 7 EPILOGUE

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this non-traditional article-style PhD thesis [see/cf. Chapter 1, 1.1.1], the research journey involved completing five interrelated articles [see/cf. Chapters 2–6 for full details]. In conclusion of the thesis, Chapter 7 provides a synopsis of these articles. I will provide brief background and context; concluding reflections on the findings; and justify journal choices.

### 7.2 SYNOPSIS OF FIVE INTERRELATED ARTICLES

Although each article is free-standing, for publication purposes, these five articles contribute to the thesis and are interrelated and united by a common purpose. The thesis developed an integrated service-learning praxis (ISLP) approach and expanded triad-sector community–higher education partnerships (CHEPs). These actions contributed to flourishing of professional development of partners from all three sector (community, higher education institution (HEI), service sectors).

The main objective of the study [see/cf. Chapter 1, 1.3] was to gain an understanding of (1) the role and effect of the ISLP approach by exploring the reflections of all partners, and (2) the effect of partnership expansion to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship. Instead of using a traditional, deficit-based approach, I applied the collaborative, contemporary, strength-based action research genre of appreciative inquiry, and invited the participants to answer this central question: How can the ISLP approach enable the flourishing of *engaged scholarship for all partners in expanded CHEPs*? To elaborate on the main question, each article addressed a specific objective and question (see precise details in 7.2.1–7.2.5), to complete the thesis.

The study was applied on three contextual levels (international, national, and local), each inclusive of a set of conveniently and purposefully selected participants. This three-set participant selection brought a richness set of different knowledge's to the study. In each

article's findings, the study reported on three action research cycles (ARCs) and their specific settings as follows: Article 1 (ARC 1: international); Article 2 (ARC 2: national); Articles 3 and 4 (ARC 3: local). The reason for including both Articles 3 and 4 in the third ARC was to report the perspectives of all partners who engaged in scholarship in a community–university research partnership (CURP) triad-sector model. The three sectors were represented by community members, a representative of the service sector, more specifically a non-profit organisation (NPO) (Article 3), as well as nurse educator students representing the HEI sector (Article 4). Finally, Article 5 united the three contextual levels and included a meta-reflection on the research process and synthesis of findings that merged from Articles 1 to 4. After this holistic overview, the following section will elaborate on each articles' findings in detail.

### **7.2.1 Article 1**

#### ***Title: A practical framework to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship in community higher education partnerships***

Service-learning advances engaged scholarship in CHEPs [see/cf. Chapter 2, Article 1 for full details]. However, continuous change in higher education and society requires an approach and expansion of CHEPs if the praxis of engaged scholarship is to flourish. To address the specific objective of Article 1 [see/cf. 2.3], I facilitated an appreciative inquiry among six international pioneering service-learning champions, who shared reflections regarding the development of the ISLP approach (2016–2019) (ARC 1). The main findings [see/cf. 2.5] are based on responses to the question [see/cf. 2.5.1]: *How can the ISLP approach enable flourishing of engaged scholarship in expanded CHEPs?* Participants co-constructed a practical framework that is aligned with an integrated theoretical model (Sandmann, Saltmarsh, and O'Meara 2016) to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship. The practical framework offered flourishing for professional development of engaged scholars and the institutionalisation of engaged scholarship by combining service-learning as pedagogy, appreciative inquiry as institutional change model, and appreciative leadership strategies [see/cf. 2.5.5]. In addition, the ISLP approach offered an adapted taxonomy from Shulman's "table of learning" (2002:38) to profess the praxis of engaged

scholarship [see/cf. 2.6.1]. Article 1, thus, provides practical theory, and draws from the participants' practical wisdom, which is confirmed by literature to inform the continuation of the second ARC.

### ***Journal justification***

Article 1 was prepared for submission to the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*.<sup>6</sup> This choice is justified by the journal's mission: serving as an interdisciplinary and international journal to advance theory and practice related to all forms of engagement between higher education institutions and communities. The journal highlights community-engaged endeavours, such as the development of the ISLP approach, co-constructed by international champions for engaged scholarship. Moreover, the original article on the integrated theoretical model for advancing engaged scholarship (Sandmann et al. 2016), was also published in this journal.

### **7.2.2 Article 2**

#### **Title: National support for professional development of engaged scholars in higher education**

To date, most South African public HEIs have institutionalised community engagement and service-learning [see/cf. Chapter 3, Article 2 for full detail]. However, academics still need national support to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship (Zuber-Skerritt, Wood and Louw 2015). They were driven by the objective of Article 2 [see/cf. 3.3.1], which reports on a case study of 11 board members (including me) of the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF). We conducted an appreciative inquiry summit for an in-action

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<sup>6</sup> <https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>

evaluation of the applied ISLP approach (2016). The main findings are based on responses to this *question* [see/cf. 3.4.1]: *How can SAHECEF become a flourishing community of praxis towards national support of professional development for engaged scholars?* On final evaluation of action (2019) [see/cf. 3.4.5], SAHECEF expanded existing support for engaged scholarship through a shared learning community mentored by national champions to establish CURPs. This partnership was guided by a taxonomy to profess the praxis of engaged scholarship. Additionally, SAHECEF also hosted a bi-annual international conference (2019) that enabled engaged scholars to join a global network for scale-up of practice. Thus, the practical theory that emerged from the first ARC (Article 1) served as a knowledge foundation to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship in the context of the second ARC (see Article 2).

### ***Journal justification***

I prepared Article 2 for submission to the *South African Journal for Higher Education*<sup>7</sup>. It is an independent, fully accredited peer-reviewed research journal published by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). This journal is an open-access publication and shares articles of interest to researchers and practitioners in higher education worldwide, specifically on innovations in higher education, research projects, and trends. The journal includes research done by members of prominent education associations in South Africa, as generated in the SAHECEF case study.

### **7.2.3 Article 3**

***Title. Developing and rewarding community-led action learning through engaged scholarship in a community university research partnership.***

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.journals.ac.za/index.php/sajhe/about/submissions>

In Article 3, the concept of a CHEP was transformed into the context of a triad-sector CURP model (2016–2019) [see/cf. Chapter 4, Article 3 for full detail]. The model connected a long-standing partnership, namely Bloemshelter (a shelter for the homeless) and the University of the Free State (UFS), in affiliation with the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL). This affiliation enabled the recognition and reward of community-led action learning, in parallel with academic learning and inquiry.

To address the specified objective [see/cf. 4.2], a group of 15 participants applied the ISLP approach for an in-action evaluation. As part of the CURP, a group of postgraduate nurse educator service-learning students joined the CURP. Making use of the nominal group technique, the students conducted a community-driven learning needs analysis, and accordingly presented action learning lessons to address the identified learning needs. Thereby, the students provided a network of learning support, while, in reciprocity, achieved their academic and civic module learning outcomes [see/cf. Chapter 5, Article 4 for full details].

The main findings are based on responses to the question that was posed to the community-member participants [see/cf. 4.4.1], namely: *How did the ISLP approach effect community-led development in the CURP?* The community-member participants co-created a community-led pathway to holistic development ('phd'), and a PRAY model to guide the engaged scholarship and cascade the action learning know-how, attained on community-led 'phd', beyond the research setting, into three new projects [see/cf. 4.4.4 and 4.4.5].

On completion, GULL recognised and rewarded the action learning attained in the four-year-long community-led 'phd' through certification of a Professional Bachelor Degree (Holistic Development) (Level 5). Thus, the practical theory generated in the first ARC (Article 1) informed the praxis of engaged scholarship in the second ARC (Article 2), which, in turn, informed the praxis of the engaged scholarship in the third ARC (Article 3).

### ***Journal justification***

I prepared Article 3 for submission to the Educational Research for Social Change Journal.<sup>8</sup> This is an open access, peer-reviewed and international journal, which is accredited by Scopus, IBSS and Scielo. The journal supports transformative education research through community-based participatory research approaches, to encourage educational research as social change. The journal contributes to theorising and disseminating current research to a broad, cross-disciplinary audience of academic scholars and practitioners in the field. Applying the ISLP approach in the context of the CURP model fitted these foci and related criteria.

### **7.2.4 Article 4**

#### ***Title. Advancing holistic postgraduate development through engaged scholarship in a community–university research partnership***

The workplace prompts HEIs, professional bodies, and society to equip postgraduates with a set of holistic work-and-life-ready attributes and global competencies, so that they can create a better future for the common good of society [see/cf. Chapter 5, Article 4 for full detail]. To address the specified objective [see/cf. 5.3], the 2018 class, comprising nine postgraduate nurse educator students, evaluated the effect of the ISLP approach on their postgraduate development. The ISLP approach was infused into their year-long credit-bearing practical nursing education module for application within an advanced postgraduate diploma in nursing education. These students provided a network of learning support for application in the CURP model [see/cf. Chapter 4, Article 3]. The main findings are based on the main research question [see/cf. 5.3]: *How did the ISLP approach effect postgraduate development in the CURP?*

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<sup>8</sup> <http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/index.php?id=2>

This main research question was expanded by secondary questions, which were encompassed in a post-implementation service-learning module questionnaire (see Appendix K). For the thematic analysis of the data, I specifically applied the VIA (value-in-action) classification framework (Peterson and Seligman 2004) and PERMA framework (Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning and purpose, Accomplishment) of Seligman (2011) [see/cf. 5.3]. In line with the VIA framework, the postgraduates developed a set of character strengths that aligned with universal virtues and multidimensional intelligences; reflective thinking habits of the mind; an increase in postgraduate well-being; and a set of global citizenship competencies [see/cf. 5.4.1–5.4.4]. An unintended finding, which emerged from the students' reflections, was that postgraduates spontaneously shared principles for acquiring global competencies [see/cf. 5.4.3]. This finding seems to portray the achievement of practical wisdom after applying the ISLP approach. Thus, just as demonstrated in Article 3, the practical theory generated in the first ARC (see Article 1), informed the praxis of engaged scholarship in the second ARC (see Article 2), which, in turn, informed the praxis of the engaged scholarship in the third ARC (see Article 4).

### ***Journal justification***

I prepared the article for submission to the *Perspectives in Education Journal*.<sup>9</sup> This open-access journal, which is DHET-accredited and peer-reviewed, publishes articles on contemporary topics related to education and democratic transition related to non-governmental organisations and universities. Therefore, the ISLP approach, applied to holistic postgraduate development in a CURP model, fits this nucleus.

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<sup>9</sup><https://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/pie/authorguidelines>

### 7.2.5 Article 5

**Title:** A WHOLE model: Towards flourishing of engaged scholarship in community-university research partnerships A recent review (Favish and Simpson 2016) of progress in the field indicated a quest by the higher education sector to integrate the practice of CESL with academic scholarship for delivery of action-oriented knowledge co-creation to achieve a more socially just, sustainable development in the future [see/cf. Chapter 6, Article 5]. To address the article's specific objective [see/cf. 5.3], I conducted a meta-reflection on the findings that had emerged from Articles 1 to 4. The findings of the meta-reflection are based on the following research question: *How can the ISLP approach flourish engaged scholarship in community university research partnerships (CURPs), beyond the existing CURP at the UFS?* Drawing from the emerging trends of the findings, I generated a WHOLE model, which in alignment with the focal thesis, indicates that the ISLP approach can promote flourishing of engaged scholarship in CURPs, beyond the context of the study.

#### ***Journal justification***

Article 5 was prepared for submission to the *Journal for New Generation Sciences*.<sup>10</sup> This journal is a DHET-accredited, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and peer-reviewed journal that focuses on scientific findings relating to knowledge production in the context of Mode 2: knowledge generation, scholarship in teaching and research, and entrepreneurship through innovation. The journal supports capacity building of new researchers, for example providing a platform for publishing articles that share meta-reflections on the findings of a doctoral study as a whole. Moreover, previous engaged scholarship, conducted towards the attainment of my Master's degree, was published in this journal in 2015. The findings of the Master's study also served as a foundation for completing and reporting on this doctoral study.

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://journals.co.za/journal/newgen/submit>

### **7.3 FUTURE RESEARCH**

The collective findings presented in Chapter 7 can serve as a foundation for future action research that is focused on the application of the ISLP approach, to evaluate and improve its promise of flourishing towards institutionalisation of engaged scholarship at the UFS (within the context of the CURP model). The action-oriented co-created knowledge [see/cf. 2.5, 3.4, 4.4, 5.4, 6.3.2.5] that was made explicit in this thesis, can serve as a springboard for future action research towards building a praxis model for advancing engaged scholarship. This additional action research proposes “the case for the legitimacy of service-learning as a coin of the realm in higher education (Duley cited in Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999:219).

### **7.4 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 7 provided a synopsis of the five interrelated articles for this non-traditional PhD thesis, and provided brief background and context, concluding reflections on the findings, and justification of journal choices.

When I finally reflected on the findings, I was astonished to see how the ISLP approach had come to life. I gained an in-action understanding of the role and effect of the ISLP approach for flourishing of professional development. By engaging with the participants in continuous reflection dialogue through appreciative inquiry, I listened closely to all the transformative stories (Tracy 2013; Mertens 2015). I concur with Wood (2020) that, as co-researchers, the participants became my mentors.

In the engaged scholarly context of expanded CHEPs and reciprocity, I first shared my envisioned idea to develop an ISLP approach, with six international service-learning pioneer champions. We co-constructed a practical framework for the ISLP approach, which proposed (1) flourishing for professional development of engaged scholars; (2) an adapted taxonomy from Shulman’s for professing the praxis of engaged scholarship and the institutionalisation of engaged scholarship; and (Zuber-Skerritt 2009; Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015).

This praxis followed when the ISLP approach was shared with a group of SAHECEF board members who serving as national champions. SAHECEF was willing to apply the ISLP approach in an in-action evaluation of its quality and usability. SAHECEF consequently established six regional chapters to promote the praxis of engaged scholarship by supporting the elements of glocal networking through international conferencing and the development of local CURPs.

Finally, I shared the ISLP approach in a local context by engaging with community members, the leader of an NPO, and a group of students willing to apply the ISLP approach in the context of a CURP model. By doing that, we co-constructed a community-led pathway to holistic development, in-action. In the spirit of true reciprocity, we affiliated with GULL, which recognised and rewarded this community-driven action learning. Alongside this appreciation, the service-learning students, who served as a network of learning support, gained credit-bearing recognition and reward towards their module learning outcomes, and their involvement contributed to holistic postgraduate development.

In travelling with the participants on this pathway to holistic development, I became transformed. I gained engaged scholarly knowledge, skills and attitudes – personally, professionally, socially and politically. In addition, I developed an appreciative eye, ear, mind, and heart, to observe, listen, learn, think, feel and act across multidimensional intelligence domains, universal virtues, and character strengths (Petersen and Seligman 2004; Seligman 2011; Zuber-Skerritt 2015; Stavros and Torres 2018; Wood 2020). By reflecting on a bigger picture and life-purpose, I aspired to contribute my learning and serving as a democratic global citizen and socially just, engaged scholar. In developing the ISLP approach, I thought globally. In solidarity, I acted locally to co-create action-oriented knowledge with people who experience pressing challenges, to bring about positive change for the greater common good (Tandon and Hall 2015).

Through this scholarly journey, we explored the idea of, developed and applied an ISLP approach in the context of partnership and reciprocity. The ISLP approach included mentorship by global and local champions, which supported self-directed lifelong learning, while being underpinned by VIA and infinite self-and collective appreciative reflection (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:

Stavros and Torres 2018). The engaged scholarship enabled us to inform and improve our practice and strengthen the pedagogy of service-learning, which enabled us to profess the praxis of engaged scholarship (Zuber-Skerritt et al. 2015; Shumer, Stanton and Giles 2017; Wood 2020).

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## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



### GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

09-Jun-2020

Dear Mrs Venter, Karen KE

#### Continuation/Report Approved

Research Project Title:

**Integrated Service Learning Praxis for 'flourishment' of professional learning and development in expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2016/0200**

We are pleased to inform you that the application to extend your ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Prof Derek Litthauer**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

**Adri du Plessis**

**2020.06.11**

**14:55:40**

**+02'00'**

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## APPENDIX B: LANGUAGE EDITOR'S LETTER

### Declaration

6 December 2021

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PhD Thesis: An integrated service-learning praxis approach for flourishing  
of professional development in community-higher education partnerships

Author: Karen Elizabeth Venter

I confirm that I edited this thesis, checked that the reference lists contain  
the references cited, and recommended changes to the text.



MA Language Practice



Hettie Human  
WRITER | EDITOR | TRANSLATOR | INTERPRETER

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**APPENDIX C: ARTICLE 1 – INFORMED CONSENT**



**Informed consent letter for international service-learning expert pioneers/ current service-learning champions**

<b>Researcher:</b>	<b>Study Leader:</b>	<b>Co-Study Leader:</b>	<b>Co-Study Leader:</b>
Karen Venter	Dr S.M. Holtzhausen	Prof M. Erasmus	Dr E. Myburgh
Lecturer School of Nursing Faculty of Health Sciences P O Box 339 Bloemfontein South Africa 9300	Sr Lecturer/ Researcher 5/8 School of Higher Education Studies Faculty of Education PO Box 339 Bloemfontein South Africa 9300	Professor Retired from Service- Learning Directorate, UFS	External Study Leader with PHD in Higher Education Studies with speciality Service- Learning PO Box 25834 Langenhoven Park Bloemfontein 9301
T: +27 51 401 3732	T: +27 51 401 2046	T: +27 21 959 5865	T: + 27 79 499 4835
E: venterk1@ufs.ac.za	E: HoltzhSM@ufs.ac.za	E: mabel4erasmus@gmail.com	E: <a href="mailto:elaniev@gmail.com">elaniev@gmail.com</a>

Date: .....

Dear [Name]

The purpose of this letter is to invite, inform you about and request your consent for participation in and action research study:

***Integrated Service-Learning Praxis for flourishing of professional learning and development in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships***

*Acronyms that will be used:*

- *Integrated Service-Learning Praxis (ISLP)*

- *Professional learning and development (PL&D)*
- *Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs)*

As you are aware, there are continuous global challenges for pro-active transformation of learning in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). These challenges are recognised by service-learning advocates at the University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa (SA). Early pioneers advised service-learning practitioners to find means of strengthening practice (In Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999: 219).

One of these pioneers, John Duley, advocated for building a theoretical approach to be followed, for strengthening practice. I am inspired to implement this approach, which Duley depicts as dealing with the theory of how people learn. Furthermore, I plan to follow the praxis and principles of Appreciative Inquiry/AI (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2008), as it relates to various common goals and values of the service-learning field. I am a positive practitioner who focuses on strengths in organisations and communities, beyond transformation towards flourishing of learning. As PhD student in Higher Education Studies, I aspired to engage in an action research study, where I need to complete five publishable articles. The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of the role and effect of ISLP for professional learning and development of service-learning champions and other partners in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs). The focal research question is:

***How can the ISLP approach enable flourishing of all partners' professional development, who collaborate for learning and inquiry, within expanded CHEPs?***

For the first article, I aim to explore the reflections of:

- Expert service-learning pioneers, as well as current and future champions, regarding the effect of ISLP on their own and those of other partners' PL&D in ECHEPs
- Expert action research champions, regarding the use as approach and methodology to enhance the PL&D in ECHEPs.

As background for better understanding of the research, I wish to explain my perceptions regarding a few concepts in more detail:

1. **Integrated Service-Learning Praxis (ISLP)** refers to the interdependence and integration of teaching-and-learning (*theory*) and *practice*, research and community engagement as core functions of universities; and the development, thoughts and action, resulting from the integration of these core elements in a project.
  
2. For the PhD study, I suggest that an **Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnership or ECHEPs** should comprise of a:
  - Community sector, inclusive of community members who collaborates with the other two sectors;
  - Service sector, inclusive of partner representatives from not only civil, but also public and private sector;
  - Higher Education Institution (HEI) sector inclusive of multidisciplinary, inter-professional and transdisciplinary collaborative practice.
  
3. **Service-Learning**, as a form of experiential learning is a complex and dynamic pedagogy, which may have a profound impact on the professional development of those involved. At the UFS, SA, a thorough grasp of this complexity and dynamics is conveyed in its institutional policy, where service-learning is described as:

*“...curriculum-based, credit-bearing learning experiences in which students participate in contextualised, well-structured and organised service activities aimed at addressing identified service needs in the community and reflect on the service experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of the linkage between curriculum content and community dynamics, as well as achieve personal growth and a deeper sense of social responsibility. It requires a collaborative partnership context that enhances mutual, reciprocal teaching and learning among all members of the partnership (lecturers and students, members of the communities, and representatives of the service sector)” (UFS 2006: 10).*

4. For the study, a **champion** is someone who is: “*Knowledgeable; whose practice portrays a standard of excellence and who care unconditionally for others. They share their expertise to lead others to change society; and change society towards a common good for all, themselves*” (Venter, Erasmus and Seale 2015:153).
5. For the study, professional learning is defined as “**learning in the widest sense, work related, and specialised in a particular area or field of one’s choice**”. Professional learning progresses towards development. Zuber-Skerritt defines development as a **process of self-directed, lifelong learning** (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:6).

*I appreciate you as a service-learning champion. Your occupation places you in a unique position:*

- to reflect on service-learning pedagogy
- to share your guidance as an international expert, regarding the potential PL&D of partners using ISLP in ECHEPs
- to share your perceptions regarding the development of service-learning theory.

I think there is considerable value in a study of this nature. It could enhance the understanding regarding ISLP and PL&D of service-learning champions, who participate in ECHEPs. Further, the benchmarking with service-learning expert pioneer champions could strengthen the rigour of the study, as they can share expertise, wisdom and deep understanding of their fields. I intend to publish the findings of the research, not only as effort to strengthen the theory, but also the practice of this heart-field, to showcase service-learning as a high impact educational practice.

Nothing you will say will be identified with you personally, except if you wish to be appreciated in person when I report on the findings of the project. Further, before publishing any findings from your contribution to the data, I will provide you with a transcription of the data, as well as the analysis and interpretation thereof.

There will be no remuneration for participation. If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please inform me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my study leaders.

While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and the valuable contribution you can make, your participation is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do participate, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop your participation with no further repercussions.

Sincere service-learning appreciation

Karen Venter

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**PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS PAGE. KEEP THE LETTER ABOVE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**

**Title of the Study:** *Integrated Service-Learning Praxis for 'flourishment' of professional learning and development in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships*

**Researcher:** Karen Venter

**Participant:** xxxxxx (Name and Surname)

**Participant description:** International champion/ national champion/ local CURP: Community member/ NGO leader/NPO leader/student (Please indicate)

**Contact number/ email address:** xxxxxxxx

**Declaration:**

- I hereby confirm and declare that the researcher, Karen Venter, has communicated the research study clearly to me in verbal and written form.
- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations indicated in the above study information document.
- Relevant photos for publication as revealed to me by the researcher can/ cannot be published (Please indicate).
- I prefer to remain anonymous/ reveal my identity (Please indicate)

**Signature:** xxxxxx                      Date: xxxxx                      Place: xxxx

**Witness signature** xxxxx                      Date: xxxxx                      Place: xxxx

## APPENDIX D: ARTICLE 1 – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL



### **Interview protocol for international service-learning pioneers or current service-learning champions**

***Title of the study: Integrated Service-Learning praxis (ISLP) approach for flourishing of Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) in expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs)***

#### **Introduction and background**

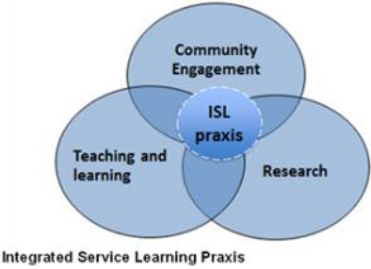
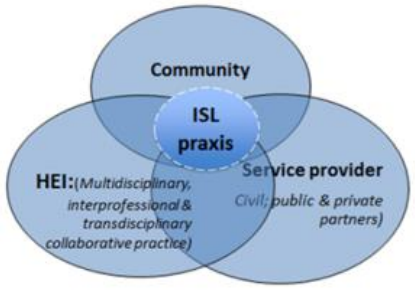
The purpose of the proposed study is to gain a better understanding of the effect of ISLP in and on PL&D of service-learning champions and other partners in the ECHEPs. The focal research question is: How can ISLP enhance PL&D of service-learning champions and other partners within ECHEPs?

I aim to develop a potential learning theory based on ISLP in ECHEPs and postulate that ISLP could contribute to flourishing of PL&D in ECHEPs. The purpose of this interview is to explore reflections of international expert service-learning pioneers or current champions, regarding possibilities of ISLP to strengthen PL&D in ECHEPs.

#### ***Acronyms clarification:***

- ***ISLP: Integrated Service-Learning Praxis***
- ***PL&D: Professional learning and development***
- ***ECHEPs: Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships***
- ***AI: Appreciative Inquiry***

*Concepts clarification:*

<p><b>ISLP:</b> Interdependence and integration of teaching and learning (theory), practice, research and CE and the development, thought and action resulting from integration of these core elements of Higher Education</p>	
<p><b>PL&amp;D:</b> At the interface of ECHEPs, professional learning occurs. Professional learning is defined as learning in the widest sense, work related, and specialised in a particular area or field of one’s choice. Professional learning progresses towards development. Development is defined as a process of self-directed, lifelong learning.</p>	
<p><b>ECHEPs:</b> ECHEPs should comprise of a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher Education (HE) sector inclusive of multidisciplinary, inter-professional and transdisciplinary collaborative practice</li> <li>• Service sector inclusive of partner representatives from not only civil, but also the public and private sector</li> <li>• Community sector inclusive of community members who collaborates with the other two sectors</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Flourishment:</b> To be very successful. I am a positive practitioner and envision that the use of ISLP could bear possibility beyond transformation of PL&amp;D, towards flourishing in the context of ECHEPs.</p>	

**Appreciative Inquiry (AI):** AI is a philosophy that incorporates an approach, a process (5-D Cycle of Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny) for engaging people at any or all levels to produce effective, positive change.

**Champion:** As mentioned in the consent letter, I have identified and appreciate you as a champion in your field. A champion is someone who is: “Knowledgeable; whose practice portrays a standard of excellence and who care unconditionally for others. They share their expertise to lead others to change society; and also change society towards a common good for all, themselves” (Venter, Erasmus and Seale 2015:153).

*To conduct this interview, I am going use the steps of the Appreciative Inquiry process, as a framework for the interview.*

***Phase 1: Defining the inquiry***

The research question to be inquired will be:

**How can the ISLP approach enable flourishing of PL&D in ECHEPs?**

***Phase 2: Discovery of strengths***

*Appreciating the best of ‘what is’. The discovery will be based on a dialogue, as a way of finding ‘what works’. It will rediscover and remember your successes, strengths and periods of excellence.*

**Interview Question 1**

- a) Please share a story about your experience when you were proud of what you achieved and when you’ve made a difference regarding service-learning partnerships. What was successful about it and what did you achieve?
- b) Please describe your top two strengths and share an example in your present role as a service-learning pioneer or champion of when you have successfully used one of these strengths in service-learning partnerships?

- c) Could you please share the things you value deeply: specifically, the things you value about yourself and the successful things you have done for service-learning partnerships?

### ***Phase 3: Dream***

*Imagining ‘what could be’... Imagining will use past achievements and successes identified in the discovery phase to imagine new possibilities and envisage a preferred future. It will allow you to identify your dreams for the community in general; having discovered ‘what is best’. You will have the chance to project it into their wishes, hopes and aspirations for the future.*

### **Interview Question 2**

Now, please imagine with me that we are meeting on this day next year, and reviewing the progress that was made through the practice of ISLP to strengthen PL&D of partners in ECHEPs?

- a) Could you please list possible successes?
- b) How could ISLP be different in ECHEPs?

### ***Phase 4: Design***

*Determining ‘what should be’... The design phase will bring together the stories from discovery with the imagination and creativity from the dream. It will bring the ‘best of what is’ together with ‘what might be’, to create ‘what should be – the ideal’.*

### **Interview Question 3**

Please share with me: If you could have three wishes for action, which should be taken by partners practicing ISLP for flourishing of PL&D in ECHEPs, with the focus on the strengthening of service-learning *theory*, which could make a difference:

- a) What could two small actions be?
- b) What could one large action (or more if you wish) be?

### ***Phase 5: Delivery/ Destiny***

*Creating ‘what will be’... The fifth stage in the 5Ds process will identify how the design is delivered, and how it is embedded into communities. It could also be called ‘delivery’.*

**Interview Question 4**

Given no constraints, how will you advise current and future service-learning champions to act in order to flourish their ISLP for PL&D in ECHEPs, by emphasising *theory development in service-learning*?

*Thank you, I really appreciated your knowledge sharing for service-learning. I have great respect for your expertise and wisdom. Thank you for helping me to gain a better understanding on how to strengthen theory in service-learning.*

**Answers:**

<b>Question 1</b>	
a	
b	
c	
<b>Question 2</b>	
a	
b	
<b>Question 3</b>	
a	
b	
<b>Question 4</b>	

## APPENDIX E: ARTICLE 1 - DATA ANALYSIS

This is a detailed list of value and characteristic indicators from literature and participants, to guide the praxis of engaged scholarship

<b>Value indicators from literature</b> (Berkowitz 1987; Duley, 2017; Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen and Daloz Parks 1996)	<b>Snippets from participants' verbatim quotations</b>
Commitment to the task at hand	I've devoted my professional life to establishing and building a movement for socially responsible education (P2)
Hard work, plus the belief that it pays off	I got the tenure years later – ironically for doing the work that I have that I would not have been tenured earlier if I had been on a tenure track (P5)
Belief in the power of one person to make a difference	I believe in what I am doing, we may not change a lot, but I hope that I can make a difference; I believe that everyone can make a difference, if they are eager to change (P6)
Willingness to take personal risks	Is service-learning dangerous work? It certainly is half of the people either lost their jobs directly or had programs pulled out from under them. I was one of those people (P5)
Do the right thing for the right reason/wisdom	I teach people to become wise and not just knowledgeable, that is something I value (P1)
Optimism	When a door slammed in our face, rather than turning around, we took it as a challenge to go through the door (P5)
Other value indicators (Emerged from the current appreciative inquiry on engaged scholarship)	
High-quality education – quality assurance	I value high-quality education; Make sure that academic content and integrity of the course, connected with community agency (P1)

	<p>The book on Service-Learning Research as resource generates better research in the field (P4)</p> <p>Since we institutionalised service learning, we need to do quality assurance in the whole process (P6)</p>
Civic engagement	I value civic engagement (P1)
Social responsibility	To establish and build a movement for socially responsible education (P2)
Relationships Solidarity	<p>Developing relationships with the community (P1)</p> <p>We had a very strong, reciprocal working relationship with *[a well-known organization] (P4)</p> <p>I see an increase in the community solidarity because we work together and have a similar goal; so, this helps us to understand what issues we want to address in the community (P6)</p>
Partnership	<p>I value partnership (P2)</p> <p>In the service-learning partnership we have, partners come to the university; that could be a win-win situation – teachers can use it for research with the consent of the community and the community also need to get evidence to get more funding (P6)</p>
Mentorship, Leadership	Encouraging and mentoring the involved students as experiential learners along the way, a process I loved (P2)
Democracy	Service learning is a form of what citizens need to do to understand the world; to be good voters, family members, and workers (P1)
Social justice Fairness	<p>I value the notions of social justice (P1) deeply</p> <p>Fairness is one of my basic values (P5)</p>

Inclusion	Inclusion is one of my values; I enrolled as a white, straight mail person in both the civil rights movement for people of colour, as well as for LGBTQ people ( <i>P5</i> )
Patience	Building partnership is a gradual process, not something you can do in a few minutes ( <i>P6</i> )
Passion	The passion for continuing this work [service learning] ( <i>P1</i> )
Service learning	I believe in service learning as a philosophy; I would tell people how we can link up service learning with reality ( <i>P6</i> )
Reciprocity	Service-learning has that mutual learning component embedded in it - that is reciprocity ( <i>P3</i> )
Harmony, respect, lifelong learning	People living in harmony, respecting one another and using lifelong learning to develop wisdom ( <i>P1</i> )
<b>Characteristic indicators from literature (Berkowitz 1987; Duley, 2017; Parks et al. 1996)</b>	
Naiveté	I had no idea I was starting a movement ( <i>P6</i> )
Living within a tribe and the ability to break tribal barriers	I have lived in all the worlds; so, I can speak from experience and theory (schools, higher education, community) ( <i>P1</i> )
Persistence, perseverance, resilience	I value my persistence ( <i>P4</i> ) Perseverance: If you tell me that I cannot do something, I will try it ( <i>P5</i> )
Experienced marginality	For twenty years I was a non-tenure track faculty ... by choice ( <i>P5</i> )
<b>Other characteristic indicators from literature (Venter, Erasmus and Seale, 2015)</b>	

<p>Knowledgeable (theory)/ Expertise (practice)</p>	<p>I speak from experience and theory (P1)</p> <p>Developing, teaching – community partnership research program (P2)</p> <p>We have been building engagement zones, using a systems approach to address community issues (P3)</p> <p>20+ years of experience as researcher, scholar, and faculty member (P4)</p> <p>I worked in the community before I came to the academy (P5)</p> <p>I am an academic and talk about community implementation when I communicate with stakeholders (P6)</p>
<p>Compassion (empathy)</p>	<p>I know how to address people’s [learning] needs; help them to express their emotions; that help to develop empathy (P6)</p>
<p>Contribute to the common good Democracy</p>	<p>I think service learning is a form of what citizens need to do to understand the world and to be good voters, good family members, workers; there are people all over the world who do good to other people (P1)</p>
<p>Other characteristic indicators (Emerged from current appreciative inquiry on engaged scholarship)</p>	
<p>Collaboration</p>	<p>Which is driven by values of collaboration (P2)</p>
<p>Communication</p>	<p>To communicate the need from different stakeholders (P6)</p>
<p>Networking; start/belong to projects/organisations</p>	<p>We were creating lots of connections between faculty and community organisations (All participants)</p> <p>We developed the *[project] and started a state-wide program that has been running for 20 years (P4)</p> <p>This personal relationship skill helped me to do fundraising; make networks and share people’s stories (P6)</p>
<p>Coordination, planning and</p>	<p>So, there was somebody who was a true coordinator (P1)</p>

organisation	We planned conferences (P4)
Scholarship of engagement - Research, publish - Teaching and learning - Community engagement	I turned the notion of research – at *[university], where particularly for graduates it is all about student achievement – into one of seeing research as service learning (P2)  We conducted research projects and wrote publications (P4)
Ambition	I value ambition (P5)
Emotional awareness/ feelings: - Passionate - Excitement	This is familiar to me. How do you get excited and keep moving? That means you are doing good work if you can get excited about it (P5)
<p>The following characteristics were mentioned in the literature (Venter and Seale 2014:296); therefore, these are not evidenced with quotes, because all the participants, but one, in the current appreciative inquiry also participated in a study done by Venter and Seale:</p> <p><i>Excellent standard of practice; high level of self-development; practice with a whole person approach; adaptable; answer to a calling; care; commit their heart and soul; co-create knowledge; persevere; serve beyond duty; share knowledge and expertise; take responsibility towards transformation of society; portray positive attitude; deeply devoted; fair, friendly; honest; passionate; patient; trustworthy; stable; humane; loving (caring); loyal; show integrity towards others</i></p>	

## APPENDIX F: ARTICLE 2 - INFORMED CONSENT



### Informed consent letter for national champions (SAHECEF)

<b>Researcher:</b> Karen Venter	<b>Study Leader:</b> Dr S.M. Holtzhausen	<b>Co-Study Leader:</b> Prof M. Erasmus	<b>Co-Study Leader:</b> Dr E. Myburgh
Lecturer School of Nursing Faculty of Health Sciences P O Box 339 Bloemfontein South Africa 9300	Sr Lecturer/ Researcher 5/8 School of Higher Education Studies Faculty of Education PO Box 339 Bloemfontein South Africa 9300	Professor Retired from Service- Learning Directorate, UFS	External Study Leader with PHD in Higher Education Studies with speciality Service- Learning PO Box 25834 Langenhoven Park Bloemfontein 9301
T: +27 51 401 3732	T: +27 51 401 2046	T: +27 21 959 5865	T: + 27 79 499 4835
E: venterk1@ufs.ac.za	E: HoltzhSM@ufs.ac.za	E: mabel4erasmus@gmail.com	E: <a href="mailto:elaniev@gmail.com">elaniev@gmail.com</a>

Date: .....

Dear [Name]

The purpose of this letter is to invite, inform you about and request your consent for participation in an action research study:

***Integrated Service-Learning Praxis for flourishing of professional learning and development in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships***

*Acronyms that will be used:*

- *Integrated Service-Learning Praxis (ISLP)*
- *Professional learning and development (PL&D)*
- *Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs)*

As you are aware, there are continuous global challenges for pro-active transformation of learning in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). These challenges are recognised by service-learning advocates at the University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa (SA). Early service-learning pioneers advised practitioners to find means of strengthening service-learning practice (Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999:219).

One of these pioneers, John Duley, advocated a more theoretical approach to be followed for strengthening practice. I am inspired to implement this approach, which Duley depicts as dealing with the theory of how people learn. Furthermore, I plan to follow the praxis and principles of Appreciative Inquiry/AI (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2008), as it relates to various common goals and values of the service-learning field. I am a positive practitioner who focuses on strengths in organisations and communities; beyond transformation towards flourishing of learning.

As a PhD student in Higher Education Studies, I wish to engage in an action research study where I need to complete five publishable articles. The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of the role and effect of ISLP for professional learning and development of service-learning champions and other partners in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs). The focal research question is:

***How can Integrated Service-Learning Praxis (ISLP) approach flourish professional learning and development (PL&D) of service-learning champions and other partners within expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs)?***

For the article, I aim to explore the reflections of:

- Expert service-learning pioneers, as well as current and future service-learning champions, regarding **the effect** of ISLP on their own and those of other partners' PL&D in ECHEPs

As background for better understanding of the research, I wish to explain my perceptions regarding a few concepts in more detail:

1. **Integrated Service-Learning Praxis or ISLP** refers to the interdependence and integration of teaching-learning (*theory*) and *practice*, research and community engagement as core functions of universities; and the development, thoughts and action resulting from the integration of these core elements in a project.
2. For the PhD study, I suggest that an **Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnership or ECHEPs** should comprise of a:
  - Higher Education (HE) sector inclusive of multidisciplinary, inter-professional and transdisciplinary collaborative practice
  - Service sector inclusive of partner representatives from not only civil, but also public and private sector
  - Community sector inclusive of community members who collaborates with the other two sectors
3. **Service-Learning** as a form of experiential learning is a complex and dynamic pedagogy, which may have a profound impact on the professional learning and development of those involved. At the UFS, SA, a thorough grasp of this complexity and dynamics is conveyed in its institutional policy where service-learning is described as:

*“...curriculum-based, credit-bearing learning experiences in which students participate in contextualised, well-structured and organised service activities aimed at addressing identified service needs in the community and reflect on the service experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of the linkage between curriculum content and community dynamics, as well as achieve personal growth and a deeper sense of social responsibility.*

*It requires a collaborative partnership context that enhances mutual, reciprocal teaching and learning among all members of the partnership (lecturers and students, members of the communities, and representatives of the service sector)” (UFS 2006:10).*

4. For the study a **champion** is someone who is: *“Knowledgeable; whose practice portrays a standard of excellence and who care unconditionally for others. They share their expertise to lead others to change society; and also change society towards a common good for all, themselves”* (Venter, Erasmus and Seale, 2015:153).
5. For the study, professional learning is defined as **“learning in the widest sense, work related, and specialised in a particular area or field of one’s choice”**. Professional learning progresses towards development. Zuber-Skerritt defines development as a **process of self-directed, lifelong learning** (Zuber-Skerritt 2015:6).

*I appreciate you, as a service-learning champion.*

Your occupation places you in a unique position:

- to reflect on service-learning pedagogy
- to share your guidance as a national expert, regarding the potential PL&D of partners through the use of ISLP in ECHEPs
- to share your perceptions regarding the development of service-learning theory

I think there is considerable value in a study of this nature. It could enhance the understanding regarding ISLP, PL&D of service-learning champions, who participates in ECHEPs. Further, the benchmarking with service-learning expert pioneers and action research champions could strengthen the rigour of the study as they can share expertise, wisdom and understanding of their fields. I intend to publish the findings of the research, not only as effort to strengthen the theory, but also the practice of this heart-field, to showcase service-learning as a high impact educational practice.

Nothing you will say will be identified with you personally, **except if you wish to be appreciated in person** when I report on the findings of the project. Further, before publishing any findings from your contribution to the data, I will provide you with a transcription of the data, as well as the analysis and interpretation thereof.

There will be no remuneration for participation. If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please inform me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my study leaders. While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and the valuable contribution you can make, your participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do participate, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop your participation with no further repercussions.

Sincere service-learning appreciation

Karen Venter

## **REFERENCES**

Cooperrider, D.L., Whitney, D. and Stavros, J.M. 2008. *Appreciative Inquiry handbook for leaders of change*, 2nd edition, Brunswick: Crown Custom Publishing.

Stanton, T.K., Giles, D.E. and Cruz, N.I. 1999. *Service Learning: A movement's pioneers reflect on its origins, practice and future*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

UFS (University of the Free State). 2006. *Community Service Policy*. [http://supportservices.ufs.ac.za/dl/userfiles/Documents/00000/357\\_eng.pdf](http://supportservices.ufs.ac.za/dl/userfiles/Documents/00000/357_eng.pdf) Retrieved on 27 November 2021.

Venter, K., Erasmus, M. and Seale, I. 2015. Knowledge sharing for the development of service learning champions, *Journal for New Generation Sciences*, vol. 13(2):147-163.

Zuber-Skerritt, O. 2015. Conceptual framework. In O. Zuber-Skerritt, M. Fletcher and J. Kearney (Eds), *Professional learning in higher education and communities: Towards a new vision for action research*. London: Palgrave, pp. 1 - 37.

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**PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS PAGE. KEEP THE LETTER ABOVE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**

**Title of the Study:** *Integrated Service-Learning Praxis for 'flourishment' of professional learning and development in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships*

**Researcher:** Karen Venter

**Participant:** xxxxxx (Name and Surname)

**Participant description:** International champion/national champion/local CURP: Community member/ NGO leader/NPO leader/student (Please indicate)

**Contact number/ email address:** xxxxxxxx

**Declaration:**

- I hereby confirm and declare that the researcher, Karen Venter, has communicated the research study clearly to me in verbal and written form.
- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations indicated in the above study information document.
- Relevant photos for publication as revealed to me by the researcher can/ cannot be published (Please indicate).
- I prefer to remain anonymous/ reveal my identity (Please indicate)

**Signature:** xxxxxx                      **Date:** xxxxx                      **Place:** xxxx

**Witness signature** xxxxx                      **Date:** xxxxx                      **Place:** xxxx

## APPENDIX G: ARTICLE 2 - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL



### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL - SAHECEF

*Title of the study: Integrated Service-Learning praxis (ISLP) for flourishing of Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) in expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships*

### SAHECEF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY SUMMIT: WORKBOOK



**SAHECEF Launch Colloquium 2009 Hosted by Mangosothu University of Technology**

## Programme of the day:

### Day 1: 9 June 2016

Action	Time
Welcome	8h30 – 8h45
<b>Appreciative Inquiry principles:</b> Interactive information sharing on AI principles	8h45 -09h50
<b>Tea</b>	09h50 – 10h25
Teambuilding by TEAMBO	10h25 -11h00
<b>How to conduct AI Conversations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive knowledge sharing on AI</li> <li>• Process: 5-D Cycle</li> <li>• Consent to participate in inquiry</li> </ul>	11h05 – 12h05
<b>Background knowledge sharing:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAHECEF highlights</li> <li>• Research study – Karen Venter</li> </ul>	12h05 – 12h20 12h25 –12h55
<b>Define the appreciative conversations topic</b>	12h 55 -13h00
<b>Lunch</b>	13h00 – 13h55
<b>Engage in paired appreciative conversations</b> <b>Discovery:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one interviews</li> <li>• Small group share: Participants share stories</li> <li>• Large Group share for collective findings</li> </ul>	14h00 – 14h30 14h30 -15h00 15h00 – 16h00
<b>END OF DAY: Thank you for participation</b>	
<b>DAY 2: 10 June 2016</b>	
Welcome and tea	8h30
Reflection on the previous days	8h30 -8h45
<b>Dream</b>	8h45 – 9h10

Paint a picture to present the collective dream	09h10 – 9h30
Tea	9h30 – 9h50
<b>Design</b> (Write down provocative propositions)	9h50 – 10h20
Present the propositions	10h20 – 10h40
<b>Delivery/Destiny:</b> Brainstorm and compile action plans	10h40 – 11h45
Reflective circle (Semi-structured reflection)	11h45 – 12h00
<b>Lunch – END OF SUMMIT</b>	12h00 - 13h00

## DAY 1

**9 June 2016**

**Welcome:**

- A warm welcome to you.

**Interactive information sharing on AI principles:**

Appreciative Inquiry is a process for engaging people in building kinds of organisations and a world they want to live in. Working from peoples’ strengths and positive experiences, AI co-creates a future based on collaboration and open dialogue ~ *David Cooperrider, founder of Appreciative Inquiry.*

First developed in the late 1980’s at Case Western University, USA, and now used all over the world, Ai is a collaborative and highly participative, system-wide approach to organisation and community development. It identifies and enhances the “life-giving forces” that are present when a team is working at its best, to serve whatever is its purpose and role.

**Unique aspects of AI:**

- Different from traditional approaches towards organisational change
- Not problem-based, because a problem-based approach can create more problems
- Builds on research showing that people become stronger and build on their strengths when they work from their strengths

- It is not only about positive thinking, although positivity is important
- Accepts that there are problems, but reframe them into challenges
- Example of reframing of problems: What are the weaknesses that we need to work on?//  
**Vs What are our strengths which we can develop further?**
- The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach uses the SOAR model (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results). It can liberate us to focus on **what really matters: the future of our people and organisation.** (It does not exclude the SWOT model totally, but rather reframes the negative language into positive provocative propositions)

### **Underpinning theories of AI:**

- Constructionism
- Generativity

### **Ten core principles (5 building blocks and 5 emergent)**

(Cards handed out and participants will explain their concepts)

- **The Constructionist Principle:** Words Create Worlds; Reality is socially created through our conversations
- **The Simultaneity Principle:** The moment we ask a question, we begin to create a change.
- **The Poetic Principle:** What we choose to learn about makes a difference. It describes – even creates – the world as we know it.
- **The Anticipatory Principle:** What we imagine creates the future; The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive our action.
- **The Positive Principle:** Positive Questions Lead to Positive Change; positive feelings and social Bonding.
- **The Wholeness Principle:** Wholeness brings out the best in people in partnerships. Bringing all partners together stimulates creativity, builds connectedness and capacity.
- **The Enactment Principle:** Acting ‘As If’ is self-fulfilling; to really make a change, we must “be the change we want to see.”

- **The Free Choice Principle:** People perform better and are more committed when they have the freedom to choose how and what they contribute
- **The Narrative Principle:** Stories are Transformative; We build stories about our lives and live into them.
- **The Awareness Principle:** When we are deliberately aware and reflective in our interactions, with both ourselves and others, we can use this insight to take full responsibility for how we relate to others and utilise our learning and reflection to shift and reframe our actions.

### **How to conduct AI Conversations:**

- Interactive knowledge sharing on AI facilitated by Karen Venter

**Meaningful AI conversations:** Discussion cards will be provided, and participants will share their knowledge

- Appreciative interviews are at the heart of the AI philosophy and often most important in the AI process. The AI principles are central to crafting great, generative questions.
- Reminding those asking the questions to become active mindful listeners!
- AI conversations focus on what is good and positive, what worked and how it made you feel. They prompt new insight as the speaker reflects your story back to you.
- How should questions look like?
- Tips for interviews
- Examples of open questions
- Please sign consent to participate in the appreciative conversations

### **Here are redirecting R's and counselling C's that can guide the planning process:**

- Reflection: become mindful of decisions
- Recognition – recognise contribution of partners
- Respect – everyone wants to be respected
- Role clarification– everyone needs to feel needed and valued

- Relationship building – encourage accountability, mutual support and responsibility
- Reward from the partnership – there must be obvious benefits
- Results – there must be definite results
- Communication, Collaboration; Critical reflection; Competence; Character Building & Coaching Dialogue (Adapted from Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher and Kearney, 2015)

The next two days, we will have “flourishing conversations for the future!”

## **AI and Research**

AI is a method, a type of action research, that attempts to discover “the best of what is” in any organisational system. In completing interviews, the objective should be to understand when and why organisations are operating at their best and what are the core capabilities to allow the organisation to perform well.

**The process seeks to identify the positive core that contributed to such operation and that can transform itself to the new vision.**

## **Data Collection and Organising Considerations**

### **Methods of data collection:**

- **Interviews**
- Participant **observations**

### **Agents of data collection:**

- Karen is **facilitator**
- Leaders at tables
- Everyone—the interview chain

### **Meaningful info** to collect:

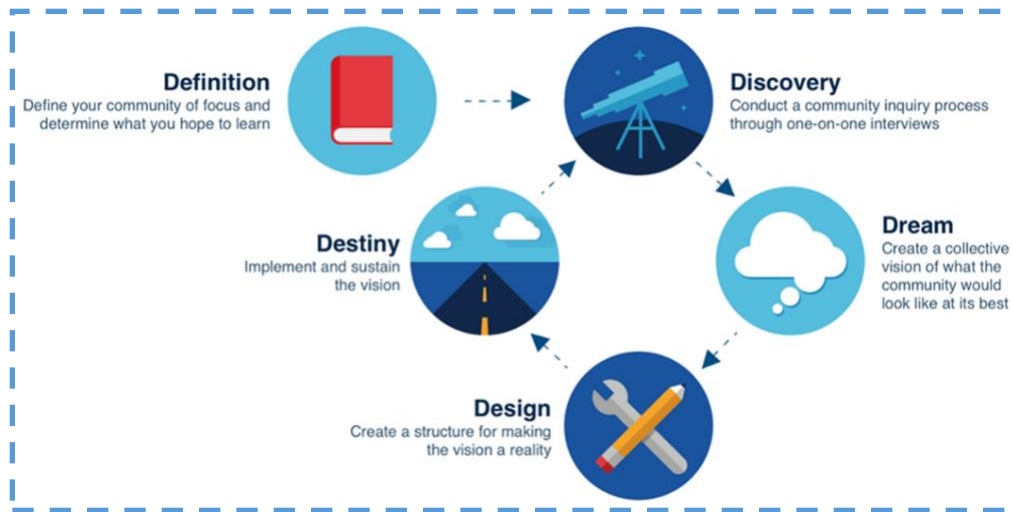
- Best quotes and wishes

- Best stories and practices
- Exemplars: Illustrations of the positive core

Eventually the **AI report** will include:

- Rich narratives
- Exemplary stories
- Description of the positive core of SAHECEF
- Multi-media presentations

**The 5D process of AI. This can be applied as a framework for the interview**



### Phase 1: Define the topic

You can ask participants to do that, or decide before hand on the topic

### Phase 2: Discovery of strengths and values

The discovery phase is both exploratory and descriptive. It allows for an open-ended discovery of an organisational system at its best. The objective is to generate themes, descriptors, a dream, the vision, and key ingredients for dialogue and design of possible provocative propositions. Appreciating the best of ‘what is’. The discovery will be based on a dialogue, as a way of

finding ‘what works’. It will rediscover and remember your successes, strengths and periods of excellence. It will focus on self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-respect and how this relates to other in our partnerships.

### Phase 3: Dream

Imagining ‘what could be’... Imagining will use past achievements and successes identified in the discovery phase to imagine new possibilities and envisage a preferred future. It will allow you to identify your dreams for the community and university in general; having discovered ‘what is best’. You will have the chance to project it into your wishes, hopes and aspirations for the future.

### Phase 4: Design

Determining ‘what should be’... The design phase will bring together the stories from discovery with the imagination and creativity from the dream. It will bring the ‘best of what is’ together with ‘what might be’, to create ‘what should be – the ideal’.

### Phase 5: Delivery/Destiny

Creating ‘what will be’... The fifth stage in the 5Ds process will identify how the design is delivered, and how it is embedded into communities. It could also be called ‘delivery’.

## **Background and context: Setting the stage:**

### **SAHECEF:**

- Briefly reflecting on SAHECEF aspects
- **Here are some prompts of provocative propositions for flourishing:**
  - Cherish and document our rich national history of SAHECEF
  - Re-image our community of practice
  - Re-imagine vision, mission, goals and objectives (It raises opportunities for tracer studies and developing a model for community of praxis)
  - Develop shift in mindset for organisational structure: from being a **movement to becoming a social enterprise to a company**

- Establish top priorities for the next three years
- Determine focus areas for value adding
- Establish new ways of mindfulness: beliefs, values, thoughts, habits  
develop inclusive listening to all the voices
- Integration of teaching-learning, research and community engagement (Integrated engaged scholarship), however rethink the current uniqueness and relevance of each function (e.g. relevance of decolonized curriculum, financial ability of students)
- Integration of theory and practice: praxis
- Develop relevant ([academic & professional-practical] inclusive professional learning and development for **all** partners (community and higher education e.g. *explore possibilities of alliance with GULL*)
- Re-imagine the purpose of the “South African University” within an development context
- develop Inclusive partnerships (lets have safe, honest and open platform for appreciative conversations and become mindful to inclusive listening to all the voices)
- Re-image **reflection** as glue for learning in a cultural-diverse South African context (develop South African model for critical reflexive praxis)
- Create fundraising strategies for generating income e.g. opening new opportunities through expanded networking (multi-organisational and global), crowdfunding
- Re-imagining our hope, excitement, inspiration, camaraderie, and joy about the past, our present, and our potential future as central to the change process
- Re-imagine the core function of CE with a recognition of all unique dimensions of CE, not only teaching and learning, to become the inclusive transformational leader among the individual core functions (The favourite child to become change agent in Universities)
- Re-imagine and develop robust and rigorous all-inclusive South African research for evaluation and measurement of quality assurance and management (instruments for measurement of impact/ effect, policy, conceptualisation)

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## **KAREN VENTER STUDY FOR PHD: BACKGROUND**

The purpose of my proposed study is to gain a better understanding of the effect of ISLP in and on PL&D of CE and service-learning champions and other partners in ECHEPs.

The **focal research question** of the study is: **How can ISLP flourish PL&D of SAHECEF?**

The aim of the study is to co-create an organic inclusive pedagogy based on ISLP in ECHEPs and argue that ISLP could contribute to flourishing of PL&D in ECHEPs.

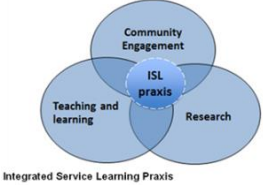
**The purpose of this inquiry** is to:

- Collect reflections from current national CE and service-learning champions
- Become mindful of the discussed plan, barriers and drivers for SAHECEF.
- Share information collected from international service-learning pioneer champions. The shared wisdom and expertise from the international CE and service-learning pioneer champions, could inspire the current national CE and service-learning champions to discover, dream, and design a strategic action plan towards a destiny of positive change for the field of service-learning in South Africa.

*Acronyms clarification:*

- *ISLP: Integrated Service-Learning Praxis*
- *PL&D: Professional learning and development*
- *ECHEPs: Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships*
- *AI: Appreciative Inquiry*

*Concept clarification:*

<p><b>ISLP:</b> Interdependence and integration of teaching and learning (theory), practice, research and CE; and the development, thought and action resulting from integration of these core elements of Higher Education</p>	
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**PL&D:** At the interface of ECHEPs, professional learning occurs. Professional learning is defined as learning in the widest sense, work related, and specialised in a particular area or field of one’s choice. Professional learning progresses towards development. Development is defined as a process of self-directed, lifelong learning.

**ECHEPs:** ECHEPs should comprise of a:

- Higher Education (HE) sector inclusive of multidisciplinary, inter-professional and transdisciplinary collaborative practice
- Service sector inclusive of partner representatives from not only civil, but also the public and private sector
- Community sector inclusive of community members who collaborates with the other two sectors



**Flourishment:** To be very successful and do very well. I am a positive practitioner and envision that the use of ISLP could bear possibility beyond transformation of PL&D, towards flourishing in the context of ICHEPs.

**Appreciative Inquiry (AI):** AI is a philosophy that incorporates an approach, a process (5-D Cycle of Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny) for engaging people at any or all levels to produce effective, positive change.

**Champion:** As mentioned in the consent letter, I have identified and appreciate you as a champion in your field. A champion as someone who is: “knowledgeable; whose practice portrays a standard of excellence and who care unconditionally for others. They share their expertise to lead others to change society; and also change society towards a common good for all, themselves”.

**Community of practice:** Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015:Online) describes such a collaborative environment as a “community of practice” where “...groups of people share a passion for something that they know how to do, and who interact regularly in order to learn how to do it better”. Communities of practice provide a useful perspective on knowing and learning.

**Praxis:** Is the interdependence and integration – not separation – of theory and practice, research and development, thought and action.

**Community of praxis:** “groups of people share a passion for something that they know how to do, and who interact regularly in order to learn how to do it better, where the interdependence and integration – not separation – of theory and practice, research and development, thought and action, adds to the value of collaboration.

*To conduct this inquiry, we are going use the steps of the Appreciative Inquiry 5D process, as a framework.*

*As promised, I shared the information of international champions. With this info we can benchmark our stories with, or to inspire us.*

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## **SUMMARY SHEET OF SHARED STORIES FROM AN INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION**

**What was the most appreciative quotable quote that came out of this interview?**

Quote: Future champions will need to continue the work of developing theory in research and practice, in order to advance the service-learning /CE field.

**What was the most compelling story that came out of this interview?**

That it was collaboration that made the difference. **Quote:** “We have partnered with other researchers and scholars to produce two edited books (and a third one is almost complete—my sixth in five years) that are designed to improve research on service-learning”.

**How were the interviewee and/or others changed by the story?**

The champion provided others in the field with examples and guidance to develop and do research.

**What was the most life-giving moment of the interview for you as a listener?**

The champion shared the importance of reciprocal connection with a big non-profit organisation (NPO), compiled of more than 1 100 leaders from universities and colleges. **This following question inspired me: What if we could establish such an organisation in South Africa for community engagement and service-learning?**

**Did a particularly intriguing “golden innovation” emerge during the interview? If so, describe what you learned about it, including who is doing it.**

Research is important to develop the “theory” aspect of the field. This deficit thereof influences all core functions of universities.

**What three themes stood out most for you during the interview?**

The pride, perseverance and passion which was characteristic of this champion for the field. The champion shared “experience”.

**What small steps toward positive change emerged as being possible?**

We should find others to collaborate with, and share stories of experience, to advance the field. Establish your own micro-network to do scholarly work together. This grows into praxis in time.

**What broader steps of positive change emerged?**

Establishing communities of praxis as platforms of support and to generate and publish knowledge of success stories. Connect and collaborate with a well-established big network (organisation).

Add more voices in our published work (students and community members themselves) – publish **with** them, and not **about** them.

**TIME TO ENGAGE IN APPRECIATIVE CONVERSATIONS**

**Phase 1: Defining the inquiry:**

*How can SAHECEF become a flourishing community of praxis for engaged scholarly professional development*

**Phase 2: Discovery of the positive core**

**Discovery occurs through:**

- One-on-one interview and return-interview
- Discovering our strengths & resources in each other
- Partners share each other's' stories
- Discovering our strengths & resources from groups.

Thank you for joining us here these two days to take part in an exciting process. Appreciative questions will be asked. You are going to ask each other questions about times when you saw things at their best in SAHECEF. Often we try to ask about things that are not working well - the problems – so that we can fix them.

In this case, however, we will ask about things that **are working well** – the successes – so that we can do more of it. The best thing that you can do in this conversation is to please **think about, remember, and tell your interview partner in detail about the positive things you have seen, heard, experienced or imagined in SAHECEF.**

**Question 1**

Tell me about a peak experience, or high point, in the time where you were a member of SAHECEF – a time that you felt alive, most engaged, or really proud of what SAHECEF did?

**Question 2.**

What was it about you, the situation, and/or SAHECEF that created the space for that peak experience to emerge?

**Question 3.**

What do you value most about yourself as a member of SAHECEF?

**Question 4.**

What is the one thing that gives life to SAHECEF without which it just would not be the same?

**Question 5**

Tell me about the best meeting in SAHECEF you have attended. What was it about that meeting that made it so enjoyable?

**Question 6.**

Tell me about a case where members handled conflict in SAHECEF in a positive way.

- A) What did someone else do right then?
- B) What did you do right?

**Question 7**

What do you appreciate most about the senior members (“the elders”) of the SAHECEF?

**Question 8**

What do you appreciate most about the new members of SAHECEF?

**Question 9**

What is done to make them feel that they are an important part of SAHECEF?

**Question 10**

Tell me what other members do when you feel most secure, or most cherished in SAHECEF – when it is simply great to be together?

**Question 11**

What makes SAHECEF’s work related tasks, our work-relationship with our members, unique?

**Question 12.**

Share the highlight of your relationship with members at SAHECEF with me –

- A) A time when you have felt the closest to them:

B) A time when their relationship within SAHECEF have meant the most to you.

## **NOW WE WILL PAINT A MAP OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE POSITIVE CORE**

### **Phase 3: Dream**

#### **Question 13**

Imagine that you have a magic wand, and you would have any three wishes granted in order to create an ideal community of praxis for SAHECEF. What would those wishes be? Please think big, creative and out of the box and consider all the drivers, challenges and shared plan that have been discussed.

#### **Question 14**

It is three years from now. You are still a member of SAHECEF. What is the most extraordinary thing that you would personally have liked to accomplish as a member of the SAHECEF team within the next three years?

## **STATING OF PROVOCATIVE PROPOSITIONS FOR SAHECEF AS A FLOURISHING COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

*Write down single line statements that describes a flourishing community of praxis.*

#### **Question 15**

What are the desired resources for meeting the opportunities identified in the dream exercise?

### **Phase 4: Design**

## **WRITE DOWN SMART (SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, REALISTIC, TIMEOUS) ACTIONS PLANS/IDEAS TO OPERATIONALISE SAHECEF AS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

### **Phase 5: Destiny/delivery**

*Let us now look forward to reflect on progression and planning to finish the process, at our evaluation of success meeting in 2019.*

I really appreciated your knowledge sharing for CE and service-learning. I have great respect for your expertise and wisdom. Thank you for helping me to gain a better understanding on how to strengthen the field of community engagement through the guidance of a community of praxis.

Thank you

**SUMMARY: POSITIVE CORE**

**SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS, VALUES AND BEST PRACTICES SUMMARY OF  
SAHECEF**

**TIME TO VOTE: Voting with five stickers per person.**

-----

**PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS PAGE. KEEP THE LETTER ABOVE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**

**Title of the Study:** *Integrated Service-Learning Praxis for 'flourishment' of professional learning and development in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships*

**Researcher:** Karen Venter

**Participant:** xxxxxx (Name and Surname)

**Participant description:** International champion/ national champion/ local CURP: Community member/ NGO leader/NPO leader/student (Please indicate)

**Contact number/ email address:** xxxxxxxx

**Declaration:**

- I hereby confirm and declare that the researcher, Karen Venter, has communicated the research study clearly to me in verbal and written form.
- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.

- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations indicated in the above study information document.
- Relevant photos for publication as revealed to me by the researcher can/ cannot be published (Please indicate).
- I prefer to remain anonymous/ reveal my identity (Please indicate)

**Signature:** xxxxxx                      Date: xxxxx                      Place: xxxx

**Witness signature** xxxxx                      Date: xxxxx                      Place: xxxx

## APPENDIX H: ARTICLE 3 - INFORMED CONSENT



### Informed consent letter for service-learning community partners

<b>Researcher:</b>	<b>Study Leader:</b>	<b>Co-Study Leader:</b>	<b>Co-Study Leader:</b>
Karen Venter	Dr S.M. Holtzhausen	Prof M. Erasmus	Dr E. Myburgh
Lecturer School of Nursing Faculty of Health Sciences P O Box 339 Bloemfontein South Africa 9300	Sr Lecturer/ Researcher 5/8 School of Higher Education Studies Faculty of Education PO Box 339 Bloemfontein South Africa 9300	Professor Retired from Service -Learning Directorate, UFS	External Study Leader with PHD in Higher Education Studies with speciality Service - Learning PO Box 25834 Langenhoven Park Bloemfontein 9301
T: +27 51 401 3732	T: +27 51 401 2046	T: +27 21 959 5865	T: + 27 79 499 4835
E: venterk1@ufs.ac.za	E: HoltzhSM@ufs.ac.za	E: mabel4erasmus@gmail.com	E: elaniev@gmail.com

Date: xxxx

Dear [Name]

The purpose of this letter is to invite, inform you about and request your consent for participation in and action research study:

***Integrated Service-Learning Praxis for ‘flourishment’ of professional learning and development in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships***

*Acronyms that will be used:*

- *Integrated Service-Learning Praxis (ISLP)*
- *Professional learning and development (PL&D)*
- *Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs)*

As you are aware, there are continuous global challenges for pro-active transformation of learning in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) e.g. universities. These challenges are recognised by service-learning advocates at the University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa (SA). Early service-learning pioneers advised practitioners to find means of strengthening service-learning practice (In Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999: 219).

One of these pioneers, John Duley, advocated a more theoretical approach to be followed for strengthening practice. I am inspired to implement this approach, which Duley depicts as dealing with the theory of how people learn. Furthermore, I plan to follow the praxis and principles of Appreciative Inquiry/AI (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008, as it relates to various common goals and values of the service-learning field. I am a positive practitioner who focuses on strengths in organisations and communities; beyond transformation towards flourishing of learning.

As a PhD student in Higher Education Studies, I wish to engage in an action research study where I need to complete five publishable articles. The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of the role and effect of ISLP for professional learning and development of service-learning champions and other partners in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs). The focal research question is:

***How can Integrated Service-Learning Praxis (ISLP) enhance professional learning and development (PL&D) of service-learning champions and other partners within expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs)?***

I aim to explore the reflections of:

- Partners, regarding the effect of ISLP on their own and those of other partners' PL&D in ECHEPs
- Partners, regarding the use of Appreciative Inquiry as approach and methodologies to enhance the PL&D in ECHEPs.

As background for better understanding of the research, I wish to explain my perceptions regarding a few concepts in more detail:

1. **Integrated Service-Learning Praxis or ISLP** refers to the interdependence and integration of 1) teaching-and-learning (*theory*) and *practice*, 2) research and 3) community engagement as core functions of universities; and the development, thoughts and action resulting from the integration of these core elements in a project.
2. For the purpose of my PhD study, I suggest that an **Extended Community-Higher Education Partnership or ECHEPs** should comprise of a:
  - Higher Education (HE) sector inclusive of multidisciplinary, inter-professional and transdisciplinary collaborative practice
  - Service sector inclusive of partner representatives from not only civil, but also public and private sector
  - Community sector inclusive of community members who collaborates with the other two sectors
3. **Service Learning** as a form of experiential learning is a complex and dynamic teaching strategy/ experience, which may have a profound impact on the professional learning and development of those involved. At the UFS, SA, a thorough grasp of this complexity and dynamics is conveyed in its institutional policy where service-learning is described as:

*“...curriculum-based, credit-bearing learning experiences in which students participate in contextualised, well-structured and organised service activities aimed at addressing identified service needs in the community, and reflect on the service experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of the linkage between curriculum content and community dynamics, as well as achieve personal growth and a deeper sense of social responsibility. It requires a collaborative partnership context that enhances mutual, reciprocal teaching and learning among all members of the partnership (lecturers and students, members of the communities, and representatives of the service sector)” (UFS, 2006: 10).*

4. For the study, professional learning is defined as “**learning in the widest sense, work related, and specialised in a particular area or field of one’s choice**”. Professional learning progresses towards development. Zuber-Skerritt defines development as a **process of self-directed, lifelong learning** (Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher and Kearney, 2015:6).

*I appreciate you as a service-learning partner.* Your occupation places you in a unique position:

- to reflect on service-learning experience
- to share your guidance as a service-learning partner, regarding the potential PL&D of partners using ISLP in ECHEPs

For being a service-learning partner in this partnership, your experience places you in the unique position to reflect on action research; and share guidance regarding the use of AI an approach and methodology in the envisioned expanded partnerships. I think there is considerable value in a study of this nature. It could enhance the understanding regarding ISLP, PL&D of service-learning partners, who participates in ECHEPs. I intend to publish the findings of the research, not only as effort to strengthen the theory, but also the practice of this heart-field, to showcase service-learning as a high impact educational experience.

Nothing you will say will be identified with you personally, except if you wish to be appreciated in person when I report on the findings of the project. Further, before publishing any findings from your contribution to the data, I will provide you with feedback on the findings to clear out any possible misunderstandings. There will be no remuneration for participation. If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please inform me directly to discuss it, and also note that you are free to contact my study leaders. While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and the valuable contribution you can make, your participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do participate, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop your participation with no further repercussions.

Sincere appreciation

Karen Venter

## REFERENCES

- Cooperrider, D.L., Whitney, D. and Stavros, J.M. 2008. *Appreciative Inquiry handbook for leaders of change*, 2nd edition, Brunswick: Crown Custom Publishing.
- Stanton, T.K., Giles, D.E. and Cruz, N.I. 1999. *Service Learning: A movement's pioneers reflect on its origins, practice and future*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- UFS (University of the Free State). 2006. *Community Service Policy*. [http://supportservices.ufs.ac.za/dl/userfiles/Documents/00000/357\\_eng.pdf](http://supportservices.ufs.ac.za/dl/userfiles/Documents/00000/357_eng.pdf) Retrieved on 27 November 2021.
- Venter, K., Erasmus, M. and Seale, I. 2015. Knowledge sharing for the development of service learning champions, *Journal for New Generation Sciences*, vol. 13(2):147-163.
- Zuber-Skerritt, O. 2015. Conceptual framework. In O. Zuber-Skerritt, M. Fletcher and J. Kearney (Eds). *Professional learning in higher education and communities: Towards a new vision for action research*. London: Palgrave, pp. 1 - 37.

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**Title of the Study:** *Integrated Service-Learning Praxis for 'flourishment' of professional learning and development in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships*

**Researcher:** Karen Venter

**Participant:** xxxxxx (Name and Surname)

**Participant description:** International champion/national champion/local CURP: Community member/ NGO leader/NPO leader/student (Please indicate)

**Contact number/ email address:** xxxxxxxx

**Declaration:**

- I hereby confirm and declare that the researcher, Karen Venter, has communicated the research study clearly to me in verbal and written form.
- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations indicated in the above study information document.
- Relevant photos for publication as revealed to me by the researcher can/ cannot be published (Please indicate).
- I prefer to remain anonymous/ reveal my identity (Please indicate)

**Signature:** xxxxxx                      **Date:** xxxxx                      **Place:** xxxx

**Witness signature** xxxxx                      **Date:** xxxxx                      **Place:** xxxx

## APPENDIX I: ARTICLE 3 - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL



### Interview schedule for service-learning community partners

*Title of the study: Integrated Service-Learning praxis (ISLP) for ‘flourishment’ of Professional*

#### Introduction and background


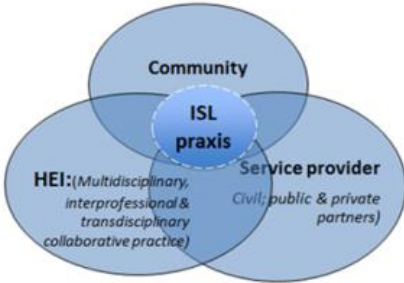
The purpose of the proposed study is to gain a better understanding of the effect of ISLP in and on PL&D of service-learning champions and other partners in the ECHEPs. The focal research question is: How can ISLP enhance PL&D of service-learning champions and other partners within ECHEPs?

I aim to develop a potential learning theory based on ISLP in ECHEPs and postulate that ISLP could contribute to flourishing of PL&D in ECHEPs. The purpose of this Appreciative Inquiry Summit is to explore reflections of service-learning partners, regarding possibilities of ISLP to strengthen PL&D in ECHEPs.

#### *Acronyms clarification:*

- *ISLP: Integrated Service-Learning Praxis*
- *PL&D: Professional learning and development*
- *ECHEPs: Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships*
- *AI: Appreciative Inquiry*

**Concept clarification:**

<p><b>ISLP:</b> Interdependence and integration of teaching and learning (theory), practice, research and CE and the development, thought and action resulting from integration of these core elements of Higher Education</p>	 <p>Integrated Service Learning Praxis</p>
<p><b>PL&amp;D:</b> At the interface of ECHEPs, professional learning occurs. Professional learning is defined as learning in the widest sense, work related, and specialised in a particular area or field of one’s choice. Professional learning progresses towards development. Development is defined as a process of self-directed, lifelong learning.</p>	
<p><b>ECHEPs:</b> ECHEPs should comprise of a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher Education (HE) sector inclusive of multidisciplinary, inter-professional and transdisciplinary collaborative practice</li> <li>• Service sector inclusive of partner representatives from not only civil, but also the public and private sector</li> <li>• Community sector inclusive of community members who collaborates with the other two sectors</li> </ul>	 <p>Expanded Community—Higher Education Partnerships</p>
<p><b>Flourishment:</b> To be very successful and do very well. I am a positive practitioner and envision that the use of ISLP could bear possibility beyond transformation of PL&amp;D, towards flourishing in the context of ICHEPs.</p>	
<p><b>Appreciative Inquiry (AI):</b> AI is a philosophy that incorporates an approach, a process (5-D</p>	

Cycle of Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny) for engaging people at any or all levels to produce effective, positive change.

**Champion:** As mentioned in the consent letter, I have identified and appreciate you as a champion in your field. A champion is someone who is: “Knowledgeable; whose practice portrays a standard of excellence and who care unconditionally for others. They share their expertise to lead others to change society; and also change society towards a common good for all, themselves”.

**To conduct this research, we are going to use phases of the Appreciative Inquiry process, as a framework for the interview.**

### **Phase 1: Defining the inquiry**

The research question to be inquired will be:

**What is the effect of ISLP on professional learning and development of current and future service-learning champions and other partners, after knowledge sharing in ECHEPs?**

### **Phase 2: Discovery of strengths**

**Appreciating the best of ‘what is’. The discovery will be based on a dialogue, as a way of finding ‘what works’. It will rediscover and remember your successes, strengths and periods of excellence.**

### **Interview Question 1**

- a) Please share a story about your experience when you were proud of what you achieved and when you’ve made a difference regarding service-learning in ECHEPs. What was successful about it and what did you achieve?
- b) Please describe your top two strengths and share an example in your present role as a service-learning champion of when you have successfully used one of these strengths in service-learning partnerships?

- c) Could you please share the things you value deeply: specifically, the things you value about yourself and the successful things you have done for service-learning partnerships?

### **Phase 3: Dream**

**Imagining ‘what could be’... Imagining will use past achievements and successes identified in the discovery phase to imagine new possibilities and envisage a preferred future. It will allow you to identify your dreams for the community in general; having discovered ‘what is best’. You will have the chance to project it into their wishes, hopes and aspirations for the future.**

#### **Interview Question 2**

Now, please imagine with me that we are meeting on this day next year, and reviewing the progress that was made through the practice of ISLP to strengthen PL&D of partners in ECHEPs?

- a) Could you please list possible successes?
- b) How could ISLP be different in ECHEPs?

### **Phase 4: Design**

**Determining ‘what should be’... The design phase will bring together the stories from discovery with the imagination and creativity from the dream. It will bring the ‘best of what is’ together with ‘what might be’, to create ‘what should be – the ideal’.**

#### **Interview Question 3**

Please share with me: If you could have three wishes for action, which should be taken by partners practicing ISLP for flourishing of PL&D in ECHEPs, with the focus on the strengthening of service-learning theory, which could make a difference:

- a) What could two small actions be?

b) What could one large action (or more if you wish) be?

**Phase 5: Destiny**

**Creating ‘what will be’... The fifth stage in the 5Ds process will identify how the design is delivered, and how it is embedded into communities. It could also be called ‘delivery’.**

**Interview Question 4**

Given no constraints, how will you advise current and future service-learning champions to act in order to flourish their ISLP for PL&D in ECHEPs, by emphasising theory development in service-learning?

*Thank you, I really appreciated your knowledge sharing for service-learning. I have great respect for your expertise and wisdom. Thank you for helping me to gain a better understanding on how to strengthen theory in service-learning.*

**Answers:**

<b>Question 1</b>	
A	
B	
C	
<b>Question 2</b>	
A	
B	
<b>Question 3</b>	
A	
B	
<b>Question 4</b>	

## APPENDIX J: ARTICLE 4 – INFORMED CONSENT



### Informed consent letter for service-learning students

Researcher:	Study Leader:	Co-Study Leader:	Co-Study Leader:
Karen Venter	Dr S.M. Holtzhausen	Prof M. Erasmus	Dr E. Myburgh
Lecturer	Sr Lecturer/ Researcher 5/8	Professor	External Study Leader
School of Nursing	School of Higher Education	Retired from Service -Learning	with PHD in Higher
Faculty of Health	Studies	Directorate, UFS	Education Studies with
Sciences	Faculty of Education		speciality Service -
P O Box 339	PO Box 339		Learning
Bloemfontein	Bloemfontein		PO Box 25834
South Africa	South Africa		Langenhoven Park
9300	9300		Bloemfontein
			9301
T: +27 51 401 3732	T: +27 51 401 2046	T: +27 21 959 5865	T: + 27 79 499 4835
E: venterk1@ufs.ac.za	E: HoltzhSM@ufs.ac.za	E: mabel4erasmus@gmail.com	E: elaniev@gmail.com

Date: xxxx

Dear xxx [*Name*]

The purpose of this letter is to invite, inform you about and request your consent for participation in and action research study:

***Integrated Service-Learning Praxis for ‘flourishment’ of professional learning and development in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships***

*Acronyms that will be used:*

- *Integrated Service-Learning Praxis (ISLP)*

- *Professional learning and development (PL&D)*
- *Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs)*

As you are aware, there are continuous global challenges for pro-active transformation of learning in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) e.g. universities. These challenges are recognised by service-learning advocates at the University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa (SA). Early service-learning pioneers advised practitioners to find means of strengthening service-learning practice (In Stanton, Giles and Cruz 1999: 219).

One of these pioneers, John Duley, advocated a more theoretical approach to be followed for strengthening practice. I am inspired to implement this approach, which Duley depicts as dealing with the theory of how people learn. Furthermore, I plan to follow the praxis and principles of Appreciative Inquiry/AI (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008) as it relates to various common goals and values of the service-learning field. I am a positive practitioner who focuses on strengths in organisations and communities, beyond transformation towards flourishing of learning.

As a PhD student in Higher Education Studies, I wish to engage in an action research study where I need to complete five publishable articles. The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of the role and effect of ISLP for professional learning and development of service-learning champions and other partners in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs). The focal research question is:

***How can Integrated Service-Learning Praxis (ISLP) enhance professional learning and development (PL&D) of service-learning champions and other partners within expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships (ECHEPs)?***

I aim to explore the reflections of:

- Students, regarding **the effect** of the ISLP approach on their own and those of other partners' PL&D in ECHEPs

- Students, regarding the use of Appreciative Inquiry as approach and methodologies to enhance the **PL&D** in ECHEPs.

As background for better understanding of the research, I wish to explain my perceptions regarding a few concepts in more detail:

1. **Integrated Service-Learning Praxis or ISLP** refers to the interdependence and integration of 1) teaching-and-learning (*theory*) and *practice*, 2) research and 3) community engagement as core functions of universities; and the development, thoughts and action resulting from the integration of these core elements in a project.
2. For the purpose of the PhD study, I suggest that an **Extended Community-Higher Education Partnership or ECHEPs** should comprise of a:
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*and learning among all members of the partnership (lecturers and students, members of the communities, and representatives of the service sector)” (UFS, 2006: 10).*

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*I appreciate you, as a service- learning student.* Your occupation places you in a unique position:

- to reflect on service-learning experience
- to share your guidance as a service-learning student, regarding the potential PL&D of partners through the use of ISLP in ECHEPs

For being a service-learning student in this partnership, your experience places you in the unique position to:

- reflect on action research
- share guidance regarding the use of AI as an approach and methodology in the envisioned expanded partnerships

I think there is considerable value in a study of this nature. It could enhance the understanding regarding ISLP, PL&D of all partners, who participates in ECHEPs. I intend to publish the findings of the research, not only as effort to strengthen the theory, but also the practice of this heart-field, to showcase service-learning as a high impact educational experience.

Nothing you will say will be identified with you personally, except if you wish to be appreciated in person when I report on the findings of the project. Further, before publishing any findings from your contribution to the data, I will provide you with feedback on the findings to clear out any possible misunderstandings.

There will be no remuneration for participation. If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please inform me directly to discuss it, and also

note that you are free to contact my study leaders. While I greatly appreciate your participation in this important study and the valuable contribution you can make, your participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do participate, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop your participation with no further repercussions.

Sincere appreciation

Karen Venter

## REFERENCES

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The School of Nursing  
Idahlia Loots Building  
University of the Free State

(Date xxx)

**Re: Consent to use data from post-implementation service-learning questionnaires**

**Title of Project:** Integrated Service-Learning praxis for flourishing of Professional Learning and Development in expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships

Dear Students

As you know, when you participate in a service-learning module at the University of the Free State, you are requested to complete a post-implementation service-learning questionnaire. The data from these questionnaires is analysed and interpreted towards the improvement of the quality of service-learning practice at our University. I, Karen Venter from the School of Nursing, UFS, am conducting research towards a PHD in Higher Education Studies on the topic as indicated above. Therefore I am asking your voluntarily consent to gather data from these completed questionnaires. There are no known or anticipated risks to the fact that I will review these questionnaires. I will not know who completed the questionnaires, as they are anonymous. The fact that I will review the documents will also have no impact on your course grade. All information you provide will be considered confidential. The questionnaires collected will be stored in my locked office and thereafter provided back to your lecturer. The questionnaires and associated electronic data will be retained indefinitely in my locked office and on secure electronic hardware.

If you have any questions about this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about the use of data from these questionnaires, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors, per information provided on the letter. Ethical clearance for this study has been provided by the ethical board of the School of Higher Education Studies. Thank you in

advance for your consent to access the data on these questionnaires. The findings of the study will be reported on in the form of publishable journal articles and shared at conferences, towards the improvement of the service-learning field.

Yours Sincerely,

Karen Venter (Student number: 1983624915)

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS PAGE. KEEP THE LETTER ABOVE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

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**Title of the Study:** *Integrated Service-Learning Praxis for 'flourishment' of professional learning and development in Expanded Community-Higher Education Partnerships*

**Researcher:** Karen Venter

**Participant:** xxxxxx (Name and Surname)

**Participant description:** International champion/national champion/local CURP: Community member/NGO leader/NPO leader/student (Please indicate)

**Contact number/ email address:** xxxxxxxx


**Declaration:**

- I hereby confirm and declare that the researcher, Karen Venter, has communicated the research study clearly to me in verbal and written form.
- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are.
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations indicated in the above study information document.
- I prefer to remain anonymous/ reveal my identity (Please indicate)

**Signature:** xxxxxx                      Date: xxxxx                      Place: xxxx

**Witness signature** xxxxx                      Date: xxxxx                      Place: xxxx

## APPENDIX K: ARTICLE 4 – SERVICE-LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA	
<h3>Service Learning Student Survey          Post-Implementation Questionnaire</h3>	

Module code:

Date on which questionnaire was completed:  /  / 20

Dear Student

You have completed a service learning module, which differs from other modules in various respects. We need to gain insight into your experiences of and perspective on the module, both for research purposes and in order to improve the module in future. Please note that your responses will be treated with confidentiality and that your name will not be associated with research findings in any way.

Thank you, in advance, for your insights and invaluable contribution!

### 1. Student Information

1.1 Gender

Male	1
Female	2

1.2 Home language

Afrikaans	1
English	2
IsiXhosa	3
Sesotho	4
Setswana	5
IsiZulu	6
Other	7

1.3 Age

<18	1
19	2
20	3
21	4
22-24	5
25+	6



1.4 In which year of study are you currently?

1 <sup>st</sup> year	1
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	2
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	3
4 <sup>th</sup> year/Honours	4
Master's	5

## 2. Service Sector and Community

2.1 Name the service sector partner you worked with during the module:

2.2 In which community did your service learning take place?

## 3. Understanding of Service Learning

Please state your current understanding of service learning by completing the following:

"Service learning is ..."

## 4. Involvement in Module Development

4.1 Were you involved in the development of the service learning module and its curriculum in any way?

Yes	1
No	2

4.2 If YES, please specify in what way:


## 5. Experiences Regarding the Service Learning Module

We would like to know whether the service learning module came up to your expectations. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the statements below:

1 = Strongly agree	2 = Agree	3 = Neutral	4 = Disagree	5 = Strongly disagree
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- |      |  |                                |                                |                                |                                |                                |
|------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 5.1  | I learned from the community in which I worked   | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |
| 5.2  | I learned from the service sector staff involved in the module   | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |
| 5.3  | This module provided me with the opportunity to apply the knowledge that I have acquired during my study period thus far   | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |
| 5.4  | The service learning module assisted in preparing me for the world of work   | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |
| 5.5  | The service learning experience helped me to gain insight into my role as a responsible citizen                            | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |
| 5.6  | The service learning module contributed to my personal development   | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |
| 5.7  | The service learning module required much more work than other modules   | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |
| 5.8  | The service component of the module was fully integrated into the curriculum   | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |
| 5.9  | Arrangements regarding logistics (transport, schedules, etc.) were satisfactory  | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |
| 5.10 | There were adequate supervision and facilitation during the service learning module  | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |
| 5.11 | The service learning experience contributed to my understanding of diversity and the "celebration" of cultural differences | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |
| 5.12 | All students should do service learning modules  | <input type="text" value="1"/> | <input type="text" value="2"/> | <input type="text" value="3"/> | <input type="text" value="4"/> | <input type="text" value="5"/> |

**6. Learning Outcomes of the Module (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes and Values)**

- |     |   |           |   |
|-----|---|-----------|---|
| 6.1 | Do you think that you have achieved the module's learning outcomes? | Yes       | 1 |
|     |   | Partially | 2 |
|     |   | No        | 3 |

6.2 Please explain your response, whether YES, PARTIALLY or NO:


**7. Outcomes for the Community**

7.1 Do you think the community outcomes were achieved as intended?

Yes	1
Partially	2
No	3

7.2 Please explain your response:


**8. Outcomes for the Service Sector Partner**

8.1 Do you think the intended service sector outcomes were achieved?

Yes	1
Partially	2
No	3

8.2 Please explain your response:


**9. Guidelines, Orientation and Preparation**

9.1 Were you given appropriate guidelines and orientation for working in the community?

Yes	1
No	2

9.2 If YES, please specify what you regard as the most important of these guidelines:


9.3 If NO, please specify what additional preparation and information you should have received:


**10. Assessment of Learning**

10.1 Was the assessment of the learning outcomes of this service learning module different from that of other modules?

Yes	1
No	2

10.2 If YES, please specify in what ways the assessment was different from other modules:


10.3 Do you have suggestions for the improvement of assessment for this module?


**11. Learning from Others (Reciprocity)**

11.1 What did you learn from community members?


11.2 What did you learn from the service sector staff?


11.3 What did you learn from your fellow students?


11.4 What did you learn from and about your lecturer(s) during the service learning experience that you would otherwise not have known?


## 12. Personal Experience

12.1 What did you learn about yourself during your service learning experience?


12.2 Please reflect briefly on your personal experience of the service learning module:


12.3 What did you learn about the value of reflection during the service learning experience?


12.4 What forms of personal growth did you gain, if any?


12.5 What social development did you gain, if any?


12.6 How did the service learning experience contribute to your sense of social responsibility, if at all?

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**13. Final Remarks**

13.1 Please share any final remarks regarding your feelings, perspectives, concerns and difficulties experienced during this module:


13.2 Please share any recommendations for improvement of this module:


Thank you very much!

**APPENDIX L: ARTICLE 4 – THEMATIC DATA ANALYSIS**

**A: The ISLP approach’s effect on postgraduate development according to the VIA framework**

<b>Multidimensional Intelligences and aligned virtues</b>	<b>VIA Character Strengths</b>	<b>Participants’ character strengths validated by verbatim quotes</b>
Cognitive - Wisdom	creativity, curiosity, judgment, love of learning, perspective	<p>* = Discipline specific knowledge of a nurse educator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• always be willing to learn (P5) [see/cf. 5.4]</li> <li>• reflected every day after work and gain better insight (P8)</li> <li>• became open-minded about other people whose perspectives are different from us (P4)</li> <li>• *able to mentor, coach and facilitate learning in a group (all the participants)</li> <li>• *identified community learning needs (all the participants)</li> <li>• *prepared in advance and read all the time (P 6)</li> <li>• *project management (all the participants)</li> <li>• *empowered the community with knowledge (P3, P7)</li> <li>• *presentation skills improved (All the participants)</li> <li>• *able to engage the community members in the learning activities (all the participants)</li> <li>• *able to <b>integrate</b> (all the participants)</li> </ul> <p>(According to the ISLP approach – this refers to integration of theory and practice, research and development, thought, feelings and action – therefore delivered the praxis of engaged</p>

		scholarship)
Social - Humanity	love, kindness, care, social intelligence, generosity, oneness (connectedness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• always remember that we are one (P3)</li> <li>• built relationship (P6)</li> <li>• became friendly (P2)</li> <li>• interacted well (P4)</li> <li>• improved communication (all the participants)</li> <li>• applied the act of service, to help other people (P8)</li> <li>• cared for, supported and respected each other, when learning in reciprocity (P5)</li> <li>• first understand yourself, before interacting with the group (P7)</li> <li>• reached out and became be kind, because it's never known what one is facing (P9)</li> <li>• actively engaged and talked to people (P6)</li> <li>• knew the community members, fellow students and lecturer on a personal level (P5)</li> <li>• respected the confidentiality of other peoples' issues (P3)</li> <li>• developed empathy for and understood others' behaviour (P8)</li> <li>• was surprised - the lecturer generously handed presents to the community members after we presented our lesson, it was really kind of her (P9)</li> </ul>
Community - Justice	teamwork, collaboration, fairness, leadership, citizenship, social responsibility, working towards the common good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• built partnership (all the participants)</li> <li>• learned that being late, can jeopardise the whole day (P9)</li> <li>• became: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a team leader (P3)</li> <li>- actively involved and engaged in the community, realising it is a continuous responsibility (P2)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• linked community dynamics to our work (P 6)</li> <li>• worked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- client centered, not self- centered (P5)</li> <li>- with people from multiple cultures (P4)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• realised that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- we have different backgrounds, some of us are more fortunate than others (P7)</li> <li>- working together is the way to go (P8)</li> <li>- less fortunate people really need learning support (P3)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Protective - Temperance/Moderation	forgiveness, humility, prudence, self-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• became humble and never look down on other people (P8)</li> <li>• had tolerance for those with whom we work (P1)</li> <li>• bear in mind that someone next to you, knows something you do not (P1)</li> <li>• developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- self-confidence to become independent (P3)</li> <li>- self-awareness – “realised that I get emotionally involved in other people’s challenges, and have to manage that better” (P4)</li> <li>- self-knowledge – “know myself better now” (P6)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• stopped stereotyping – “we often think that less fortunate people are mostly drunkards who likes fighting, but after engagement to my surprise I found that is not the case” (P8)</li> <li>• achieved self-actualisation – “became inspired to reach my full potential” (P9)</li> </ul>
Emotional - Courage	bravery, perseverance, honesty, zest	<p>developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• openness (P8)</li> <li>• courageousness and enthusiasm (P3)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• patience (P9)</li> <li>• realised that motivation is key in the collaborative learning process (P4)</li> <li>• a passion for service-learning (P5)</li> </ul>
Transcendence - Spiritual	appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, spirituality or a sense of purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• realised how privileged and fortunate I am (P2)</li> <li>• became a good citizen and contributed to community development (P4)</li> </ul>

**(Source: Adapted from Peterson and Seligman 2004)**

**B): Development of postgraduate well-being, according to the PERMA model**

Indicators of well-being	Text-based validation of findings
Positive emotions: such as joy, gratitude, interest, and hope.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am encouraged, happy, motivated, relieved and satisfied (P8)</li> <li>• The service-learning experience was beautiful (P9)</li> </ul>
Engagement: Being fully absorbed in activities, using skills but it still challenges you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I actively became engaged in the community, realising it is a continuous responsibility (P2)</li> </ul>
Relationships: Having positive relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We cared for, supported and respected each other, when learning in reciprocity (P7)</li> <li>• I started to know the community members, fellow students and lecturer on a personal level (P4)</li> </ul>
Meaning: Belonging to and serving something you believe is bigger than yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I made a positive social impact in the community (P3)</li> <li>• I became a good citizen and contributed to community development (P6)</li> </ul>
Accomplishment: Pursuing success, winning achievement, and mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I met my expectations and outcomes, I acquired skills, the module was worthwhile (P1)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When you apply the work and commit yourself, you can succeed (P5)</li><li>• I became inspired to reach my full potential</li></ul>
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(Source: Adapted from Seligman 2011)