



# Service Learning as a Pedagogical Approach for the Enhancement of Employability Skills in BCom Students

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# **SERVICE LEARNING AS A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN BCOM STUDENTS**

by

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# Declarations

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*Elanie Myburgh*

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# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

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AC	Abstract Conceptualization
AE	Active Experimentation
AGR	Associate of Graduate Recruiters
BIHECC	Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCFOs	Critical cross-field outcomes
CE	Concrete Experimentation
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHESP	Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships
CHET	Centre for Higher Education Transformation
COBE	Centre for Outcomes – Based Education
CTL	Centre for Teaching and Learning
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DNT	Department of National Treasury
DIRAP	Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning
DoE	Department of Education
EDD	Economic Development Department
EGAP	Economic Graduate Assessment Project
EMS	Economic and Management Sciences
EQF	European Qualification Framework
ESSD	Economic Soft Skills Development
GAP	Graduate Assessment Project
GMT	Graduate Market Trends
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEIS	Higher Education Institutions
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
JET	Joint Education Trust
LMS	Learning Management System

NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OU	Organisational units
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QDA	Quality Data Analysis
PDP	Personal development planning
RO	Reflective Observation
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SA	South Africa
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SAHECEF	South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SL	Service learning
SMEs	Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises
SMS	Short Message Service
SQA	Scottish Qualification Authority
SSD	Soft Skills Development
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UFS	University of the Free State
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
USEM	<b>U</b> nderstanding, <b>S</b> kills, <b>E</b> fficacy, <b>B</b> eliefs and <b>M</b> etacognition
WIL	Work-Integrated Learning

# Abstract

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The study has been undertaken against the background of the effect that a service learning module might have on BCom students' employability skills and the students' awareness in this regard. In this day and age, a qualification alone is not enough for graduates to secure a job. Employers are looking for graduates with a complete skills set, namely work experience, practical application of knowledge, communication skills, leadership, working with diverse people and computer skills, to name a few. With the current economic situation globally and in South Africa, there is no guarantee for graduates to be employed after graduation. Nevertheless, many students enrol in higher education institutions in the hope of not only obtaining a degree, but also a golden ticket to enter the world of work.

Community engagement is one of the three pillar responsibilities of higher education institutions. In turn, service learning is one of the spheres embedded within community engagement. Service learning differs from the traditional mode of teaching and learning due to the fact that students have to visit a community partner, work on a specific project where they share their academic knowledge, and at the same time learn from the community partner. Service learning students therefore are empowered to experience the application of knowledge during their service learning hours and thus gain an understanding of the world of work. Students also are exposed to entrepreneurship during their service learning experiences and they might venture into this field if they do not find a suitable job.

In 2013 all the second-year BCom students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of the Free State were enrolled for a service learning module. The main aim of this study was to investigate the mentioned second-year BCom students' experiences and perceptions of their service learning opportunities and the influence or impact it had on their own employability skills. For this purpose, the researcher first had to investigate, through a literature review, current local and global perspectives on employability skills, service learning as a pedagogical approach and how service learning links with employability skills in the context of higher education.

The literature review formed the basis for the subsequent empirical investigation. The empirical investigation entailed a qualitative, explorative case study design with

multiple sources of information and only limited quantitative enhancement. The 2013 data set was obtained from responses of students' assessment tasks in the module, namely pre- and post-implementation questionnaires, a letter to a friend explaining the student's understanding of service learning, as well as a PowerPoint presentation task in which students had to explain what they had learned from the relevant service learning module, and whether they considered themselves to be more employable after their service learning experiences or not. The second set of data was collected in 2015 by means of five follow-up focus group interviews conducted with students from the same population (i.e. students who were enrolled in 2013 for the relevant module), who responded to an SMS invitation to take part. Each focus group eventually included eight participants from the five departments within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, respectively. This enabled the researcher to explore the students' experiences and perceptions of service learning as pedagogy, which employability skills these students believed their service learning projects fostered, and which evidence existed of a relationship between service learning and employability skills.

Through a method of comparison, and the interpretation of the literature and empirical research findings, the researcher not only identified the implications of the research findings, but also formulated a number of recommendations for further action in response to these implications. The major outcome of the study is the construction of a proposed framework of guidelines for planning and implementing a service learning module or programme that would enhance the development of employability skills in Economic and Management Sciences students.

The value of the study is found in the presentation of the final framework with a set of guidelines for ease of implementation. The study confirms that service learning and employability skills could complement each other and thus together enable, foster, create and impact a student's learning experiences and perceptions regarding the world of work and the need for lifelong learning.

**KEYWORDS:**

Higher education; Employability skills; Service learning; Perception; Experience; World of work; Economic and Management Sciences.

# Abstrak

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Dié navorsing is onderneem teen die agtergrond van die uitwerking wat 'n diensleermodule op BCom-studente se indiensnemingsvaardighede mag hê, en die mate waarin studente daarvan bewus is. In die huidige omstandighede is 'n kwalifikasie nie meer voldoende om gegradueerdes van 'n aanstelling te verseker nie. Werkgevers verlang gegradueerdes met 'n volledige stel vaardighede, naamlik werkervaring, toepassing van kennis in die praktyk, kommunikasievaardighede, leierskap, die vermoë om met diverse mense te werk en rekenaarvaardighede, om enkeles te noem. Weens die huidige ekonomiese situasie wêreldwyd en in Suid-Afrika is daar geen waarborge vir gegradueerdes dat hulle werk sal kry nadat hulle afgestudeer het nie. Nogtans skryf groot getalle studente jaarliks by hoëronderwysinstellings in met die hoop om nie net 'n graad te verwerf nie, maar ook dat dit aan hulle 'n vrypas tot die arbeidsveld sal verskaf.

Gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid is een van drie basiese verantwoordelikhede van hoëronderwysinstellings. Op sy beurt is diensleer een van die terreine wat ingebed is in gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid. Diensleer verskil van die tradisionele modus van onderrig en leer in die sin dat studente 'n gemeenskapsvennoot moet besoek, aan 'n bepaalde projek moet werk waar hulle akademiese kennis deel, en die student terselfdertyd van die gemeenskapsvennoot leer. Diensleerstudente word dus bemagtig om die toepassing van kennis gedurende hul diensleerure te ervaar en verkry dus 'n beter begrip van die werkomgewing. Studente word ook tydens diensleer blootgestel aan entrepreneurskap en kan dan dié terrein betree indien hulle nie geskikte werk kan vind nie.

Gedurende 2013 is al die tweedejaar-BCom-studente in die Fakulteit Ekonomiese en Bestuurswetenskappe aan die Universiteit van die Vrystaat ingeskryf vir 'n diensleermodule. Die hoofogmerk van hierdie studie was om die genoemde tweedejaar-BCom-studente se ervaring en persepsies van diensleerbetrokkenheid te ondersoek, asook om die gevolge daarvan of impak wat dit op hul indiensnemingsvaardighede gehad het, te bepaal. Met dié doel voor oë moes die navorser eers deur middel van 'n literatuurondersoek bestaande plaaslike en wêreldbeskouings oor indiensnemingsvaardighede bestudeer, tesame met diensleer as pedagogiese benadering en hoe diensleer binne die konteks van hoër onderwys met indiensnemingsvaardighede in verband gebring kan word.

Die literatuurstudie het die grondslag van die daaropvolgende empiriese studie gevorm. Die empiriese ondersoek het gebruik gemaak van 'n kwalitatiewe, ondersoekende gevallestudie-ontwerp met veelvuldige inligtingsbronne en slegs beperkte kwantitatiewe uitbouing. Data vir die 2013-ondersoek is verkry uit die response van studente se assesseringstake in die module, naamlik voor- en na-implementeringsvraelyste, 'n brief aan 'n vriend waarin die studente hul begrip van diensleer moes beskryf, asook 'n *PowerPoint*-aanbieding waarmee die studente moes verduidelik wat hulle uit die betrokke diensleermodule geleer het, en of hulle hulself meer geskik vir indiensneming beskou na hul diensleerervarings of nie. Die tweede stel data is in 2015 ingesamel deur middel van vyf opvolg-fokusgroeponderhoude met studente uit dieselfde populasie (dit wil sê studente wat in 2013 vir die betrokke module ingeskryf was) nadat hulle gereageer het op 'n *sms*-uitnodiging om deel te neem. Elke fokusgroep het uiteindelik bestaan uit agt deelnemers respektiewelik uit die vyf departemente in die Fakulteit Ekonomiese en Bestuurswetenskappe. Hierdeur kon die navorser die studente se ervarings en persepsies van diensleer as pedagogiek ondersoek, asook watter indiensnemingsvaardighede studente geglo het deur die diensleerprojekte bevorder is, en watter bewyse bestaan vir 'n verband tussen diensleer en indiensnemingsvaardighede.

Deur van 'n metode van vergelyking en die interpretasie van literatuur- en empiriese bevindings gebruik te maak, het die navorser nie slegs die implikasies van die navorsingsbevindings geïdentifiseer nie, maar ook 'n aantal aanbevelings geformuleer vir verdere aksies in respons op die implikasies. Die belangrikste uitkoms van die studie is die samestelling van 'n voorgestelde raamwerk van riglyne vir die beplanning en implementering van 'n diensleermodule of -program wat die ontwikkeling van indiensnemingsvaardighede van studente in die Fakulteit Ekonomiese en Bestuurswetenskappe sal bevorder.

Die waarde van die studie is geleë in die aanbieding van die finale raamwerk met 'n stel riglyne wat maklik is om te volg en te implementeer. Die studie bevestig dat diensleer en indiensnemingsvaardighede mekaar duidelik aanvul en gesamentlik studentebevoegdhede bevorder, uitbrei en skep, en 'n impak maak op die studente se leerervarings en hul persepsies aangaande die wêreld van werk en die belangrikheid van lewenslange leer.

**SLEUTELWOORDE:**

Hoër onderwys; Indiensnemingsvaardighede; Diensleer; Persepsie; Ervaring; Wêreld van werk; Ekonomiese en Bestuurswetenskappe.

# Chapter 1

## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

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*Doing nothing for others is the undoing of ourselves.*

Benjamin Franklin, Founding Father

### 1.1 Introduction and Background

A key purpose of higher education is to prepare students to enter the workplace upon graduation (Cole and Thompson 2002:36; Evers, Rush and Berdrow 1998:15; Martin, Milne-Home, Barrett, Spalding and Jones 2000:211; McLaughlin 1995: online; Peddle 2000:37). However, several authors (Askov and Gordon 1999:62; Atkins 1999:2138; Kivinen and Silvennoinen 2002:49; Morley 2001:133) note that today's students are not being prepared with the appropriate skills needed to face the challenges that linger outside the confined, structured environment of a university classroom. In fact, Evers *et al.* (1998:15) state that “the skills most in demand are least in supply”.

Peddle (2000:29) contends that graduates generally need to possess more employability skills and as such often are not ready to enter the workplace. According to Schmidt (1999:31), graduates entering the workplace must be able to “solve complex multidisciplinary problems, work successfully in teams, exhibit effective oral and written communication skills, and practice good interpersonal skills”.

In an evaluation survey of the University of the Free State’s BCom programme among alumni and their line heads in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, Botes, Pelser and Van Rooyen (2007) found that significant numbers of both alumni and line heads suggested that the degree programmes lacked opportunities for the sufficient development of aspects such as the practical application of theory, the compilation and writing of documentation, verbal communication and dealing with human relationships in the workplace.

In an attempt to address the growing need for employability skills, Sapp (2000:4) states that institutions of higher education should begin shifting the emphasis to providing instruction according to a teaching philosophy geared to producing authentic learning.

One way of including authentic learning in curricula is through service learning. Service learning is a form of experiential learning, created through a spirit of civic responsibility (Binard and Leavitt 2000:246); it exists as a means to bring ownership to the learning process and enable students to develop – through experience – the employability skills mostly required in the workplace.

The Education White Paper 3 on higher education transformation (RSA DoE 1997) laid the foundation for making community engagement an integral and core part of higher education in South Africa. Learners only flourish if education adapts successfully to the needs and demands of their age (Barnard 2005:24). In the South African context, collaborative engagements are often built with institutions and organisations, both government and Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs), that render services to communities and not directly with the community members (Alperstein 2007:61).

Service learning, a curricular form of community engagement, represents an integration of community engagement with teaching and learning. Bringle and Hatcher (2000:275) state that service learning is a multifaceted construct defined by the work and goals of various stakeholders. The focus should be on four constituencies, namely the institution, academic and support staff, students, and members of the broader community who are the critical stakeholders in the implementation of service learning in higher education (Bringle and Hatcher 2000:275).

In 1984, David A. Kolb developed a model of experiential learning, consisting of concrete experience, observation and reflection, forming abstract concepts, and testing the concepts in new situations. To explain the theory behind experiential learning, Kolb (1984:41) contends that it is “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”. Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier, and Benson (2006:42) affirm that experiential learning implies the following: Concrete experiences help students grasp information when they reflect on those experiences and experiment actively with the concepts they are learning. Experiential learning provides more depth to information processing, and thus has greater potential of impacting on learning than less active methods.

Service learning provides educators with a vehicle for integrating experiential learning activities into the curriculum (Barkley 2009:29). Scales *et al.* (2006:53) noted that

service learning integrates concepts learned in class with real-world, authentic problems in society. Service learning should take place in a community setting and should include a reflection component (Barkley 2009; Bringle and Hatcher 1996; Karayan and Gathercoal 2005). By providing students with opportunities for concrete experiences and assisting in the intellectual processing of an out-of-class experience, service learning takes advantage of the natural learning cycle and also allows students to make meaningful contributions to the lives of community members, and *vice versa*.

Service learning in the South African context is described by Osman and Petersen (2013:6) as being a form of curriculum-based community engagement in higher education and experiential learning at the same time. They further argued that not all experiential learning can be defined as community engagement. Community engagement is generally considered to be a case of using a university's teaching, learning and research competence to reciprocally build beneficial relationships with various communities in areas of discipline strength and community issues.

According to Osman and Petersen (2013:3), students in this day and age are faced with numerous changes, as knowledge is produced in different contexts and by different people. Knowledge has always been produced like that, but today's students have to be more critical as a result of technology advancement, as anyone can claim something as truly scientifically-based knowledge without providing sufficient proof in reliable sources. This also has to do with the rapid expansion of knowledge – what one learns at the beginning of a course may very well be obsolete by the end of one's studies. This forces students to think more critically and be open to new knowledge – a requirement for employability.

Yorke and Knight (2006:4) define employability as a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations. These achievements will benefit themselves, the employers, the workforce, the community and the economy.

Service learning is a unique experience that is likely to provide experiences that are sufficiently powerful to destabilise and create disequilibrium in a students' existing knowledge system and, as a result, create new learning that potentially can be transformative. In contrast, information presented solely in a classroom may not

appear as relevant or motivational to students and, therefore, is less likely to be retained (Ennis 1992:27). Kinloch and Liptrot (2010: online) argue that service learning is a teaching strategy that includes many learning techniques. Service learning projects involve cooperation with other students, the community, staff, and the external participants in the community. It fosters students' social skills, higher-order conceptualisation, and information processing. Because the brain benefits from new and multisensory experiences, opportunities to practise newly acquired skills in a novel, authentic environment are more likely to result in consolidation of learning and an increase in retaining information and skills mastered. The salient multisensory experiences include events that challenge students to consider options for handling different situations and for problem-solving towards finding the best solutions. Moreover, the emotional component of service learning is one of its most important advantages. It involves emotional reactions to new experiences and conflicting knowledge (Goleman 1995; Kinloch and Liptrot 2010: online; LeDoux 1996), potentially leading to deeper learning.

According to Millican and Bourner (2011:90), student development through service learning can also add value to higher education experience in other ways. Potential benefits in terms of student learning and development frequently cited in literature, include:

- It can broaden the horizons of students by increasing their awareness of the world around them.
- It can enhance their social self-efficacy, that is, their belief that they can make a difference.
- It can provide a source of material for some subjects (particularly in the social sciences) and an opportunity to apply the learning acquired on campus, for example, a student in computing studies setting up a website for a community group.
- It can enhance employability of students by, for example, developing their teamwork skills and communication skills. It can also provide students with evidence that they possess such employability skills.
- It can enhance students' academic performance. This is a frequent finding of the research on service learning in the United States of America (USA).

- It can develop students' interpersonal and leadership skills.
- It can provide an opportunity to gain greater self-knowledge, including students' knowledge of their own strengths and values.
- It can provide a vehicle to enable students to expand their capacity for reflective thinking and reflective learning; that is, their capacity to capture the lessons of experience. This is, of course, a key component of the capacity for lifelong learning (Millican and Bourner 2011:90).

In a democratic country that is situated in a globalised world, higher education must give serious thought to structuring student learning and development in such a way as to promote cross-cultural understanding and civic-mindedness. In strong democracies, people have to be able to listen to each other, to understand the places and interests of others in the community, and to reach compromises and solve problems when conflicts occur. These are the kinds of skills students can successfully develop and enhance through their service work and through the critical classroom reflection activities that are central to effective service learning experiences (Hurd 2006:5).

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework**

Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena, and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical, adjoining assumptions. The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists (Swanson 2013:40). This study will be guided by a theoretical framework that comprises Kolb's experiential learning (see 3.5.1) theory and the CareerEDGE model (see 2.5.1).

### **1.2.1 Kolb's experiential learning model**

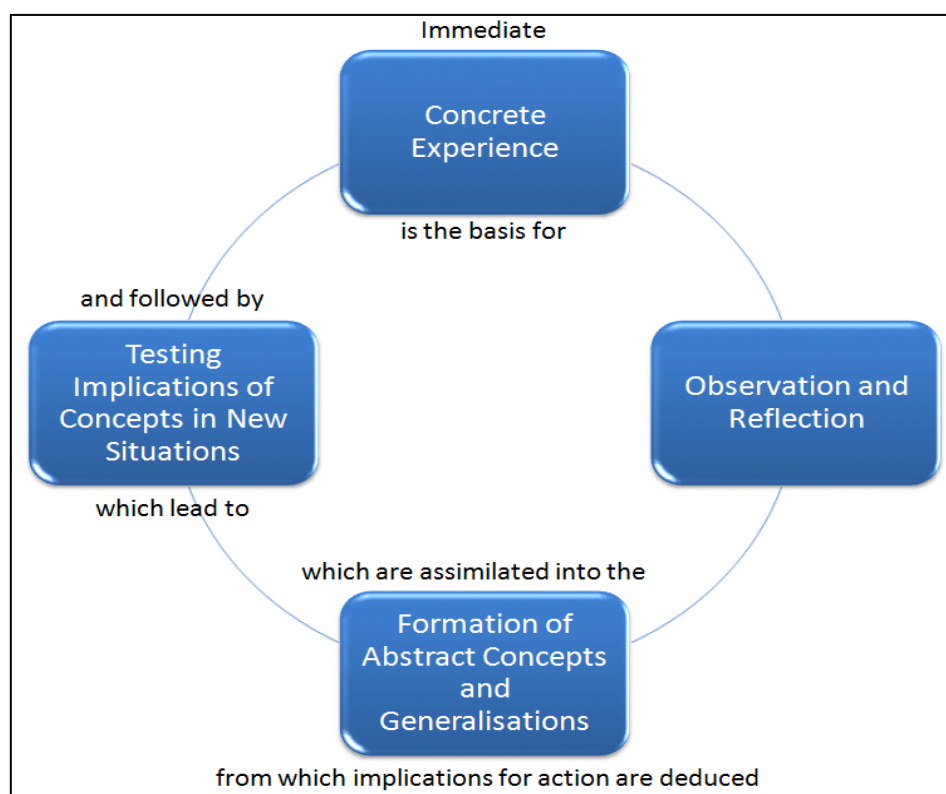
Kolb's experiential learning theory works on two levels: a four-stage cycle of learning and four separate learning styles. Much of Kolb's theory is concerned with the learner's internal cognitive processes (Kolb 1984:21).

Kolb states that learning involves the acquisition of abstract concepts that can be applied flexibly in a range of situations. According to Kolb's theory, the impetus for the development of new concepts is provided by new experiences: "Learning is the

process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb 1984:31).

Kolb (1984:22) views learning as an integrated cyclic process with each stage being mutually supportive of and feeding into the next. It is possible to enter the cycle at any stage and follow it through its logical sequence. However, effective learning only occurs when a learner is able to execute all four stages of the model. Therefore, no one stage of the cycle is effective as a learning procedure on its own.

Figure 1.1 is a representation of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (Kolb 1984:22).



Source: CHE/HEQC (2006:19).

**Figure 1.1: Kolb's experiential learning cycle**

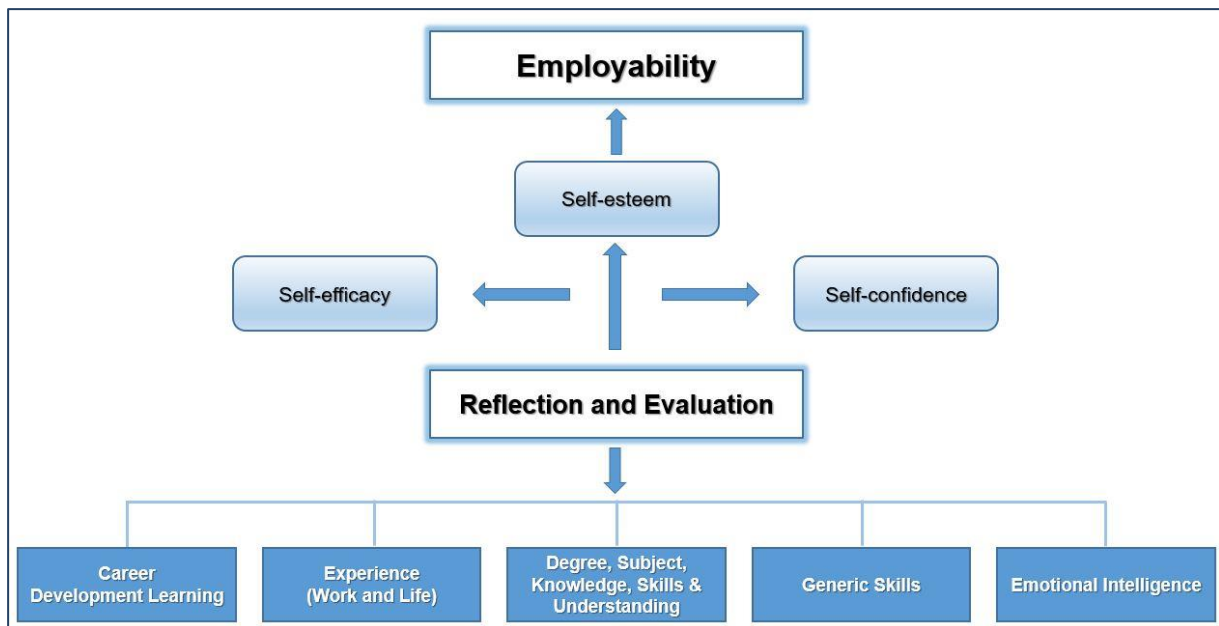
In short, the cycle in Figure 1.1 represents how learning takes on a pattern that starts with practical **experience**, moves through **reflection** (exploring the meaning of the experience for the individual through processes of observation, examination, analysis and interpretation) to **conceptualisation** (forming abstract theories explaining why and how things happen), and **action** (testing conceptualisations in different contexts in order to connect theory and practice).

The pedagogy of service learning leans heavily on the experiential learning cycle, the application of which may vary from person to person and situation to situation. Entry into the cycle may occur at any of the stages, more than one learning cycle may be occurring at the same time, and the time it takes for cycles to be completed may show great variability in terms of duration, for example from module to module and from student to student (Council on Higher Education (CHE/HEQC) 2006:19). Experiential learning also provides a useful conceptual framework for supporting and organising service learning experiences.

### 1.2.2 CareerEDGE model

CareerEDGE is a practical model of graduate employability developed by Lorraine Dacre Pool and Peter Sewell from the Futures Team at the University of Central Lancashire in England (Pool and Sewell 2007:277). This model is an uncomplicated, practical model of employability that allows the concept of employability to be explained easily and it may be used as a framework for working with students to develop their employability. The model was developed based on existing research on employability issues.

The CareerEDGE model is a clear and useful framework that clarifies the elements that need to be addressed to ensure that graduates secure occupations in which they will be both satisfied and successful. Specifically, Pool and Sewell (2007:289) have identified five critical elements: **Career Development Learning**; **Experience (Work and Life)**; **Degree Subject Knowledge, Understanding and Skills**; **Generic Skills**; and **Emotional Intelligence**. They identified the mnemonic **CareerEDGE** to facilitate recall of these elements and argued that when students have support in reflecting on and evaluating these experiences it leads to enhanced self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence. This in turn leads to far greater prospects for employability. Importantly, they believe that their model is straightforward for academics, students, employers and parents to recognise and understand. Employability requires a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful (Pool and Sewell 2007:290). The model is depicted in Figure 1.2 below.



Source: Pool and Sewell (2007:278)

*Figure 1.2: The CareerEDGE model*

### 1.2.3 Pragmatic and Discipline Demarcation

In section 4.3 of the research study it is argued that this study overlaps with five (5) key themes in higher education research, as identified by Tight (2012:7). In this respect this study therefore clearly falls within the field of Higher Education Studies. In addition, the context of the particular case study, namely Economic and Management Sciences confirms that the study might also be considered as interdisciplinary, which is also a typical characteristic of Higher Education Studies (Bitzer and Wilkinson, 2009:394).

The interpretive research paradigm was chosen to serve as the lens through which the literature and research data in this study would be interpreted since it allows for the constant comparison and integration of literature and empirical data (De Vos and Strydom 2011:40).

## 1.3 Research Problem, Questions, Aim and Objectives

The twenty-first century world of work can be described as a volatile, high-speed, ever-changing environment that places high levels of pressure on those functioning within this context (Fugate and Kinicki 2008:504). It is generally accepted that this era poses difficulties to both employer and employee that have not previously been present, or have intensified those pressures already experienced. The employer, or organisation,

now seeks individuals who are adaptable, creative, innovative, flexible and keen problem-solvers, to mention but a few skills (Graduate Market Trends (GMT 2011: online). The individual can no longer only depend on the relevance of a degree when it comes to securing employment (Yorke and Knight 2006:9). It is with some dismay that graduate students realise that in order to be seen as employable, the bar has been raised, so to speak. Due to the difficult economic circumstances in 2009, and to a lesser extent in 2010, the South African labour market has been plagued by an unacceptably high unemployment rate (GMT 2011: online). The unemployment rate in South Africa averaged 25.31 percent from 2000 until 2016, reaching an all-time high of 31.20 percent in the first quarter of 2003 and a record low of 21.50 percent in the fourth quarter of 2008. Unemployment Rate in South Africa is reported by the Statistics South Africa (BusinessTech 2016: Online).

Clarke and Patrickson (2008:128) indicated that organisations today are driven by the ability to be flexible and adaptable, thus eliminating the promise of job security. Pascale (1997:244) points out that individuals need to be self-starters and entrepreneurs in essence, in order to ensure employment or succeed in self-employment, while Clarke (2008:8) emphasises an attitude with the focus on continuous learning. Employability research rendered a number of lists indicating those skills considered important or desired by employers. There seems to be little consensus among these lists, which may be attributed to the varying requirements of industries and jobs across the world. However, as significant as the differences may be, these lists are all based on the consensus that people must possess employability skills to remain relevant in the employment market.

### **1.3.1 Research problem**

The problem that prompted this research investigation was that it is not known how students experience and perceive the effect that service learning activities may have on their own employability skills. Accordingly, in this study employability was investigated in the context of a service learning experience of second-year students (e.g. EGAP60206 module) in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa.

### 1.3.2 EGAP60206 module outline

The EGAP60206 (Economic Graduate Assessment Project) module, which is an 8-credit module on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 6, was presented to second-year BCom students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) during the year 2013. During the first semester the 293 second-year students attended theory and practical class sessions on community engagement, service learning, communication skills, diversity, working in a group, conflict management, treating others with respect, time management and project management. All of these skills formed part of graduate attributes required for being more employable. Originally it was planned that the project would be implemented in groups, but due to problems experienced (see 3.6.3) it changed to an individual project. In the second semester the students had to find a service learning partner with whom they had to spend 40 hours doing service learning activities, for example a project aimed at solving a problem in the community of the partner. They had to arrange meetings with the partner, do a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis on themselves and the community partner, administer a needs analysis questionnaire and compile a plan of action to solve the problem and/or to address the issue. The projects had to comply with the criteria for service learning and not merely be volunteer work, meaning that the students had to share their academic knowledge with the partner and reciprocally gain knowledge from the partner. The main aim of the EGAP60206 module was to implement a compulsory service learning module in the faculty, as well as to teach and demonstrate how service learning could be to the benefit of students by preparing them for the world of work.

Table 1.1 illustrates the module outline for the ESSD (Economic Soft Skills Development) and EGAP (Graduate Assessment Project) modules in the BCom curriculum.

**TABLE 1.1: THE MODULE OUTLINE FOR THE ECONOMIC GRADUATE ASSESSMENT PROJECT (EGAP)**

<b>Skills Module NQF 5 (Individual) 1<sup>st</sup> Year Students ESSD50105 (1<sup>st</sup> Semester) EGAP50105 (2<sup>nd</sup> Semester) 4 credits per module 40 notional learning hours</b>	<b>Skills Module NQF 6 (Group) 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Students ESSD60106 (1<sup>st</sup> Semester) EGAP60206 (2<sup>nd</sup> Semester) 8 credits per module 80 notional learning hours</b>	<b>Skills Module NQF 7 (Organisation) 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Students ESSD70107 (1<sup>st</sup> Semester) EGAP70107 (2<sup>nd</sup> Semester) 8 credits per module 80 notional learning hours</b>
Introduction to employability skills and their importance. Orientation on how Soft Skills Development (SSD) modules will be approached throughout the academic plan.	Communication skills – oral and written – including preparing and delivering presentations.	Gathering and using information.
Gathering and using information. The internet and plagiarism.	Gathering and using information.	Communication – orally and in writing.
Planning your workload, time management, dealing with pressure, self-management, motivation and adaptability.	Solving problems and making decisions.	Report and academic writing, presentation of numerical data.
Communicating at work – orally and in writing. Also includes meetings, appropriate forms and structures of communication, etiquette, netiquette, etc.	Working in teams and leadership.	Project work (includes planning and organising).
	Conflict management and assertiveness (may also be addressed in communication unit).	Professional behaviour, mentoring, appraisal and lifelong learning, professional development.
	Ethics.	Ethics.
<b>IN ADDITION TO CONTENT FORMALLY COVERED</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing own effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li>• Having a strong component of evaluation of and reflection on various aspects.</li> <li>• Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills (assessment of basic computer literacy; those students not competent, take an extra module).</li> <li>• Values and diversity (Discussion and incorporation of what was learnt in other modules such as UFS101 Undergraduate Core Curriculum Model, as well as difficult dialogues. The facilitators received training in difficult dialogues).</li> <li>• UFS101 is a compulsory core module. Each year every 1<sup>st</sup> year student on the Bloemfontein and QwaQwa campus have to enrol for. They cover a variety of topics in the module e.g. Religion.</li> <li>• Difficult dialogues were monthly sessions held with the module coordinator and facilitators. The facilitators received training on how to handle controversial discussions and topics in their sessions.</li> <li>• The skills modules aim to prepare students for the GAP (Graduate Assessment Project) modules, as well as consecutive skills modules. Skills learnt at one level ideally are transferred to other modules covered and developed through all three years of study.</li> </ul>		

Source: Study Guides for ESSD50105, EGAP50105, ESSD60106 and EGAP60206.

### 1.3.3 Research questions

The primary research question is:

*How do students experience service learning and perceive the effect that service learning activities may have on their employability skills?*

The following secondary research questions were therefore answered through the study:

1. What are the current local and global perspectives on employability skills within the higher education sector?
2. What are the current local and global perspectives on service learning as a pedagogical approach in higher education and how does it link with employability skills?
3. What are the experiences and perceptions of second-year students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS of service learning?
4. What type of employability skills do service learning projects create or foster, according to these students?
5. What evidence is there of a relationship between service learning and employability skills?
6. What provisional framework and guidelines can be proposed for service learning modules to enhance the employability of students?

#### **1.3.4 Aim and objectives**

Given the nature of the stated research problem, the main aim of this study was to investigate the second-year BCom students' experiences and perceptions of their service learning opportunities and the influence or effect it may have on their employability skills. In other words, the researcher wanted to investigate the broad trends regarding employability skills that were enhanced, fostered or learned through service learning experiences.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To conceptualise the construct 'employability skills' in the context of higher education from a theoretical perspective.
2. To conceptualise the construct 'service learning' as a pedagogical approach in the context of higher education from a theoretical perspective.
3. To investigate the experiences and perceptions about service learning of the second-year students who were enrolled for a BCom course. The perceptions of second-year students were determined through comparing their understanding of service learning before starting the project and after completion of the project (a letter to a friend and reflection reported as part of a PowerPoint presentation).

4. To determine the second-year students' experiences and perceptions about the influence that service learning may have on their own employability skills through the collection of qualitative data and quantitative data (a pre- and post-implementation questionnaire). The PowerPoint presentation (a journal included) and the letter to a friend were analysed with Nvivo software and with assistance from a statistician. The quantitative data were analysed by applying SurveyMonkey software.
5. To investigate the possible relationship between employability skills and service learning by analysing and interpreting the qualitative data obtained in 2013 from the student group enrolled for the EGAP6026 (the above-mentioned letter to a friend and the reflections reported in the PowerPoint presentation) and in 2015 from a group of 40 volunteer students who were also part of the 2013 sample (focus group interviews).
6. To develop a provisional framework and set of guidelines for the enhancement of employability skills through service learning.
7. To make recommendations for further research in the field of higher education and service learning, specifically focusing on the enhancement of employability skills through service learning.

## **1.4 Research Design and Methodology**

According to Bergh and Theron (2003:21), the research design denotes a “specific, purposeful, and coherent strategic plan to execute a particular research project in order to render the research findings relevant and valid”. In other words, it can be said that the research design is the blueprint or plan for the proposed research, while the research methods describe the steps of the research process and specific resources to be used in the study.

An exploratory research approach is taken when the researcher wants to investigate a new interest or when relatively little knowledge exists on the topic of interest (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2000:83). The purpose of exploratory research generally is to investigate the feasibility of a more extensive study, and also to satisfy the curiosity of the researcher. The researcher embarks on a journey of discovery, so to speak. There is limited available knowledge on the potential relationship between employability skills

and service learning experiences, thus making an exploratory mode of inquiry appropriate to the study. The intent was to gather information that would allow for a broader study to be conducted in order to make recommendations to both graduates and the service learning sector regarding the employability skills that can be acquired through service learning in the South African context.

Table 1.2 indicates the design and methodology, data sources, number of students, and how the analysis was done.

**TABLE 1.2: DESIGN, DATA SOURCES, NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND DATA ANALYSIS METHODS**

Design and Methodology	Data sources	Number and study year of students	Analysis
Quantitative	Pre-implementation questionnaire	265 second year (2013)	SurveyMonkey software
Text analysis Qualitative	Letter to friend about service learning	292 second year (2013)	Coding through Nvivo software
Text analysis Qualitative	PowerPoint presentations with headings	290 second year (2013)	Coding through Nvivo software
Quantitative	Post-implementation questionnaire	173 second year (2013)	SurveyMonkey software
Data transcription Qualitative	Focus group interviews	Five departments x 8 honours students = 40 (2015)	Coding through Nvivo software Triangulation

Source: Author's own (2016).

In order to aid the achievement of the research objectives, an exploratory qualitative case study design with limited quantitative enhancement was utilised. The research design, therefore, included both qualitative and quantitative methods. It focused on collecting and analysing both numeric information (although very limited; for example, scores on the survey questionnaire) and text information (for example letter to a friend, open-ended questions, PowerPoint presentation and focus group interviews) in order to answer the secondary research questions. The central premise of the design was that using a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches would provide a better understanding of the research problem than a qualitative approach alone (*cf.* Creswell and Plano Clark 2007:20; Ivankova, Creswell and Plano Clark 2007:253).

## 1.5 Sampling

Two types of sampling are used in research: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The researcher made use of a non-probability sampling technique in the category of convenience sampling. In non-probability sampling the choice of cases is not based on a randomised selection, but on criteria that provide a sample that meets a particular need, depending on the aims of the research. A convenience sample allows access to participants who are conveniently located, and for the purpose of this study, the BCom students at the UFS served as the research population. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:219) pointed out that the selectivity which is built into a non-probability sample derived from the researcher targeting a particular group in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population; it simply represents itself.

Non-probability sampling involves selecting cases that do not necessarily represent groups outside of the research. They are chosen because the researcher knows that they have the information that will contribute directly to answering the research question. Within the non-probability sampling technique there are four options: purposive sampling, convenience sampling, quota sampling and viral sampling. The researcher made use of convenience sampling.

Data were obtained with informed consent from the second-year BCom students in the EMS Faculty enrolled for the EGAP60206 module in 2013. New data were gathered in 2015 by means of focus group interviews with volunteer students representing the five departments within the EMS Faculty. These volunteer students had also been enrolled for the EGAP60206 module in 2013.

## 1.6 Data Analysis, Interpretation and Reporting

The process of data analysis can be described as one which 'dissects' the data in order to obtain answers to the research questions (Fouché 2002:12). The data analysis processes, as well as the interpretation of, and report on, the data are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis. See Table 1.1 for a summary of the data analysis methods, sources and analysis.

## 1.7 Value of the Research

Employability is generally portrayed as the ability to gain meaningful employment (Clarke 2008:260). Yorke and Knight (2006:5) indicated in their research report that having obtained a relevant degree is merely a means by which to compete for a job, but that employers choose among graduates based on 'something more complex'. As organisations have changed as a result of downsizing, restructuring and outsourcing, the emphasis on flexibility and similar employability skills has increased (Clarke 2008:268).

This study not only explores the effect, perceptions and experience of service learning on students regarding their employability skills; it also demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between service learning activities and employability skills. A clear linkage was shown when the findings obtained from the empirical data were linked with the theoretical framework of the study.

The current misconception regarding employability and the accompanying lack of scientific knowledge available (Hartshorn and Sear 2005:273), further adds to the significance of the study. The current misconception about employability includes the fact there is no universal definition for employability skills. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have been identified in many studies (Bhanugopan and Fish 2009:117; Harvey 2005:16; Yorke and Knight 2006) as key providers to the development of knowledge and employability skills. As such, this study took an informed look at the influence service learning has on the students' employability skills in the South African higher education context.

The study contributed to an understanding of the current status of the interlinked concepts, namely employability skills and service learning. Conducting this investigation using the student population as subjects aided in obtaining a greater understanding of both HEIs and the service learning sector. The study added a great deal to scientific knowledge, given that there is such a widespread debate on the topic at present (Clarke and Patrickson 2008:124; Hartshorn and Sear 2005:279). The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS benefits most from the study because the set of guidelines developed by the researcher might influence the staff members when designing a service learning module that specifically focuses on

developing employability skills. Finally, albeit the results of this study cannot be generalised to all populations, the information may be useful in developing a service learning module that focuses on employability skills.

## 1.8 Ethical Considerations

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:142-145, 333-335) consideration should be given to the following ethical aspects from the onset until conclusion of the study:

- The researcher in the study is responsible for all ethical standards to which the study adheres. The researcher thus must inform all participants on all aspects of the research that might influence their willingness to participate and answer all enquiries on features that may have an adverse effect or consequences.
- The study has been approved by the UFS Ethics Committee. Ethical Clearance number: **UFS-HSD2015/0299** (see Appendix A).
- Informed consent was obtained from the 40 participants before they participated in the focus group interviews (see Appendix D). A letter of consent was drafted by the researcher and sent to all participants. In this letter, the purpose and outcome of the study were outlined, and participants were also informed about aspects pertaining to anonymity and confidentiality, as well as termination of participation in the study. This gave participants the opportunity to be voluntary participants in the study.
- Ensuring participants of the confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study was used as a supporting strategy to encourage participants to be frank and honest at all times. In conjunction with a written letter of consent, verbal assurance in this regard was also given at the beginning of the interviews.
- To support confidentiality and anonymity in the study, no personal information was made available to any third parties. In addition, comments made during focus group interviews were not attributed to a particular individual by name.
- For the data collected in 2013, the pre- and post-implementation questionnaire (see Appendix B and C) had a tick box where students gave consent for the data to be used. In the EGAP60206 study guide (see Appendix G) and during the orientation session with the second-year BCom students, the teaching practitioner explained the

purpose of the module and that the assignments and PowerPoint presentations would be used for data gathering. The teaching practitioner ensured the students of confidentiality by removing the cover pages from their assignments and presentations. The teaching practitioner were the main researcher in 2013 and in 2015.

The findings of the study will be communicated to the School of Higher Education Studies at the UFS and the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS. Participants were also provided with the opportunity to receive the results on request. In this case the researcher had the responsibility to make sure that potential misinterpretations and misuse of the information do not take place, and that the findings should be seen in context of the study.

## **1.9 Quality assurance**

In this study the researcher attended to the trustworthiness of the qualitative data and findings through the application of specific strategies for enhancing the four criteria for trustworthiness, namely credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (see 4.7.1). Similarly, the validity, reliability and objectivity of the quantitative data and findings were enhanced through the application of related strategies (see 4.7.2). These strategies included the triangulation of data sources; providing thick descriptions that include verbatim accounts of students' opinions; member checking/participant review; peer debriefing/review; applying reflexivity/disciplined subjectivity; leaving an audit trail; administering and analysing the questionnaire data with the assistance of SurveyMonkey software; analysing the qualitative data with the assistance of Nvivo software; comparing the empirical data and findings with findings reported in the literature study, and deviant case analysis. (See sections 4.7.1 and 4.7.2 in Chapter 4 for more detail pertaining to which strategies were applied in each case.)

## **1.10 Unit of Analysis**

Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006:156) described the unit of analysis as the person (or object) from whom the data will be collected. The sample then takes on the meaning of being a representation of the greater population, with the individuals within

the sample being referred to as the 'units of analysis' (Bless *et al.* 2006:156). For the purpose of the study the unit of analysis consisted of:

2013 Second-year BCom students enrolled for EGAP60206 = 292 students.

2015 Eight students from each of the five departments within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences = 40 students.

## 1.11 Layout of Chapters

For the purpose of addressing the overarching research question, the respective chapters addressed the specific secondary research questions that collectively led the researcher to respond to the overarching research question.

Chapter 1: Overview of the study.

Chapter 2: Detailed literature review on employability skills and the world of work.

Chapter 3: Detailed literature review on Service learning as a pedagogical approach.

Chapter 4: Overview of the research design and the methodology used in the study.

Chapter 5: Students' experiences and perceptions of the service learning module: Research findings from the 2013 data.

Chapter 6: Students' experiences and perceptions of the relationship between service learning and employability: the 2015 data.

Chapter 7: Conclusions, implications, recommendations, value and limitations of the study.

## 1.12 Conclusion

This chapter provided an introduction to the study at hand, giving an overview of the literature, research problem and importance and benefits of the study. Specific research questions and objectives were stated, and the methodology used was briefly discussed. The layout of the study was provided so as to guide the reader. Chapter 1 is the foundation of the study because all the key terms, ideas and way forward are discussed. The report on the exploratory journey to determine if service learning can serve as pedagogy to develop employability skills in BCom student starts with Chapter 1 and will end in Chapter 7.

The next chapter, Chapter 2, provides a detailed literature review of employability skills as a major construct in this study.

# Chapter 2

## EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND THE WORLD OF WORK

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*Developing skills is as important as training. A larger effort is needed to create a skilled workforce with employment potential.*

Pallam Raju

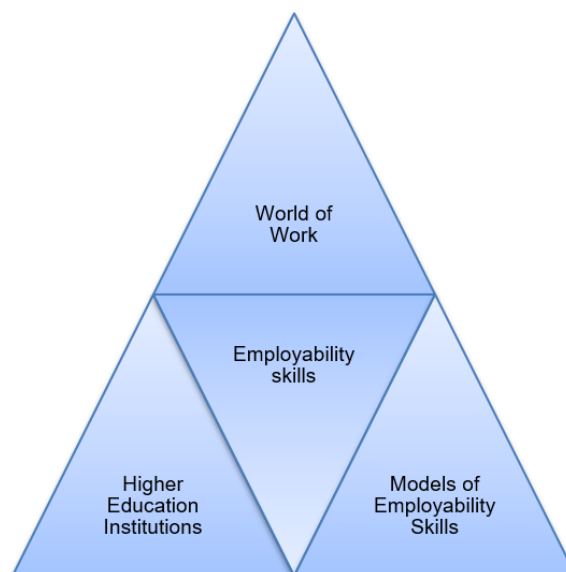
### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter takes an in-depth look at the available literature that relates to employability and the world of work. Employability models will also be discussed as part of the chapter. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the first research question:

*What are the current local and global perspectives on employability skills within the higher education sector?*

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss employability skills that can be developed, enhanced, or fostered by HEIs, and the world of work.

The themes that will be looked at are depicted in Figure 2.1:



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 2.1: Themes discussed in Chapter 2**

In the following subsections some definitions and the origin and development of the terms *employability* (see 2.2.1) and *employability skills* (see 2.2.3) will be discussed, as well as the *world of work* (see 2.3). The definitions lay the platform of the study and exploratory nature of it.

## 2.2 Employability

Definitions of each construct give an idea of the vast differences among earlier studies; however, these definitions provide a much broader understanding of the origin and development of employability (see 2.2) and the world of work (see 2.3).

### 2.2.1 Definitions of employability

The following definitions of employability surfaced from the literature consulted:

- “Employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. More comprehensively employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment” (Hillage and Pollard 1998:1).
- Freeman, Hancock, Simpson and Sykes (2008) see employability skills as a subset of graduate attributes, which are supported by the Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council report (BIHECC 2007:12).
- Scholarios, Van der Schoot and Van der Heijden (2005:1) define employability as “the extent to which employees have skills which the market and employers regard as attractive”.
- The set of achievements, understanding and personal attributes that support individuals in managing their careers [Centre for Outcomes-Based Education (COBE) 2007:3].
- Harvey and Knight (2003) (cited in Beaven and Wright 2006:17) describe employability as graduates being ready to secure work of a suitable level within a reasonable time of graduation and being equipped to keep the post and develop within their chosen career.
- Employability is “the relative changes of acquiring and maintaining different kinds of employment” (Brown, Kesketh and Williams 2003:111).

- Employability is “a set of achievements – skills, understanding and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefit themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy” (Yorke 2006a:20).
- Employability is about a person consciously developing his/her knowledge and a wide range of skills, even if one still does not know what one wants to do later (Price and Maier 2007:18).
- Employability is not just about getting a job; it is about developing attributes, techniques, or experience of life. In essence the emphasis is less on ‘employ’ and more on ‘ability’ (Harvey 2005:13).
- The most widely accepted definition of employability when considering the graduate student is offered by Knight and Yorke (2004:3), stating that employability is “a set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations”.

They also describe employability as “a blend of understanding, skilful practices, efficacy beliefs (or legitimate self-confidence) and reflectiveness (or metacognition)”.

The definitions above indicate that employability is a broad term that relates to skills, the attainment of employment and the ability to move between positions. Barnett (in Nilsson 2010:9) argues that it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine which competencies will secure and retain a position for graduates in the world of work. For the purpose of the research, Knight and Yorke’s (2004:3) definition of employability will be used as the main focus and starting point.

### **2.2.2 History of employability**

The term *employability* has become a hot topic and buzzword in recent years; however, its introduction can be traced back to the 1900s. Employability as construct may have enjoyed much international attention over the past decade (De Grip, Van Loo and Sanders 2004:3; McQuaid, Green and Danson 2005:191), yet the term made its appearance in the scientific arena as early as 1909. Mansfield (2001:26) reports that Sir William Beveridge first noted the concept of employability in 1909 in a book titled *Unemployment: A problem of industry*.

Employability has changed considerably over the years, which is mainly due to the changing labour market, the economy and government policies. The concept of employability came into regular use around 1955 (Versloot, Glaude and Thijssen 1998). However, it is only since the late 1990s that employability has been empirically studied. According to Thijssen, Van der Heijden and Rocco (2008:166), employability is studied from different angles and levels (individual, organisational and industrial) across a wide range of academic disciplines, such as business management studies, human resource management, psychology, educational science and career theory.

From the definitions mentioned in 2.2.1, it is evident that employability can be broken up into four dissimilar parts. First, it is the ability to secure employment, and, second, the ability to maintain employment. In the third instance, it includes the ability to move between various jobs and roles within the organisation, and, lastly, it refers to the ability to secure a new role with an alternative organisation.

### **2.2.3 Employability skills**

This subsection is devoted to the skills desired by the employers: skills that are lacking and those skills that employers are most satisfied with.

Wellman (2010:908) mentions the work done during 2009 by the United Kingdom (UK) Commission for Employment and Skills, stressing that employability skills must allow and enable any individual to use the more specific knowledge and technical skills acquired through higher education. This commission also emphasises that employability skills are the distinguishing factor when it comes to being good at a subject and being good at doing one's job.

Wellman (2010:908) and Cornford (2005:35) indicate the difficulty in understanding the terminology used when commenting on graduate employability. It seems that there is great confusion when it comes to core skills, transferable skills, and more generic skills, each taking on a unique meaning in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, to mention a few. The European Qualification Framework (EQF) defines skills as the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of this framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive, and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the

use of methods, materials, tools, and instruments) (Hoffmann, Hampe, Müller, Bargstädt, Heiß, and Schmitt, 2010:641).

According to Allen Consulting (2006:11) employability skills:

- *are multifunctional* – they meet a variety of diverse and significant demands of daily life; they are needed to accomplish dissimilar goals and to solve numerous problems in different situations;
- *are applicable across numerous fields* – for example, for the involvement in school, the labour market, political procedures, social networks, and interpersonal relationships, including family life, and for developing a sense of social wellbeing;
- *refer to a high order of conceptual complexity* – they assume a conceptual autonomy which includes an active and reflective approach to life;
- *are multidimensional* – they are composed of experience, systematic, cultural, and communication skills, and common sense.

Employability skills may be seen as a useful subset of graduate attributes and not the other way around (BIHECC 2007:2).

### **2.2.3.1 Generic skills**

Generic skills represent the so-called transferable skills that can support study in any discipline (Yorke and Knight 2006:4).

Generic skills are developed in association with technical skills because they serve as a vehicle for the development of technical skills. Second, generic skills are rarely applied in isolation, but are applied in association with other generic skills (Australian DEST, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia 2002; Allen Consulting Group 2006:11).

However, 'generic skills' is an overarching term that includes communication skills, problem-solving skills, computer literacy, information literacy and willingness to learn, as well as teamwork among others (Ng, Abdullah, Nee and Tiew 2009:306). Another viewpoint about employability skills is that the workplace puts the highest value on generic cognitive skills, such as willingness to learn, teamwork and collaborative learning (Coll and Zegwaard 2006:33; Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick and Cragolini

2004:48), but places little emphasis on discipline knowledge except in technical roles in the specialised professions.

Generic employability skills are also described as a set of generic achievements, in many cases enriched with specific vocationally useful elements. Employability is not something static, but something that a person can develop throughout life (Širca, Nastav, Lesjak and Sulčić 2006:53-64; Yorke 2006b:2).

Yorke (2006b:5) provides a list derived from research carried out over 25 years and suggests that employers expect to find that the following generic skills have been developed in graduates:

- Imagination/creativity.
- Adaptability/flexibility.
- Willingness to learn.
- Independent working/autonomy.
- Working in a team.
- Ability to manage others.
- Ability to work under pressure.
- Good oral communication.
- Communication in writing for varied purposes/audiences.
- Numeracy.
- Attention to detail.
- Time management.
- Assumption of responsibility and for making decisions.
- Planning, coordinating and organising ability.
- Ability to use new technologies (not included in the list above, but mentioned in many others and an important element). The use of technology is a requirement for most jobs in this day and age.

Enterprise and entrepreneurship skills, which are often discussed in the employability literature, also need to be discussed in this regard. It is likely to be the case that an enterprising graduate would be valued in any organisation, either profit-making or non-profit-making, large or small (Yorke 2006b: 5).

### **2.2.3.2 Core skills**

The Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) defines a core skill as one of a group of five skills that are the key to learning and working in today's world (SQA [n.d.]: online). It has become a widely accepted idea in the workforce and career development literature that the economy currently demands 'new basic skills', a combination of 'hard skills' (for example, high level literacy and numeracy, plus the technical skills required by a particular job) and 'soft skills'. Robert Bowles (in Battistoni and Longo 2005:7) of the Middlesex Community College in Massachusetts writes that among the specific 'soft skills' listed by employers, the following deserve attention:

- Effective listening and oral communication skills.
- Creative thinking and problem solving-skills.
- The ability to work effectively in diverse teams or groups.
- Leadership and interpersonal skills

In 2002, both the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry created a list of employability skills for the future. These were communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, planning and organising, technology, and lifelong learning skills, and initiative and entrepreneurial skills (Australia. DEST *et al.* 2002: online).

### **2.2.3.3 Transferable skills**

The Performance and Innovation Unit (as quoted by Knight and Yorke 2004:24) defines transferable skills as skills that can be used across all occupational groups. According to the Victoria University (2007, in McLennan and Keating 2008:3), these skills can be linked directly to employability skills, namely to be:

- *work ready* – with a set of skills, knowledge and experiences to move seamlessly into work after university studies;
- *career ready* – with transferable skills and knowledge to manage their own way through the changing world of work; and
- *future ready* – with skills and capabilities to continue to learn, contribute, and be adaptable as citizens of the changing world and their communities.

This definition refers to skills students should have ‘after university studies’; therefore, the role of higher education in skills development deserves discussion.

#### **2.2.4 Employability skills and higher education**

The Dearing Report as cited by Ng *et al.* (2009:316) concludes that the primary purpose of any higher education institution is to prepare its students for the world of work. This report also argued that students should be given the opportunity to develop generic skills to enhance the application of their technical and/or subject-specific knowledge.

Enhancing employability is about recognising and making explicit what is being done in higher education courses by drawing students’ attention to the employability skills and outcomes that are being developed as part of their study. This means:

- Raising awareness about how the curriculum develops employability skills.
- Explicitly linking learning outcomes with employability.
- Enhancing students’ understanding of the value of their studies in higher education beyond their immediate subject area/discipline.
- Facilitating students’ language comprehension to communicate more effectively with employers about their skills, knowledge and career potential (Ng *et al.* 2009:317).

Harvey (2000:3) concurs with this, and emphasises that there is a growing awareness in the UK of the importance of higher education in providing innovation and creativity for the development of a knowledge-based economy in an increasingly competitive global market. Three major policy initiatives have contributed to this in South African higher education over the past decade, namely policies on the following:

- Widening participation and improving retention.
- Enhancing employability.
- Lifelong learning.

Both the higher education sector and the graduate labour market are changing rapidly. Employability is a multifaceted and ‘multidimensional concept’ (Lees 2002:2), which may include knowledge, attributes, competencies, behaviour and attitudes. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is an emphasis on employability skills and a belief that they “should be a core part of a student’s university experience” (Confederation of

British Industry [CBI] 2009:6). It could be argued, therefore, that it is misleading to focus on employability skills within education as merely a set of strategic tools, because this approach undermines the aims of the process of education. Rather, the development of students' skills and attributes is intrinsic to a more holistic pedagogical approach. It could be posited, therefore, that employability skills are closely interwoven with students' intellectual and personal development. This idea is reflected in Knight and Yorke's (2002:5) model of employability, Understanding, Skills, Efficacy, Beliefs and Metacognition (USEM), which will be discussed under the Models of Employability (see 2.5.1 to 2.5.4).

The increasing attention paid to high-level skills in the workplace and lifelong learning (see 2.6), and the rapid production and communication of knowledge made possible through the internet since the 1990s, led to a rethinking of the role of education. The problem of interfacing successfully with the requirements of the workplace runs deeper, because the students cannot always be convinced to move beyond disciplinary boundaries and the knowledge that is usually expressed within those boundaries. The workplace requires capability in a different kind of knowledge than that generated through research and scholarship, and which remains at the heart of the university curriculum. This 'schism' between academic and workplace knowledge led to the coming into existence of 'work-based learning' (Boud and Solomon 2001:3; Osborne 2000:883). This generated interest in articulating high-level skills such as interpersonal, communication, goal-setting, self-management, and teamwork skills, in order for the formal curriculum to also be seen as facilitating employability (Brennan and Little 1996:15). The following quotations show the various opinions about this:

*Learning in educational settings presents a stark contrast to learning in work and life ... Learning in educational institutions tends to be decontextualized. Courses are often constructed as islands apart from the bodies of knowledge and practices from which they are generated and on which they focus (Boud and Falchikov 2007:405).*

*Workplace knowledge is created through implementation of a new work system through solving problems which arise in the rapidly shifting context of work or from the employees' need to understand the complex situation (Reeve and Gallacher 2005:228).*

*There are substantial challenges in making existing course units available within a work-based learning framework [disciplinary and workplace] knowledge may be qualitatively different and unable to be transplanted from one to another. It is easier to imagine a dialogue between disciplinary and professional frameworks within a conventional course, than in a work setting (Boud and Solomon 2001:10).*

The above statements clearly illustrate that HEIs should communicate and liaise more with the workplace in order to identify disciplinary skills and workplace skills that are relevant to companies.

Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010:229) proclaim that there is a lack of literature that depicts the difference in skills expectations between employers, graduates, and HEI.

Although there is no universally agreed upon definitive list of skills, some skills and competencies are commonly cited, such as communication, goal-setting, self-management, teamwork skills, and more. Barnett and Coate (2001:417) add the importance of motivation and flexibility to the usual list.

In the following section the models of employability that highlight the important skills, are discussed. It involves a discussion of graduates attributes at the UFS.

### **2.2.5 Graduate attributes at the University of the Free State**

In 2013 the draft Teaching and Learning Strategy of the UFS (see Appendix F) proposed institutional graduate attributes based on the exploration of national and international practices (University of the Free State, Centre for Teaching and Learning (UFS CTL; 2013:11). These attributes were shared in the draft strategy document to stimulate institutional conversation regarding graduate attributes and emphasises that sustained institutional work is required to identify and finalise a set of graduate attributes for the UFS.

The framework of the Teaching and Learning Strategy has two tiers. Tier 1 includes “complex interwoven aspects of human ability which are difficult to explicitly teach or assess in traditional university experiences”, whereas Tier 2 consists of more explicit clusters of personal skills and abilities that can be developed differently in different disciplines (adapted from Barrie 2005). Tier 2 attributes help facilitate the development of Tier 1 attributes. As Tier 2 attributes are more explicit in nature it is easier to map or

design them in existing curricula and measure them through assessment. The Tier 1 attributes of scholarship, active glocal (that is, local and global) citizenship, and lifelong learning are viewed as resulting from the complex interactions between Tier 2 attributes throughout an undergraduate programme. Therefore, Tier 1 attributes are more difficult to assess directly as they are broader, interwoven aspects of graduate attributes (UFS CTL 2013:11). In this document the skills and abilities are elucidated.

## **TIER 1: PERSONAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

- **Scholarship: A critical attitude towards knowledge and understanding**

Have a scholarly attitude to knowledge and understanding. Graduates should be able to generate knowledge through inquiry, critique and synthesis. They should also be able to apply this knowledge to relevant problems and communicate their understanding in a professional, effective and confident manner.

- **Active 'glocal' citizens: An attitude or stance towards to complex local and global systems**

Develop an understanding of complex, interdependent global systems and aspire to contribute to society in meaningful ways. This contribution includes, among other traits, accepting social responsibilities, advocating for improving the sustainability of the environment, and having a broad understanding and high regard for human rights, equity and ethics in local, national and global communities.

- **Lifelong learning: An attitude or stance towards themselves**

Be lifelong learners, committed to and capable of continuous collaborative and individual learning and critical reflection for the purpose of furthering their personal knowledge, skills and competence, and understanding of the world and their place in it.

## **TIER 2: ENABLING OUTCOMES OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

- **Inquiry focused and critical**

Develop a focus on creating new knowledge and understanding through the process of inquiry, analysis and critical thinking.

Inquiry refers to a systematic process of exploring issues, objects or works through the collection and analysis of evidence that results in informed conclusions or judgments. Analysis refers to the process of breaking complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them. Inquiry and analysis will be developed within the context of a critical disposition defined as a habit of mind characterised by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artefacts, and events before accepting or formulating opinions or conclusions.

- **Academic and professional competence**

Develop academic and professional competence that includes high-level communication skills (written and oral) that will enable them to negotiate and create new understanding through interaction with diverse others to further their own learning. They will also be expected to develop creative thinking, problem-solving and teamwork abilities as part of the learning experience.

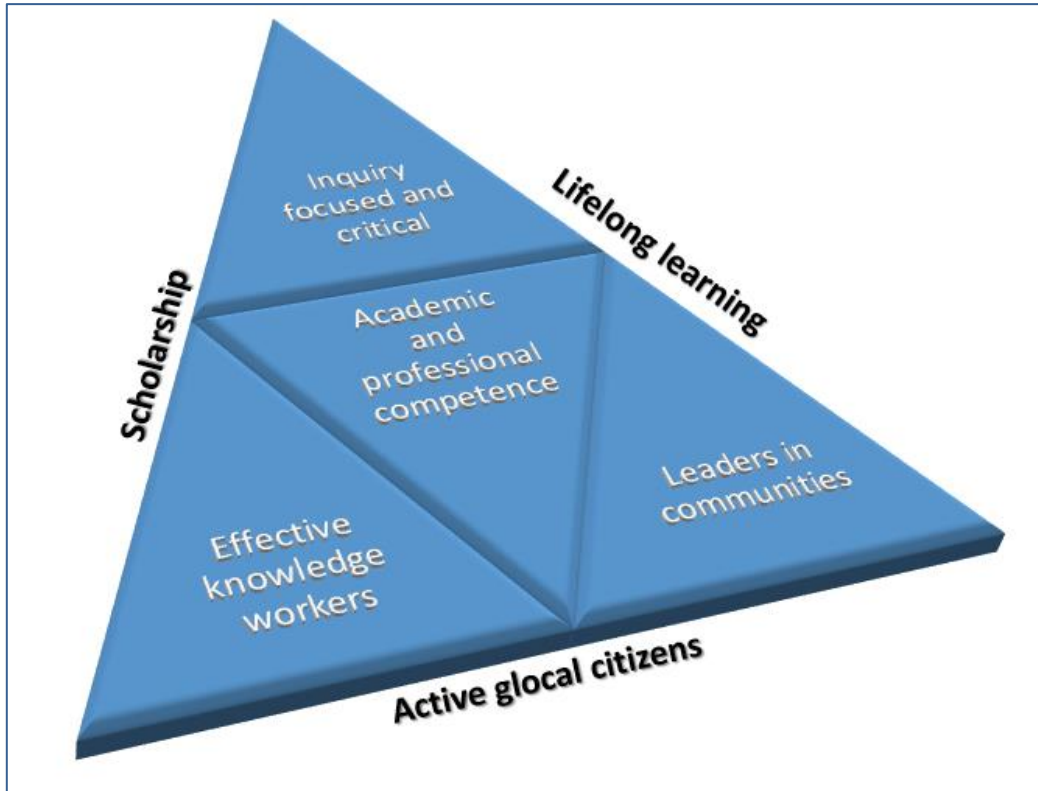
- **Effective knowledge workers**

Develop the skills necessary to function effectively in the twenty-first century knowledge economy where people have to 'think for a living' (Cooper 2006).

This will entail the ability to know when there is a need for information to be able to use the information effectively and responsibly to address a problem.

- **Leaders in communities**

Initiate and implement constructive change in all communities. Their leadership should be characterised by integrity and an awareness of community needs and ethics involved. UFS graduates should also lead in a way that mentors the next generation of learners in a way that values different cultures and viewpoints.



Source: UFS CTL (2013:13).

*Figure 2.2: Graduate attributes for the University of the Free State: An integration of the work*

## 2.2.6 Yorke and Knight's employability skills

Yorke and Knight (2006:8) compiled an extensive list of 39 dimensions of employability, which were further grouped into three categories, namely personal qualities, core skills and process skills.

**TABLE 2.1: YORKE AND KNIGHT'S DIMENSIONS OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS**

A. PERSONAL QUALITIES	
1	<b>Malleable self-theory:</b> Belief that attributes [e.g. intelligence] are not fixed and can be developed.
2	<b>Self-awareness:</b> Awareness of own strengths and weaknesses, aims and values.
3	<b>Self-confidence:</b> Confidence in dealing with the challenges that employment and life throw up.
4	<b>Independence:</b> Ability to work without supervision.
5	<b>Emotional intelligence:</b> Sensitivity to others' emotions and the effects that they can have.
6	<b>Adaptability:</b> Ability to respond positively to changing circumstances and new challenges.
7	<b>Stress tolerance:</b> Ability to retain effectiveness under pressure.
8	<b>Initiative:</b> Ability to take action unprompted.
9	<b>Willingness to learn:</b> Commitment to ongoing learning to meet the needs of employment and life.
10	<b>Reflectiveness:</b> The disposition to reflect evaluatively on the performance of oneself and others.

<b>B. CORE SKILLS</b>	
11	<b>Reading effectiveness:</b> The recognition and retention of key points.
12	<b>Numeracy:</b> Ability to use numbers at an appropriate level of accuracy.
13	<b>Information retrieval:</b> Ability to access different sources.
14	<b>Language skills:</b> Possession of more than a single language and being competent in it.
15	<b>Self-management:</b> Ability to work in an efficient and structured manner.
16	<b>Critical analysis:</b> Ability to 'deconstruct' a problem or situation.
17	<b>Creativity:</b> Ability to be original or inventive and to apply lateral thinking.
18	<b>Listening:</b> Focused attention in which key points are recognised.
19	<b>Written communication:</b> Clear reports, letters, etc. written specifically for the reader.
20	<b>Oral presentations:</b> Clear and confident presentation of information to a group [also 21, 35].
21	<b>Explaining:</b> Orally and in writing [see also 20, 35].
22	<b>Global awareness:</b> In terms of both cultures and economics.
<b>C. PROCESS SKILLS</b>	
23	<b>Computer literacy:</b> Ability to use a range of software.
24	<b>Commercial awareness:</b> Operating with an understanding of business issues and priorities.
25	<b>Political sensitivity:</b> Appreciates how organisations actually work and acts accordingly.
26	<b>Ability to work cross-culturally:</b> Both within and beyond South Africa.
27	<b>Ethical sensitivity:</b> Appreciates ethical aspects of employment and acts accordingly.
28	<b>Prioritising:</b> Ability to rank tasks according to importance.
29	<b>Planning:</b> Setting of achievable goals and structuring action.
30	<b>Applying subject understanding:</b> Use of disciplinary understanding from the HE programme.
31	<b>Acting morally:</b> Has a moral code and acts accordingly.
32	<b>Coping with complexity:</b> Ability to handle ambiguous and complex situations.
33	<b>Problem-solving:</b> Selection and use of appropriate methods to find solutions.
34	<b>Influencing:</b> Convincing others of the validity of one's point of view.
35	Arguing for and/or justifying a point of view or a course of action [see also 20, 21, 34].
36	<b>Resolving conflict:</b> Both intra-personally and in relationships with others.
37	<b>Decision-making:</b> Choice of the best option from a range of alternatives.
38	<b>Negotiating:</b> Discussion to achieve mutually satisfactory resolutions of contentious issues.
39	<b>Teamwork:</b> Can work constructively with others on a common task.

Source: Adapted from Yorke (2006a:8).

The skills listed above indicate what is seen in the literature to be ideal or necessary in order to achieve fulfilment and career success.

According to Harvey (2001:107), there is a growing emphasis on enabling students with these skills. A diploma, degree or qualification is not enough in this day and age

to secure employment after completing one's studies. Skills should be embedded into curriculums, courses and modules to give graduates the 'edge' when they enter the world of work. Another set of skills was published in 2010 by the Higher Education Academy (HEA 2010) in the UK which will be discussed in the following section.

## 2.2.7 Centre for Outcome-based Education Skills

The HEA in the UK, more specifically, the Open University, has published a list of skills, competencies and attributes that employers stated they value. Table 2.2 links the HEA employability skills to the indicators used in the Organisational Unit's (OU) undergraduate levels framework.

**TABLE 2.2: COMPARISON OF THE ORGANISATIONAL UNIT INDICATORS AND HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY'S EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS**

OU Indicators	HEA employability skills
<p><b>Cognitive skills</b> <i>Description, application, analysis and synthesis of knowledge.</i></p>	<p><b>Cognitive skills</b> <i>The ability to identify, analyse and solve problems, work with information and handle a mass of diverse data. Assess risk and draw conclusions.</i></p>
<p><b>Key skills</b> <i>Addressing issues and problems; communication; information literacy; information and communications technology (ICT) and numerical skills: learning how to learn.</i></p>	<p><b>Generic competencies</b> <i>High-level of transferable key skills such as the ability to work with others in a team, communicate, persuade and have interpersonal sensitivity.</i></p>
<p><b>Practical and professional skills</b> <i>Developing practical skills and professional awareness.</i></p>	<p><b>Practical elements</b> <i>Critical evaluation of the outcomes of professional practice; reflect and review own practice; participate in and review quality control processes and risk management.</i>  <i>Business and/or organisational awareness. Having an appreciation of how businesses operate through work experience. Appreciation of organisational culture, policies and processes.</i>  <i>Technical ability, for example, having the knowledge and experience of working with modern laboratory equipment. The ability to apply and exploit information technology.</i></p>
<p><b>Personal and career development</b> <i>Using personal and career planning and development resources.</i></p>	<p><b>Personal capabilities</b> <i>The ability and desire to learn oneself and improve one's self-awareness and performance – lifelong learning philosophy, emotional intelligence and performance.</i></p>

(Source: COBE 2007:6).

Enhancing employability is about helping the individual to recognise the skills they have however and wherever those skills have been developed, and articulate them to others.

### **2.2.8 Linking education and the workplace**

The *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: Building an expanded, effective and integrated post-school system* that was published in 2013, has a section on Education and the Workplace (RSA DoE 2013). One of the purposes of an HEI is to prepare workers for the labour market. The government also aims to improve the places of work training in South Africa. Work-integrated learning (WIL) must be a fundamental part of a student's training system. It is verified by the National Skills Accord (Republic of South Africa, Economic Development Department (RSA EDD) 2011). In education and training, a combination of both theoretical knowledge and practical experience is important. Theory provides knowledge of general principles and laws, which allows additional learning and adaptation to new technologies and circumstances. Practical experience builds applied knowledge and develops self-confidence in someone's ability to act effectively. In numerous areas of study, valuable practical experience can be attained in an institutional workshop where learning can be easily controlled in line with a curriculum.

The SETAs (Sector Education and Training Authority) have a crucial role to play in facilitating workplace learning partnerships between employers and educational institutions. Given the demographics of the South African labour force, it is not enough to emphasise education and training or preparing students for employment. Unemployment levels in South Africa are extremely high, particularly among youth. In the second quarter of 2013 the official unemployment rate was 25.6%; if discouraged work-seekers are included, the rate was 38.4% (RSA DoE). The unemployment statistics demonstrate the value of an education: The highest unemployment rate 30.3% was among those without a National Senior Certificate (NSC) or equivalent, while those with an NSC or equivalent had an unemployment rate of 27%. Among university graduates, the unemployment rate was only 5.2%, while the rate for others with a tertiary education was 12.6%. This means that HEIs are providing training for individuals who will not, in the foreseeable future, be able to find formal employment in

existing enterprises. One of the causes can be due to lack of employability skills and experience of real world situations.

To make a living, these individuals will have to create employment opportunities in other ways – by starting small businesses in the informal or formal sector, or by establishing cooperatives, community organisations or non-profit initiatives of various types. The education and training system must cater for people in such circumstances by providing suitable skills. Education must also provide for the desires of communities by supporting them to develop skills and knowledge which are not specifically aimed at income generation, but rather knowledge on how to deal, for example, with individuals in community organisations (Statistics South Africa 2013:xiv).

### **2.2.8.1 *Employability skills according to the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training***

In 2002 the DEST in Australia (Australia DEST 2002) published the *Employability skills for the future* (see Table 2.3 below). The table reflects on graduates and the skills employers expect them to have. First, it states the personal attributes that contribute to overall employability, namely loyalty, motivation, commitment and reliability, to name a few. The next section of the table is divided into skills and elements. The skills are what the graduate should have acquired before entering the world of work. The elements are the facets of the skill that the employers identified as important –the mix and priority of these elements would vary from job to job. The six crucial skills that graduates should have acquired during their study period at an HEI include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, planning and organising, technology, lifelong learning and initiative and enterprise.

Table 2.3 explains the employability skills of the future according to DEST (Australia DEST 2002: online). Next to each skill in the table it explains the elements that employers view as important. The elements are not the same for every position, but it will include a combination of a few elements together.

**TABLE 2.3: EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE**

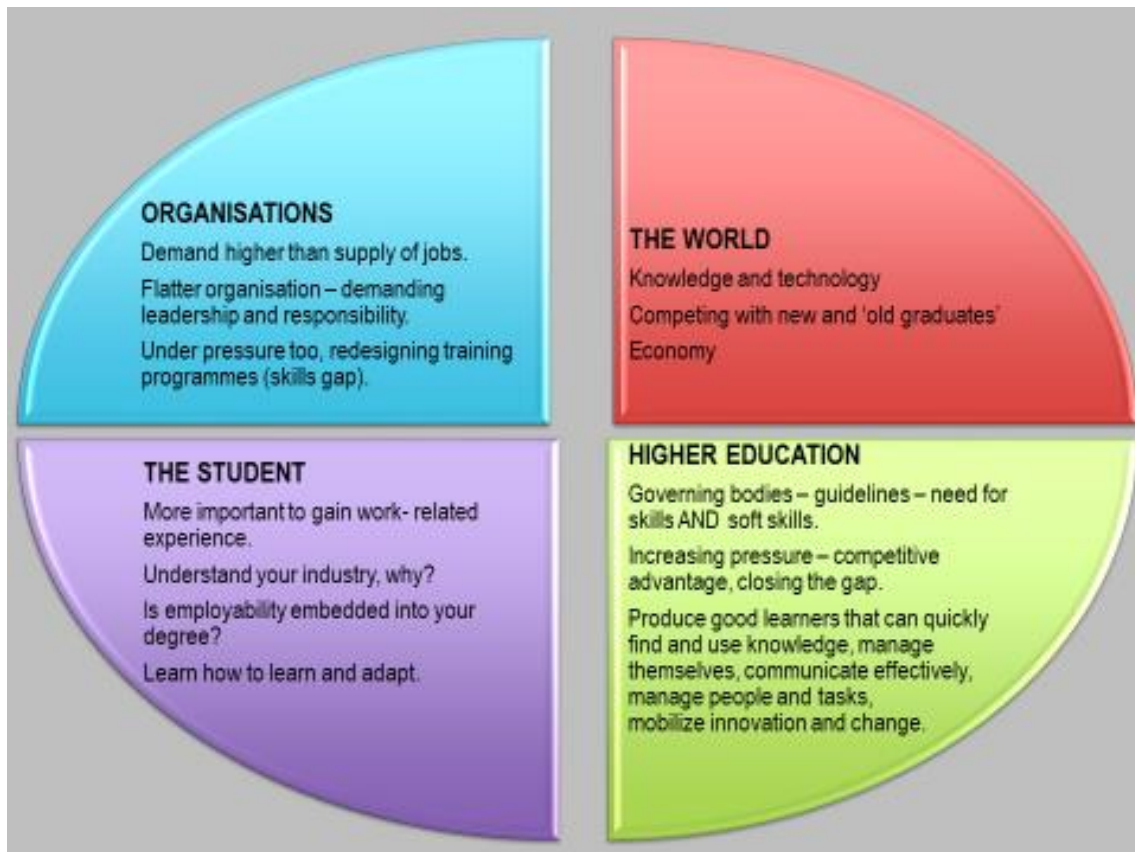
<p><b>Personal attributes that contribute to overall employability:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loyalty.</li> <li>• An ability to deal with pressure.</li> <li>• A sense of humour.</li> <li>• Personal presentation.</li> <li>• Honesty and integrity.</li> <li>• Adaptability.</li> <li>• A balanced attitude to work and home life.</li> <li>• Positive self-esteem.</li> <li>• Reliability.</li> <li>• Commitment.</li> <li>• Motivation.</li> <li>• Common sense.</li> <li>• Enthusiasm.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Skill</b></p>	<p><b>Element</b> (i.e. facets of the skill that employers identified as important, noting that the mix and priority of these would vary from job to job)</p>
<p><b>Communication</b> that contributes to productive and harmonious relations across employees and customers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening and understanding.</li> <li>• Speaking clearly and directly.</li> <li>• Writing to the needs of the audience.</li> <li>• Negotiating responsively.</li> <li>• Reading independently.</li> <li>• Empathising.</li> <li>• Speaking and writing in languages other than English.</li> <li>• Using numeracy.</li> <li>• Understanding the needs of internal and external customers.</li> <li>• Persuading effectively.</li> <li>• Establishing and using networks.</li> <li>• Being assertive.</li> <li>• Sharing information.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Teamwork</b> that contributes to productive working relationships and outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working across different ages and irrespective of gender, race, religion or political persuasion.</li> <li>• Working as an individual and as a member of a team.</li> <li>• Knowing how to define a role as part of the team.</li> <li>• Applying teamwork to a range of situations, for example future planning, crisis problem-solving.</li> <li>• Identifying the strengths of the team members.</li> <li>• Coaching and mentoring skills, including giving feedback.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Problem-solving</b> that contributes to productive outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing creative, innovative solutions</li> <li>• Developing practical solutions.</li> <li>• Showing independence and initiative in identifying problems and solving them.</li> <li>• Solving problems in teams</li> <li>• Applying a range of strategies to problem-solving.</li> <li>• Using mathematics, including budgeting and financial management to solve problems.</li> <li>• Applying problem-solving strategies across a range of areas</li> <li>• Testing assumptions, taking the context of data and circumstances into account.</li> <li>• Resolving customer concerns in relation to complex project issues.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Self-management</b> that contributes to employee satisfaction and growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a personal vision and goals.</li> <li>• Evaluating and monitoring own performance.</li> <li>• Having knowledge and confidence in own ideas and visions.</li> <li>• Articulating own ideas and visions.</li> <li>• Taking responsibility.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Planning and organising</b> that contributes to long- and short-term strategic planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing time and priorities – setting timelines, coordinating tasks for self and with others.</li> <li>• Being resourceful.</li> <li>• Taking initiative and making decisions.</li> <li>• Adapting resource allocations to cope with contingencies.</li> <li>• Establishing clear project goals and deliverables.</li> <li>• Allocating people and other resources to tasks.</li> <li>• Planning the use of resources, including time management.</li> <li>• Participates in continuous improvement and planning processes.</li> <li>• Developing a vision and a proactive plan to accompany it.</li> <li>• Predicting – weighing up risk, evaluate alternatives and apply evaluation criteria.</li> <li>• Collecting, analysing and organising information.</li> <li>• Understanding basic business systems and their relationships.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Technology</b> that contributes to effective execution of tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a range of basic information technology skills.</li> <li>• Applying information technology as a management tool.</li> <li>• Using information technology to organise data.</li> <li>• Being willing to learn new information technology skills.</li> <li>• Having the OHS? knowledge to apply technology</li> <li>• Having the physical capacity to apply technology, for example manual dexterity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lifelong learning</b> that contributes to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing own learning.</li> <li>• Contributing to the learning community at the workplace.</li> <li>• Using a range of mediums to learn – mentoring, peer support and networking, information technology, courses.</li> <li>• Applying learning to ‘technical’ issues (for example, learning about products) and ‘people’ issues (for example, interpersonal and cultural aspects of work).</li> <li>• Having enthusiasm for ongoing learning.</li> <li>• Being willing to learn in any setting – on and off the job.</li> <li>• Being open to new ideas and techniques.</li> <li>• Being prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills.</li> <li>• Acknowledging the need to learn in order to accommodate change;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Initiative and enterprise</b> that contribute to innovative outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapting to new situations.</li> <li>• Developing a strategic, creative, long-term vision.</li> <li>• Being creative.</li> <li>• Identifying opportunities not obvious to others</li> <li>• Translating ideas into action.</li> <li>• Generating a range of options.</li> <li>• Initiating innovative solutions.</li> </ul>

Source: Australia DEST (2002: online)

In the first ESSD50101 (Skills Development) class at the UFS in 2012, Figure 2.3 was shown to students in order for them to make the connection between employability skills (what they need for the world of work) and how these are linked to the organisation (corporate businesses) and the higher education environment. The students had to complete an assignment on how they saw themselves within the picture and what skills they ought to develop during their study period at the UFS. The reason why students were shown the figure (see Figure 2.3) was to make them aware

that each employability skill is interwoven with the others. The student, higher education, the world and organisations each requires specific skills and together it contributes to a better employer in the world of work.



Source: UFS (2012: PowerPoint slide used in 2012 for ESSD50105 students).

**Figure 2.3: The importance of employability skills nationally and internationally**

This assignment indicated that it is regarded important for students to realise that the skills they will need for the world of work would be embedded in their curricula. Nationally and internationally there are few skills that overlap, but different countries also have specific required skills (see 2.2.8 and Table 2.3). This figure was the first of the ESSD50105 assignments students had to complete. The assignment created awareness of employability skills within the context of curricula and the world of work. Students had to explain how they would develop skills in each sphere throughout their BCom study period. By doing this assignment, students were able to draw up their own plan of action to develop the necessary and required employability skills. The next section focus on the importance of embedding employability skills in the curriculum.

### 2.2.9 Embedding employability in the curriculum

Kruger (2014) discusses embedding employability skills and graduate attributes in the curriculum of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS in her PhD thesis, titled *Attributes for economic and management sciences graduates entering the world of work: A curriculum perspective*. Kruger was a former employee of the Faculty of EMS and worked with the researcher to develop and implement the ESSD and EGAP modules within the Faculty's new curriculum that was implemented in 2013. ESSD were the Soft Skills Development module where students learned the theory of specific employability skills (see 1.3.2; Table 1.1). In the EGAP module, the Graduate Assessment Project, the students had to practically implement and demonstrate the theory of ESSD.

In her study, Kruger (2014) developed and designed a proposed framework, based on the integration of perspectives gained (including the perceived needs and possible shortcomings) from her first round of data collection and elaborated on the important graduate skills, as well as the perspectives gained from the literature review done for the study.

Kruger's proposed framework consisted of the following six main interrelated sections:

- Graduate attributes identified as important for graduates from the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences to possess in the world of work.
- The internal and external realities (i.e. context) surrounding graduate attribute development that need to be taken into consideration.
- Undergraduate curriculum design and review processes (including the mapping of graduate attributes).
- Teaching–learning practices for curriculum delivery that promote graduate attribute development.
- Assessment practices that enable graduate attribute development.
- The collection and management of evidence of graduate attribute development.

In concluding her framework, Kruger (2014) included five main focus areas (see Table 2.4), namely:

- A: Academic and professional competence.
- B: Effective knowledge workers.
- C: Being inquiry focused and critically inclined, which include the ability to create new knowledge and understanding.
- D: Self-management that leads to career self-management in the workplace.
- E: Leadership which include the ability to lead through a variety of elements.

**TABLE 2.4: GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES TO BE DEVELOPED DURING UNDERGRADUATE YEARS OF STUDY**

<b>A. Academic and professional competence, which includes the following abilities:</b>	
A1	A sound discipline-specific knowledge base and the ability to apply it in, and transfer it to different contexts.
A2	Oral communication (e.g. making presentations).
A3	Written communication (e.g. report and essay writing).
A4	An understanding of and sensitivity toward non-verbal communication (e.g. interpreting body language).
A5	Conflict management.
A6	Problem-solving. (This also relates to effective knowledge workers and information literacy.)
A7	Decision-making.
A8	Professional conduct, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A8.1 An understanding of ethics.</li> <li>A8.2 The application of ethical principles.</li> <li>A8.3 Acting with integrity.</li> <li>A8.4 Ability to work effectively with diverse others.</li> </ul>
A9	Creativity and innovation.
<b>B. Effective knowledge workers, which includes the following abilities:</b>	
B1	To know when there is a need for information to address a particular problem.
B2	To collect appropriate information pertaining to the problem.
B3	To use information to address a particular problem.
B4	To organise information to address a particular problem.
B5	To apply knowledge gained from different sources and experiences.
B6	Information technology skills that contribute to effective knowledge work/information literacy. Information technology skills relate to the ability to use computers, software application, databases and other technology to perform academic, personal and work-related tasks.

<b>C. <i>Being inquiry focused and critically inclined, which include the ability to create new knowledge and understanding through:</i></b>	
C1	Inquiry before accepting or formulating opinions or conclusions.
C2	Analysis before accepting or formulating opinions or conclusions.
C3	Critical thinking before accepting or formulating opinions or conclusions.
C4	Systems thinking before accepting or formulating opinions or conclusions.
C5	An <i>interest in</i> global and local issues impacting on organisations and society as a whole.
C6	An <i>understanding of</i> global and local issues impacting on organisations and society as a whole.
<b>D. <i>Self-management that leads to career self-management in the workplace</i></b>	
<i>Self-management abilities</i> include aspects such as:	
D1	The management of oneself or by oneself.
D2	Taking responsibility for one's own behaviour and well-being.
D3	Taking a favourable stance to lifelong learning.
D4	Working independently.
D5	Taking ownership and responsibility for tasks and career development.
D6	Working under pressure.
D7	Adapting to changing circumstances.
D8	Persisting in the face of adversity/ambiguity (resilience).
D9	Managing time effectively.
D10	Performance- and goal-directed behaviour (also related to lifelong learning).
D11	Having confidence in one's abilities to complete tasks and achieve success (i.e. self-efficacy beliefs).
D12	<b>Emotional literacy/intelligence (related to, amongst others, working effectively with diverse others, leadership ability, adaptability and reflective thinking)</b> , that includes the following:
D12.1	The ability to understand one's own emotions (including identifying, understanding the origin of, and expressing one's own emotions appropriately).
D12.2	The ability to understand the emotions of others (including identifying the emotions of others).
D12.3	The ability to manage one's own emotions (including selectively engaging in or detaching from emotions, where appropriate).
D12.4	The ability to manage the emotions of others (including selectively engaging with or detaching from the emotions of others, where appropriate).
<b>E. <i>Leadership, which includes the ability to:</i></b>	
E1	Lead through <i>integrity</i> (i.e. with an awareness and understanding of <i>ethics</i> ).
E2	Lead through an <i>awareness and understanding of community needs</i> (including service to others, promoting a sense of community, building community).
E3	Delegate tasks effectively (including showing trust in the ability of others).
E4	Working effectively with diverse others (including teamwork and respect for others, effective communication and conflict management, also related to emotional intelligence).

Source: Kruger (2014:389).

In the concluding chapter of her thesis Kruger (2014:389) makes the following concluding remarks about the proposed framework:

*If the framework is indeed utilised, it will provide opportunities for further research into the effectiveness of the application of the features included in the framework and ultimately will lead to further refinement of approaches taken to accommodate graduate attributes in undergraduate curriculum design and delivery.*

*If the proposed framework is used, evaluated and monitored in programmes in other faculties, the results may yield important information about the generalizability [sic] of the features of the proposed framework.*

From the comprehensive framework developed by Kruger it is evident that employability skills should be embedded within the curriculum and should not be seen as a stand-alone 'project' or add-ons. It is the current researcher's contention that employability skills should be planned carefully when developing learning material, outcomes and assessment in order to accomplish the end goal of making students and thus graduates more employable and give them the 'edge' over other graduates.

When the researcher developed the EGAP60206 module, the focus was that employability skills should be embedded within the service learning activities.

### **2.2.10 Teaching and learning activities, tasks, assessments and critical cross-field outcomes**

Critical cross-field outcomes (CCFOs) and developmental outcomes are generic outcomes that inform all teaching and learning in the South African context. The CCFOs adopted by SAQA (2000:18; 2001:24) are the following:

- Identify and solve problems in which responses demonstrate that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made.
- Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community.
- Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
- Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentations.

- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

SAQA (2000:18-19) also identifies five important developmental outcomes that the students should be made aware of in all programmes of learning, which are the following:

- Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.
- Participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities.
- Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
- Exploring education and career opportunities.
- Developing entrepreneurial opportunities.

Learning programmes must assist learners to become aware of the significance of these developmental outcomes in their own lives.

Students also need to be adequately prepared for learning in a work environment. The use of work-integrated theoretical learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and related educational practices prior to work cement, support this. Guidance documentation and regular feedback are helpful in preparing students for successful workplace learning (CBI 2009:29; CHE 2011:37-38; Lawson, Fallshaw, Papadopoulos, Taylor and Zanko 2011:64; McLennan and Keating 2008:8).

Tables 2.5 to 2.8 define the WIL approach as applied in South Africa and provide examples of teaching-learning activities, assessment tasks and the potential links with the proposed UFS graduate attributes and critical-cross field outcomes.

The concept of WIL is used as an umbrella term to describe curricular, pedagogic and assessment practices across a range of academic disciplines that integrate formal learning and workplace concerns. The concept implies career-focused education that includes classroom-based and workplace-based forms of learning that are appropriate

for a particular professional qualification and address concerns such as gradueness, employability and civic responsibility (CHE 2011:4). WIL thus serves as a valuable vehicle for the development and integration of graduate attributes in higher education curricula and therefore is relevant to the particular study.

A great number of examples of WIL exist that include the following: action learning, apprenticeships, cooperative learning, experiential learning, inquiry learning, inter-professional learning, practicum placements, problem-based learning, project-based learning, scenario learning, service learning, team-based learning, virtual or simulated WIL learning, work-based learning, work experience, and workplace learning (CHE 2011:4).

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**TABLE 2.5: WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING APPROACH**

Description of WIL approach: Work-directed theoretical learning	Examples of teaching-learning activities	Examples of assessment tasks and approaches	Value of approach	Examples of the link to UFS graduate attributes
<b>WORK-DIRECTED THEORETICAL TRAINING</b>				
<p>Theoretical forms of knowledge are introduced and sequenced in ways that meet academic criteria and are applicable and relevant to the career-specific components.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals from the industry come to campus to lead workshops and provide case studies. Students may also visit workplaces for a day or more.</li> <li>• Case studies/real-life business scenarios.</li> <li>• Industry simulations: Students engage in real-time analysis and decision-making related to the real-world within the educational environment.</li> <li>• Study abroad opportunities.</li> <li>• Undergraduate research.</li> <li>• Essay writing by making real-world connections using a grid/rubric provided by teacher.</li> </ul>	<p>Assessment tasks identified, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem-based calculations.</li> <li>• Written or oral discussion of topical issues, debates and short oral and written reports.</li> <li>• Taking part in graded online discussion forum contributions.</li> </ul> <p>It is suggested that a moderator from industry acts as moderator of the overall assessment plan and assists with rubrics and individual marking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment between theoretical learning and workplace demands is encouraged.</li> <li>• Simulations offer reality-based, experiential, learning-centred approaches.</li> <li>• The application of analytical and problem-solving skills is possible by critically evaluating decisions made by business executives.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tier 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarship (a critical attitude towards knowledge and understanding.</li> <li>• Active global citizens.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tier 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquiry focused and critical.</li> <li>• Academic and professional competence.</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples of the link to critical cross-field outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and solve problems.</li> <li>• Work effectively with others.</li> <li>• Communicate effectively.</li> <li>• Collect, analyse, organise and/or critically evaluate information.</li> </ul>
<b>PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING</b>				
<p>A range of educational approaches that encourage students to learn through the structured exploration of a research or practice-based problem.</p> <p>Carefully structured and sequenced 'problems' that will direct the students' learning towards the determined outcomes and objectives of the curriculum, are compiled by an inter-disciplinary team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students work in small self-directed groups to define, carry out and reflect upon a task, which is usually based on a 'real-life' problem.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self and peer assessment that should occur at the end of every problem (CHE 2011:46).</li> <li>• Integrated or capstone assessment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students that are exposed to effective problem-based learning acquire a variety of self-directed and lifelong learning skills such as information literacy.</li> <li>• Reflection aids the process of converting the functioning knowledge gained through problem-solving into knowledge that can be used and applied to different contexts (i.e. transfer) in future</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tier 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarship.</li> <li>• Lifelong learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tier 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquiry-focused and critical.</li> <li>• Academic and professional competence</li> <li>• Effective knowledge workers.</li> <li>• Leadership.</li> </ul>

				<p><b>Examples of the link to critical cross-field outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and solve problems.</li> <li>• Collect, analyse and critically evaluate information.</li> <li>• Work effectively with others.</li> <li>• Communicate effectively.</li> <li>• Understanding of the world as a set of related systems.</li> </ul>
<b>PROJECT-BASED LEARNING</b>				
<p>Combines problem-based learning and workplace learning in that it brings together intellectual inquiry, real-world problems, and student engagement in relevant and meaningful work.</p> <p>Project work is generally understood to facilitate students' understanding of essential concepts and practical skills.</p>	<p>Projects undertaken are similar to work undertaken in the workplace and include the production of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management plans.</li> <li>• Business reports.</li> <li>• Market research.</li> <li>• Management activities.</li> <li>• Industry competitions where students compete in teams to achieve a business-oriented objective in a short time frame.</li> <li>• Service learning where students engage with the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Businesses judge the projects presented by students in industry competitions and get rewarded accordingly.</li> <li>• Exhibitions and assessments of students' work in light of personal, academic and workplace standards of performance.</li> <li>• Self and peer assessment of team processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students develop skills such as planning, managing and communicating.</li> <li>• The application of theory to work-related issues promotes the development of project management skills, team skills and problem-solving skills.</li> <li>• Service learning projects encourages deep learning, personal growth, critical thinking and a better understanding of contemporary social issues: the organisation in turn benefits from the students' time and knowledge.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tier 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarship.</li> <li>• Lifelong learning.</li> <li>• Active local and global citizens.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tier 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquiry focused and critical.</li> <li>• Academic and professional competence.</li> <li>• Effective knowledge workers.</li> <li>• Leaders in communities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples of the link to critical cross-field outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and solve problems.</li> <li>• Work effectively.</li> <li>• Understanding of the world as a set of related systems.</li> <li>• Being culturally sensitive.</li> <li>• Reflecting on experience and areas for improvement.</li> </ul>

WORKPLACE LEARNING				
<p>With workplace learning (industry placement) students are placed in a workplace related to their discipline or career goals.</p>	<p>Workplace learning can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job-shadowing or professional practice to support a professional qualification.</li> <li>• Employer- or employment-based schemes, such as learnerships and internships.</li> <li>• Industry study hours that include field trips site visits and lengthier tours</li> </ul>	<p>Innovative forms of assessment such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning diaries.</li> <li>• Online journal entries.</li> <li>• Portfolios and e-portfolios.</li> <li>• Student progress reports from teachers and industry supervisors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows for concrete experience, reflection on learning experiences as well as the identification of areas for improvement.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tier 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarship.</li> <li>• Lifelong learning.</li> <li>• Active local and global citizens.</li> </ul>
				<p><b>Tier 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquiry focused and critical.</li> <li>• Academic and professional competence.</li> <li>• Effective knowledge workers.</li> <li>• Leaders in communities.</li> </ul>
				<p><b>Examples of the link to critical cross-field outcomes</b></p>
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and solve problems.</li> <li>• Work effectively with others.</li> <li>• Self-management.</li> <li>• Communicate effectively.</li> <li>• Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.</li> <li>• Understanding the world as a set of related systems.</li> <li>• Reflecting on experience and areas for improvement</li> <li>• Exploring education and career opportunities.</li> </ul>

Source: Compiled by researcher from: AACU (2011); Blumberg (2000, cited in Blumberg, 2014:75); Blumberg (2014:77); CBI (2009:12); Chapman (2004:27,30,35,94,126); CHE (2011:19,34-35,37,38,46,47,75); Dee Fink (2013:24); Lawson *et al.* (2011:64-75); SAQA (2000:18-19; 2001:24); UFS CTL (2013); Wessels (2005, cited in CHE, 2011:78).

The four WIL approaches identified and encouraged by the CHE (2011), namely work-directed theoretical learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and workplace learning were used as a starting point for the above summaries.

## 2.3 The World of Work

Up until the 1800s, careers were understood in terms of lifelong employments, mutual loyalty, and well-defined boundaries. Jobs required little specialisation and were relatively short-lived, making specific skills for a specific project the key to continued employment (Clarke 2008:260; Clarke and Patrickson 2008:124).

The world of work, however, has changed over the past decades and especially now, in the twenty-first century, it is changing at increased speed and in varying ways. More graduates are entering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and going into freelance work (Harvey, Locke and Morey 2002:2). Organisations are no longer the relatively secure and stable places they were over the past few decades. The idea that an organisation will plan one's career and take care of its employees is also seriously flawed. Careers of the future may best be described as mosaics or jig-saws. People's working lives will consist of portfolios of skills, qualifications and roles, rather than a series of discrete and easily defined positions or jobs (Bates and Bloch 1997:23).

The world of work in South Africa changed dramatically from 1994 that is in the post-apartheid era, and will continue to change as is the case globally. Global changes in economics, the outbreak of war and recessions also influenced the current world of work. In South Africa it is not only politics that play a role in the world of work, but so do the economy, partial recession, and structural changes in HEI curriculums. Furthermore, the type of students and graduates that enter a university and the world of work have also changed.

Arthur and Rossouw (1996:6) describe the 'boundaryless' career as being characterised by limitless or free movement between organisations, positions and careers. Graduates are now expected to show flexibility and the ability to work in project teams (Harvey 2000:103). Stewart and Knowles (1999:375) quote the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) survey of 1995 to show that the world of work, and more so the graduate jobs, are characterised by an interaction with clients,

adding value in all aspects of work, lifelong learning, portfolio careers and self-development, and an extreme need to remain employable. Positions in an organisation need to stay current and up to date with new technology, trends and the ever-changing world of work. The change in the world of work can be attributed to the change in technology, more use of technology that replaces people in a specific job, recessions and globalisation trends. More companies are allowing personnel to work from home because this saves the companies office space and paying for it. There are some jobs that disappeared over the last ten years, this is due to the change in the job market, technology usage and knowledge explosions – the knowledge and skills are outdated and not used anymore – this has an impact on the number of time people change between jobs. More graduates are venturing into being entrepreneurs and working for themselves or from home. Office hours are not just between 08:00 and 17:00, but can be anytime due to the difference in time zones when working with overseas companies, and the use of technology enables people to have meetings any time of day or night.

## 2.4 Pedagogic Developments and Managed Learning Environments

Pedagogy has a long history. Schools for children were established in Europe to groom young boys for the priesthood during the early seventh century. Educators were accountable for teaching the values and ways of the church. This teaching became known as pedagogy, a word derived from the stem 'paediatrics' from the Greek word *paeda* which means 'child' (Knowles 1990: online). Ever since the seventh century, pedagogy has endured as the foundation for all education (Knowles 1990: online).

A widely used pedagogic device to develop employability skills is group work. However, this is frequently unsupported and students are often grouped together and told to work as a team (Harvey *et al.* 2002:8). Although the definitions of pedagogy vary considerably, they tend to centre around three major goals (adapted from Harley and Parker 1999:181), namely:

- A focus on collective and collaborative learning, with a concomitant de-emphasis on hierarchy, including authority differences between teacher and student.
- A demystification of conventional knowledge, including embracing the notion that objectivity is impossible, that neither the teacher nor education generally is neutral, and that people's lived experiences are valid sources of knowledge.

- A focus on teaching for social change.

Despite its origin the 'pedagogy' referred to in this study does not refer to the education, training and/or teaching of children but rather to post-secondary, adult education and teaching. This is in line with the way in which scholars in higher education currently use the term, implying that pedagogy has now become a general term for referring to the education, training and/or teaching of all learners, irrespective of the level at which it occurs.

Chapter 3 of the research consulted literature regarding the use of service learning as a specific pedagogical approach. Dewey (see 3.6.2), Kolb (see 3.6.1) and Eyler (2002:517) are advocates of the effect that service learning can and will have on students and graduates. Experiential learning is not yet service learning. More of service learning as a pedagogy, the skills that can be acquired during service learning, and the impact that it may have on graduate students will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

The introduction of computerised managed learning environments offers another opportunity to embed employability in the curriculum. Embedding does not require wholesale changes and the Skills *plus* approach (Yorke and Knight 2006:15-16), for example, argues for tweaking of curricula. At the UFS, the computerised learning management system is Blackboard. Lecturers and students have access to specific modules on Blackboard. The pre- and post-questionnaire (see appendix B and C) were made available via a link on Blackboard. The use of computers and computer skills are also part of employability skills.

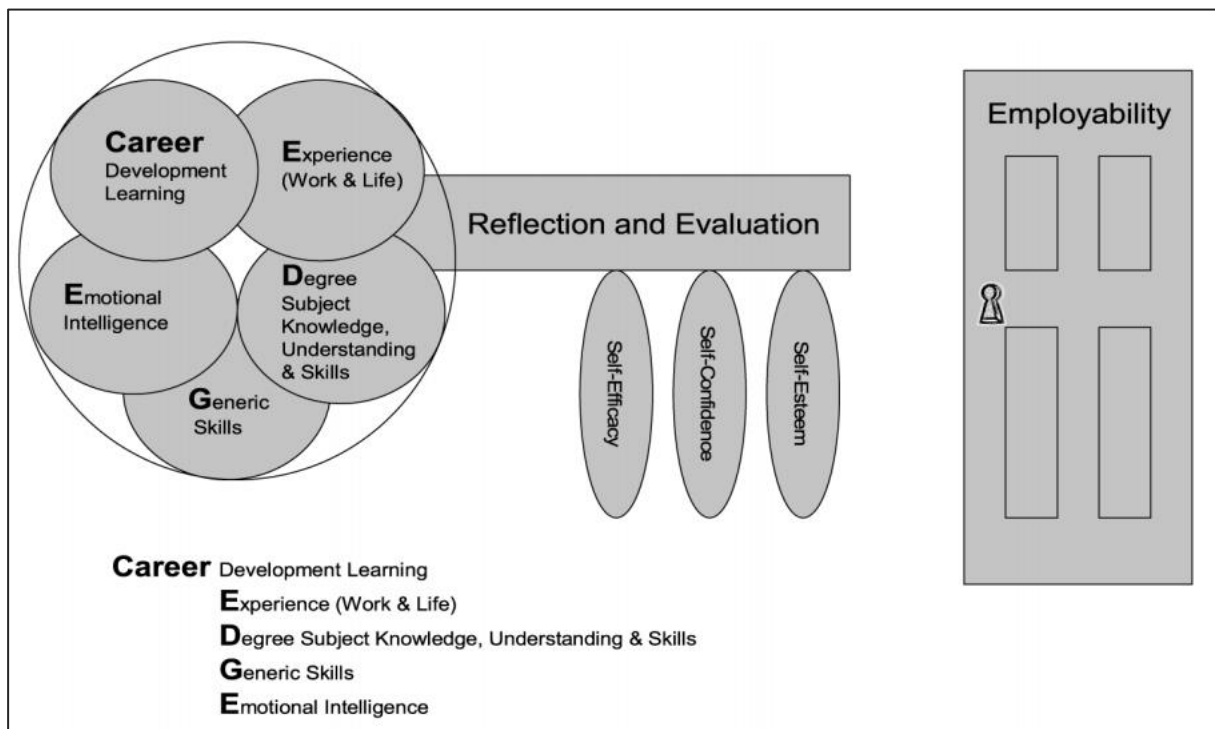
## **2.5 Models of Employability**

This subsection of the literature discussion will focus on four different models of employability. The four models of employability that are discussed in 2.5.1 – 2.5.4 links directly with the study and highlights the importance of specific skills that added to the formulation of the proposed framework (see 7.3).

## 2.5.1 CareerEDGE

The key to this employability model is based on the following definition: “Employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure an occupation in which they can be satisfied and successful” (Pool and Sewell 2007:277).

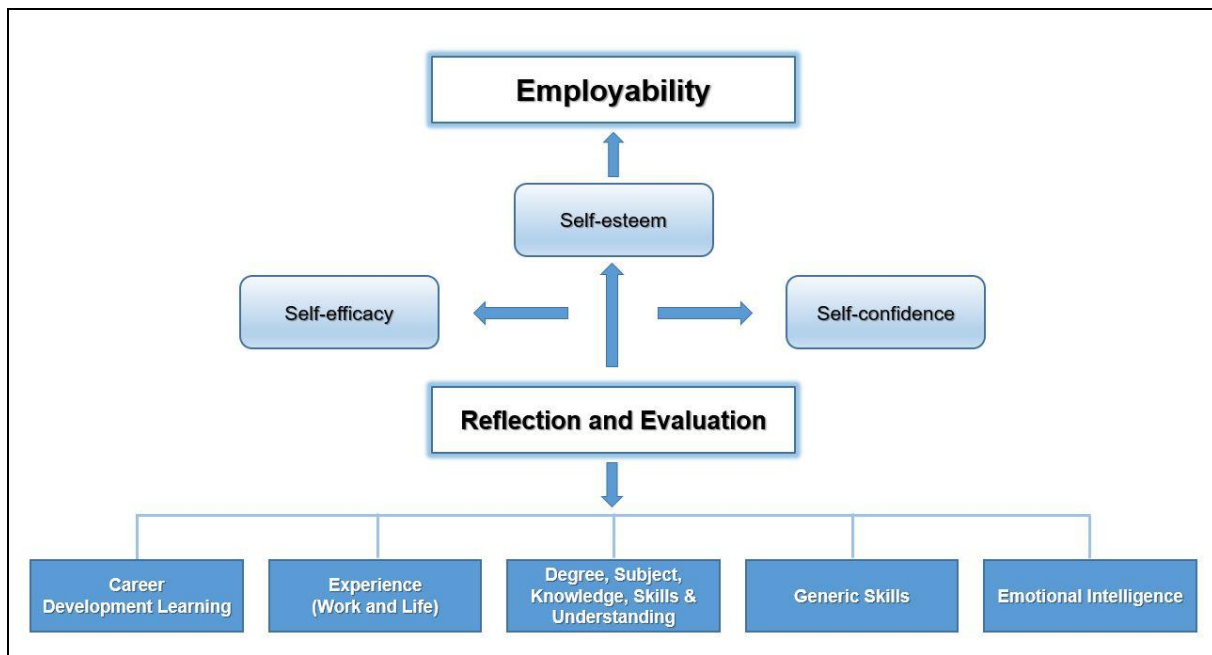
The CareerEDGE model argues for the inclusion of ‘satisfaction’, focusing on individual facets that will allow a student to better adapt in the working context. The model shows that each component is absolutely essential, and asserts that one missing component will significantly lower the employability of the graduate student. Pool and Sewell (2007:228) provide the following illustration of this model (Figure 2.4):



Source: Pool and Sewell (2007:281).

**Figure 2.4: Pool and Sewell's CareerEDGE Model – The key to employability**

Pool and Sewell (2007:228) also made the following illustration of the CareerEdge model in order to explain it to various stakeholders (Figure 2.5).



Source: Pool and Sewell (2007:228).

**Figure 2.5: Sewell and Dacre Pool's CareerEDGE Model - Alternative Illustration**

Pool and Sewell (2007:281) distinguish between five interrelated components as shown in Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.5 above, namely:

- Career development learning.
- Experience – work and life.
- Degree subject knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Generic skills.
- Emotional Intelligence.

These five components also provide the mnemonic of 'CareerEDGE'. Pool and Sewell (2007:285) suggest that providing graduates with the opportunity not only to access, but also to develop these five components, and then reflect on and evaluate such experiences, ultimately results in the development of higher levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem, which have been shown to be critical in employability (see also Yorke and Knight 2006:5).

Pool and Sewell (2007:279) contend that the key benefit of this model lies in its simplicity. It can be explained with ease to any student or teaching practitioner, or perhaps even to a parent. The model also has been useful in the planning of curricula and may in future serve to demonstrate to employers the valued role of HEI, and how

both employers and HEIs may contribute to increased employability, consequently benefiting all relevant parties. The relevance of the two models is shown in its continuous aim to ensure adaptability to our changing world of work and hence an increased chance of occupational satisfaction and success.

### **2.5.1.1 Degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills**

The model constituent, degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, is a fundamental concept in this model. The persuader to go into higher education commonly is supposed to be the chance to study a specific discipline in depth, to obtain a degree/diploma, get a higher qualification and consequently a decent or superior job. Consequently, it still remains the state that the superior qualified people have far better employment opportunities (Johnes, 2006).

*Graduate Prospects* (2005/6:17) recognised two-thirds of graduate jobs as open to graduates in any discipline, which suggests that for the outstanding third, subject-specific information, understanding and skills still are of utmost importance. It is vital to distinguish that employers will judge graduates on the foundation of successfully completing their degree course (i.e. their degree classification). This measurement is often the only measure available to them. This tends to be the situation whether or not graduates are entering an occupation with direct significance to their degree, and as such there is a requirement to identify the central importance of this specific component of graduate employability.

### **2.5.1.2 Generic Skills**

There has been considerable debate in the literature about the terminology for generic skills, which may also be referred to as ‘core skills’, ‘key skills’ or ‘transferable skills’:

*The term ‘generic skills’ has been used for the purpose of this model and is used: to represent the skills which can support study in any discipline, and which can potentially be transferred to a range of contexts, in higher education or the workplace (Bennett, Dunne and Carré 2000:76).*

In Knight and Yorke’s (2002:2) paper, they discuss some of the research on the value placed by employers on generic skills in graduates and interpret the message from employers as follows:

*Give us a bright and engaged graduate, and we will build specific expertise for this organisation on top of that.*

Employers therefore want graduates with relevant subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding, but in addition to this they are looking for well-developed generic skills in a number of areas (Harvey, Moon and Geall 1997: online).

### **2.5.1.3 Emotional intelligence**

Goleman (1998:4) provides strong support for the inclusion of emotional intelligence in any model of employability when he says:

*In a time with no guarantees of job security, when the very concept of a 'job' is rapidly being replaced by 'portable skills', these are prime qualities that make and keep us employable.*

Talked about loosely for decades under a variety of names, from 'character' and 'personality' to 'soft skills' and 'competence', there now is at last a more precise understanding of these human talents, and a new name for them: emotional intelligence. Moynagh and Worsley (2005: online) suggest that in the future knowledge-based economy, emotional intelligence will become even more important with the predicted expansion of customer-facing jobs in which human interaction plays a central part.

Emotional intelligence has been defined as the capacity to reason about emotions, and use emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso 2004:197). In more simple terms, Goleman (1998:317), who has done much to make emotional intelligence accessible to a wide audience, defines it as the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.

As with all the components in the model, in order to achieve their true employability potential, a graduate will need to have well-developed emotional intelligence competencies. Knight and Yorke (2002:37) list emotional intelligence as one aspect of

employability under their personal qualities section, but it could be suggested that it in fact subsumes many of the other personal qualities listed, and some of the process skills listed too (Pool and Sewell 2007:235). As such, it deserves a much higher profile. Research has shown that people with high levels of emotional intelligence motivate themselves and others to achieve more. They also enjoy more career success, build stronger personal relationships and enjoy better health than those with low levels of emotional intelligence (Cooper 1997:35). Jaeger (2003:634) posits that emotional intelligence can be improved through teaching and learning in a higher educational setting and is positively correlated with academic achievement. She suggests that:

*Enhancing emotional intelligence is a desirable outcome for students, employees and employers. Emotional intelligence is not fixed genetically, nor does it only develop during early childhood (Goleman 1998:7); it seems to be something people can learn, which would suggest that this is something that higher education institutions (HEIs) can successfully teach.*

#### **2.5.1.4 Career development learning**

For graduates to stand the best chance of safeguarding occupations in which they will be content and prosperous, it is essential that they obtain some education in career development learning. According to Watts (2006:29), career improvement learning has not always been strongly characterised in HEIs as it should have been. However, he proposes that there is indication that this is changing. Foster (2006:5) affirms Watts's stance with the following states:

*There is little to be gained in developing employability if, at the end of the day, students cannot identify a market in which to advertise their newly developed employability.*

*Importantly, after acquiring so much knowledge, understanding and skill at university, they will need help and guidance in how best to explain to potential employers about their achievements and how they will be of benefit to them, in application forms, CVs and interview activities. (Pool and Sewell 2007:284).*

Partnerships between employers and HEIs are valuable in promoting work-related learning and in improving the quality and quantity of such experiences (The Pedagogy for Employability Group 2006:4). According to Yorke (2006b:5), it is widely agreed that graduates with work experience are more likely to secure employment than graduates

without it. It is also important to consider the wider life experiences that many students, particularly mature students, bring with them into higher education. There is a need, therefore, for students to be given this information and to be provided with guidance as to how their life experience and work-related experience, either arranged as part of a course, carried out on a voluntary basis or gained through part-time work, can be used to enhance their levels of employability.

#### **2.5.1.5 Reflection and evaluation**

Providing students with the opportunities to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, understanding and attributes obviously is important, but so too is providing opportunities for reflection on and evaluation of the learning experiences that have already taken place. Without these opportunities, a student is unlikely to give full consideration to how far they have come in developing their employability and what they may need to do in order to develop it further. Moon (2004:4) provides a full discussion of the crucial role of reflection in the context of employability. This element of reflection and evaluation is also the key to development of the three S's discussed in 2.5.1.6. Personal development planning (PDP) is a highly appropriate vehicle for reflection and evaluation in this context, and as all students now are entitled to PDP as part of their university experience, it should be relatively straightforward to ensure that it is used to full effect in developing employability. The HEA (2006) suggests that there is a strong link between PDP and employability and that PDP can help students to:

- plan, record and reflect upon their experiences in a way that develops their employment-related skills and self-awareness;
- understand how their transferable skills might be applied in new settings;
- make realistic and suitable career plans based upon their heightened self-knowledge; and
- demonstrate both their employment potential and their ability to manage their future professional development to employers.

#### **2.5.1.6 Levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem**

The three closely-linked S's of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem provide a crucial link between knowledge, understanding, skills, experience and personal

attributes and employability. According to Bandura (1995:2): “Perceived self-efficacy refers to belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations. Efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves and act.” Bandura (1995:3) further suggests a number of sources of efficacy beliefs. The ones particularly relevant to employability are mastery experiences; second-hand experiences provided by social models; and social persuasion.

- **Mastery experiences** occur when people are given the opportunity to try a particular task themselves. Examples of mastery experiences within the employability agenda are work experience, realistic work environments, live student projects (where students work in a consultancy role for outside agencies), and some career development learning activities such as making job applications. According to Bandura (1995:3) mastery experiences are the most effective way of creating a strong sense of self-efficacy, and thus play a vital role in employability.
- **Second-hand experiences** provided by social models occur when students are able to see others who have achieved success. The closer the others are in similarity to themselves, the more effective the experiences are. Examples of this are when successful recent graduates return to the university to give talks to current students about how they have achieved their goals.
- **Social persuasion** occurs when people are persuaded that they possess the capabilities needed to master a particular activity. This encourages them to put in more effort and stay motivated in order to achieve success in their goals. There is an important role for tutors to play here, particular in the way in which they provide feedback to their students.

Bandura (1995:17) purports that “[a] major goal of formal education should be to equip students with the intellectual tools, efficacy beliefs, and intrinsic interests to educate themselves throughout their lifetime”. Therefore, by providing the opportunities for mastery experiences, second-hand experiences and social persuasion, then encouraging reflection on and evaluation of these experiences, self-efficacy can be increased. Graduates who believe they can do whatever is necessary are far more likely to gain a position and be successful in whatever occupations they choose, than

a graduate who does not have that self-belief. If self-efficacy is seen as a belief that one has in one's capability in a particular situation, then self-confidence could be seen as the way this is projected to the outside world.

Self-confidence appears to be something that can be seen from a person's manner and behaviour. According to Goleman (1998:68) people with self-confidence are able to present themselves with self-assurance and have 'presence'. It has been suggested that self-confidence can be either a trait or something that is specific to certain situations. Norman and Hyland (2003:6) point out that if self-confidence is seen as a trait, which personality theorists suggest are relatively stable over time, then those who lack self-confidence would be unlikely to develop it through educational activity. If, however, it is viewed as a situational-specific concept, as is assumed by this model, then it is possible for students to increase their levels of self-confidence for any given situation.

An increase in self-efficacy should be reflected in an increase in demonstrated self-confidence. According to Owens (1993:290), people with global self-esteem have self-respect and a feeling of worthiness, but are realistic in their evaluations of themselves. Without this realism a person is unlikely to reflect on areas for improvement, which is crucial to the process of lifelong learning.

In 2.5.3 the USEM model (Knight and Yorke 2004:6) are discussed and one of the focus points are on 'E' (which includes the personal qualities, self-theories, efficacy and beliefs). The 'E' includes everything that the students do during their time at the HEI that will have a direct impact on their self-esteem. It is through the development and fostering of high-global self-esteem that employability is acquired.

Lawrence (1996: xi), affirms the inclusion of self-esteem in the USEM model. He further explains that one of the most noteworthy discoveries in educational psychology in this day and age are the verdict that people's levels of accomplishment are directly predisposed by how they feel about themselves. Numerous research and sources have been collected to showcase the positive correlation between self-esteem and success. In the words of Gloria Steinem (1992:26): "Self-esteem isn't everything; it's just that there's nothing without it."

### **2.5.1.7 Value of the model**

Following the discussion of the components of the model and the justification of their inclusion, a need also exists to demonstrate in what way the model will be a useful and practical addition to the literature already available on the subject of employability. Pool and Sewell (2007:287) made the following recommendations about an employability model:

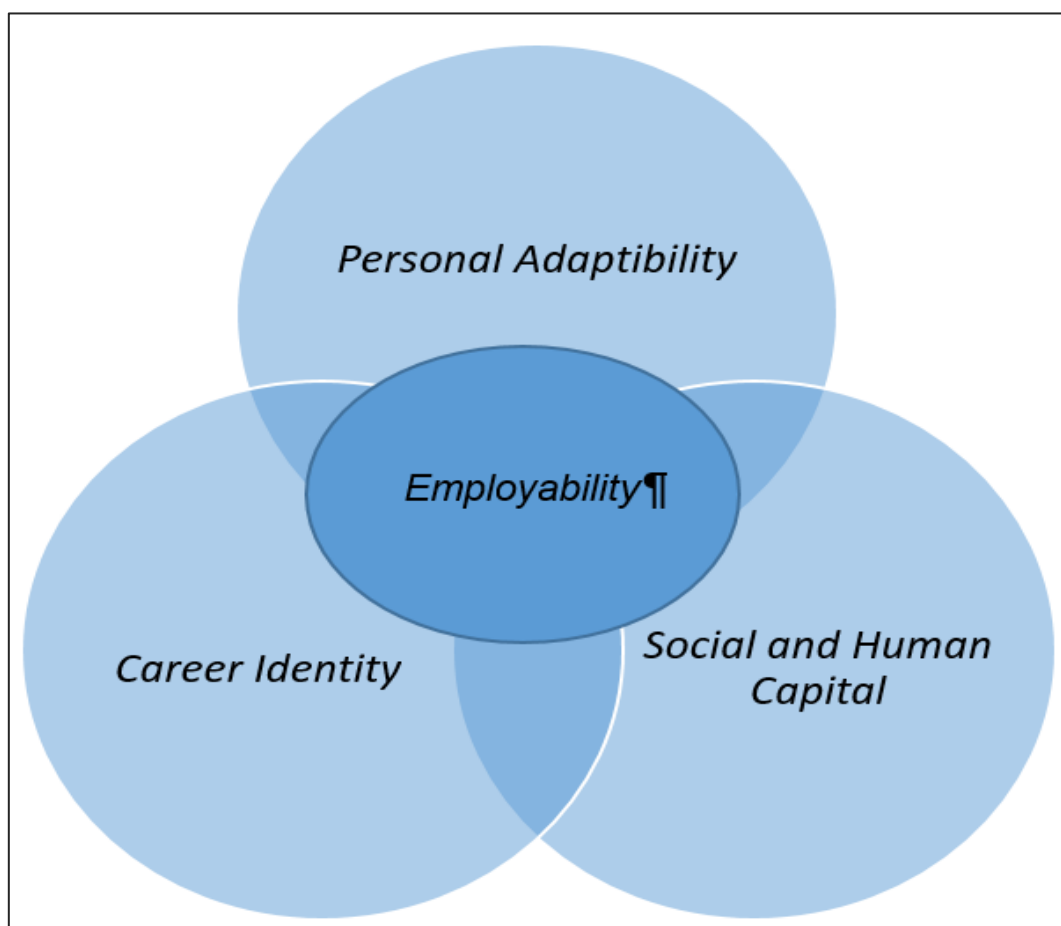
- First, any model of employability should appraise the preparation of learning programmes and planned interventions aiming to focus on the key area. The CareerEdge model offers clearness of information about what needs to be considered and included.
- Second, a model geared at graduate employability should be something that can be explained effortlessly to students and perhaps their parents, as well as teaching practitioners. The CareerEdge model permits teaching practitioners, personal tutors, career advisors or anybody else involved with the promotion of employability within higher education to do so without obscuring the issue in complexity.
- Third, the model should be a cherished tool for knowledge transfer accomplishments. The CareerEdge model can be used to validate to employers how the roles of HEIs and business can both underwrite to graduate employability with subsequent benefits for all the role players.
- Finally, it would be valuable to investigate a model of employability that could be modified for use with groups other than students and new graduates. It would be probable to adapt the CareerEdge model for use at any life phase, for example with mid-life career changers or people dealing with a joblessness situation.

### **2.5.2 Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth: Heuristic model of employability**

Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth's conceptualisation of employability (2004:17) resembles that of Judge, Erez, Bono and Thoresen (2002:699) regarding core self-evaluations. Judge *et al.* (2002:699) present core self-evaluations as a construct that encompasses the conceptual commonalities of four component dimensions. The idea they examined is that an individual's employability incorporates a host of person-centred constructs needed to deal effectively with the career-related changes occurring in today's

economy. Survival in this turbulent career environment requires workers to continually manage change – in themselves and their contexts. Thus, a person’s ability and willingness to adapt is essential to career success (Hall 2002; Pulakos, Arad, Donovan and Plamondon 2000:621). The purpose of this heuristic model is to introduce the construct of employability.

In total, the three dimensions in the heuristic model (see Figure 2.6) described below provide the cognitive impetus and individual characteristics that influence adaptive behaviours at work. The conceptual foundation of each dimension is discussed at a modular level and relations to employability are explicated.



Source: Fugate *et al.* (2004:19).

**Figure 2.6: Heuristic model of employability**

### **2.5.2.1 Career identity**

Career identity resembles constructs like role identity, occupational identity and organisational identity in that they all refer to how people define themselves in a particular work context. Career identities help fill the void by replacing institutionalised career structures with individualised psychological structures. It is also often articulated in the form of narratives. Narratives are stories people create to frame and give meaning and continuity to past, present and future career-related experiences (Ashforth and Fugate 2004:238; Grotevant 1997:219). Individuals with an 'information orientation' tend to proactively seek and use self-relevant information, whereas individuals with a 'normative orientation' tend to conform to others' expectations, and those with an 'avoidant orientation' tend to avoid self-reflection. Therefore, according to Fugate *et al.* (2004: 21), an information-orientated identity style may enhance one's ability to identify and realise career opportunities (i.e. employability).

### **2.5.2.2 Personal adaptability**

Flexible people are keen and able to alter personal factors. Personal adaptability underwrites to both organisational performance (Crant 2000:457) and career success (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan and Plamondon, 2000:622) as it permits people to remain fruitful and attractive to employers in intermittently changing work areas (Chan 2000:26). Researchers also express the importance of flexibility for one's overall career growth (Savickas 1997:251). The capability to acclimatise to altering situations is mainly determined by individual differences (Chan 2000:456) that influence individuals to engross in (pro-actively adaptive efforts (Crant 2000:459; Siebert, Davis, Litzenberg and Broder 2002:228; Stokes 1996:77). First, the variable requests general conceptual significance to flexibility in the work area. Second, and more specifically (Fugate *et al.* 2004:21), each variable should be steady with the conceptual intent of employability. The chosen variables are required to underwrite to the identification and awareness of new opportunities at work.

### **2.5.2.3 Social and human capital**

The third dimension of employability is social and human capital. Both social capital and human capital are incorporated into individuals' career identities, further embedding them in the construct of employability (Fugate *et al.* 2004:23). The benefits

of social capital and its influence on employability are illustrated in the job search behaviours of individuals. Evidence of some degree, level of education is preferred and in most cases a direct requirement for employment. Experience in a particular line of work is also very important. Experience usually gives an individual different levels of proficiency and implicit knowledge (Lubit 2001:173), which result in making the person more appealing to potential employers.

The connections between employability and its dimensions, is described by Ashford and Taylor (1990) as quoted by Fugate *et al.* (2004:25) as follows:

*Employability is a multidimensional construct, the component dimensions of which are reciprocally related. Furthermore, they suggest that the dimensions of employability jointly provide for the three conditions essential for effective adaptation – sufficient information, suitable internal conditions, and freedom of movement.*

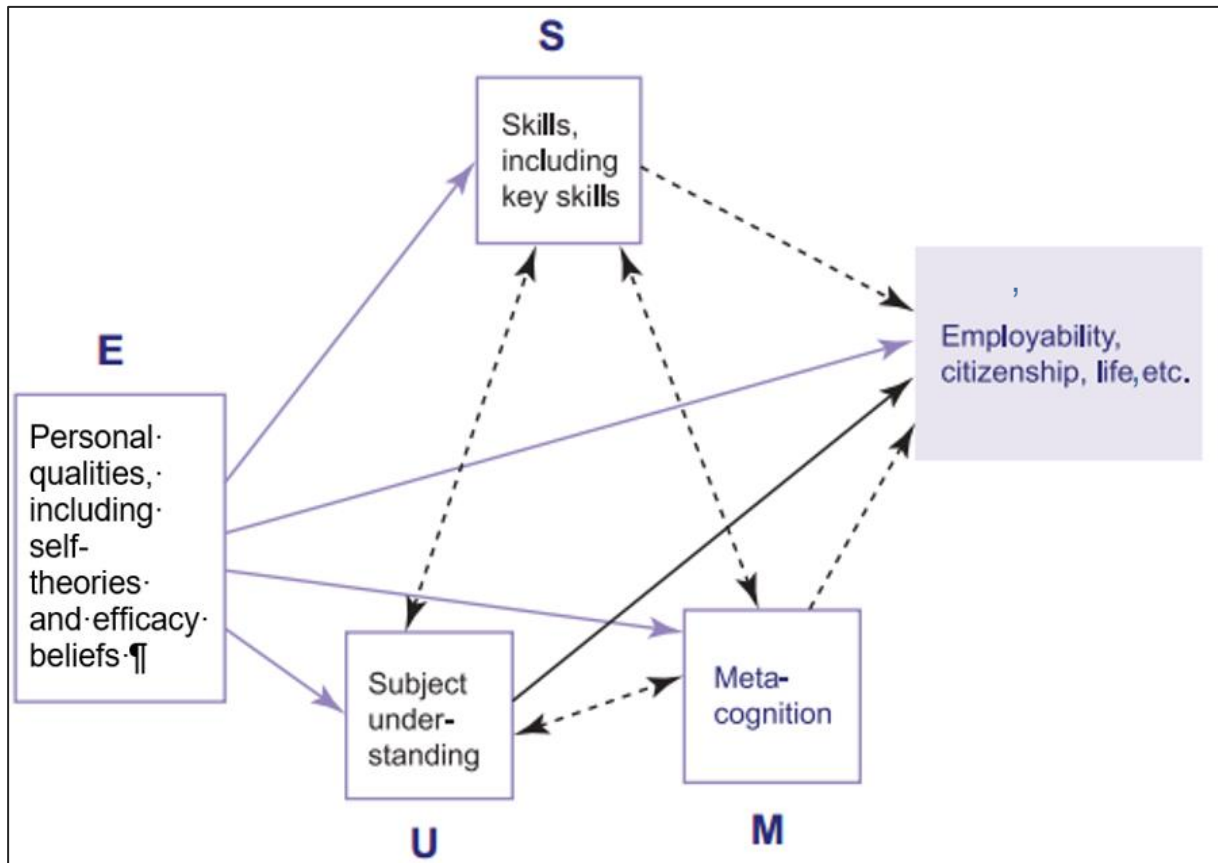
In conclusion, Fugate *et al.* (2004:32) proclaim that “employability captures the conceptual commonalities among these dimensions, as they relate to active adaptability at work”. This model clearly exemplifies that employability is not just one dimension or factor but interwoven dimensions that have a reciprocal effect on one another. They also expect employability to affect the trajectory of one’s career path.

### 2.5.3 Yorke and Knight’s USEM model

The work of Yorke and Knight (2006:5) is seen as critical to the understanding of graduate employability and how it may be entwined with higher education curricula (Pool and Sewell 2007:228). The employability model, which comprises **u**nderstanding, **s**kills, **e**fficacy, beliefs and **m**etacognition, is known by the acronym USEM. The USEM model reinforces the view that employability concerns the development of individual and personal qualities, in addition to subject-specific and generic skills. Moreover, academic skills and employability skills are not mutually exclusive (HEA 2006).

This model is deemed one of the most widely accepted and influential in terms of employability literature (Pool and Sewell 2007:278). The USEM model accounts for employability where seen as being influenced by four broad and inter-related components, namely:

- **Understanding** refers to the critical role played by higher education, but is not inclusive of the term 'knowledge' due to the implied depth of the term.
- **Skills** (the term is used here because of its significance in political and employment circles, but there is a real danger of it being given a simplistic and unhelpful interpretation; a term such as 'skilful practice' is probably more appropriate.). The term refers to 'skilled practices' or 'skilful practice'. Critical to this component is an awareness of and responsiveness to context. 'Skills' should be seen as a wider concept than the traditional 'core' or 'key' skills, and could more accurately be referred to as 'skilful practices'.
- **Efficacy beliefs, students' self-theories and personal qualities:** Of critical importance is the extent to which students feel that they might be able to make a difference – not every time, but in a probabilistic way. Efficacy beliefs as a component differentiate the USEM model from the Bennett model (Bennett *et al.*, 2000:13). Yorke and Knight (2006:6) point to the work of Dweck (1999:71), which shows the benefit of students having malleable rather than fixed self-theories. Malleable self-theories characterise a disposition that views tasks as opportunities for learning, as opposed to mere performance-related opportunities that display competence and skill. This is a key component in that it influences the outcome of learning, with those individuals leaning toward malleable self-theories being more likely to believe in their own ability to effectively cope with unique and complex challenges.
- **Metacognition**, encompassing self-awareness regarding the student's learning, and the capacity to reflect on, in and for action. It is also seen as a key component of employability, and is increasingly being recognised in the literature related to student learning. Yorke and Knight (2006:5) define metacognition as "subsuming elements of 'learning how to learn'; or reflection on, in or for practice; and a capacity for self-regulation".



Source: Yorke and Knight (2006:7).

**Figure 2.7: USEM Model**

Understanding (as a term, preferred to 'knowledge', because of its implication of depth) is, of course, a key outcome of higher education and needs no further justification here. 'Skills' here is taken to mean 'skilled practices' or 'skilful practice' with the implication that this hinges on awareness of, and responsiveness to, the context – in contrast to narrowly conceived notions of skills such as appearing at the lower end of the National Vocational Framework (mostly used in the United Kingdom), or in some usages of so-called 'key skills'. As for efficacy beliefs (the element of the model that differentiates USEM from the approach adopted by Bennett *et al.* 2000:13), Dweck's (1999:71) work points to the advantages of a student having malleable, rather than fixed, self-theories (or beliefs about the self – for example, that a person's intelligence is fixed for all time or, alternatively, is mutable). Malleable self-theories go with a disposition to see tasks as opportunities for learning rather than as performance-oriented opportunities to demonstrate competence (or avoid showing incompetence). There are correlations between deep learning and a personal commitment to the pursuit of learning goals,

and between surface learning and an orientation towards performance. Hence, the self-theories that students – and their teaching practitioners – hold are likely to influence learning, with those tending to malleable self-theories being likely to have more belief in their ability to be effective when faced with novel challenges.

There are four combinations of

- teacher or student  
*with*
- fixed or malleable self-theories each of which may produce different effects – a theme that is developed by Knight and Yorke (2004:31).

“The significance of metacognition is increasingly being recognised because of research related to student learning that has developed at a pace over the last quarter century and which has become an essential underpinning in institutional programmes for the development of teaching in higher education” (Yorke and Knight 2006:6).

The USEM model is grounded in a large amount of research-based scholarly work, and is a useful way of looking at how employability might be enhanced. Yorke and Knight (2006:8) subsequently developed a list of 39 employability aspects in their *Skills Plus* project, with the purpose of helping departments to examine their curricula from an employability enhancement perspective.

In summary: the USEM model has proven very useful in its application within the higher education arena, providing a strong base for educators and students to assess employability. It is critical for the student to possess a thorough understanding of the subject, along with skilful practices (core skills). The model places much emphasis on continuous learning, which has been identified as a requirement of the new world of work. This model allows all parties to understand the concept of employability and what is required in order to be deemed employable.

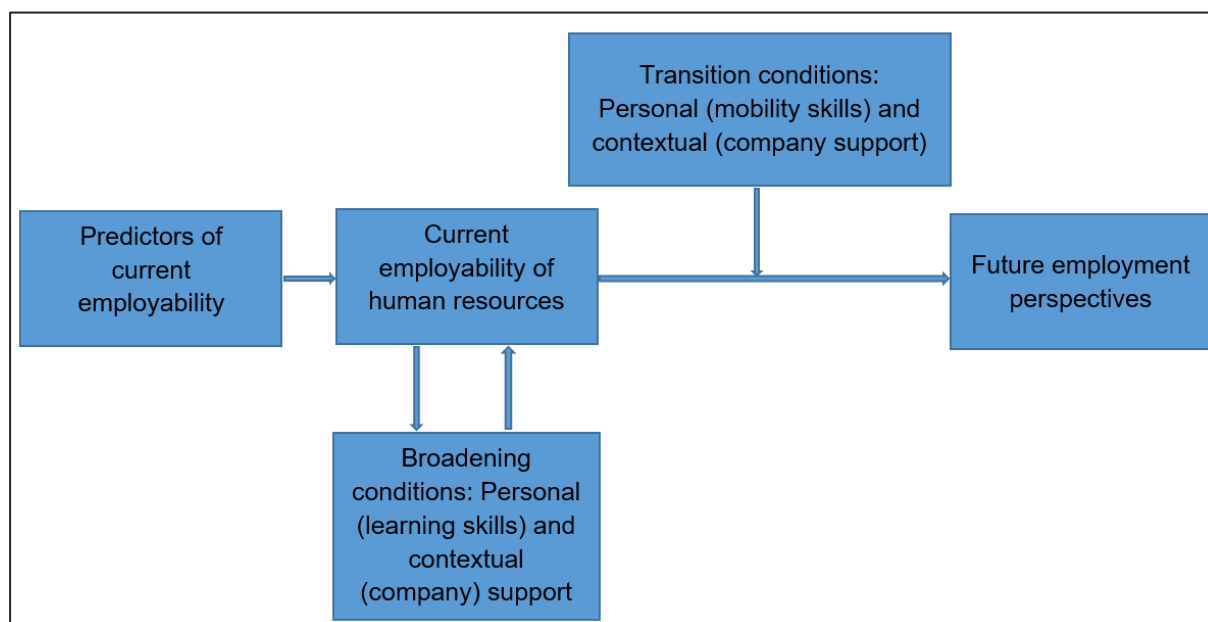
#### **2.5.4 Employability-Link Model**

Thijssen, Van der Heijden and Rocco (2008:179) explain that employability goals and means have shifted during the past decade. They further purport that it is not easy to build theory regarding the relationship between the various components that are part

of employability and to determine the influence of the component on employment, that is, work in future. The construction of the employability–link model as designed by Thijssen *et al.* (2008:171) is based on the following assumptions:

1. Employability concerns a compound phenomenon that has an effect on employment and on work in the future and is seen as the whole of interrelated components that influence the employment perspectives of workers in the (near) future.
2. The core component of employability is the current employability radius of an individual worker, that is, the diversity of jobs and tasks someone can fulfil properly because of his or her current competencies.
3. Tasks that are performed adequately or that can be performed adequately by an individual worker are in general hard to determine directly. That is why research on current employability often is focused on predictors of employability, in particular, dispositional characteristics (for example, self-efficacy), descriptive characteristics (for example, age), and/or experience characteristics (for example, educational history). These are indicators that will influence a student's future employment indirectly because of the mediating role of one's current employability radius (see also Van der Heijden 2005).
4. If a graduate's current employability radius is considered as (too) limited, broadening or enlarging it could be a strategic choice. The possibilities for enlargement are determined by two types of conditions: personal conditions, that is, the presence of personal learning competencies, for example the capability and willingness to acquire new job qualifications during a formal training programme, and/or contextual conditions, for example training facilities that are offered at a company level or even at national level.
5. An enlarged employability radius of employees does not always have a significant effect on future employment perspectives as this depends on certain transitional conditions that play an interactive role as well. For this role, two types of conditions are important: personal (career competencies, for example career planning and applying skills), and contextual conditions (for example, career management

support by the employers and the labour market measures at a social level) (see also Thijssen 1998).



Source: Thijssen (1998:173).

**Figure 2.8: The Employability-Link Model**

The five components summarised above are the core elements of the employability–link as depicted in Figure 2.8. The employability–link model can be useful as a frame of reference for theory building and research and also for practical strategic analyses.

Thus, employability describes the key importance of adaptability in the workplace, with emphasis on knowing who one is, but also being able to gain access to information and networks that will aid in the identification and realisation of new opportunities.

## 2.6 Lifelong Learning and Employability Skills

Lifelong learning, the ultimate aim of university teaching, has the generic and the embedded meanings of many other graduate attributes. The Higher Education Council (HEC 1992:20) of Australia defines the attributes a graduate should possess as:

*The skills, personal attributes and values which should be acquired by all graduates regardless of their discipline or field of study. In other words, generic skills should represent the central achievements of higher education as a process.*

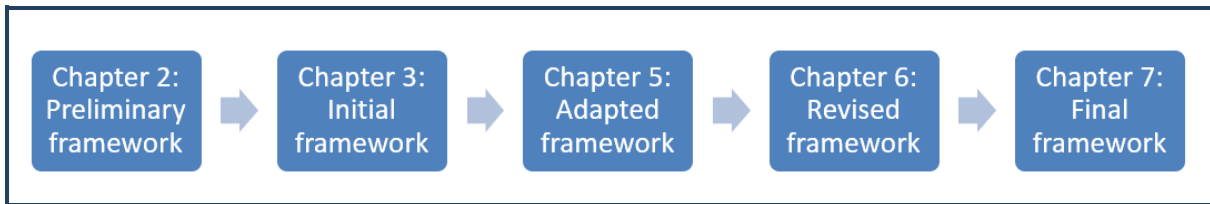
The generic meaning of lifelong learning is that graduates can learn to handle whatever life throws at them. One interpretation is that lifelong learning is a “political response to a need to upskill the working population in order to obtain a competitive advantage in the economy” (Chisholm and Burns 2003:179). Work-based and just-in-time learning can apply to pre-university, undergraduates, postgraduates and continuing professional development in the workforce. Students need to learn how to seek new information, how to utilise it and evaluate its importance, and how to solve novel, non-textbook, professional problems. They will need high-level reflective skills to judge how successfully they are coping with novel problems (Biggs and Tang 2007:147). The Dearing Report (NCIHE1997:1) referred to a culture that demanded similar attributes, but also that students should become part of the conscience of a democratic society. Both reports – the Dearing and the HEC reports referred to above – were looking to employability at a time when students were more than ever seeing a university degree as a ‘lifelong meal ticket’ and these reports more broadly identified qualities that responsible citizens in a global society should have. These attributes include critical thinking, ethical practice, creativity, independent problem-solving, professional skills, communication skills, teamwork, lifelong learning and the like (University of Botswana yearbook 2008).

Knight (2006:98), by way of contrast, takes a strong, embedded view. He proclaims that attributes such as reasoning, creativity, ethical practice, team working and collaboration and others mentioned in this regard, are complex ‘achievements’ or ‘wicked competences’ that are developed rather than taught. Self- and peer-assessment and, particularly, portfolios, in which students make claims which they themselves try to substantiate, are more suitable. In this view, graduate attributes are desirable outcomes that need to be continually reviewed such that they are fostered in teaching over a range of subjects and interactions with students.

## **2.7 Summary of the Models and a Proposed Employability Framework**

In total, four employability models were discussed in this chapter (see 2.5.1 to 2.5.4). These models, together with the draft Teaching and Learning Strategy (UFS CTL 2013) (see Appendix F) gave the researcher a clear idea of what is deemed important to develop and foster employability skills. The researcher will discuss and illustrate

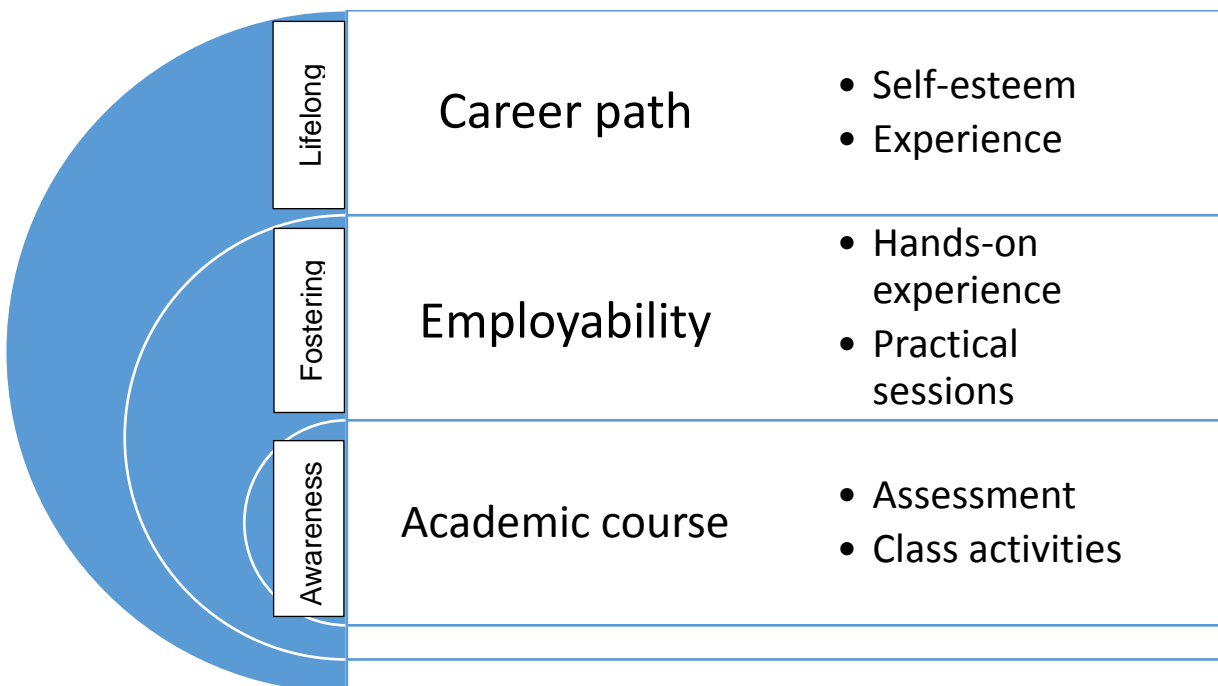
sections of the proposed framework in Chapters 2, 3, 5 and 6. Figure 2.9 illustrates the evolution of the proposed framework.



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 2.9: Evolution of the proposed framework**

From the literature, specific trends in employability skills models came to the fore, and a golden thread or link was picked up among the four models and the UFS Graduate Attributes Report. Figure 2.10 illustrates a possible and proposed employability framework that the researcher designed based on the findings discussed in this chapter. This proposed framework focuses on employability skills. In Chapter 7 the researcher will propose a final framework in which employability skills and service learning are linked.



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 2.10: Proposed employability model**

There are three levels in this proposed model. The first level, namely the awareness level, will have an influence on a student's/graduate's employability skills and relates to his/her academic course. Not all academic courses will develop or foster the same employability skills. Students studying towards a BCom degree (Accounting, Business Management, Economics, Industrial Psychology and Public Management) at the UFS will not necessarily develop the same skills as students studying towards a BA degree (Drama, Arts and Language). Within the academic course the class activities and assessment tasks will make a student more or less aware of his/her employability skills and radius. This level will be known as the awareness level.

The second level will occur when a student is enrolled for practical sessions, for example, tutorial sessions, or a hands-on experience – a visit to a company, attending career fairs where they meet prospective work companies, workshops presented by companies, as well as service learning, graduate or internship programmes. At this level, students will already be more cognisant of employability and skills. Thus academic content alone will not develop the necessary skills. This level will be known as the fostering level.

The third level of the proposed model will be the career path and the development of lifelong learning skills of a student. This career path will start with their first job experience, for example, as a marker in the faculty, a student assistant, tutor, and/or intern or in the relevant field of study at a company – any job-related experiences will aid in developing the lifelong learning level. With the lifelong learning level, it is expected or anticipated that the graduate will continuously improve his/her skills based on previous experience and his/her self-esteem.

A summary of the manner in which the proposed model was compiled after consultation of employability literature is provided in Table 2.6.

**TABLE 2.6: SUMMARY OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS**

Skill	Model	Level of importance
<b>Awareness</b>		
<b>Academic course</b>	CareerEDGE model	Start of the model
	Heuristic model	Dimension interlinking with employability
	USEM model	Understanding (U)
	Link model	Predictors
<b>Assessment</b>	Heuristic model	Dimension interlinking with employability
	USEM model	Understanding (U)
	Link model	Broadening conditions
<b>Class activities</b>	Heuristic model	Dimension interlinking with employability
	USEM model	Understanding (U)
<b>Fostering</b>		
<b>Employability</b>	CareerEDGE model	End result of the model
	Heuristic model	Dimension interlinking with employability
	USEM model	Skills (S) and Efficacy (E) Metacognition (M) and Subject Understanding (U) Skills (S) and Efficacy (E)
	Link model	Employability
<b>Hands on</b>	USEM model	Transition condition
	Link model	Metacognition (M)
<b>Practical experience</b>	CareerEDGE model	Middle
	USEM model	Skills (S)
	Link model	Current employability
<b>Lifelong</b>		
<b>Career path</b>	CareerEDGE model	End result of model
	Heuristic model	Dimension interlinking with employability
	USEM model	Skills (S)
	Link model	Future employment perspectives
<b>Self-esteem</b>	CareerEDGE model	End result of model
	Heuristic model	Dimension interlinking with employability
	USEM model	Personal qualities (E)
<b>Experience</b>	CareerEDGE model	Middle
	Heuristic model	Dimension interlinking with employability
	USEM model	Skills (S), Personal qualities (E)
	Link model	Future employment perspective

Source: Author's own (2016).

Table 2.6 demonstrates how the proposed model was compiled. The most important skill in each employability model was used in the proposed model. Key terms and concepts repeatedly came to the fore in the models. One of these concepts is self-esteem. Self-esteem will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, which are devoted to students' discussions about their experience of and perceptions regarding the service learning module.

It is clear from the literature consulted that employability is a complex concept encompassing more than a mere set of practical skills, because it also involves students' development of intellectual skills, competencies and personal attributes (Gravells 2010:79; Knight and Yorke 2002:273; Lees 2002:2; Yorke 2006b). Students acquire various skills through their academic coursework, but may not be aware overtly of these skills, their potential value in a workplace, or how to apply the skills they have mastered (CBI 2011: online; Hesketh 2000:267; Lees 2002:2), unless they are pointed out to them through employability awareness raising endeavours made by the university, or more specifically through coursework and assessment, as recommended by HEA (2006). It has been found that experiential action learning methods combined with direct work experience is effective in developing employability (Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac, and Lawton 2012:44), a combination which is akin to service learning.

## 2.8 Conclusion

This chapter was aimed at addressing the first research question: *What are the current local and global perspectives on employability skills within the higher education sector and the world of work?* In following this directive, the chapter commenced with the clarification of employability skills (see 2.2.1) definitions and discussion on models of employability (2.5.1 to 2.5.4). The consulted literature, discussion about the employability models and the world of work (see 2.3) enabled the researcher to draw up a proposed model (see 2.7; figure 2.10). This proposed model is intended to serve as a foundation for the final model in Chapter 7.

Employability skills are interlinked and a complex concept. Companies, more specifically employees, are not just looking at graduates' qualifications, but also their experience, knowledge and flexibility regarding the world of work (see 2.6). In addition, this chapter explored some of the inevitable changes and challenges that the higher

education environment is currently facing (see 2.2.9). A definite undertaking toward recognising the importance of equipping graduates with more than discipline-specific knowledge and skills becomes evident from the discussions in this chapter.

The first research question was successively answered through the consulted literature in Chapter 2 (see 2.2 to 2.6). Chapter 3 will focus on service learning and models that portray the importance of service learning as a pedagogical approach in curricula and student life.

# Chapter 3

## SERVICE LEARNING AS A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

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*Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.*

John Dewey

### 3.1 Introduction

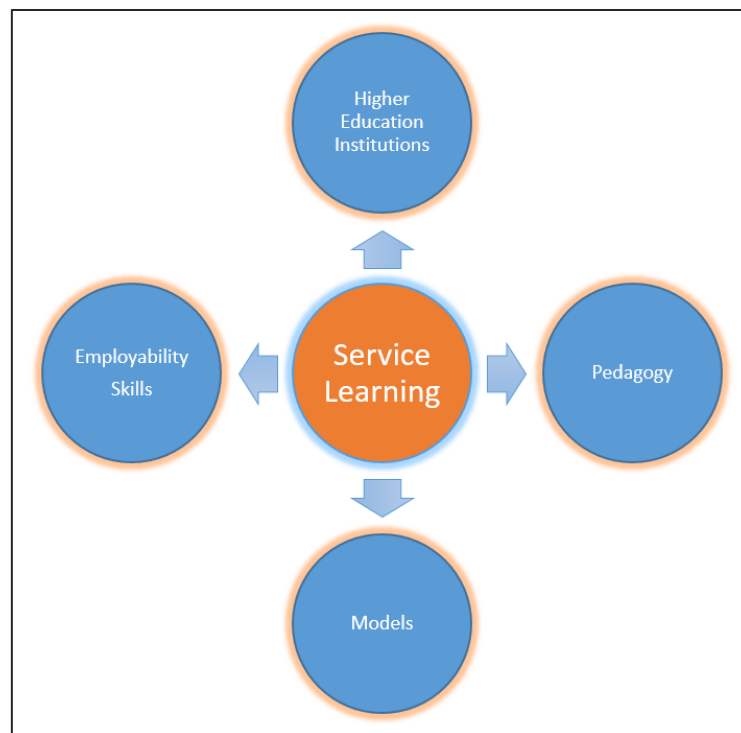
Service learning has become a very popular pedagogical approach for enhancing student learning at institutions of higher education across the USA. This is done by involving students in community service as part of their educational experience. Osman and Petersen (2013:5) discuss the breakthrough in South African when the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF) was launched in 2009. This forum plays an advocacy and facilitative role in the South African higher education environment with reference to community engagement and service learning for transformation and development. Lazarus (2007:102) states that the term *service learning* was unknown in the South African higher education sector until 1990. A growing body of literature calls for more attention to the impact service learning offers (Chupp and Joseph 2010:190).

The theoretical and pedagogical roots of service learning are founded on John Dewey's (1859–1952) theory of experience and education, including his ideas of democracy as a way of experience, and linking the school to the community (Dewey 1916/2011:106). Giles and Eyler (1994:78) maintain that many scholars look at Dewey as an influential theorist in laying the foundation for service learning. Although Dewey did not coin the phrase 'service learning' he has historically been associated with the relevant pedagogy and is often called the 'father' of service learning (Zentner 2010:10). This chapter will focus on service learning, within the context of higher education and as pedagogy. Kolb's experiential learning model (see 3.5.1), Dewey's transformative learning (see 3.5.2), Mezirow's transformative learning (see 3.5.3) and Bringle and Hatcher's model (see 3.5.4), will be discussed with the main focus on service learning.

The aim of this chapter is to address secondary research question 2:

*What are the current local and global perspectives on service learning as a pedagogical approach in higher education and how does it link with employability skills?*

Service learning as part of Community Engagement is the core discussion in this chapter. A clear linkage between service learning experiences and perceptions about the development of employability skills will be explored in this chapter. Figure 3.1 illustrates how service learning as part of community engagement is portrayed as the central focus point in this study with the other elements which are influenced by it. It is therefore also an illustration of the key topics that will be discussed in this chapter.



Source: Author's own (2016).

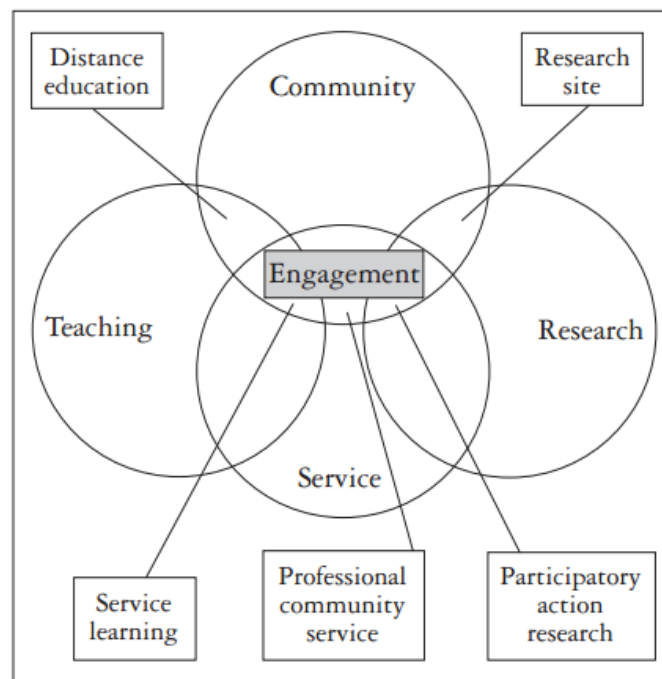
**Figure 3.1: Aspects of higher education influenced by service learning**

## 3.2 Community Engagement

Community engagement is one of three core responsibilities and pillars of higher education, alongside research, and teaching and learning (Albertyn and Daniels 2009:410). According to a definition provided by Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna and Slammat (2008:61-62), community engagement can take on many different forms and shapes within the context of higher education. These forms include distance

education, community-based research, participatory action research, professional community service, and service learning. “In its fullest sense, community engagement is the combination and integration of service with teaching and research, related and applied to identified community development priorities” (Lazarus *et al.* 2008:61-62).

For many HEIs and educators, service learning has become the “engagement tool of choice” (Zlotkowski 2005:153). Although Boyer never used the term ‘service learning’, it is recognised as the fundamental academic intervention to reach Boyer’s vision of a scholarship of engagement (Boyer 1996:11-20). CE is linked to the curriculum through service learning (Bringle, Games, Ludlum-Foos, Osgood and Osborne 2000:884; Bringle and Hatcher 2004:136; Bringle, Hatcher and Clayton 2006:271; Lazarus 2001: online; Saltmarsh 1996:19). Bringle, Games and Malloy (1999). Bringle and Hatcher (2004:127) and the Higher Education Qualification Committee (HEQC) 2006) provide a clear conceptual framework to demonstrate where service learning is situated within the broader sphere of community engagement and other academic endeavours. Although service learning does not encompass the whole sphere of civic engagement, service learning serves as a basis for informing and valuing service, teaching and research, as well as an impetus for revisiting community involvement towards civic engagement (Bringle and Hatcher, 2005:26) (see Figure 3.2 below).



Source: Bringle and Hatcher (2005:26).

**Figure 3.2: A conceptual framework depicting service learning within the broader sphere of community engagement and other academic endeavors**

Within this frame of reference, it is clear that service learning should not be removed from teaching and learning. It is of cardinal importance to distinguish between outreach as a philanthropic activity and service learning as a scholarly activity (Lazarus 2001: online). Service learning should be driven by intellectual curiosity, and recognised as a valued part of scholarly work that deliberately integrates teaching, service and research (Furco 2003:13; Ward 2003:152). Therefore, it was deemed necessary for education authorities to formalise service learning as part of the higher education curricula.

### 3.2.1 Policy directives for community engagement and service learning

For the purposes of this study a brief outline of the constitutional, policy and professional directives that guide community engagement and service learning in higher education in South Africa is provided. The information contained in this discussion was taken from the *Good practice guide and self-evaluation instruments for managing the quality of service-learning* (HEQC 2006:1-12) unless stated otherwise.

- The Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation (RSA DoE 1996) points out that HEIs in South Africa do not contribute sufficiently to cultivating a culture of tolerance; neither is there sufficient consideration of and contribution to community needs. It calls for programmes and teaching methods that are more responsive to these needs and that would increase participation in higher education.
- Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (RSA DoE 1997) requires of HEIs to “promote social responsibility and awareness amongst students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes” and also promises support for the development of community service in higher education programmes.
- The Founding Document of the HEQC (2001) states that the key objective of the HEQC is to ensure the implementation and quality assurance of the three core functions of HEIs, these being teaching, research and community service.
- The HEQC Institutional Audit Framework (HEQC 2004a) and Institutional Audit Criteria (HEQC 2004b) call for the integration of community engagement with teaching and research. It calls on HEIs to have policies in place, make resources

available for and monitor the impact and effectiveness of service learning programmes.

- The HEQC Criteria for Programme Accreditation (2004a) requires the integration of service learning programmes into “institutional and academic planning as part of the institution’s mission and strategic goals”, as well as the availability of “enabling mechanisms to support implementation of Service Learning”.
- The Joint Education Trust (JET) Education Services Survey (1997) identified the common difficulties and stumbling blocks of HEIs in implementing service learning.
- The JET-CHESP Initiative (1999) aims to support, monitor, assess and research the implementation of community engagement and service learning programmes.
- The Vice-Chancellor’s Meeting in 2000, highlighted the various roles of role-players in HEIs, but most importantly highlighted the purpose of HEIs as educating for good citizenship and striving for a scholarship of engagement.
- The UFS Community Service Policy (UFS 2006:2) states the position of the UFS pertaining to community engagement as a core function supported by its vision and mission and striving toward a scholarship of engagement.

These policies and directives show the support of the CHE–HEQC and other stakeholders in emphasising the importance of community engagement and service learning. These policies and directives encourage debate and reflection on community engagement and service learning serving as critical resources for capacity building and quality management. Currently these policies are still used as directives due to a lack of literature regarding service learning in the South African context. Most literature, guidelines and policies are based on American literature.

### **3.3 Service Learning**

In its traditional form, service learning is focused primarily on student learning as a “pedagogical process whereby students participate in course relevant community service to enhance their learning experience” (Petkus 2000:64; see also, Bringle and Hatcher 2002:508; Easterling and Rudell 1997:60; Eyler 2002:152). Drawing on Dewey’s (1938) seminal work that established an educational pedagogy embedded in experience, service learning has become the principle mechanism for putting students

in a more active and engaged role than that of a passive classroom learner. Kolb's experiential learning is another cornerstone of service learning pedagogy (Saltmarsh 1996:17).

Service learning can encourage selflessness and community service amid students (Easterling and Rudell 1997:61; Forte 1997:159), counter seclusion of learning from the real world (Eyler, Giles and Gray 1999:6), and aid social problem-solving by meeting community requirements (Boyer 1994:48). An additional benefit, in many cases, is that students cultivate cultural competence and the skill to interact with numerous ethnic and cultural groups (Flannery and Ward 1999:329), which in South Africa is of particular importance.

Bringle and Hatcher (1995:112) define service learning as an educational experience where students

- participate in an organised service activity in such a way that it meets identified community needs; and
- reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the relevant discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

Service learning is also a pedagogy that combines coursework with service to the community through a process of structured and critical reflection (Deeley 2010a:44) and is based on experiential learning theory (Jarvis 2010; Merriam, Cafarella and Baumgartner 2007).

The characteristics of modern society are distinctly different from that of society a few decades ago. Gibbons (2000:34) describe some of these differences as an overall rise in the complexity of society which leads to uncertainty in social relations, new approaches to economic endeavour, more permeable institutional boundaries and an increasingly altered perception of time and space – a phenomenon he coined Mode 2 society.

As a result of the more permeable boundaries between HEIs and other institutions such as government, industry, businesses (called “triple-helix partners”) and communities, HEIs need to review the way they interact with these institutions,

especially pertaining to social responsibility and accountability in knowledge production (Gibbons 2000:38; Erasmus 2005:27). Gibbons (2000:40) points out that Mode 2 knowledge production is applicable to a wide context, is transdisciplinary and includes a variety of skills, and in essence is “more socially accountable and reflexive” than more traditional forms of discipline-based knowledge production governed by academic interests.

Knowledge production as posed above refers primarily to the research dimension of higher education. However, Erasmus (2005:28) argues that what applies to research, also applies to the dimension of teaching and learning. She poses the question as to what extent HEIs in South Africa are preparing future researchers and professionals to participate successfully in the Mode 2 society.

Service learning is regarded as an effective pedagogy to develop social responsibility in students in a Mode 2 society, because it brings a civic aspect to academic learning; in order to cultivate researchers and professionals who are able to interact “in the public spaces where socially robust knowledge can be produced in collaboration with triple-helix and community partners” (Erasmus 2005:29).

### **3.4 Service Learning and Higher Education Institutions**

Community engagement, and more specifically service learning, are concepts with which the South African higher education system has grappled for more than a decade according to the 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: Building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System. The Ministry earlier encouraged suitable viability studies and pilot programmes which would discover 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 2013:36).

A study commissioned by the HEQC (2013) specifies that numerous of the community engagement enterprises conducted by universities in South Africa have been of an *ad hoc* nature, disjointed and not connected in any way to the academic programme. These enterprises usually are not state-funded and are not connected to measurable

outcomes. Given financial and other resource limitations within higher education and the incalculable different ways in which universities approach community engagement, it can be assumed that funding for universities in future will be limited if the programmes do not link directly with the academic content and programmes of universities. Community engagement that has an undeviating relationship to academic programmes and research, and which consequently is part of the central mission of universities, should be seen separately and not be confused with the suggestion for a national graduate community service programme (HEQC 2013). Currently, the only successfully implemented national graduate community service programme is one within the health sciences which has been developed through the Funza Lushaka teacher education programme. Funza Lushaka is a bursary scheme (HEQC 2013).

The UFS, and most other HEI, claim to have three core functions, namely research, teaching and learning, and community engagement (see 3.2). Research produces a third-stream income for HEIs which is crucial for the sustainability of an HEI. Much emphasis is placed on teaching and learning in HEIs, because it is closely linked to student success and throughput rates. Teaching and learning is embedded in a curriculum and modules. Community engagement, and more specifically service learning, is often seen as an add-on and not as important as research and teaching and learning. Service learning costs money in order to cover the expenses of travelling to and from the communities, materials, celebration functions and certificates as mentioned in the 2013 White Paper (CHE 2013b).

In total seven faculties are actively involved in service learning at the UFS. The involvement usually entails one service learning module per programme. Sixty modules are currently actively involved in service learning, compared to over 500 modules which are actually presented on the UFS campus for undergraduate students. This puts a question mark to the extent to which service learning is ranked as important by teaching practitioners and the institution.

The UFS defines community service learning (or 'service learning') as follows:

*An educational approach involving curriculum-based, credit-bearing learning experiences in which students:*

*(a) participate in contextualised, well-structured and organised service activities aimed at addressing identified service needs in a community, and*

*(b) 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 sense of social responsibility.*

*It requires a collaborative partnership context that enhances mutual, reciprocal teaching and learning among all members of the partnership (teaching practitioners and students, members of the communities and representatives of the service sector (UFS 2006: section 3.1.7).*

As interest in service learning increases at HEIs across the country (Bringle and Hatcher 2002:284; Butin 2006:1678; Jacoby and Associates 1996:5), the idea of engaging students in service activities outside the classroom as a part of their education might seem to offer an irrefutable benefit to both student learning and community well-being.

Deeley (2014:46) reported that the results of a study called *Summative co-assessment: A deep learning approach to enhancing employability skills and attributes*, indicated that many employability skills and personal attributes referred to in the literature and sought by prospective employers were evident in the service learning course investigated, although previously this had not been overtly acknowledged. Students reported that they gained by the service learning in the course, and had developed numerous skills and attributes through the course and its assessment. Skills they mentioned were time management, organisational skills, adaptability, flexibility, leadership, decision-making and problem-solving. According to the findings of this study, it can be presumed that service learning courses do have an impact on students' employability skills.

Service learning in higher education is widely advocated as a method for advancing civic awareness and citizen responsibility (Daniels, Adonis, Mpofo and Waggie 2013:144). Service learning in higher education succeeds in making theory and research more 'real' to students by placing them inside organisations or communities, responding to social problems. Service learning provides a transformational experience and prepares students for a global and diverse workplace. When an intentional pedagogical integration of service learning and course content is practised,

students' academic learning is enhanced, as they are able to tie course content to practical applications (Zimmerman, Krafchick, and Aberle 2009:201).

Table 3.1 contains a summary of the benefits service learning holds for students. Various authors identified the key benefits that are summarised in this table.

**TABLE 3.1: BENEFITS OF SERVICE LEARNING FOR STUDENTS**

Moral development		Learning	Critical thinking skills
Spiritual growth	Civic-mindedness	Increased academic learning	Problem-solving
Reduced stereotypes		Increased interest	Leadership
		Relevant	Self-management
Lifelong learning	Commitment to service	Broaden scope of curriculum	
Social responsibility	Ask larger questions	Application of content	
		Real world problems	Creative
Responsible citizenship		Credible	Right-brain learning
		Experience of service sector	
			Reflective learning

Sources: Albertyn and Daniels (2009); Bawa (2003); Bender (2008); Bringle and Hatcher (1996); Coles (2005); Erasmus (2007); Hatcher and Erasmus (2008).

Boyer (1990) avers that service learning is a teaching approach that intentionally integrates academic learning and relevant community service, addresses the disconnection between higher education and society and offers a potentially transformative pedagogy for student learners.

Unfortunately, there is a negative side to a service learning experience or module (see 3.6.3). The first stumbling block for service learning modules are usually the lack of finance and human resources from the institution (Daniels *et al.* 2013:158). Financial support for transport, stationary and items needed during the project should be budgeted for. An academic staff member with service learning knowledge and experience should be involved with the development of the module. Due to a lack of funds at HEIs most faculties and departments do not have the human resources for such an appointment. Academic staff members are usually maxed out to capacity with preparing material, lecturing, consulting hours, setting up of test and exam papers and marking of them, they do not have the time to invest and develop service learning activities within their modules or even visiting the communities. Lastly, students are

unfamiliar with service learning and thus they feel threatened. Perceptions regarding service learning are one of the main causes for students to feel negative towards service learning (Krebs 2012:132). The students' perceptions regarding their service learning experience are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 of the research thesis.

### **3.4.1 Service learning as pedagogy**

Internationally, service learning, which began as pedagogy created by a loosely coupled group of social change-orientated education reformers, was increasingly embraced, strengthened, and ultimately institutionalised within the context of and by riding the waves of larger, national reform efforts. These reforms were driven by broader, but related concerns similar to those of the pioneers. Students greased the wheels along the way. Universities in the USA are now ranked nationally by the extent to which they offer and support service learning (Stanton and Erasmus 2013:74).

Service learning has been recognised and advocated to have a pedagogical significance in aiding students to understand, implement course content and developing reciprocal relationships with community members along with social skills, including skills of collaboration and patience (Eyler *et al.* 1999:9; Huckin 1997:53; Jacoby and Associates 1996:5). Although Mouton and Wildschut (2005:121) report a prevailing lack of strong tradition of service learning in South Africa, Alperstein (2007:60) and Lazarus *et al.* (2008:63) believe that there has been considerable development in the field of service learning as a pedagogy.

Service learning is a “pedagogical framework that employs an algorithm of practice to principle to practice that guides the application of academic knowledge and skills in meaningful community action” (Hullender, Hinck Wood-Nartker, Burton and Bowlby 2015:59). “Many teaching instructors consider service learning as a high-impact, engaged pedagogy, linking to its strong emphasis on reflection, experiential methods to teaching, and growth of circumstantial and social learning communities” (Carrington and Selva 2010:49; Felten and Clayton 2011; Rice 2003:8). In pedagogy, the teaching practitioner is in charge and held entirely responsible for all learning: what is to be taught, how it is to be taught, when it is to be taught and how it is to be measured. However, students should be in charge of their own learning with the assistance (not as main role player) of a facilitator and teaching practitioner. Kolb's experiential

learning is seen as one of the corner stones for service learning pedagogy (Saltmarsh 1996:15). Kolb's experiential learning refers to the process of learning through experience, action and doing (Osman and Petersen 2013:6). Service learning entails experience, action and doing. More on Kolb's experiential learning are discussed in 3.6.

Butin (2005:2), however, argues that service learning is pedagogically dangerous due to the 'de-centred mode of teaching'. He implies that service learning operates on the level of pedagogy and classroom practice. Butin argues that service learning that is practised in this way shifts the boundaries from the powerless and knowledge-less educational relationship. Contrary to this view, it should be made clear that with EGAP60206 (the module used for this study) the students, module coordinator and community were viewed as equal partners.

Service learning is an effective pedagogical tool to "transform lives, to touch the heart as well as the mind and to teach many valuable lessons beyond those that professors provide within the confines of their classrooms" (Kretchmar 2001:9). Service learning, like any other pedagogy, presents risks and rewards, with barriers and pitfalls (Speck 2001:7). The format, structure and nature of learning from experience are of particular importance (Osman and Petersen 2013:22). Although service learning is considered to be a means of expanding the borders of traditional education and learning, academics that use service Learning need to move beyond a superficial understanding of learning, knowledge and experience of higher education (Osman and Petersen 2013:29).

The discussion of service learning models in the following section eventually aided the researcher in making the link between service learning, employability skills and pedagogy.

### **3.5 Service Learning Models**

There are a few well-known service learning models that are usually incorporated by teaching practitioners at universities when developing a service learning module or programme. Using a service learning model enables the teaching practitioner to play it safe and follow the guidelines of the specific model to avoid possible pitfalls.

### 3.5.1 Kolb's experiential learning design

*Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember.*

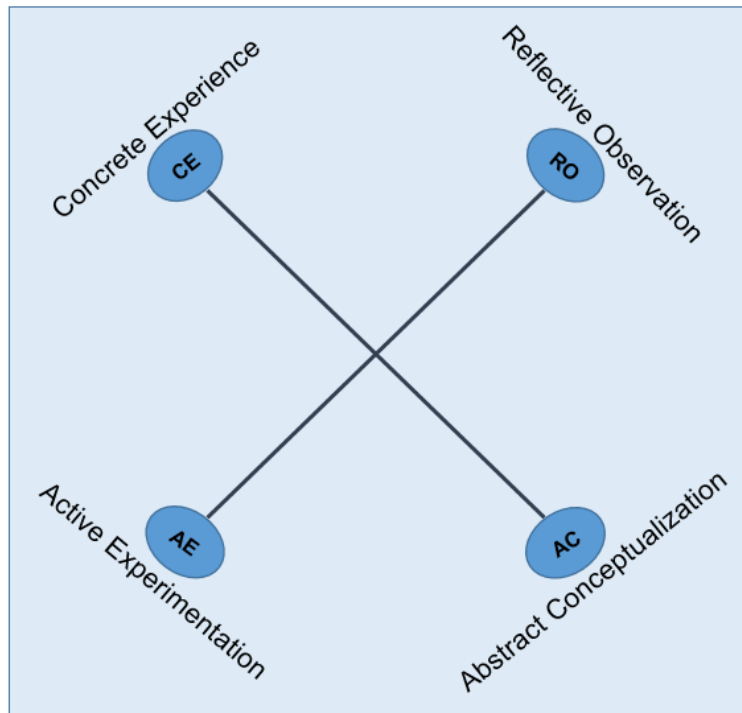
*Involve me, and I will understand.*

(Confucius 450BC).

With this dictum, Confucius 'introduced' the idea of action and experiential learning. Since then, numerous theories have focused on the importance of involvement, experience and engagement as the source of learning and development. In accordance with the idea behind experiential learning, Palmer (1998:39; 2001:62) comments that people are more likely to live their way into a new way of thinking than to think their way into a new way of living.

Kolb (1984:21) identifies John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget as the founding fathers and developers of the concept of experiential learning. Kolb acknowledges the work of Dewey as the most influential and best articulation of guiding principles for programmes of experiential learning in higher education. He identifies internships, field placement, work/study assignments, structured exercises and role plays, gaming simulations and other forms of experience-based education as playing a large role in the curricula of undergraduate and professional programmes (Kolb 1984:41 in Pacho 2015:10). Moore (2010a:4) agrees with Kolb who identifies service learning, internships, community-based research and study abroad as some of the approaches to experiential learning, whereas Moore (2010a:8) acknowledges service learning as the most widely analysed form of experiential education in higher education learning. Action and experiential learning are both based on the belief that experience and constant reflection on experience are the keys to effective learning (Zuber-Skerritt 1992:121; 2002:115).

Experiential learning contends that learning is a continuous loop (Montrose 2002:9), constructed by four adaptive modes of learning, namely concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualisation (AC), and active experimentation (AE), as illustrated in Figure 3.3.



Source: Adapted from Kolb (1984:39).

**Figure 3.3: Four adaptive modes of learning**

Kolb's theory of experiential learning can be described as a process “of performing work in real-world settings to strengthen learning” (quoted by Wong, Green and Wan 2012:14). It is a suggested epistemological frame in which to structure the pedagogy of service learning courses (Collier 2005:149; Cress 2011:44; Montrose 2002:7). Petkus (2000:66) reminds practitioners that there is not a designated starting point for the cycle and notes that, according to Kolb's original Experiential Learning Cycle (see 1.2.1; Figure 1.1), “learning is most effective when the student goes through all the points, regardless where he or she starts”.

The experiential learning theory also emphasises the transaction between internal characteristics (such as biological maturation and developmental achievements) and external circumstances (for example, environmental demands). Experiential learning theory thus regards the process of learning from experience as shaping and actualising individual development (Kolb 1984:42). Most scholars today will support the idea that both the readiness for development within the person and the challenges and support from the external environment are important conditions for development. This presents an interactional approach that encompasses both the nativist and nurturist perspectives (Salkind 1985).

The following is a list of experiential learning principles as noted by the Association for Experiential Education (2011: online):

- Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis and synthesis.
- Experiences are structured to require the student to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for results.
- Throughout the experiential learning process, the student is actively engaged in posing questions, is investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative and constructing meaning.
- Students are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully and/or physically. This involvement produces a perception that the learning task is authentic.
- The results of the learning process are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning.
- Relationships are developed and nurtured: student to self, student to others and student to the world at large.
- The teaching practitioner and student may experience success, failure, adventure, risk-taking and uncertainty, because the outcomes of the experience cannot be predicted in totality.
- Opportunities are nurtured for students and teaching practitioners to explore and examine their own values.
- The teaching practitioners' primary roles include creating or identifying suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting students, ensuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process.
- The teaching practitioner recognises and encourages spontaneous opportunities for learning.
- The teaching practitioners strive to be aware of their biases, judgements and pre-conceptions, and how these influence the student.
- The design of the learning experience includes the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes and successes.

Experiential learning involves a number of steps that offer students a hands-on, collaborative and reflective learning experience, which helps them to “fully learn new

skills and knowledge” (Haynes 2007:168). Although learning content is important, learning from the process is at the heart of experiential learning. During each step of the experience, students will engage with the content, the teaching practitioner, each other, do self-reflection and apply what they have learned in another situation.

### **3.5.1.1 Teaching practitioner roles in experiential learning**

In experiential learning, the teaching practitioner guides, rather than directs, the learning process to where students are naturally interested in learning. The teaching practitioner assumes the role of facilitator and is guided by a number of steps crucial to experiential learning, as noted by Wurdinger and Carlson (2010:13). Thus the teaching practitioner

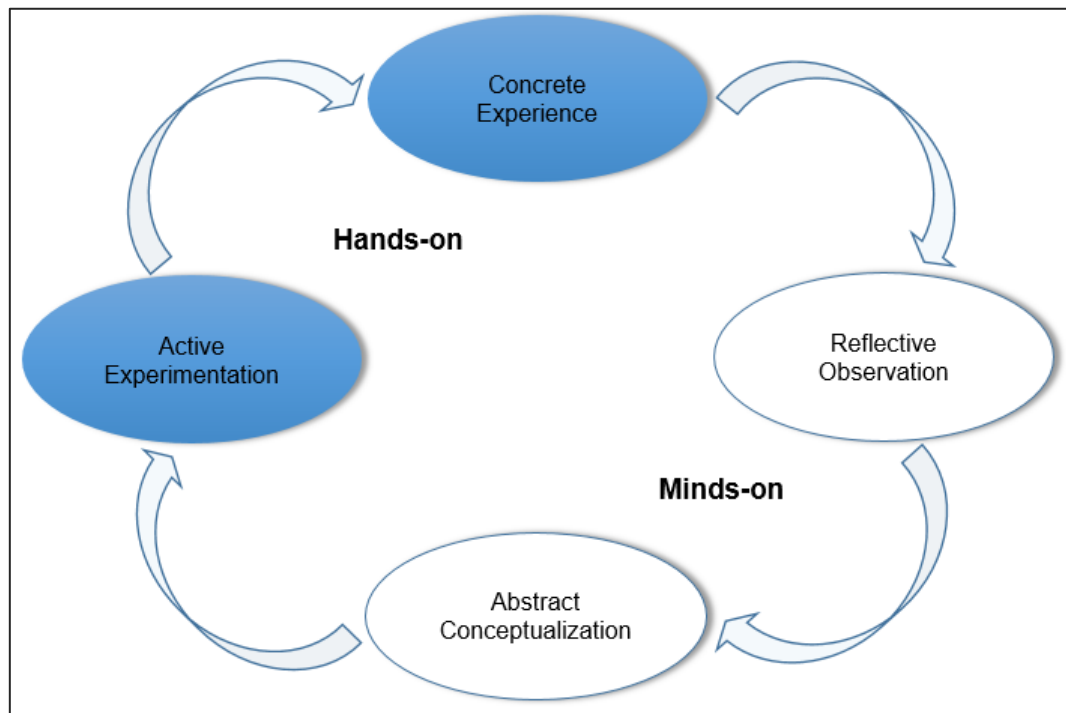
- is willing to accept a less teacher-centric role in the classroom;
- approaches the learning experience in a positive, non-dominating way;
- identifies an experience in which students will find interest and be personally committed;
- explains the purpose of the experiential learning situation to the students;
- shares his/her feelings and thoughts with his/her students and lets them know that he/she is learning from the experience too;
- ties the course learning objectives to course activities and directs experiences for students to know what they are supposed to do;
- provides relevant and meaningful resources to help students succeed;
- allows students to experiment and discover solutions on their own;
- finds a sense of balance between the academic and nurturing aspects of teaching, and
- clarifies students’ and teaching practitioner roles.

### **3.5.1.2 Student roles in experiential learning**

Quality in experiential learning is found in those learning activities in which students decide for themselves to be personally involved. Students are actively participating in their own learning and have a personal role in the direction of learning. Students, therefore, are not completely left to teach themselves; however, the teaching practitioner assumes the role of guide and facilitates the learning process. The

following list of student roles has been adapted from UC-Davis (2011: online) and Wurdinger and Carlson (2010:67):

- Students are involved in problems which are practical, communal and personal.
- Students are allowed autonomy in the classroom as long as they make headway in the learning process.
- Students often need to be involved with difficult and challenging situations while discovering.
- Students self-evaluate their own progress or success in the learning process which becomes the primary means of assessment.
- Students learn from the learning process and become open to change. This change includes less reliance on the teaching practitioner and more on fellow students, the development of skills to investigate (research) and learn from an authentic experience, and the ability to objectively self-evaluate one's performance.



Source: Young (2015:44).

**Figure 3.4: Young's Hands-on and Minds-on activities**

According to Figure 3.4, depicting Kolb's experiential learning cycle, Young (2015:44) identifies two types of activities in the cycle, namely 'minds-on' activities and 'hands-on' activities. During the experiential learning cycle the 'hands-on' activities are the

concrete experiences, providing the basis for the learning process, which should be designed to engage, motivate, and evoke the affective (feeling) aspect of the experience. Techniques that provide students with concrete experiences include cases, simulations, in-class demonstrations, lectures with anecdotes, videos, discussion of experiences, and current news articles.

The 'minds-on' experiences refer to conceptual knowledge representing the facts, concepts, principles, and their interrelationships that apply to a specific domain (Alexander 1996:90). Conceptual organisation of knowledge is a major characteristic of expert proficiency, suggesting that a primary goal of meaningful learning is to continue the organisational development of conceptual understanding (Glaser and Bassok 1989:654).

Service learning indeed rests on a sound pedagogical method of active learning (Chapdelaine, Ruiz, Warchal and Wells 2005:3). Service learning is about doing, about action, about learning from experience, and about using the knowledge and skills learned. It is about having assumptions challenged through confronting new perspectives or puzzling experiences and learning to sort out complex, messy real-world situations. It is about knowledge in use, not just about acquiring facts and being tested on facts (Eyler 2002:526).

According to the Northern Illinois University, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center ([n.d.]: online), experiential learning experiences help to complete students' preparation for their chosen careers which should reinforce course content and theory. Students learn through student-centred rather than teaching practitioner-centred experiences, that is, by doing, discovering, reflecting and applying. Through these experiences students develop communication skills and self-confidence and gain and strengthen decision-making skills by responding to and solving real-world problems and processes.

Following Kolb's cycle of experiential learning, most reflection processes go through the stages of concrete description to discerning meaning (interpretative/emotional), to conclusions and plans of action (Eyler, Giles and Schiemde 1996; Hatcher and Bringle 1997:153). The Three Stage model, the ORID model and the DEAL model are examples of reflection models based on Kolb's experiential cycle.

### 3.5.2 Dewey's active learning strategy

*There is an intimate and necessary relation between the process of actual experience and education* (John Dewey 1938:25).

Dewey's argument can serve as an outline for understanding, appreciating and reconsidering service learning (Cummings 2000:103). Dewey, an enthusiast of the practical dimension of learning, contributed to the contemporary belief that the most effective learning is active, engaged, collaborative and reflective (Pomery and Bellner 2005:7). Dewey (1938:87 in Pacho 2015:8) explains that the fundamental purpose of education is to prepare students to function productively as adults in a democratic society that could afford equal opportunities for all, regardless of social class, race and gender. Dewey (1938:88) declares that education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process. He insists that students must always be involved in "an actual empirical situation as the initiating phase of thought". Experience, according to Dewey (1938:88), involves "trying to do something and having the perceptibility to do something to one in return". This implies learning from experience. Experience-based education has become widely accepted as a method of instruction and a central lifelong task that is essential for personal and career development in colleges and universities (Kolb 1984:39). The assumption is that students seldom learn from experience unless we assess the experience and assign it our own meaning in terms of our goals, aims, ambitions and experiences (Smith and McKittrick 2010:58).

Dewey (1938:89) noted that education is a six-step process, namely:

- Encountering a problem.
- Formulating the problem as a question to be answered.
- Gathering information to answer the posed question.
- Developing a hypothesis.
- Testing the hypothesis.
- Making warranted assertions.

Service learning provides students with experiences that may increase civic engagement and better prepare students to participate in their communities. As an active learning strategy, service learning is framed by the experiential learning theory inspired by Dewey (1938:79) and popularised by Kolb (1984:21).

Critical links are also seen between service learning and Dewey’s ideas regarding reflection and the theory of inquiry. Reflective inquiry is a cornerstone on which service learning is built (Buchanan, Baldwin and Rudisill 2002:31; Saltmarsh 1996:18). While service learning pedagogy can be applied to diverse contexts and disciplines, its practitioners must remain faithful to its original ideas as stipulated by Dewey in order for it to remain authentic. Dewey’s experiential learning theory therefore provides a basis on which service learning can operate (Pacho 2015:15).

### 3.5.3 Mezirow’s transformative learning theory

The transformative learning theory was actualised by Jack Mezirow and is known as a constructivist theory. It enables an individual to construct meaning from a learning experience (Mezirow 1990a:1). The foundation of the concept of university-developed, community-based agencies lies in Mezirow’s (1978a) theory of transformational learning, which posits that learning is an understood process that utilises prior interpretations to construct new and revised interpretations to guide future behaviour (Nino, Cuevas and Loya 2011:35). There are ten phases of transformative learning, according to Mezirow (1978a; 1978b), as illustrated in Figure 3.5.

Phase 1	A disorienting dilemma
Phase 2	A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
Phase 3	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
Phase 4	Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
Phase 5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
Phase 6	Planning of a course of action
Phase 7	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
Phase 8	Provisional trying of new roles
Phase 9	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
Phase 10	A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s perspective

Source: Adapted from Mezirow (1978a:105; 1978b:105).

**Figure 3.5: Ten phases of transformative learning**

Mezirow's (1978a; 1978b) initial theory became more developed as he expanded the view of perspective transformation, by relating the emancipatory process to self-directed learning in order to form three revised types of learning. The original three types of learning (technical, practical, and emancipatory), based on Habermas's (1971) work, and then became (a) instrumental, (b) dialogic, and (c) self-reflective learning (Mezirow 1985:147).

Mezirow (1990b:12) places much emphasis on self/critical reflection:

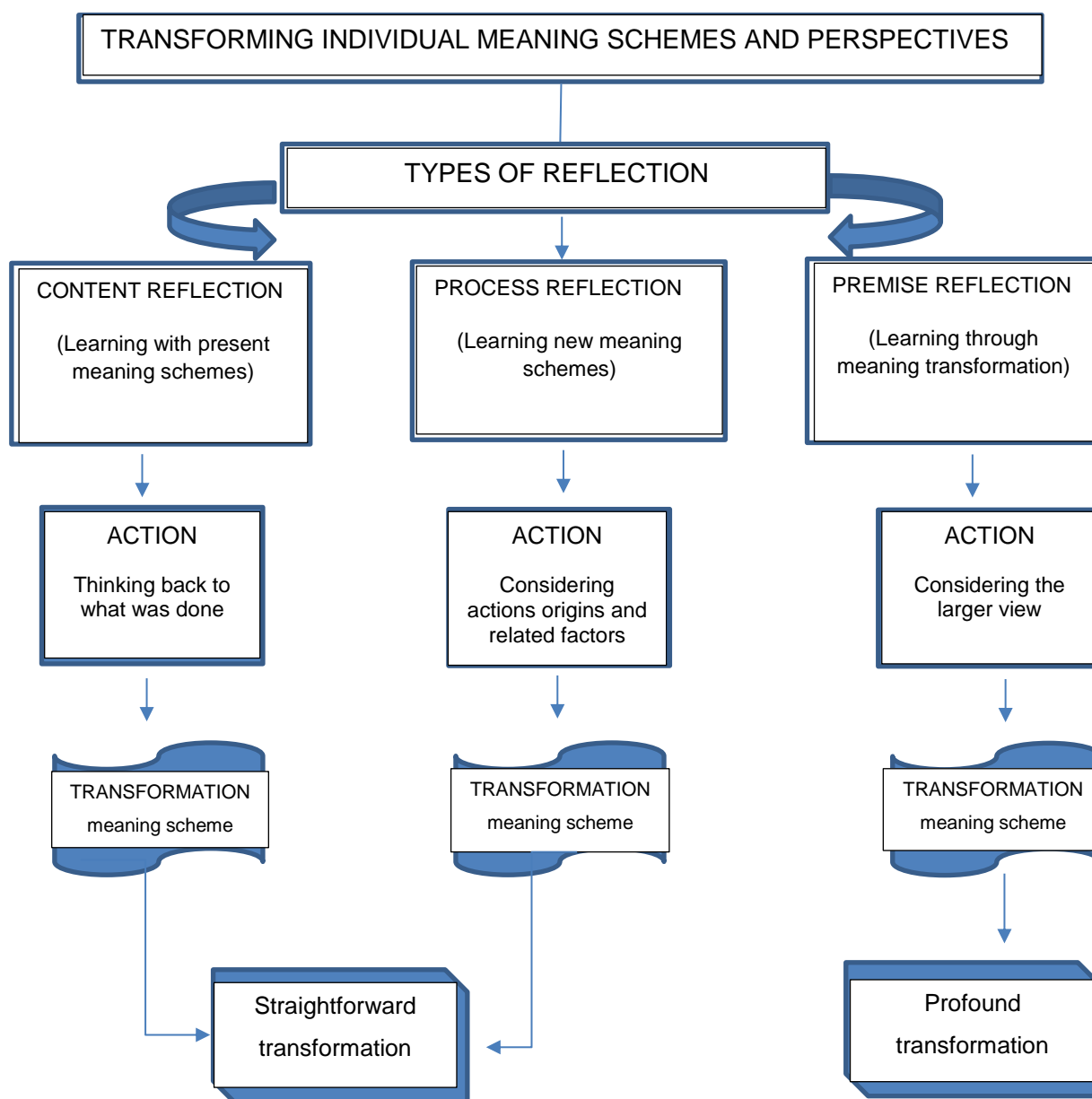
*Critical reflection addresses the question of the justification for the very premises on which problems are posed or defined in the first place. We very commonly check our prior learning to confirm that we have correctly proceeded to solve problems, but becoming critically aware of our own presuppositions involves challenging our established and habitual patterns of expectations, the meaning perspective with which we have made sense out of our encounters with the world, others, and ourselves.*

In other words, learners can transform an individual meaning scheme by examining previous actions (content reflection or learning within meaning schemes), or where the actions and their related factors originated (process reflection or learning new meaning schemes), but when they consider a more global view, the reflection is much deeper, more complex, and involves transforming a series of meaning schemes (Kitchenham 2006:115), as illustrated in Figure 3.5.

Mezirow (1998:197) argued that "learning to think for oneself involves becoming critically reflective of assumptions and participating in discourse to validate beliefs, intentions, values and feelings".

Mezirow (2000:62) proposes that learning occurs in four ways:

- By elaborating existing frames of reference.
- By learning new frames of reference.
- By transforming points of view.
- By transforming habits of mind.



Source: Mezirow (1991:115).

**Figure 3.5: Diagrammatic representation of the three types of reflection, their related actions, transformation, and depths of change**

If one separates the two terms *transformation* and *learning* it may be described as follows:

Transformation as defined by Howie and Bagnall (2013:12)

*is the conceptual sphere of consciousness raising, refining, becoming free from the past, undoing twisted views of the world, raising above self-limitations, being future orientated, becoming enlightened, unfolding spiritually, metaphorically of butterflies emerging, and all this through an inner awakening, creating a stirring*

*of discontent that generates a drive in a person to enlarge their understanding and appreciation of life (Howie and Bagnall 2013:12).*

One of the above attributes that clearly links to employability skills is being future orientated. Students need to transform from being a wasp as first-year student into an emerging butterfly.

*Learning*, on the other hand, according to Howie and Bagnall (2013:130) can be seen as

*the conceptual domain concerned with the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding brought about through a variety of processes, including reading, studying, being taught, teaching others, curriculum development, pedagogy, different ways of taking in, interacting, constructing and assimilating knowledge, improving one's understanding of that knowledge, and social and community advancements through such processes (Howie and Bagnall 2013:13).*

Acquisition of skills can be linked to employability skills in the context of this study. Students need to acquire skills in order to stand out as future employees.

Mezirow (1978b:100) continues to refine his thinking and his model of perspective transformation, which he came to characterise as “a structural change in the way we see ourselves and our relationships”. The idea, then, that some kind of cognitive dissonance, some kind of realisation that what one believes is not necessarily making sense anymore, is at the heart of a transformative learning experience. In other words, students come to understand that they have held a limited view of the world or of how things work, they adjust their thinking to accommodate a more accurate or expansive understanding. Whether this is a part of disciplinary understanding or a part of self-understanding in relation to the world, the student has transformed a perspective of his/her personal view of reality.

In conclusion: Transformative learning is often viewed as an outcome of a well-designed service learning experience, it signifies a dramatic change in knowledge, skills and how we understand our relationship to the world around us (Hullender *et al.* 2015:74). The change in students' knowledge, skills and how they understand the world around them is definitely influenced by a service learning experience. Their perceptions about the world of work change once they gain practical experience (see 5.6).

### 3.5.4 Reflection in service learning

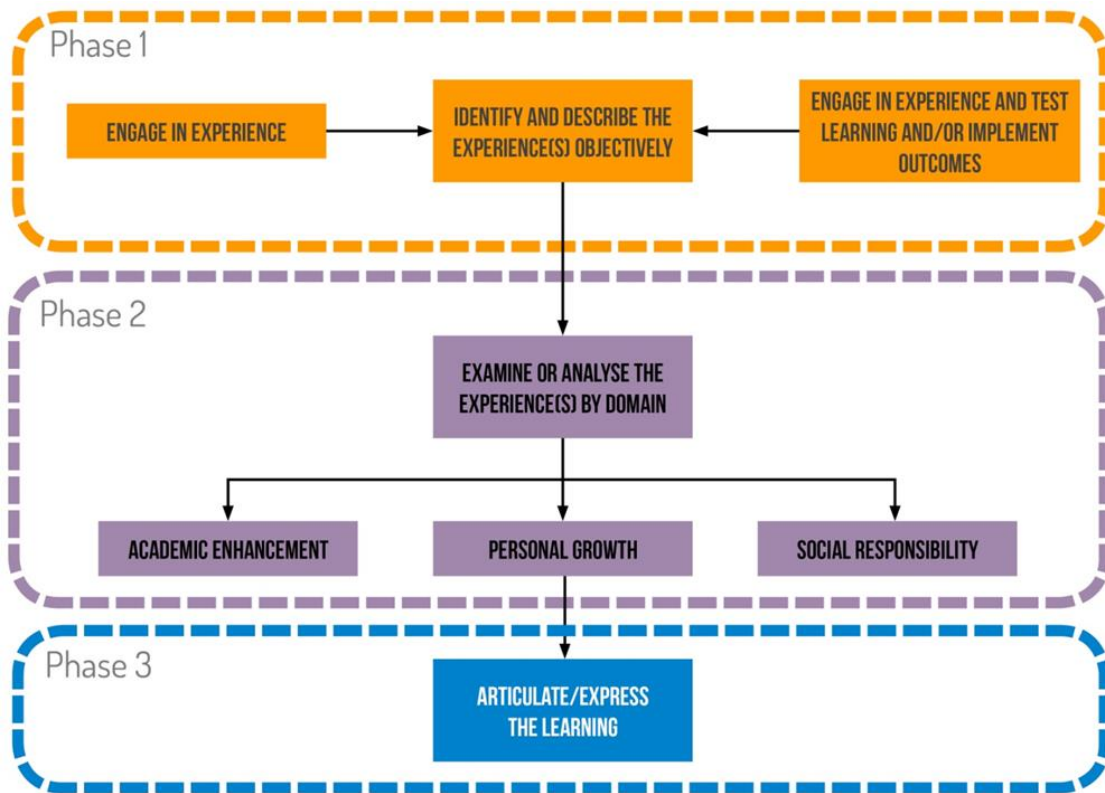
Hatcher, Bringle and Mutiah (2004:40) state as follows:

*When reflection activities engage the learner in examining and analyzing the relationship between relevant, meaningful service and the interpretive template of a discipline, there is enormous potential for learning to broaden and deepen along academic, social, moral and civic dimensions.*

Sometimes referred to as the 'hyphen' in service learning (Eyler *et al.* 1999:145), reflection ties community service activities to academic learning, often resulting in the creation of a new understanding of ideas addressed. Research on reflection has found that the quality of the reflection activity impacts the academic outcomes associated with service learning. Mabry (1998:45) found that reflection needs to occur regularly (weekly), written reflection must be ongoing and summative and in-class reflections will uniquely impact students' understanding of their subject matter. She also mentions that there are academic gains when doing reflection.

### 3.5.5 Reflective practice in service learning - DEAL model

Although it is problematic to define reflection, the following views are relevant to service learning pedagogy. According to Schön (1983: online), reflective practice refers to the capacity to reflect on an action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning. Schön's view accords with Hatcher and Bringle's (1997:153) definition of reflection as the intentional consideration of an experience in the light of particular learning objectives. Blanchard (2014: online) describes reflection as a tool of service learning that deliberately incorporates creative and critical thinking by the student in an effort to understand and evaluate what they did, what they learned, how it affected them personally, and how their services affected society on a broader scale. Parrillo (1994: 7) argues that reflection is critical to service learning pedagogy since it is the process through which true learning takes place. It is considered one of the core components of service learning that connects the service and the learning, and distinguishes it from other community-based experience.



Source: HEQC (2006:72).

**Figure 3.6: The DEAL model**

The reflection, activities and outcomes of the EGAP60206 module were based on the DEAL model of reflection. The DEAL model supports students in connecting the service experience with their academic content, as well as with their personal growth and social responsibility. In this case the students’ experience and perceptions of service learning, and the impact it had on employability skills were the main focus of reflection. Reflection took place during the 20 hours they spent in the community and they had to include their reflective journal in their final PowerPoint presentation.

Reflection, using the DEAL model, takes place in three phases (HEQC 2006:72-76), namely:

**PHASE 1: DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENCE(S) OBJECTIVELY**

The student must be completely objective in this phase and only review what happened at the service site or during the facilitation session.

## PHASE 2: EXAMINE THE EXPERIENCE(S)

### ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

- This enables the student to better understand the module content and the experiences. The student can make connections between what they read and discussed, and their experiences in the community and service agencies. The students must compare and contrast what theory suggests and what really happened.

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The student explores what the service experience actually revealed about him-/herself: his/her strengths and weaknesses, sense of identity, the assumptions he/she intends to make and his/her beliefs and convictions, as well as personal traits. The student may learn something new, question why he/she is the way he/she is and whether he/she wants to change the way he/she is.

### SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- This will deepen their understanding of citizenship. It helps them to learn how individuals in a particular profession act in socially responsive ways, and to understand why things are the way they are and how they might be changed. It is important to understand what outcomes are at stake, what was done in order to try to accomplish them and what might have been done differently.

The ideas of Phase 2 are then expanded in Phase 3.

## PHASE 3: ARTICULATE (EXPRESS) THE LEARNING THAT RESULTS.

One or more core ideas that were captured in Phase 2 are built on to create more significant and deeper learning.

Kottkamp (1990:182) defines reflection as:

*a cycle of paying deliberate, analytical attention to one's own actions in relation to intentions – as if from an external observer's perspective – for the purpose of expanding one's options and making decisions about improved ways of acting in the future, or in the midst of the action itself.*

Through reflection, students, have the opportunity to analyse their experiences, question their own beliefs, values and attitudes and construct new meaning (HEQC 2006:58). Reflection also prepares the student for working in the business world. Mintzberg (2004 in Carmichael 2006:233) refers to the importance of reflection for managers. In the light of this importance, management education should give students the opportunity to develop their reflection skills.

Reflection needs to be continuous and implemented before, during and after the service experience (HEQC 2006:61). Different activities are seen as reflection; these include reflective journals, presentations and role-playing.

Journals are a popular tool of reflection for service learning students. Reflective journals should not be just a summary of events, but should examine and analyse their experiences on a deeper level (HEQC 2006:63). Structured reflection activities such as journal entries create opportunities for students to monitor their progress towards the learning outcomes, and provide the opportunity to the facilitator for formative assessment and to provide feedback (HEQC 2006:78). Reflective journals enable the facilitator and teaching practitioner to assess higher-order thinking skills, such as those included in Bloom's taxonomy of educational outcomes (for example, analysis, evaluation and synthesis/creation) (Carmichael 2006:234), just as the taxonomy has been used to create the outcomes of this module.

### **3.6 The EGAP60206 Module**

In 2012 the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS implemented a new structured curriculum. This ensued in the Faculty then only presenting 11 (eleven) degree programmes and not 26 (twenty-six) degree programmes as previously. The new structured curriculum entailed that 80% of the credits for a degree programme would focus on the main discipline; for example, if a student is enrolled for BCom Economics (course ID 6318), an 80% credit load throughout the three (3) years of study would only focus on Economics. The other 20% would focus on core module content, for instance Human Resource Management and Business Calculations, to name but two. There were no electives in the programme and this prevented students from 'shopping for a degree' format. Previously students were able to receive recognition for completed modules in order to qualify for another degree specialisation

than what they first enrolled for. The new curriculum therefore forced students to think more carefully about a long-term study path and what the end result should be.

Another new thing about the curriculum was that students were enrolled for ESSD and EGAP modules during their three-year study period.

The abbreviated module code for ESSD and EGAP can be explained as:

*E*      *Economic and Management Sciences Faculty*

*SSD*   *Soft Skills Development*

*GAP*   *Graduate Assessment Project*

The new format of module codes and the new curriculum were rolled out in 2012 after two years of careful re-curriculation.

In Chapter 1 the *module outlines for ESSD and EGAP* were briefly described (see 1.3.2; Table 1.1). For the purpose of this research the second-year EGAP module on NQF level 6, carrying eight (8) credits, was the main focus area.

### **3.6.1 EGAP implementation**

BCom students taking the new curriculum in 2012, enrolled in the first semester of their first year of study for ESSD50105 (four credits and NQF5). Every week students had to attend a lecture of fifty minutes and then attend a small group session (no more than 40 students per group) during which a trained facilitator assisted them with activities and practical demonstrations. During the first semester the students theoretically covered the learning outcomes of ESSD50105 and ESSD60106 (only started in 2013) as illustrated in Table 3.2. Continuous assessment in the form of assignments was used for the modules. In the second semester students enrolled for EGAP50105 (also four credits and NQF5) and EGAP60206 (eight credits and NQF6). During the EGAP50105, and EGAP60206 classes students had to use the theoretical work covered in the first semester in ESSD50105 and ESSD60106 in a practical format. In EGAP50101, students had to apply for a job in their relevant field, compile a cover letter, and compile a curriculum vitae and practise interview skills and questions. The assessment for this module also entailed continuous assessment by means of submission of class activities relating to the world of work, the completed cover letter, their curriculum vitae's and role play in the class dealing with possible interview

questions. Students had to complete both ESSD50105 and EGAP50105 successfully in order to progress to the second-year modules.

**TABLE 3.2: THE MODULE OUTLINE FOR EGAP**

<b>Skills Module NQF 5 (Individual)</b> <b>1<sup>st</sup> Year Students</b> <b>ESSD50105 (1<sup>st</sup> Semester)</b> <b>EGAP50105 (2<sup>nd</sup> Semester)</b> <b>4 credits per module</b> <b>40 notional learning hours</b>	<b>Skills Module NQF 6 (Group)</b> <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Year Students</b> <b>ESSD60106 (1<sup>st</sup> Semester)</b> <b>EGAP60206 (2<sup>nd</sup> Semester)</b> <b>8 credits per module</b> <b>80 notional learning hours</b>	<b>Skills Module NQF 7 (Organisation)</b> <b>3<sup>rd</sup> Year Students</b> <b>ESSD70107 (1<sup>st</sup> Semester)</b> <b>EGAP70107 (2<sup>nd</sup> Semester)</b> <b>8 credits per module</b> <b>80 notional learning hours</b>
Introduction to employability skills and their importance. Orientation on how Soft Skills Development (SSD) modules will be approached throughout academic plan.	Communication skills – oral and written – including preparing and delivering presentations.	Gathering and using information.
Gathering and using information. The internet and plagiarism.	Gathering and using information.	Communication – oral and written.
Planning your workload, time management. Dealing with pressure, self-management, motivation and adaptability.	Solving problems and making decisions.	Report and academic writing, presentation of numerical data.
Communicating at work – orally and in writing. Also includes meetings, appropriate forms and structures of communication, etiquette, netiquette, etc.	Working in teams and leadership.	Project work (includes planning and organising).
	Conflict management and assertiveness (may also be addressed in communication unit)	Professional behaviour, mentoring, appraisal and lifelong learning, professional development.
	Ethics.	Ethics.
<b>IN ADDITION TO CONTENT FORMALLY COVERED</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing own effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li>• Having a strong component of evaluation of and reflection on various aspects.</li> <li>• ICT skills (assessment of basic computer literacy; those students not competent take an extra module).</li> <li>• Values and diversity (discussion and incorporation of what was learnt in other modules such as UFS101 as well as difficult dialogues. The facilitators received training in difficult dialogues).</li> <li>• The skills modules aim to prepare students for GAP (Graduate Assessment Project) modules, as well as consecutive skills modules. Skills learnt at one level ideally are transferred to other modules covered and developed through all three years of study.</li> </ul>		

Source: Study Guide ESSD50105, EGAP50105, ESSD60106 and EGAP60206.

BCom students in their second year of study in 2013 – only those who started with the new curriculum in 2012 – were enrolled for ESSD60106 (four credits and on NQF level 6) and EGAP60206 (eight credits and NQF level 6). In ESSD60106 students attended a lecture and small-group session per week that covered the learning outcomes as

illustrated in Table 3.2. After successfully completing ESSD60106, students immediately started with EGAP60206.

The module outcomes for EGAP60206 were discussed in the study guide (see Appendix G) and in class:

*By the end of this module, the student should demonstrate a clear understanding of Service Learning and the principles that underlie it. They should be able to apply their knowledge about groups, soft skills, culture and diversity in the Service Learning experience, as well as the logistics that go therewith. They should be able to develop their theoretical competence, personal growth and social responsibility through the Service Learning experience.*

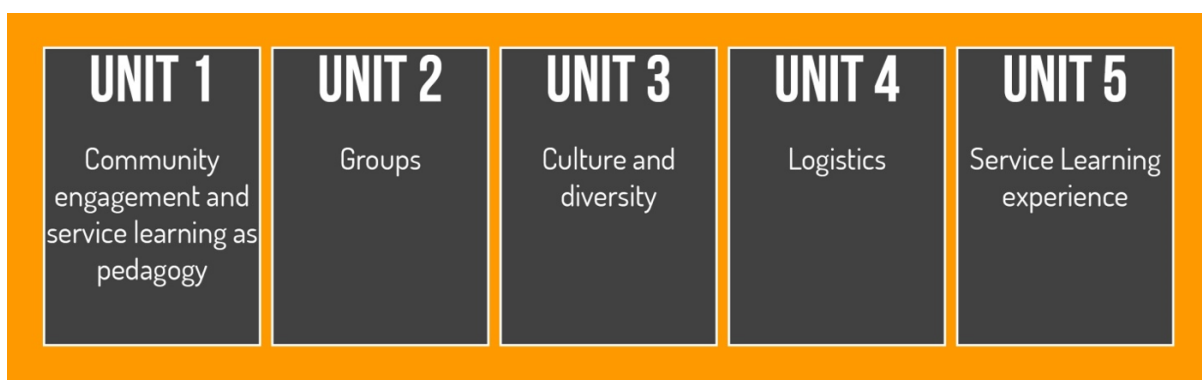
Service learning requires explicit learning outcomes for students. Specific outcomes for the units of the EGAP60206 module can be found at the beginning of each unit (see Appendix G). According to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC 2006:41) the outcomes for service learning should enhance a student's academic learning and personal growth, and develop a deeper appreciation of social responsibility. All academic modules and programmes are required to address CCFOs and developmental outcomes (SAQA 2000). According to De Villiers, Botma and Seale (2009:60), these outcomes promote lifelong learning. The authors further argue that the outcomes form the basis for developing specific outcomes for any learning programme. Furthermore, SAQA put forth the NQF level descriptors that must be considered too when learning outcomes are developed. These NQF level descriptors ensure that there is coherence across all learning and qualifications in South Africa (SAQA 2012).

The outcomes for EGAP60206 were structured on the basis of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom and Karthwohl 1984 in HEQC 2006:42-44). Bloom and Karthwohl classifies the verbs used to describe an outcome according to cognitive levels, from lower-order thinking to higher-order thinking. Since the EGAP60206 syllabus is pitched on NQF level 6, most outcomes for this module fell into the lower categories of the taxonomy, namely knowledge, comprehension and application, although specific outcomes from the other cognitive levels (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) also were included.

Therefore, the learning outcomes were formulated with CCFOs, NQF levels and Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives in mind. All outcomes are concisely formulated and specific. The outcomes also are linked to matters that students will encounter during the service experience, since these types of outcomes facilitate student learning (CHE/HEQC 2006:41).

### 3.6.2 Units for EGAP60206

The EGAP60206 module consisted of five units (see Figure 3.7). The learning outcomes of each of these units are set out below.



Source: Author's own (2016).

*Figure 3.7: Learning outcomes for EGAP60206*

#### **UNIT 1: LEARNING OUTCOMES: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE LEARNING AS PEDAGOGY**

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Define community engagement and explain the transformation thereof, with specific reference to recent policies.
- Explain the link between community engagement and Service Learning.
- Define Service Learning as pedagogy.
- Apply reflection activities in the Service Learning module and evaluate the value of these activities.
- Outline the benefits of Service Learning for students.
- Identify the partners in Service Learning by using the CHESP triad.
- Describe what is meant by 'social responsibility', by referring to the unique South African context and the business world.

- Describe what a ‘community of practice’ is and how this term relates to Service Learning.
- Indicate what is meant with “the balancing act of Service Learning”.
- Recognise the importance of Service Learning as part of your studies.

## **UNIT 2: LEARNING OUTCOMES: GROUPS**

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Define a group.
- Explain the importance of group work.
- Describe the four stages of group development.
- Distinguish between different types of group members and their responsibilities.
- Apply the guidelines for making groups successful by working effectively as a member of a group.

## **UNIT 3: LEARNING OUTCOMES: CULTURE AND DIVERSITY**

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

1. Recognise a culture and the existence of cultural diversity.
2. Express why it is important to understand cultural diversity.
3. Employ guidelines to build a diverse culture.
4. Question your own stereotypes, impressions and assumptions about other cultures.
5. Identify and solve problems in regard to cultural diversity by using critical and creative thinking.
6. CCFO: Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

## **UNIT 4: LEARNING OUTCOMES: LOGISTICS**

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Plan logistics for the service experience of this module.
- Employ the UFS Risk Management Guidelines for UFS students.
- Organise and manage your activities in an ethical manner.
- Propose solutions to ethical dilemmas.
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information necessary for managing the quality of the module.

## UNIT 5: LEARNING OUTCOMES: SERVICE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Identify the connection between the service experience and your academic learning.
- Examine education and career opportunities.
- Develop entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Apply curricular content in the service by creating a business plan, doing marketing research, etc.
- Analyse the content of units 1 to 4 in light of the service experience.
- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively through an online journal.
- Evaluate the adequacy of units 1 to 4 in the light of the service experience.

### 5.1: SPECIFIC OUTCOMES FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- CCFO: Use science and technology responsibly, effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
- Communicate your feelings, experiences and facts effectively using an online journal as well as a presentation.
- Re-evaluate your own stereotypes and assumptions.

### 5.2: SPECIFIC OUTCOMES FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Participate as a responsible citizen in the lives of a local community.
- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
- Develop your own social responsibility.
- Identify and describe what steps have been taken to ensure that the goals, decided upon in the first meeting between the partners, are met.
- Apply your understanding of these steps to your own context.
- Analyse how appropriate these steps were and how they can be improved for future use.
- Evaluate each partner's role in the service experience.

The 2013 second-year BCom students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences were the first second-year group that had to enrol for a compulsory service learning module. The students received the instructions for their formative assessment and final assessment during the orientation session (see Appendix G) for the final PowerPoint instruction. Formative assessment, combined with constructive feedback may enhance learning (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006:213).

Formative assessment is used for providing feedback during student learning. Students and teachers both need to know how learning is proceeding. Formative feedback may serve both to improve the learning of individual students, as well as to improve teaching (Biggs and Tang 2007:161). In the EGAP60202 module formative feedback provided by the lecturer was given to students after each assignment or activity. It was an individual discussion between the facilitator and the student.

Hay (2003:189-190) emphasises that evaluation of the service learning module is important for differing reasons for the different parties involved. Evaluation assists in the adaptation and improvement of the module to the benefit of future students and to address curriculum demands better. Evaluation also reveals the extent to which community goals have been achieved, and helps to guide future decisions about the partnership and the module. Lastly, evaluation also uncovers the value of service learning at an institutional level to colleagues and administrative staff responsible for the continuation of service learning on campus – emphasising the need for communicating evaluation findings to these parties.

### **3.6.3 Problems experienced with the EGAP60206 module**

Since the Reitz debacle in 2008, the UFS spent vast amounts of money, time and effort to restore relationships amongst diverse student groups. The Reitz debacle made headlines when four white male students were involved with initiation rituals during a hostel day. They filmed the ritual and in one of the video clips it seemed like they were urinating in the ritual food before serving it to the service workers.

Students felt unhappy because the UFS would not fund the entire project for each group. The students would have received R1 000 per group to assist them in paying for transport and items needed for the service learning projects. The students were informed that they could use this R1 000 to generate more funds and/or approach

companies to fund and sponsor their projects. The students also did not feel comfortable to travel to Heidedal (15 km from campus). Even though the ESSD60106 module was aimed at addressing cultural issues and working as a group, one semester was not enough to re-assure students about the influence service learning would have on their personal, emotional and academic growth. Threats in the form of anonymous letters, phone calls and even letters published in the *Volksblad* (the local Afrikaans newspaper) against the module coordinator, forced the dean and teaching-learning manager of the Faculty to make a decision about the safety of the module coordinator and to compromise with the students. The decision included that students would not work in groups on their EGAP60206 projects, but rather individually. This meant that all students enrolled (a total of 292) had to initiate their own projects, visit the community on their own and complete the PowerPoint report by themselves.

This decision entailed that the facilitators and the module coordinator would give individual feedback on projects, assignments and presentations. The envisaged learning outcome that students would learn how to work in groups in the community, therefore, was not achieved. However, they did master groupwork in the ESSD60106 module where they had to do role play and group role activities which relate to teamwork. The students also had to submit group assignments in the ESSD60106 module which forced them to work together and get to know one another.

Another problem that occurred during 2013 in the ESSD and EGAP modules was that the promised funding was not received, and the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences eventually had to cover the costs involved for these modules. At the end of 2013 it was decided to remove the ESSD and EGAP modules from the EMS curriculum. Students flocked to the researchers' office to lay grievances and to plead that it should not be removed. Only after the ESSD and EGAP modules had been discontinued, the module coordinator spoke to students informally and asked them to reflect on the modules and their value. From the informal feedback gathered from students they shared that they gained skills and experience through the ESSD and EGAP module. The data in Chapter 5 and 6 will give formal feedback about the students' service learning experience.

### 3.7 Employability Skills and Service Learning

According to Yorke and Knight (in Griesel and Parker 2009:5) employability is influenced by four main components:

- Skilful practices (communication, management of time, self and resources, problem solving and lifelong learning).
- Deep understanding of module content (specialised knowledge of study).
- Efficacious beliefs about personal identity and self-worth.
- Meta-cognition (self-awareness and the capability to reflect).

Various authors (Deeley 2010a:51; Kiely 2004:5; Warner and Esposito 2009:513) are in agreement about the conflict of emotions when students hear they are “forced” to complete a service learning module. Being engaged in service learning outside their usual environment may initially unleash uncomfortable or conflicting beliefs or behaviours in students; this dissonance has been identified as an impetus to improve critical thinking and problem-solving.

*Service learning fosters the development of personal and interpersonal knowledge grounded in an interdisciplinary perspective that illuminates self-understanding and provides the basis for effective teamwork. Service Learning encourages students to be more self-reflective about who they are, what they value, and the reasons for their values. It promotes the development of interpersonal and communication skills related to effective and cooperative problem solving (Bonar, Buchanan, Fischer and Wechsler 1996:14-15).*

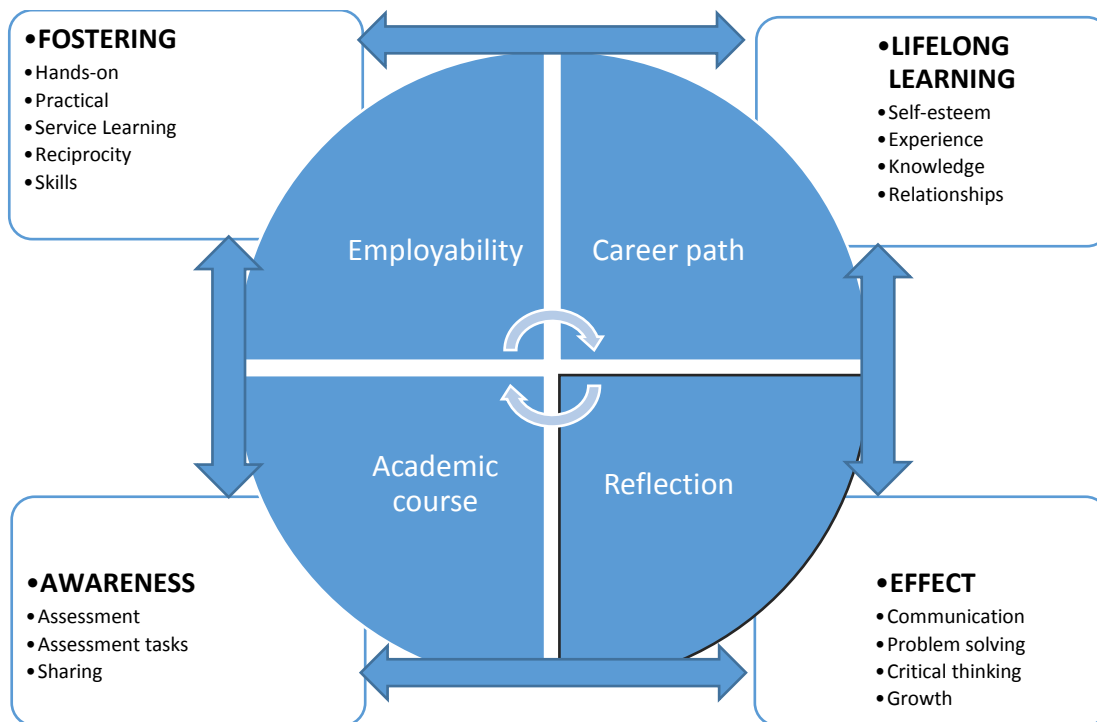
According to Tanner (n.d.: online) best practices in service learning include a combination of classroom instruction through which students gain the necessary foundational and professional skills, and experience and act on genuine community needs. Through this combined approach, students are able to take their knowledge bases and apply them to address an array of societal problems. The application of this pedagogy includes the offering of structured time for students to step back and reflect on their hands-on experience in the community setting and consider their roles and responsibilities as citizens of a society.

Tanner (n.d: online) also proclaims that service learning is a means to teach problem-solving skills (employability skill); it assists students in learning more about themselves and their capacities (employability skill); it fosters collaborative learning and civic responsibility (employability skill), while it enhances relationships between an educational institution and the surrounding community. The literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 clearly shows that there is a link between service learning experiences and gaining employability skills.

The benefits students derive from service learning are well-documented. Researchers report that students attain personal, interpersonal, social and academic benefits from participation in service learning (Aquila and Dodd 2003; Eyler and Giles 2002:153; Melchior and Bailis 2002:217; Scales *et al.* 2000:346; Scales and Roehlkepartain 2004:29; Search Institute 2000: online). In the area of their own personal development, students report an increase in self-confidence, self-esteem, leadership skills, and personal decision-making skills (Aquila and Dodd 2003:246). As a result of participation in service learning, students also see themselves as valuable resources for their organisations and their communities (Eyler *et.al.* 1999:146; Search Institute 2000). All the skills mentioned are employability skills (see York and Knight's list of skills, Table 2.1). According to Krebs (2012:145) it is not only students that acquire skills, but also the academic who presents the course. If the academic observed greater depth of thinking, authentic learning, greater empathy, improvement in writing and academic growth, students are motivated to continue with service learning long after the course stopped.

### **3.8 Proposed Model for Service Learning and Employability Skills**

After having studied literature about both employability skills and service learning thoroughly and critically, it is now time to propose a possible framework that will incorporate the framework proposed in Chapter 2 (see 2.7; Figure 2.10), complemented with the findings of the literature on service learning reported in this chapter. This proposed model will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7 along with guidelines. Figure 3.8 is the initial framework (see 2.7; Figure 2.10) in the evolution towards the final framework.



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 3.8: Proposed model that interlinks Service Learning and employability skills**

The above proposed model (Figure 3.8) includes the same three levels as the model proposed in Chapter 2. The only difference is that it now takes a cyclical form representing the relevance of relationships. It is more of a relationship-type model and the reflection component is added. AWARENESS, FOSTERING and LIFELONG LEARNING are now supplemented with EFFECT at the level of reflection.

In the service learning models discussed in this chapter (see 3.5.1 to 3.5.5), it is clear that students' reflection (on what they see, feel, experience and remember), and the effect (awareness, lifelong learning and skills acquired) are the most valuable 'abilities' that one can develop from doing service learning. The proposed model will be elucidated on in Chapter 7.

The following table (Table 3.3) illustrates how the proposed relationship model came into being.

**TABLE 3.3: FORMULATION OF RELATIONSHIP MODEL**

<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Reflection</b>	<b>Employability</b>	<b>Career Path</b>
<b><u>Assessment</u></b> See 2.5, 2.6, 2.2.9, 2.2.10, 3.4, 3.6.5 and 3.6.3	<b><u>Impact</u></b> See 2.3, 2.4, 2.5.1.6, 3.1, 3.2.1, 3.5.3 and 3.6.4	<b><u>Fostering</u></b> See Figure 2.8 and Table 2.9	<b><u>Lifelong learning</u></b> See 2.2.4, 2.2.5, 2.3, 2.5.1.6 and 2.6. Tier 1, Table 2.2. and 3.1 See 3.6.2, 3.6.3.1 and 3.8
<b><u>Assessment task</u></b> See 2.6, 2.2.5, 2.2.10, 3.4, 3.6.1.2, 3.6 and 3.6.3.1. Table 2.5 and 2.8	<b><u>Communication</u></b> See 2.2, 2.2.8.1, 2.6, 3.6.1.2 and 3.8. Table 2.1. Tier 2.	<b><u>Hands-on</u></b> See 2.5.1 to 2.5.2 and Figure 3.4	<b><u>Self-esteem</u></b> See 2.5.1, 2.5.1.6, 2.5.2 and 3.8. Figure 2.4.
<b><u>Sharing</u></b> See 2.2.3, 3.6.1.1 and 3.6.3	<b><u>Problem solving</u></b> See 2.2.3.2, 2.2.3.3, 2.2.8.1, 3.4 and 3.8. Tier 2. Table 2.1 and 3.1	<b><u>Practical</u></b> See 2.2.8, 2.2.9, 2.5.1.7 and 2.5.3. Table 2.2. Figure 2.7. 3.6.1.2, 3.6.2. Table 3.1 and 3.2.	<b><u>Experience</u></b> See Table 2.2, 2.5 – 2.8. See 2.2.1, 2.2.4, 2.2.5, 2.2.8, 2.4, 2.5.1 and chapter 3 (3.1 – 3.10)
	<b><u>Critical thinking</u></b> See 2.2.5, 2.6, 3.6.5, 3.8. Tier 2. Table 3.1	<b><u>Service learning</u></b> See 1.1, 2.2.10, 2.4 and Chapter 3	<b><u>Knowledge</u></b> See 2.2.3, 2.2.4, 2.2.5, 2.2.8, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5. 3.5.2, 3.6.1, 3.6.2, 3.6.3, 3.6.4, 3.6.3 and 3.8. Table 2.4
	<b><u>Growth</u></b> See 2.2.4, 2.5.1.3, 2.2.6, 3.4, 3.6.2 and 3.6.3.1. Table 3.1	<b><u>Reciprocity</u></b> See 2.5.2.4, 2.5.4 and 3.4	<b><u>Relationships</u></b> See 2.2.3, 2.5.1.3, 3.4, 3.5.3, 3.6.4, 3.6.3. Table 2.1 and Figure 3.4
		<b><u>Skills</u></b> Chapter 2 (see 2.1 – 2.5), table 3.1, 3.5.3	

Source: Author's own (2016).

This table summarises the findings from literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. The themes that stood out mostly or that were repeated in the literature were considered as important and they were included in the proposed relationship model (Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8 clearly illustrates the growth in a student's or graduate's road or pathway to career success. It starts off with awareness and progresses to their career path. The final proposed framework and guidelines are discussed in Chapter 7.

### 3.9 Conclusion

An integral part of service learning is that students learn through and from experience. Through Kolb's experiential learning (see 3.5.1) and reflection (see 3.5.5) students are able to apply theory into practical experience.

The service learning models (see 3.5.1 to 3.5.5) discussed in this chapter clearly confirm that experience and reflection are the key drivers behind service learning knowledge-building, by integrating active experiential learning with intellectual rigour and holistic development. Creating awareness of employability skills that can be acquired through service learning experience is crucial for the fostering of life-long learning (see 2.6). Service learning and employability skills should be integrated into the curriculum and should not be stand-alone activities or actions. The proposed framework (see 2.7, Figure 2.10; and 3.8, Figure 3.8) illustrate the fostering of skills when completing a service learning module.

The aim of this chapter was to address and answer research question 2:

*What are the current local and global perspectives on service learning as a pedagogical approach in higher education and how does it link with employability skills?*

Through the consulted literature (see 3.2 to 3.7) the research question was successively answered. Although service learning can sometimes be challenging (see 3.6.3), the rewards, employability skills and growth of students make it worth in the end. More of the students' perceptions and experience are discussed in Chapter 5 and 6 of the research.

In Chapter 4 the research design and methodology that the researcher employed in the study for the analysis of the EGAP60206 data from the 2013 second-year BCom group, as well as the follow-up focus group interview in 2015, are discussed.

# Chapter 4

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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*Verbal and nonverbal activity is a unified whole, and theory and methodology should be organized or created to treat it as such.*

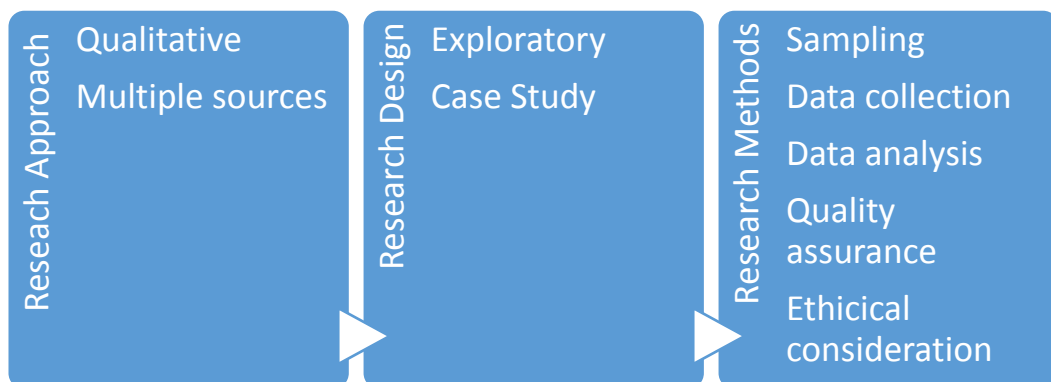
Kenneth L. Pike

### 4.1 Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 focused on perspectives in the literature about employability skills and service learning, respectively. Chapter 4 subsequently addresses the research approach, design and methodology employed in the execution of the study.

The chapter includes a threefold discussion. First, it focuses on the research approach, namely the qualitative and multiple sources approach. Secondly, it focuses on the research design, namely the exploratory case study design, and, lastly the research methodology that was used to collect and to analyse the 2013 and the 2015 data is discussed (refer to Chapter 1, see Table 1.2). In this study research methods refer to sampling, data collection, quality assurance and ethical considerations pertaining to the study.

The aspects of research discussed in his chapter are depicted in Figure 4.1.



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 4.1: Themes addressed in Chapter 4**

## 4.2 Research Problem and Research Questions

The research problem, questions, aim and objectives of the study were discussed in Chapter 1 (see 1.3.1 to 1.3.3). The research problem and research questions are mentioned again to indicate the relationship between the research questions and the methodologies employed to answer them.

### 4.2.1 Research problem

The problem that triggered the research was that it is not known how students experience and perceive the impact that service learning activities may have on their own employability skills. Accordingly, in this study employability was investigated in the context of a service learning experience of second-year students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS.

### 4.2.2 Research questions

The primary research question in this study was:

*How do students experience service learning and perceive the effect that service learning activities has on their employability skills?*

The following secondary research questions were answered through the study:

1. What are the current local and global perspectives on employability skills within the higher education sector?  
→ Answered through Chapter 2.
2. What are the current local and global perspectives on service learning as a pedagogical approach in higher education and how does it link with employability skills?  
→ Answered through Chapter 3.
3. What are the experiences and perceptions of second-year students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS of service learning?  
→ Introduced in Chapter 4 and answered through Chapter 5.

4. What type of employability skills do service learning projects create or foster, according to these students?

➔ Introduced in Chapter 4 and answered through Chapter 5.

5. What evidence is there of a relationship between service learning and employability skills?

➔ Introduced in Chapter 4 and answered through Chapter 6.

6. What provisional framework and guidelines can be proposed for service learning modules to enhance the employability of students?

➔ Answered in Chapter 7.

Although no direct research question is addressed in this chapter, the chapter outlines how the researcher collected, analysed and interpreted the empirical data in an ethical manner.

### 4.3 Disciplinary Demarcation of the Research

The purpose of this research was to determine whether service learning as a particular version of community engagement can serve as a pedagogical approach for the enhancement of the employability skills of BCom students.

Tight (2012:397) identifies eight key themes of research in higher education, namely:

- Teaching and learning.
- Course design.
- The student experience.
- Quality.
- System policy.
- Institutional management.
- Academic work
- Knowledge and research.

Bitzer and Wilkinson (2009:394) added two more South African extensions to Tight's (2012) key themes in higher education studies and research, namely:

- Higher education transformation in South Africa.
- Higher education and socio-cultural links/relationships/responsibilities.

This particular research study overlaps with the following five key themes:

- Course design.
- Student experience.
- Academic work and knowledge categories.
- Higher education transformation in South Africa.
- Higher education and socio-cultural links/relationships/responsibilities.

Tight (2012:179) also makes a useful distinction between the concepts of research methodology and methods. Methodology refers to the underlying approaches and world views adopted by researchers (paradigm), whereas methods are essentially the techniques used for data collection and analysis. Tight (2012:409) places emphasis on higher education research, proclaiming that it should engage with theory to a much greater extent since it will lead to more credibility and respect.

The discussion below commences with the research approach (see 4.4), research design (see 4.5), methodology (see 4.6) of the study and finally progress to the more specific methods used for data collection (see 4.6.3) and analysis (see 4.6.4).

## **4.4 Research Approach**

For the purposes of data collection, a qualitative approach involving multiple data sources and limited quantitative enhancement was used in the study; therefore, a brief description of these approaches is deemed necessary.

### **4.4.1 Qualitative research**

Creswell (2013:44) defines qualitative research as follows:

*Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social research or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or call for change.*

It is important to point out that both quantitative and qualitative methodologies have specific benefits and limitations; therefore, the strengths and weaknesses of the different methodologies used need to be identified.

According to Fouché and Delport (2005:123), qualitative research is a type of scientific research. Such a study consists of an investigation that

- seeks answers to a question;
- systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question;
- collects evidence;
- produces findings that were not determined in advance; and
- produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of a study.

One of the qualitative methods the researcher employed as part of the research design was observation of students during the focus group interviews. Observation was applied during focus group interviews in which use was also made of a voice recorder. According to Shank (2002:19), observation is both the most basic and single trickiest skill for qualitative researchers to master.

According to Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005:33) focus groups are effective in eliciting data on norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern to groups. In qualitative research, transcripts of verbal records usually play an important role (see 4.6.4).

Qualitative research may enrich service learning research with anecdotal evidence that gives insight into patterns of behaviour and provides more extensive information about the impact and benefits of service-learning experiences (Waldstein 2003:36; Waterman 2003:73).

Qualitative research adopts a person-centred and holistic perspective. It develops an understanding of people's opinions about their lives and the lives of others. It also helps the researcher to generate an in-depth account that will present a lively picture of the research participants' reality (Holloway 2005:5). In qualitative research, the researcher is required to be a good listener, non-judgmental, friendly, honest and flexible. Qualitative research involves a form of content analysis covering a spectrum of

approaches ranging from empirical phenomenological psychology to hermeneutical-phenomenological psychology, depending on the data source (Van der Wal 1999:55).

#### **4.4.2 Multiple data sources**

Multiple forms of data typically are gathered rather than relying on only one source of data. Qualitative data are reviewed to make sense of it and then organised into categories or themes that cover all of the data sources (*cf.* Creswell 2013:45). Qualitative descriptions are in the form of words rather than numbers, although simple numerical summaries are sometimes used in qualitative studies. In this study, data were collected by means of questionnaires, assessment tasks and focus group interviews.

#### **4.4.3 Advantages of a qualitative approach for research**

Qualitative research has the following advantages:

- Qualitative research is a means to understanding human emotions such as rejection, pain, caring, powerlessness, anger and effort.
- Since human emotions are difficult to quantify (i.e. to have a numerical value assigned to them), qualitative research appears to be a more effective method of investigating emotional responses than quantitative research.
- In addition, qualitative research focuses on understanding the whole.
- Abstract thinking processes are used to develop research findings from which meaning and theoretical implications emerge.
- The research design is flexible and unique and involves throughout the research process (Brink and Wood 1998:246; Burns and Grove 2003:374-374).

Miles and Huberman (1994:4) state that the general reasons for conducting qualitative research are description and hypothesis generation. Description is done when little is known about the phenomenon under study.

#### **4.4.4 Quantitative research**

A quantitative approach was used to a very limited extent for this study. In quantitative research educational data are converted into a format that can be read and manipulated by computers, for example, to determine frequencies and relationships

between variables statistically and to generalise findings to a larger population (Babbie 2013:414).

The goal of analysis in quantitative research is twofold: first, to describe things according to pre-established measurement criteria, and second, to test predictions based on theory (Shank 2002:15). Although quantitative research is valuable in service learning research (as it provides a more precise focus with regard to parameters and extent of impact), the researcher in this study was more interested in understanding participants' experiences and perceptions. While quantitative results provide statistical significance, qualitative analyses can show subtleties, capture more of the rich experiences involved in service learning and leave room for unexpected outcomes (Bringle and Hatcher 2000: 282).

Table 4.1 provides a comparison of the quantitative and qualitative research approaches in this study.

**TABLE 4.1: COMPARISON OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACHES**

Research approach	Quantitative approaches	Qualitative approaches
<b>General framework</b>	Instruments used more rigid, and use style of eliciting and categorising responses to questions  Use highly structured methods such as survey questionnaires, surveys and structured observations	Seek to explore phenomena  Instruments use more flexible style of eliciting and categorising responses to questions  Use semi-structured methods such as semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus groups and participant observation
<b>Analytical objectives</b>	To describe characteristics of a population	To describe and explain relationships To describe group norms
<b>Question format</b>	Close-ended	Open-ended
<b>Data format</b>	Numerical (obtained by assigning numerical values to responses)	Textual (obtained from audiotapes, videotapes and field notes)
<b>Flexibility in study design</b>	Participants' responses do not influence or determine how and which questions the researcher asks next	Some aspects of the study are flexible (for example, the addition, exclusion, or wording of particular interview questions)  Study design is iterative; that is, data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learned

Source: Mack et al. (2005:47).

In this study, quantitative data such as frequencies, were only used for the purpose of supporting and illuminating the meaning of the qualitative data collected.

## 4.5 Research Design

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:74), a research design is a plan or blueprint of how one intends to conduct the research. Creswell (1988:5) defines the research design as the “plan or proposal to conduct research”, and indicates that the research design addresses the overlap of three aspects, namely the philosophical worldview, the strategies of inquiry and the methodology which will be employed.

In order to aid the achievement of the research objectives (see 1.3.4), an exploratory case study design was utilised. This design was selected since service learning is a relatively new area of investigation in South Africa that required more exploration. In addition, the empirical research questions could be answered by investigating the experiences and perceptions of the UFS students who were exposed to a service learning module and were easily accessible.

The conceptualisation, sources of data and analytical strategies in this study are therefore informed by the case study approach. Conceptually, the researcher had theoretical expectations at the beginning of the study; these provided a guide to structuring the data collection process (*cf.* Babbie and Mouton 2001:81).

### 4.5.1 Exploratory case study design

There are several types of case studies. Yin (1994) identifies three such types in terms of their outcomes: exploratory (as a pilot to other studies or research questions); descriptive (providing narrative accounts); explanatory (testing theories). In this study the researcher employed an exploratory case study design.

According to Collins COBUILD English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (2001:540), “exploratory actions are done in order to discover something or to learn the truth about something”. Burns and Grove (2003:313) define exploratory research as research conducted to gain new insights, discover new ideas and/or increase knowledge of a phenomenon.

In this study, the researcher selected the exploratory method in order to gain new insights, discover possible new ideas and/or increase her knowledge of BCom students’ experience of and perceptions about service learning and employability skills. The researcher therefore entered the research field with curiosity from the point of not

knowing and to provide new data regarding the phenomenon in that context (*cf.* Burns and Grove 2003:313; Creswell 1988:145).

One advantage of qualitative methods in exploratory research is that the use of open-ended questions and probing gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses, as required in quantitative methods. Another reason why the researcher employed this particular method is because it can be compared to a detective following a line of evidence before making an arrest (i.e. design a model or framework). The data for an exploratory case study design usually are descriptive and rich in data.

Plowright (2011:15) maintains that the researcher's choice is determined and limited by the potential case or cases that make up the group that will be studied. According to Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor (2003:52), the primary defining features of a case study are the multiplicity of perspectives, which are rooted in a specific context. Those perspectives may originate by means of using multiple sources of information and methods. The perspectives may also derive from multiple accounts obtained from people with different perspectives, using a single method.

Merriam (2009:43-44), posits that a case study is characterised as being particularistic (i.e. focuses on a particular site, event, programme, phenomenon), descriptive (thick, rich description of the phenomenon under study), and heuristic (it illuminates understanding of the phenomenon). This study followed a linear structure beginning with a thorough literature review, careful positioning of the problem, questions and objectives, data collection and analysis, conclusions, implications and recommendations (*cf.* Yin 2009:188). Table 4.2 explains the purpose, foci, key terms and characteristics of a case study design as portrayed by Cohen *et al.* (2007:85).

A detailed case study is indeed a useful research approach for providing in-depth contextual information on processes and outcomes for programme improvement, illuminating unique or unusual aspects of a research phenomenon, generating theory, or enlightening a wider scholarly or policy-making audience (Bringle 2003:21; Merriam 1988:34; Patton 2002:79).

**TABLE 4.2: A FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING CASE STUDY RESEARCH**

<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To portray, analyse and interpret the uniqueness of individuals and real situations through accessible accounts</li> <li>• To catch the complexity and situatedness of behaviour</li> <li>• To contribute to action and intervention</li> <li>• To present and represent reality – to give a sense of “being there”</li> </ul>
<b>Foci</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals and local situations</li> <li>• Unique instances</li> <li>• A single case</li> <li>• Bounded phenomena and systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Individual</li> <li>○ Group</li> <li>○ Roles</li> <li>○ Organisations</li> <li>○ Community</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Key Terms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuality, uniqueness</li> <li>• In-depth analysis and portrayal</li> <li>• Interpretive and inferential analysis</li> <li>• Subjective</li> <li>• Descriptive</li> <li>• Analytical</li> <li>• Understanding specific situations</li> <li>• Sincerity</li> <li>• Complexity</li> <li>• Particularity</li> </ul>
<b>Characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-depth, detailed data from wide range of data sources</li> <li>• Participant and non-participant observation</li> <li>• Non-interventionist</li> <li>• Empathic</li> <li>• Holistic treatment and phenomena</li> <li>• What can be learned from the particular case?</li> </ul>

Source: Cohen *et al.* (2007:85).

#### 4.5.2 Reporting the case study data

Robson (2002:512–513) suggests six ways in which a case-study report may be organised. The researcher only used one way to report this particular case-study report, namely the chronological structure. This entails using a simple sequence or chronology as the organisational principle, thereby being able not only to address cause and effect, but also rendering the report possessing the strength of an ongoing story.

Willis (1977:89) contends that some case studies are divided into two main parts: the data reporting phase and then the analysis/interpretation/explanation phase. The researcher made use of the chronological structure to report the data and subsequently discussed the interpretations (see Chapters 5 and 6).

## 4.6 Research Methods

The research methods “involve the forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies” (Creswell 1988:15). In this section, information on the sampling, data collection, data analysis, validation and ethical considerations pertaining to the qualitative case study is provided.

### 4.6.1 Sampling

Sampling methods are divided into two main classes, namely probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is based on the random selection of a sample from a population in order to generalise the research findings to the general population. Non-probability sampling does not involve random selection of subjects for a study, but focuses on subjects that are available; therefore, researchers should be careful in generalising such research results to a population (Maree and Pietersen 2007:170, 157-157). Despite this disadvantage, McMillan and Schumacher (2006:125) indicate that non-probability sampling is a popular sampling method in educational research.

Bless *et al.* (2006:103) suggest that traditionally one of the main objectives of sampling is to draw inferences from the data collected about the greater population. In this study, however, the researcher was interested in obtaining an understanding of her students' understanding of service learning and the link with employability skills. Thus generalisation of the findings was not required.

One of the most important considerations in sampling is what the size of the sample should be. It is generally known and accepted that studying the entire population would be the ideal situation. However, not only is this costly, but collecting and analysing data from a population may take so long that the data and findings might become outdated and irrelevant. Bless *et al.* (2006:103) argue that the main factor to consider when deciding on sample size is whether the sample needs to be representative of the population or not. Maree and Pietersen (2007:154) indicate that the sample size in quantitative research is usually large and depends on the planned types of statistical analyses, the degree of accuracy required and the overall characteristics of the population. Random sampling is the ideal in quantitative research. In qualitative

research, however, non-probability sampling is usually employed and a large sample size is not as important as in qualitative research.

#### **4.6.1.1 Sampling technique employed**

In this study, therefore, the researcher made use of a non-probability sampling technique within the category of convenience sampling. In non-probability sampling, the choice of cases is not based on a randomised selection, but on selection criteria that render a sample that will meet a particular need. Cohen *et al.* (2007:102) point out that:

*The selectivity which is built into a non-probability sample derives from the researcher targeting a particular group, in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population; it simply represents itself.*

A convenience sampling technique was chosen because the researcher was the module coordinator and designer of the EGAP60206 service learning module. A convenience sample allows access to participants who are conveniently located. Choosing such a sample requires little project management expertise (Cohen *et al.* 2007:102). The sample was also purposively chosen, because the researcher required a sample that would be able to provide information required for the purpose of solving the research problem, namely, students who were informed about the BCom programme as well as the service learning module and would be able to provide informed opinions.

#### **4.6.1.2 Sample for 2013 data**

According to Burns and Grove (2003:43) the population should represent all the elements that meet the specific criteria for inclusion in a study.

The sampling population for this research had to be students enrolled in the module under investigation; they had to be second-year BCom students; male and female students had to be included, and students in both the Afrikaans and English classes (i.e. the languages of learning and teaching at the UFS) had to be included. These criteria rendered the following sample:

- Number of students enrolled for the module EGAP60206 in 2013:  
292 BCom students

- Study year: Second year of BCom study
- Male: 164 students
- Female: 128 students
- English-speaking: 178 students
- Afrikaans-speaking: 114 students

According to the inclusion criteria, only students enrolled for EGAP60206 in 2013 could participate in the study. No other students or year group were therefore allowed to take part.

#### **4.6.1.3 Sample for 2015 data**

In the second round of data collection in 2015 the following sample was selected to take part in the focus group interviews:

- Students who successfully completed the EGAP60206 module in 2013.
- Eight participants per department within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences:
  - Accounting – BAcc and BCom Accounting course
  - Business Management – BCom Marketing, BCom Entrepreneurship and BCom General course
  - Economics – BCom Economics and BCom Money and Banking
  - Industrial Psychology – BCom Industrial Psychology
  - Public Administration – BA Administration

#### **4.6.1.4 Inclusion criteria – 2015 data**

It is important to note that all 292 students who successfully completed the EGAP60206 module in 2013 were invited to take part in the 2015 focus group interviews.

To be selected for the 2015 focus group interviews, participants had to respond to a short systems management (SMS) message that the researcher sent them. The SMS invited the students who successfully completed the EGAP60206 module in 2013 to participate in the 2015 focus group interviews. The SMS also communicated to them where they could sign up for the focus group sessions. The first eight participants per

department who signed up for the focus group sessions were selected for participation. By inviting all the students that successfully completed the EGAP60206 module in 2013 to take part in the 2015 focus group interviews, all these students had an equal chance to be part of the interviews and to express their opinions. In total, 56 students responded to the SMS and turned up to sign the forms. There were five forms (representing the five departments within the faculty) available in the researcher's office. On each of the five forms there was space for eight participants to sign up. The participants signed for a focus group session according to their BCom course within one of the five departments. From these 56 only 40 were eventually selected by means of the inclusion criterion that the first eight participants per department would be selected. The researcher thanked the 16 students who agreed to participate but could not be included in any of the five focus group interviews and kept their contact details as backup in case one of the selected participants did not show up for the focus group interview on the particular day.

#### **4.6.2 Data analysis**

The process of data analysis can be described as a process during which data are 'dissected' in order to obtain answers to the research questions (Fouché 2002:269). Data analysis is a mechanism for reducing and organising data to produce findings that require interpretation by the researcher (Burns and Grove 2003:479). It is a challenging and a creative process characterised by an intimate relationship of the researcher with the participants and the data generated (De Vos 2002:339).

##### **4.6.2.1 Quantitative data analysis**

The limited quantitative data in this study included the demographic data obtained through the pre- and post-implementation questionnaire completed in 2013, the demographic data obtained during the 2015 focus group interviews as well as frequencies of words/phrases obtained through the analysis of the qualitative data by means of Nvivo.

To conduct a quantitative data analysis, Trochim (2006: online) suggests the following three steps:

- Cleaning and arranging the data.
- Describing the data.

- Testing the theories and models.

The researcher made sure that the limited quantitative data used were clean and organised. Furthermore, the researcher made use of verbatim quotes from students to describe the data accurately.

For reporting the limited quantitative data, the researcher made use of frequencies expressed in terms of percentages. The use of percentages in the analysis made the data descriptive and more visual. The researcher made use of bar graphs, pie graphs and tables in Chapters 5 and 6 to report the limited quantitative data.

Bar graphs are useful for presenting categorical and discrete data from highest to lowest, while pie graphs are useful for showing proportions (Cohen *et al.* 2007:507).

#### **4.6.2.2 Qualitative data analysis**

Most of the data collected for the research were qualitative. The data included responses on an open-ended question in the pre- and post-implementation questionnaire, data collected from a letter to a friend and reflections in a PowerPoint assessment task (all completed in 2013), and the discussions during the focus group interviews conducted in 2015.

The process of qualitative data analysis can be portrayed in a sequence of seven steps as described by Cohen *et al.* (2007:184-185):

##### **Step 1:**

Establish the unit of analysis for the data, demonstrating how these units are similar and dissimilar from each other. The design of units of analysis can be done by ascribing codes to data (Miles and Huberman 1994:81).

##### **Step 2:**

Create a domain analysis. It includes grouping together items and units into related clusters, themes and patterns. A domain can be described as a category which contains several other categories.

##### **Step 3:**

Establish connections and relationships between the domains. This step safeguards that data, their richness and 'context-groundedness' are retained.

**Step 4:**

Make hypothetical interpretations. This is a significant stage; it moves the researcher from explanation to interpretation. It requires the researcher on the basis of the evidence, to theorise some clarification for the situation, some key elements and possibly even the causes.

**Step 5:**

Summary. This entails the researcher writing a preliminary summary of the main features, key issues, concepts, constructs and ideas encountered thus far in the research.

**Step 6:**

Seek/confirm negative and discrepant cases. According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993:270), it is important to seek not only confirming cases, but to weigh the significance of disconfirming cases.

**Step 7:**

Theory generation. The theory derives from the data – it is grounded in the data and emerges from it.

At theoretical level a major feature of qualitative research is that analysis commences early on in the data collection process so that theory generation can be undertaken (LeCompte and Preissle 1993:238). The researcher employed all seven steps for the qualitative data analysis reported in Chapters 5 and 6.

Other aspects that Lincoln and Guba (1985:354-355) urge researchers to be mindful of when analysing and interpreting qualitative data include:

- Data overload.
- The problem of acting on first impressions only.
- The availability of people and information.
- The dangers of only seeking confirmation rather than disconfirming instances.
- The reliability and consistency of the data and confidence that can be placed in the results.

These are significant issues when addressing trustworthiness, reliability and validity in research. The analysis used in this process was guided and organised by the initial

theoretical propositions that led to the case study design. These propositions are reflected in the original objectives, the research questions (see 1.3.2) and eventually the literature (see Chapters 2 and 3) (*cf.* Yin 2009:136).

The next section outlines in more detail how the data collection and analysis methods of the 2013 and 2015 data were eventually done. The researcher continued with data analysis until saturation occurred, that is, until no new information, insights or understandings were forthcoming (*cf.* Merriam 2009:83).

### 4.6.3 Data Collection: 2013 Data

This section outlines the data collection and analysis methods used for the 2013 data. Five different data sets were obtained. Table 4.3 gives an overview of the EGAP60206 assessment tasks that were used for data collection (in chronological order as they took place; see 4.5.1) and the particular data that were eventually used. Data used for the study were collected from these completed assessment tasks.

**TABLE 4.3: CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF ASSESSMENT TASKS**

Assessment Task	Weight in %	Data Source	Support provided	Data used
Pre-implementation Questionnaire (see Appendix B)	5%	Electronic via SurveyMonkey	Module coordinator and facilitator	One specific open-ended question: <i>Please state your understanding of service learning by completing the following: "Service learning is..."</i>
Letter to a friend (see 4.6.3)	15%	Hard copy submitted in small group session Assessed by facilitator	Small-group session, discussion and facilitator support	The whole assessment task was coded into themes
PowerPoint presentation (see 4.6.3)	45%	Hard copy submitted in small-group session during October Assessed by facilitator	Module coordinator and facilitator	Sections 9, 10 and 11 of the PowerPoint presentation (see 4.6.3)
Post-implementation Questionnaire (see Appendix C)	5%	Electronic via SurveyMonkey	Module coordinator and facilitator	One specific open-ended question: <i>Please state your understanding of service learning by completing the following: "Service learning is..."</i>

- The instructions and rubric for each assessment task were uploaded on Blackboard. The students enrolled for EGAP60206 were able to view the assessment task instructions and rubrics during April 2013 until November 2013.
- The module coordinator had specific consulting hours during which she assisted the students who had trouble understanding the content, assessment tasks or who could not find a suitable community site in which to complete their 20 hours of service learning.
- The other 30% comprised out of the small group session attendance and handing in the time sheet for the 20 hours of service learning.

Source: Author's own (2016).

#### **4.6.3.1 Questionnaires**

As part of the EGAP60206 assessment tasks, students had to complete a pre-implementation questionnaire (see appendix B) and a post-implementation questionnaire (see appendix C) that were provided on Blackboard (Blackboard is the learning management system used at the UFS). The pre-implementation questionnaire was completed at the beginning of the year and the post-implementation questionnaire at the end of the year. The questionnaires collectively counted ten (10) percent towards their final assessment mark for the module.

The pre- and post-implementation questionnaires were converted to SurveyMonkey questionnaires and the link that SurveyMonkey generated was made available to students on Blackboard. The questionnaires included instructions for completion. Although both questionnaires contained a section for the collection of biographical information, respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the information.

Each time the respondents were given two weeks to complete the respective pre- and post-implementation questionnaires on Blackboard. After the two-week period lapsed, the researcher logged onto her online account on SurveyMonkey ([www.SurveyMonkey.com](http://www.SurveyMonkey.com)) to extract the data sets.

Although the students completed the pre- and post-implementation questionnaires on Blackboard, the data were sent to SurveyMonkey directly after completing the questionnaire on the provided link. The data sets were eventually exported to Microsoft Excel. The researcher saved the documents on her computer and protected them by means of a password. This ensured that no person could gain access to the data without the password.

The files with the pre- and post-implementation questionnaire data were also backed up on an external hard drive that only the researcher had access to. The file on the external hard drive was also protected by means of a password. Extra safety measurements were taken with the external hard drive; for example, every day after switching off the computer, the researcher locked the external hard drive in a cupboard.

Students' responses in the pre- and post-implementation students' questionnaire were eventually compared to establish the growth and understanding of their service learning experiences, perceptions and knowledge (see 5.5.6).

Only one (1) specific open-ended question in the questionnaire was used for the data analysis in Chapter 5. This specific open-ended question assisted the researcher to determine the students' understanding of service learning (before commencement of EGAP60206 lecture sessions and at the end of the module), namely:

*Please state your understanding of service learning by completing the following:  
"Service learning is ...".*

#### **4.6.3.2 Letter to a friend**

As one of the assessment tasks in the EGAP60206 module in 2013, students also had to write a letter to a friend about their understanding of service learning. It counted 15 (fifteen) percent of the final assessment mark. The final assessment mark was made up of the marks of other class activities and assessment tasks completed in the small group sessions. The letter to a friend was the second assessment task that the students had to complete. The first assessment task was the completion of the pre-implementation questionnaire (see Appendix B).

The instructions for the letter to a friend indicated that they had to tell the friend about their own understanding of service learning and what learning and skills they expected to gain from the EGAP60206 module. The letter to a friend had to be written after their first formal lecture and small-group session regarding service learning literature. The assessment tasks were graded by the facilitators and were handed back to the students. The researcher scanned copies of the students' assessment tasks onto her computer. In total 292 students wrote the letter to a friend.

The data contained the students' letter to a friend were uploaded onto Nvivo and subsequently analysed through the Nvivo software.

The NVivo software creates a new project each time when materials are imported, including Microsoft Word documents, Portable Document Format (PDF), videos, audio files, photos, web data, spreadsheets and data base content (QSR International: Online). The software assists with the coding process, which allows the researcher to gather all required material related to a specific topic. The qualitative data analysis software program, QSR NVivo, was deemed appropriate to facilitate the data management and analysis process of this study because, amongst others, it provided security by storing the database and files in a single file, and allowed the researcher to easily code, categorise and search for data. The program also displays codes and categories graphically (*cf.* Babbie 2013:404-405; Bringer, Johnston and Brackenridge 2006:245-262; Creswell 2013:204; Gibbs 2007:107).

Kelle (1995:4) suggests that computer programs are particularly effective at coping with the often encountered problem of data overload and retrieval in qualitative research. Kelle and Laurie (1995:27) suggest that computer-aided data analysis methods can enhance validity (by the management of samples) and reliability (by retrieving all the data on a given topic, ensuring the trustworthiness of the data).

#### **4.6.3.3 PowerPoint presentation**

The second last assessment task for students in the EGAP60206 module was to compile a PowerPoint presentation. Instead of being a group assignment as initially planned it was changed to an individual assignment due to a collective decision taken by the Dean and the Teaching and Learning Manager in the Faculty. The students each had to compile their own PowerPoint presentation after completing their 20 hours of service learning in the community (see 3.6.3). Students had to submit a hard copy of their PowerPoint presentation assessment task on a particular date in October of 2013 during their small-group sessions.

The students had time from April 2013 until October 2013 to complete their 20 hours service learning and to complete this final assessment task.

The facilitators and module coordinator were available to assist students with feedback on their individual PowerPoint presentations and/or to assist them to identify a project or community member where students could spend their 20 hours of service learning. They received the rubric and template for this final assessment task during the first lecture session for EGAP60206. The assessment task instructions and rubric were also made available on Blackboard. Only students who were enrolled for EGAP60206 had access to the particular Blackboard content and module.

The textbox below contains the headings students had to include in their PowerPoint presentations and also provides an overview and background to the PowerPoint assessment task.

1. **Background to the community, organisation or business.** This background included locality, daily business operation and number of people involved.
2. **Needs assessment of community, organisation or business.** The needs assessment was done to understand what the community/organisation/business needed from the student. (For example, the students should share their knowledge about drawing up a budget.)
3. **SWOT analysis** of community/organisation/business and students' own SWOT analysis. The SWOT analysis of the community/organisation/business guided the students in planning their service learning activities, and their SWOT analysis of themselves assisted them to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. This would support them to match their abilities with the community's/organisation's/business's needs. By doing the SWOT analyses the students were also enabled to communicate their strengths and what they were good at (academically), to the community.
4. **Plan of action.** The plan of action had to be formulated based on the needs assessments and the two SWOT analyses. The students had to communicate the plan of action with the community/organisation/business and reach an agreement upon how the plan would be implemented during the 20 hours to be spent on service learning.

5. **Goals and how these were reached.** With the plan of action as guideline, the students had to keep record of how they reached their own goals and how these related to academic content. If students did not reach their goals they had to explain why these were not achieved.
6. **Discuss and explain how they spent their 20 hours.** Students had to submit their time record sheets, signed by the community/organisation/business member. This time record sheet served as confirmation on how they had spent the 20 hours. By discussing how they spent their hours also assisted the facilitators to identify why some students did not reach their goals.
7. **Thank you or celebration function.** The students had to thank the community/organisation/business for their time and support during the 20 hours. Students had to share their PowerPoint presentation with the community/organisation/business in order for them to give input and also to see how the whole project came together. The 'thank you' or celebration function could have included taking tea and biscuits to the community/organisation/business member, conversing with them informally, and thanking them.
8. **Photos or images of their service learning experience.** Students had to first get permission from the community/organisation/business to take photographs during their time spent there. By sharing their photos from before the experience and after the experience, the researcher, facilitator and/or community member could see how proud the students felt about their projects.
9. **Reflective journal regarding their experience and how it made them feel.** Students had to write a reflective journal about their whole experience. The facilitators encouraged students to write a journal entry every day. By keeping a reflective journal, the students could see how their skills and perceptions changed during the experience.
10. **Employability skills obtained.** Did they think they were **more employable** after this service learning experience? Students also had to motivate why they felt more or less employable after the experience. They also had to list the employability skills they believed they had acquired.
11. **Conclusion and personal feelings.** In this section the aim was to determine how the module coordinator might improve the module for the next year group.

In their first small-group session the facilitators explained to students how to approach the assignment and what should be covered under each heading. Students were

advised to complete headings 1 to 3 in the textbox above during their first visit to the community. Heading number 4 – the plan of action – had to be completed after their first visit to the community. The students then had to complete their PowerPoint presentation that included the rest of the headings for assessment. The PowerPoint presentation counted 45 (forty-five) percent towards the final assessment mark.

Once the facilitators had marked this assessment task, the researcher moderated about 20% (i.e. 58 PowerPoint presentations) of the assessment tasks to check the quality of the assignments and to ensure that they had been marked fairly. Each student's PowerPoint presentation was electronically scanned and saved on the researcher's computer. The researcher, however, did not scan the cover page of the PowerPoint assessment task since it included the student's name, surname and student number. By not scanning the cover page the researcher therefore ensured anonymity and unbiased reporting of data.

The data that were used to answer the relevant research question, were obtained from the information included under headings 9, 10 and 11 of the PowerPoint presentation as illustrated in the textbox below:

9. **Reflective journal regarding the students' experience and how it made them feel.** The reflective journals assisted the researcher to determine the students' experiences and perceptions of the service learning module.

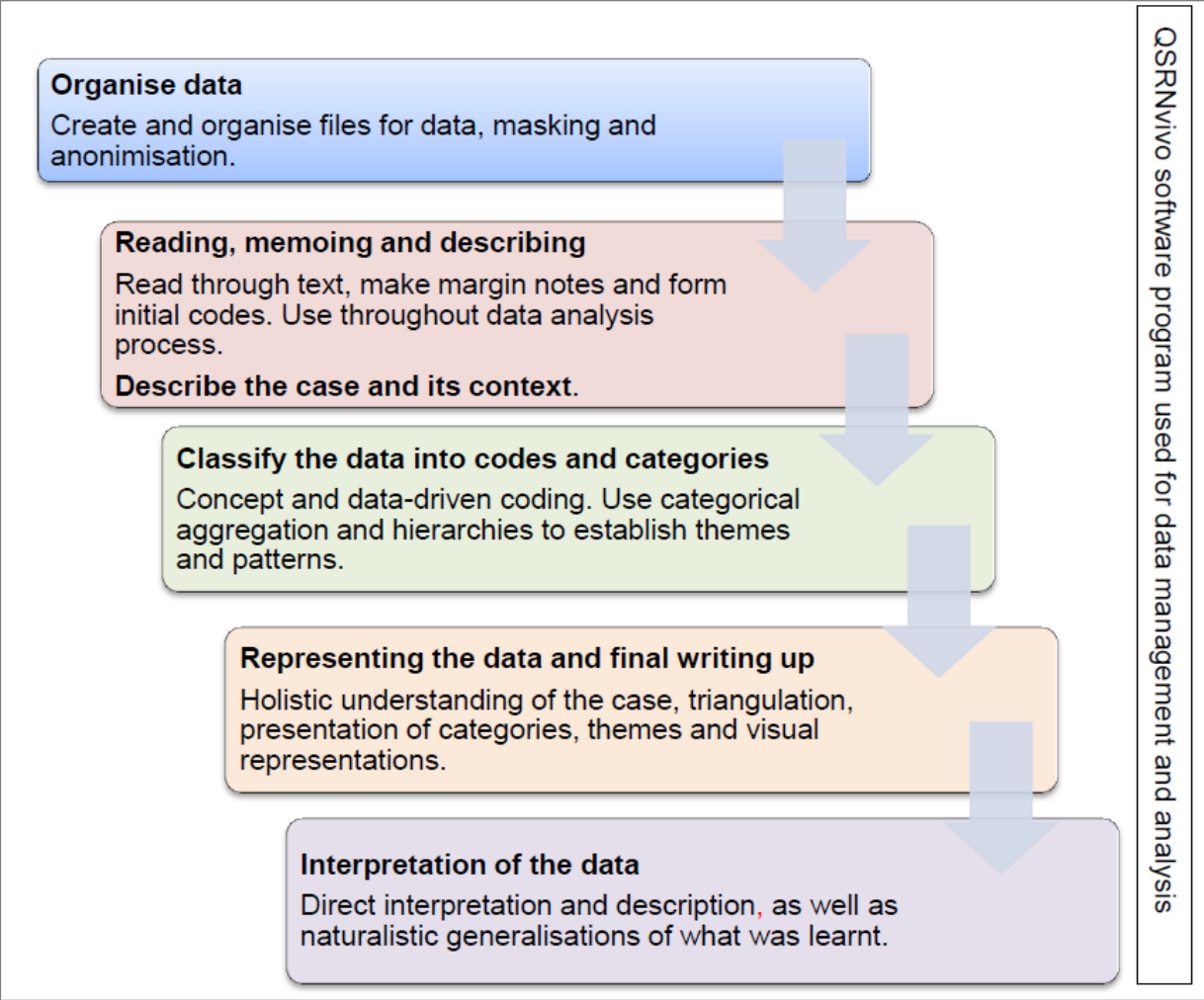
10. **Did they think they were more employable after this service learning experience?**

Students had to motivate the reason why they indicated that they were more employable (or not) after the service learning experience and also which employability skills they had acquired. This would show the possible link between service learning and employability skills.

11. **Conclusion and personal feelings**

This also assisted the researcher to understand and conclude how the students experienced service learning.

The three separate data sets (i.e. headings 9 to 11) were uploaded onto NVivo to create a tree of ideas (see Chapter 5). The researcher used a textbook that explains step-by-step how to use NVivo. She also consulted an NVivo expert on the correct way to analyse and interpret the data, to ensure an unbiased approach to the data sets, and to prevent the exclusion of negative comments made by students about their EGAP60206 experiences. Figure 4.2 illustrates how the NVivo software works – from organising the data to interpretation of the data.



[Source: Compiled from Creswell (2013:191,199; 2014:197-198); Gibbs (2007:50, 86-87); Merriam (2009:202-204); Mertens (2010:424-425)]

**Figure 4.2: Data-analysis process**

#### 4.6.4 Data Collection: 2015 Focus Group Data

The discussion that follows deals with the process of setting up the focus group interviews and how the researcher analysed the data collected from the interviews.

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Faculty of Education (see Appendix A), after which the researcher could start to send SMS invitations to all the 2013 BCom second-year students who successfully completed EGAP60206 in 2013. According to the BCom curriculum most of the 2013 participants should have completed their first degrees by this time (i.e. 2015). However, the results in Chapter 6 show that almost half of the participants were still completing their undergraduate studies (see 6.2.3).

The focus group interviews were set up with the first forty (40) students who responded to the SMS, complied with the inclusion criteria and signed the relevant lists (see 4.6.1).

##### 4.6.4.1 Construction of focus group interview questions

The first step in constructing interview questions is to specify the variables by name because these tell you where to begin (Tuckman 1972:15). Before the actual focus group interview items are prepared, it is desirable to give some thought to the question format and, for instance, to consider one or more of the following factors:

- The objectives of the interview.
- The nature of the subject matter.
- Whether the interviewer requires facts, opinions and/or attitudes.
- Whether specificity or depth is sought.
- The kind of information the respondents can be expected to have.
- Whether or not the respondents' thoughts need to be structured; do some assessment of his or her motivational level. (In this study the researcher had to remind the students about the EGAP60206 module and what the final assessment task entailed.)
- The extent of the interviewer's own insight into the participants' situation.
- The kind of relationship the interviewer can expect to develop with the participants (Cohen *et al.* 2007:349).

The researcher followed the steps above to construct the focus group interview questions (see Appendix E).

#### **4.6.4.2 Categories of interview questions**

There are several ways of categorising interview questions. These concern the substance of the questions. For this research, six of the ten categories described by Spradley (1979) and Patton (1980) were employed, namely:

- Descriptive questions.
- Background questions.
- Demographic questions.
- Experience questions.
- Behaviour questions.
- Knowledge questions.

Kvale (1996:133-135) adds what might be called 'themed process questions'. He names seven theme processes, but the researcher only employed four of the processes during the focus group interviews, namely:

- Introducing the topic of the interview.
- Follow-up on a topic or idea.
- Ask respondents to specify and provide examples.
- Directly ask for information.

The above mentioned six categories of interview questions and the four themed process questions enabled the researcher to formulate the correct questions and conduct the focus group interviews in an ethical manner. The focus group interviews were semi-structured.

#### **4.6.4.3 Focus group interview details**

Focus group interviews are useful to triangulate with more traditional forms of interviewing, questionnaires and/or observations. The researcher relies on the interaction within the group which discusses a topic supplied by the researcher (Morgan 1988:9), yielding a collective rather than an individual view. Focus group interviews have contrived settings, bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the

population to discuss a particular given theme or topic. The interaction with the group leads to data and outcomes. The contrived nature is both their strength and their weakness (Morgan 1988:19).

Annexures D and E outline the protocol and informed consent that students signed before the commencement of the interviews. The focus group protocol was semi-structured.

The textbox below contains the questions that were put to the participants during the focus group interviews.

**Questions asked during the focus group interviews:**

1. Could you please explain your understanding of service learning?
2. Could you also explain your understanding of employability skills?
3. Do you think the EGAP60206 experience made you more or less aware of employability skills?
4. If any employability skills were acquired or enhanced:  
Were the employability skills gained or enhanced different from what you expected at the beginning of the project? Please explain.
5. If no employability skills were acquired:  
Why do you think you did not acquire employability skills as planned?
6. Do you believe a generic service learning module for the BCom students will make them more employable or less employable?
7. Do you think service learning can serve as pedagogy to improve employability skills?  
If yes, why do you say so?

Source: Protocol Questions – Appendix E

The sequence of the questions was kept the same for all the focus groups. This ensured reliability and validity of the focus group procedure. The focus group interviews were set up according to the students' specific departments. By doing the focus group interviews per department the researcher aimed to determine if students had developed specific employability skills per department. Five focus group interviews were eventually conducted with a group of eight students representing the following five departments:

Focus group 1	Accounting
Focus group 2	Business Management
Focus group 3	Economics
Focus group 4	Industrial Psychology
Focus group 5	Public Administration

The focus group interviews were audio recorded. Only 36 participants' recorded data were transcribed, however, because four of the 40 participants did not verbally contribute to the focus group interview discussions. For example, they would only nod their heads in agreement or disagreement, or answered that they agreed with someone else's response. Each of the focus group sessions lasted about one hour and thirty minutes. In total the researcher had to listen to seven and a half hours of audio recorded interviews when she transcribed the data. The transcription and validation of the focus group data are discussed in 4.6.4.4.

#### ***4.6.4.4 Transcribing and Validating the Focus Group Data***

During the focus group interviews the researcher made notes when participants answered the questions. These notes and transcribing the content of the focus group interviews (from the audio tapes) herself, assisted the researcher to better understand and make meaning of the data. After having completed the focus group interviews, the researcher meticulously transcribed the focus group interviews in order to avoid data loss, distortion or the reduction of complexity. The negative side of transcription, according to Cohen et al. (2007:365), is that it is inevitably accompanied by loss of data from the original encounter. Kvale (1996:167) warns that the transcript can become an opaque screen between the researcher and the original live interview situation. The words in transcripts are not necessarily as solid as they were in the social setting of the interview. Scheurich (1995:240) suggests that even conventional procedures for achieving reliability are inadequate here, for holding constant the questions, the interviewer, the interviewee, the time and place do not guarantee stable, unambiguous data. For this reason, it is important for the interviewer to make notes during the interview.

After transcribing the interviews, the researcher printed them. As a participant review measure, she invited all 40 participants to visit her office in order for them to read

through the transcription report and summary and to confirm or otherwise explain anything that the researcher might have misunderstood. This ensured that the transcriptions were a true representation of what happened and what was said during the focus group interviews. In total only thirteen (13) participants visited the researcher's office to read and validate the transcription reports.

## **4.7 Quality Assurance**

According to Babbie (2013:407), judging the quality of qualitative research is more abstract than in the case of quantitative research, but not less important. Guba and Lincoln (1989:236-243) suggest alternative terminology for ensuring and arguing the quality of qualitative research, and that correspond with quantitative validation measures.

### **4.7.1 Trustworthiness of the qualitative data and the findings**

The focus in qualitative validity is reliance on the participants to review the findings, the resources of the researcher and the participation of external reviewers (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007:31). More specifically, McMillan and Schumacher (2010:330) explain validity in qualitative research (i.e. the trustworthiness of data) as the degree to which the interpretations have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher. In this study the researcher employed a combination of different validation strategies in order to enhance the trustworthiness with particular reference to the qualitative data and findings (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007:129,134): For example, the researcher consulted multiple data sources to ensure triangulation of data. The researcher also analysed both the quantitative and qualitative data and looked for common themes appearing in the data gathered by means of both methods.

#### **4.7.1.1 Credibility**

Credibility relates to internal validity in quantitative research. In this study the researcher used an all-encompassing literature study and multiple perceptions, experiences and focus group interviews of BCom students enrolled for the EGAP60206 module to enhance the credibility of the findings (often also referred to as the triangulation of data). The use of multiple and different sources and methods, also increases the credibility of findings (Cohen *et al.* 2007:141-142; Creswell 2013:251;

Gibbs 2007:94; Merriam 2009:229,234; Patton 2002:247; Yin 2009:118-119). Triangulation of all the data sets, peer reviews by the promoters, the participants' review of the transcribed data, including verbatim accounts in thick descriptions, all ensured the credibility of the study and internal validity.

The promoters of the study were used for the purpose of peer-review and debriefing in order to ensure that the researcher remained honest.

*It [peer review] is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind (Lincoln and Guba 1985:308).*

The promoters asked hard questions about method, meanings and interpretation and gave the researcher the opportunity to voice questions and concerns. Peer review or debriefing provides an external check of the research process much like inter-rater reliability in quantitative research (Creswell 2013:251; Merriam 2009:229, 234; Mertens 2010:257).

Using verbatim accounts (i.e. participant language/quotations) enhances the authenticity and credibility of the data. Quotations should be relevant, short and contextualised (Gibbs 2007:97; McMillan and Schumacher 2010:330,335). In this study direct quotations from the data were used in reporting the findings of the study in an attempt to enhance the authenticity and validity of the findings; however, care was taken not to make participants identifiable. Participant review is also referred to as member checking. Member checking happens when data, analytical categories, interpretations and conclusions are tested with members of those groups from whom the data were originally obtained (i.e. participants). This can be done both formally and informally as opportunities for member checks may arise during the normal course of observation and conversation (Lincoln and Guba 1985:32).

#### **4.7.1.2 Transferability**

Transferability relates to external validity in quantitative research. In this study the researcher further aimed to enhance the transferability of the findings by providing rich

descriptions of the literature, the findings and the proposed framework that resulted from the study.

*Thick description refers to the detailed account of field experiences in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context (Holloway 2005).*

Rich descriptions enable the reader to relate the findings to similar situations if the need should arise. Direct quotes from students' letters to a friend, reflective pieces in the PowerPoint presentations as well as from the focus group interview transcripts were used for this purpose. Such information is highly valued as data (McMillan and Schumacher 2006:409; 2010:330).

#### **4.7.1.3 Dependability**

Dependability relates to reliability in quantitative research. In this study the researcher constantly attempted to understand multiple perspectives and to identify blind spots or bias in her interpretive analysis through disciplined subjectivity and reflexivity, meaning that the researcher constantly raised questions about her own bias, motivation and interest to strengthen the dependability and confirmability (see 4.7.1.4) of the findings. Both the dependability and confirmability of the study were enhanced through leaving an audit trail of how the study was conducted. External audits occur when a researcher who is not involved in the research process, examines both the process and product of the research study. The purpose is then to evaluate the accuracy and whether or not the findings, interpretations and conclusions are supported by the data (Guba and Lincoln 1989).

#### **4.7.1.4 Confirmability**

Guba and Lincoln (1989) describe confirmability as the degree of neutrality, or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. In this study the researcher left an audit trail by providing a detailed description of how the findings were arrived at and by safekeeping all data and records for inspection. An audit trail also requires a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985:34).

Reflexivity is an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to the effect of the researcher, at every step of the research process.

*A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions (Malterud 2001:483-484).*

In summary, Table 4.4 illustrates what strategies the researcher used in each of the evaluative criteria:

**TABLE 4.4: LINCOLN AND GUBA'S EVALUATIVE CRITERIA**

CRITERIA	TECHNIQUE	RESEARCHER USED:
Credibility (see 4.7.1.1)	<b>Prolonged engagement</b> <b>Persistent observation</b> <b>Triangulation</b> <b>Peer debriefing</b> <b>Deviant case analysis</b> <b>Referential adequacy</b> <b>Member-checking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulation</li> <li>• Peer debriefing</li> <li>• Verbatim accounts</li> <li>• Deviant case analysis</li> <li>• Member checking (i.e. participant review)</li> </ul>
Transferability (see 4.7.1.2)	<b>Thick description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thick description</li> <li>• Verbatim accounts</li> </ul>
Dependability (see 4.7.1.3)	<b>Inquiry audit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquiry audit by means of peer review</li> </ul>
Confirmability (see 4.7.1.4)	<b>Audit trail</b> <b>Triangulation</b> <b>Reflexivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit trail</li> <li>• Triangulation</li> <li>• Reflexivity</li> </ul>

Source: Lincoln and Guba (1985)

Creswell (2013:253) recommends that qualitative researchers should employ or engage with at least two of the practices of quality assurance described above. In this study the researcher employed a variety of strategies for quality assurance.

#### 4.7.2 Validity, Reliability and Objectivity of the Quantitative Data

*Reliability and validity are tools of an essentially positivist epistemology (Watling as cited in Winter 2000:7).*

Validity in research relates to accuracy and credibility of the overall study (Leedy and Ormrod 2005:12). Research is undertaken to add to the existing knowledge base; however, the value of such a contribution can only be seen as relevant if it meets the requirements of validity.

Validity, should answer the question of whether the data allows for meaningful conclusions to be drawn, and second, whether observations from the study can be generalised to populations outside the research context. These two questions refer to what is known as internal and external validity (Leedy and Ormrod 2005:199), and are considered to be interrelated dimensions of overall validity.

In quantitative research, validity does not rely on the respondents, but on external standards, such as judges, past research and statistics (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007:29).

Quantitative research data are converted into a format that can be read and manipulated by computers, for example, to determine frequencies and relationships between variables statistically and to generalise findings to a larger population (Babbie 2013:414). The only quantitative data the researcher used for the study were those collected through the pre-implementation questionnaire (see Appendix B, question 1.1 to 1.4) the post-implementation questionnaire (demographic section, see Appendix C, question 1.1 to 1.4) for the 2013 data as well as frequencies obtained from Nvivo analysis. For the 2015 quantitative data the researcher made use of the demographic data, and the frequency of students who responded 'yes' and 'no' to the focus group interview questions (see Appendix D, question 2.3, 2.6 and 2.7). The reason why the researcher decided to include the 'yes' or 'no' responses were to show how students experienced and perceived the service learning module before they explained their answer.

Internal validity refers to the extent to which the design and the results yielded by the study allow conclusions to be drawn that are accurate about any cause–effect relationship within the data. This is only relevant to quantitative research. Internal validity of the quantitative data was ensured through triangulation of data, peer review and participant review after the focus group interviews.

External validity is the extent to which the conclusions drawn can be generalised to those contexts not covered in the research project (Leedy and Ormrod 2005:199). However, generalisability/transferability was not a major aim of this case study.

The researcher also included more conventional existing views, given the importance of such material in the conceptualisation of the constructs being investigated. This information was structured in a rational and organised manner to ensure a proper understanding of all constructs and related concepts to enable the drawing of well-informed conclusions from the literature.

Reliability pertains to the entire process, namely the overall design, sampling, data collection methods, and the data analysis procedure. Reliability refers to the likelihood that the same results will be achieved should the measurement process be applied repeatedly (Babbie and Mouton 2001:140).

Reliability is used in quantitative methods to establish trustworthiness. In this study the researcher left a clear audit trail with the assistance of the SurveyMonkey software. The answered pre- and post-implementation questionnaire data are available on SurveyMonkey as long as the researcher's account stays active. The original focus group interview recordings and transcriptions are also backed up on the researcher's computer.

The verification tools for the level of objectivity in this study include leaving an audit trail, exporting questionnaires from the SurveyMonkey website to an Excel document and participant and peer reviews (Lincoln and Guba 1985:236-243).

The above validation instruments ensured that the researcher collected and analysed the little quantitative data in an ethical manner.

## **4.8 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics generally are concerned with beliefs about what is right or wrong from a moral perspective. Researcher ethics are focused on what is morally proper and improper when engaging with human participants or respondents (McMillan and Schumacher 2010:117). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:116) mention ethical issues such as showing appreciation towards participants for their willingness to provide data,

protecting them from harm, properly handling sensitive information, and disclosing the purpose of the research. These matters apply to both qualitative and quantitative research.

Ethics are concerned with respecting research participants throughout each project, partly by using agreed upon ethical standards (Alderson and Morrow 2004:11). Ethical issues associated with participants in research may take up a fair amount of time when planning and carrying out the research.

This study was approved on 1 July 2015 by the Ethics Committee and an ethical clearance number was obtained (*UFS-HSD 2015/0299*; see Appendix A). It was also approved by the Faculty's Title Registration Committee, Faculty Management Committee, Faculty Board and finally by the University's Executive Committee of the Senate.

The EGAP60206 module was presented to second-year BCom students for the first time in 2013. During the first orientation session the students were made aware that the researcher was the module coordinator and that all the assessment tasks would be used for research purposes in order to determine the outcome of the specific service learning module with regard to their employability skills, and in order to improve the module and the contents. There also was a statement in their study guide (see Appendix G) that explained this. In gaining informed consent, most researchers give participants the assurance of confidentiality and their anonymity, and describe the intended use of the data (McMillan and Schumacher 2010:339). Participants must be afforded a chance to base their voluntary participation in research projects on a full understanding of the purpose of the research, use of the data, possible risks, and extent of confidentiality involved (Babbie 2013:64; Gibbs 2007:8, 101; Patton 2002:408)

Because qualitative data are so detailed, the chances are greater to breach confidentiality; thus, special care should be taken to protect the anonymity of participants (Gibbs 2007:104). According to Babbie (2013:66), a researcher guarantees anonymity and confidentiality when he/she can identify individual responses, but essentially promises not to do so publicly.

In terms of confidentiality and anonymity, the participants in this study were assured of complete anonymity and confidentiality, as they were not required to indicate their names on the questionnaires. Since the pre- and post-implementation questionnaires were also used as assessment tasks, it was compulsory for second-year BCom students to complete the pre- and post-implementation student questionnaire. The pre- and post-implementation student questionnaires that were made available on Blackboard through a SurveyMonkey link were completed and submitted electronically by the participants. This made it impossible for the researcher to associate the identity of any participant with a specific questionnaire. Even though the survey data were used for the research, the researcher saw to it that no respondent could in any way be associated by name with any findings. Researchers indeed have the dual responsibility of protecting the individuals' identity from other persons and the general reading public (Gibbs 2007:8,101; McMillan and Schumacher 2010:339).

The researcher also endeavoured at all times to be as open and honest as possible. This involved full disclosure of the purpose of the research, as well as access to or publication of the research results.

The facilitators who were appointed for the module marked all the assessment tasks. The researcher received the marked assessment tasks from the facilitators. After receiving the assessment tasks the researcher scanned the documents electronically and saved them on her computer. The students received their assessment tasks back. This ensured that the data were anonymous and no students could be identified in the data analysis process.

The participants who took part in the focus group interviews had to sign informed consent forms (see Appendix D) before the commencement of the focus group interviews. This ensured that participants knew that they agreed to be recorded and observed, and that the recorded information would be transcribed by the researcher.

#### **4.9 Status and Role of the Researcher**

The researcher currently is employed as a teaching and learning officer in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS. As part of the researcher's duties and responsibility within the Faculty, she is also the service learning coordinator.

During the 2012 and 2013 academic years the researcher was a facilitator for the modules ESSD50105, EGAP50105 and the module coordinator for the modules ESSD60106 and EGAP60206. The related experience gave her insight into the context and expressions used in the study.

The researcher captured, coded and analysed the 2013 data and 2015 data. During the focus group interviews in 2015 the researcher had to ensure that participants were comfortable and understood the questions. She used observational techniques and note taking during the focus group interviews that assisted her when transcribing the data.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter an overview was given of the research approach (see 4.4), research design (see 4.5) and methods (4.6) employed in this study.

Chapter 4 is quite complex due to the various elements that need to be taken into account. The literature consulted and discussed in this chapter assisted the researcher to plan how to collect, analyse and interpret the data in an ethical manner.

The analysis and interpretation of the 2013 data will be discussed in Chapter 5. This will enable the researcher to respond to secondary research question 3 (see 1.3.2, number 3) and secondary research question 4 (see 1.3.2 number 4), respectively.

# Chapter 5

## STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE LEARNING: RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE 2013 DATA

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*The goal is to turn data into information and information into insight.*

Carley Fiorina

### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 addressed the research design and methodology employed in the execution of this study. This chapter builds on Chapter 4 in an attempt to answer the following two secondary research questions:

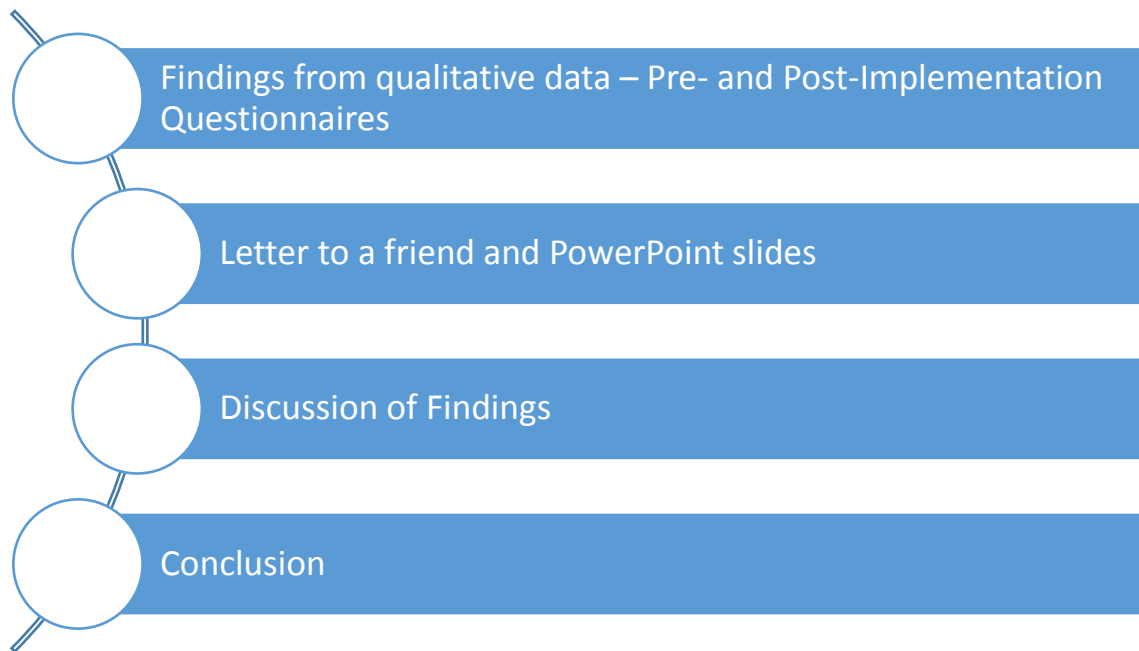
*What are the experiences and perceptions of second-year students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS of service learning?*

*What type of employability skills do service learning projects create or foster, according to these students?*

The purpose of the study was to investigate the second-year BCom students' experiences and perceptions of their service learning and the influence or impact these have on their employability skills. These second-year students were enrolled for the relevant service learning module (i.e. EGAP60206) during 2013.

By comparing and integrating the empirical findings reported in this chapter and the findings of the extensive literature review in Chapter 2 and 3, a framework that may assist in linking service learning and employability skills is eventually provided in Chapter 7.

The approach taken to report the empirical findings in this study is depicted in Figure 5.1 below.



Source: Author's own (2016).

*Figure 5.1: Reporting the empirical findings in Chapter 5*

## 5.2 Qualitative Data and the Demographic Profile of the 2013 Participants

Mainly qualitative data were gathered in 2013 and in 2015. In 2013 all the BCom students who enrolled for the EGAP60206 service learning module were invited to take part in the study. A follow-up investigation was done in 2015 with 40 students by means of focus group interviews. However, only 36 participants' focus group interview responses were transcribed, because four of the participants did not overtly respond during the interviews, but rather only nodded their heads in either agreement or disagreement.

Hecht (2003:24) states that it is questionable whether some constructs can change in a short period of time (such as a semester). This is one of the main reasons for comparing 2013 data with those of 2015.

It is also advised that multiple forms of data be collected for a case study rather than relying on only one source of data. When collecting multiple forms of data, they could be triangulated to sketch a more holistic picture of the relevant topic. More data sets can deliver more themes and opinions to analyse, which in turn leads to richer data. Qualitative data are reviewed to make sense of them; they are organised into

categories or themes that cover all of the data sources (Creswell 2013:45). In qualitative research data reporting/description is in the form of words rather than numbers, although simple numerical summaries may also be used in qualitative studies. Thus, no information escapes scrutiny or is taken for granted since the aim is to arrive at rich descriptions of findings (McMillan and Schumacher 2010:322).

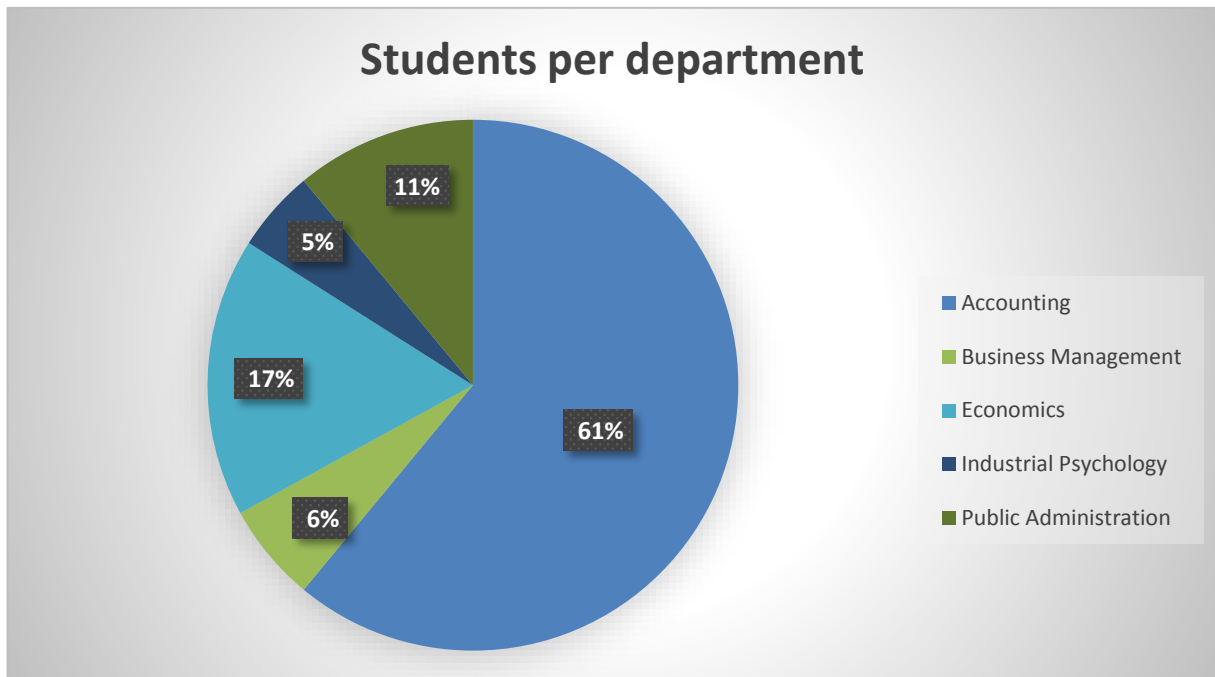
Eyler (2002:523) also points to the importance of investigating effect over a period of time longer than a semester course. This concurs with Dewey's principle that learning should extend over a considerable time span in order to foster development (Eyler *et al.* 1999:53). From her research, Strage (2000:7) also concludes that it takes time for the advantages of service learning to manifest themselves. In this study, it was thus decided to extend the period of exposure to the service learning experience for as long as was practically possible (i.e. over two academic years).

The researcher also positions herself in this study, based on aspects such as work experience, cultural experience and background (see 4.9) (*cf.* Creswell 2013:45; McMillan and Schumacher 2010:332; Patton 2002:64; see 4.9).

The following demographic data regarding the EGAP60206 module were extracted in 2013 from the 'studfile' by means of PeopleSoft. In total there were 292 students enrolled and registered for the EGAP60206 module. The same demographic data were retrieved from SurveyMonkey after the pre-implementation questionnaire had been completed by the students.

The percentage of female students registered for the module in 2013 was 56%, while 44% of the students were male. The file shows that 39% of the enrolled students chose Afrikaans as language of teaching and learning, while 61% chose English. The home languages of the students were Afrikaans (44%), Sesotho (25%), English (12%), Xhosa (7%), Tswana (5%) and other languages (7%). The five departments within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences were represented by the following percentages of the total number of students registered for the module (see Figure 5.2):

Accounting – 61%, Business Management – 6%, Economics – 17%, Industrial Psychology – 5% and Public Administration – 11%.



Source: Compiled through SurveyMonkey Software.

**Figure 5.2: Student representation per department in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences**

From Figure 5.2 it is clear that accounting students (61%) comprised the vast majority of students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. The average pass rate according to Gradebook (the UFS mark system) was 68% for the EGAP60206 module.

### 5.3 The Pre-Implementation Questionnaire

In analysing the data obtained, the researcher firstly focused on multiple perspectives that the participants held about the issues at hand (i.e. service learning and employability skills) and not the meaning that the researcher or authors in the literature brought to the research. What is thus reported here rather focuses on participants' voices and perspectives on their learning (see 4.4.2; *cf.* Creswell 2013:45; McMillan and Schumacher 2010:323).

However, these data were afterwards compared and integrated with the literature findings. Learning can be defined as a process that leads to change, which occurs as a result of experience, and increases the potential for improved performance and future

learning (adapted from Mayer, 2002; see 2.6 and 3.5.1). There are three critical components to this definition:

- Learning is a process, not a product. However, because this process takes place in the students' minds one can only infer that it has ensued from students' learning products or performance (see 3.5.1).
- Learning involves change in knowledge, beliefs, behaviours or attitudes. This change unfolds over time; it is not fleeting but rather has a lasting effect on how students think and act (see 3.5.3).
- Learning is not something done to a student, but rather something students themselves do. It is the direct result of how students interpret and respond to their experiences – conscious and unconscious, past and present (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, Norman and Mayer 2010:3; see 3.5.1 to 3.5.4).

The data obtained will therefore be reported with the above-mentioned definition of learning in mind.

Data collected by means of the online pre-implementation questionnaire (see Appendix B) and the post-implementation questionnaire (see Appendix C) were analysed by means of SurveyMonkey software (Online). The questionnaires were made available on Blackboard. By making them available on Blackboard it gave the students equal access to information. The only data that relate to this study and that were taken from the pre- and post-implementation questionnaires are those related to the students' understanding and perceptions of service learning before and after the commencement (see 4.6.3 and 4.6.4) of the 20 practical service learning hours. These data directly link to secondary research question 3, namely:

*What are the experiences and perceptions of second-year students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS of service learning? (see 1.3.2)*

One of the disadvantages of using web-based (i.e. online) questionnaires is the relatively low response rate that is usually obtained (see 4.6.3). It is therefore suggested that personal contact with the participants prior to completion, and more than one follow-up reminder for the participants to complete the questionnaire, may improve response rates (McMillan and Schumacher 2010:240-241). However, for the

web-based pre-implementation questionnaire the response rate was 91%. Almost all the enrolled students completed the questionnaire. This could be attributed to the fact that completion of the pre-implementation questionnaire counted towards their final assessment marks (see Table 4.3). However, the same cannot be said about the post-implementation questionnaire. Only 59.6% of the enrolled students for EGAP60206 completed the post-implementation questionnaire. Although completion of the post-implementation questionnaire also counted towards their final assessment mark, it seemingly did not sufficiently motivate the students to complete this questionnaire.

From the pre- and post-implementation questionnaires only data obtained from item 3 were relevant to this study. The item read:

*Please state your understanding of service learning by completing the following: “Service learning is...”*

The reason why only this specific item was used for data analysis is because it links directly to secondary research question 3 (see 1.3.2 number 3 and question 3 in Appendix B and C), whereas the other questions did not relate to this research question.

The themes\* most prevalent from the data obtained through the pre-implementation questionnaire are reported below:

### **5.3.1 Helping less fortunate people**

Since there is no universal definition of service learning (see 3.3), perceptions are very dangerous in this field. One of the most popular perceptions that people have about service learning is that it is about ‘helping’ the less fortunate. Kaars and Kaars (2014:163; see 3.6.3) explain that communities where students do service learning may already feel embarrassed due to problems such as poverty, HIV/Aids, crime, substance abuse, and child abuse, to name but a few. However, these communities do not need to be ‘saved’ by students or HEIs. This type of perception among students may result in negative feelings among community members and may cause members of the community to feel that they are not deserving of good things. This is one of the

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\* For the purpose of the study the five main themes that emerged from the data, are discussed in detail under each data set.

reasons why lecturers should educate and explain to students what service learning is and what it is not.

The following are some of the comments\* made by the students that relate to the perception issue:

*“We go into the community and we help business in under privileged areas.”*

*“Helping the poor people”.*

*“I will be giving back to the community and helping those that can’t afford it”.*

*“We will have a better understanding of the underprivileged people.”*

The verbatim quotes illustrate some students’ perception that they are going to help less fortunate people when doing a service learning module. Table 3.1 (see 3.4) outlines the benefits of service learning to students. In the moral development column of this table, one of the benefits links to reducing stereotypes. Helping the less fortunate and helping the community (see 5.3.2) are both classified as stereotyping.

### **5.3.2 Helping the community**

The second most prominent theme that emerged from the qualitative data analysis was that the students expected that they would be helping the community. Merriam-Webster (2007:Online) defines ‘help’ as:

*“to do something that makes it easier for someone to do a job, to deal with a problem, etc.: to aid or assist someone.”*

*“to make something less severe: to make something more pleasant or easier to deal with”.*

The following is a sample of verbatim quotes of students that demonstrate their perception that they would be helping the community:

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\* Note that the illustrative verbatim comments are truly verbatim and may contain spelling and grammar errors as made by participants.

*“Community service involves helping out the community with skills or knowledge for the benefit of the community without necessarily getting something or learning something from it.”*

*“This is where we go to organisations and help them with what we can do.”*

*“Service learning helps the community by providing it with needed skills.”*

Helping people, the less fortunate or the community, is not necessarily wrong, but the perception regarding ‘helping’ is dangerous in the context of service learning because these students expected that they would help and save the community; thus, indirectly placing themselves in a more powerful position.

### **5.3.3 Volunteering to serve the community**

Volunteering is defined by Osman and Petersen (2013:238) as the use of volunteers to do work in communities where the primary beneficiary is the community (see Figure 3.2).

Comments made by students in this regard included the following:

*“The module requires that I find a business or charity where I can volunteer for 20 hours.”*

*“We go out to any charity we like and help them.”*

*“I will spend my holiday at a charity.”*

*“I will be working during the first week of my June holidays.”*

In this case the students in actual fact were not volunteers because the service learning project was compulsory in order for them to pass the module and to achieve eight credits that contributed to the number of credits required to pass their second year of study. The last part of the volunteering definition of Osman and Petersen (2013:238) above, namely that the primary beneficiary is the community, also is not applicable to service learning because the communities were not the only beneficiary party in this service learning module. Nevertheless, some students had the perception of them ‘working’ at a charity or in the community. This theme relates to becoming responsible citizens and reducing stereotypes as referred to in section 3.6.1 (see 3.4; table 3.1).

### 5.3.4 Waste of time; a compulsory module; do not want to do it

Rockquemore and Schaffer's study (2000:14; see 3.7) focused on three cognitive stages in service learning, namely shock (the emotional jolt to perceptions of reality, resulting in a focus on fundamental differences, otherness, and marginalising); normalisation (when the shock wears off, relationships and human bonds develop, and the humanity of community members is realised); and, lastly, engagement.

The following direct quotations from students' remarks illustrate the initial element of shock:

*"I would never need to do something like community service as in the profession I am entering I will not need to go out into a community but the community would be coming to me for my knowledge and expertise."*

*"A lot of the students wasn't very happy with the ideas, because we have to carry the expenses."*

*"Since it will be my first experience in Service learning anxiety is eating me up."*

*"Students are reluctant and uncertain about all the arrangements concerning the execution and what is expected from them."*

It seems that the students already were unhappy with the limited financial support they would receive from the Faculty. This, therefore, could have been one of the reasons why students felt that this module was forced on them and that they did not want to do it (see 3.7.3). Another reason why the students might have felt negative towards this module was because they did not know what to expect or what they would be doing.

Resistance is very common when students start with a service learning experience. This, however, is not the only research project where data showed that students were "forced out of [their] comfort zone". McMillan (2013:54) reports the same phenomenon found among service learning students participating in the study she conducted. In fact, it was a theme found in multiple places in the analysis process. This kind of resistance may be attributed to a new way of learning, because never before in their academic careers the students have been faced with direct experiential learning in a community setting (see 3.5.3).

### 5.3.5 A different way of teaching and learning

Before enrolling for the service learning module, the second-year BCom students in this study were used to attending lectures, submitting assignments, completing class activities, writing tests and sitting for a final exam at the end of a semester. The service learning module was therefore totally different due to the structure of the direct community involvement and the assessment tasks involved. Another reason why students felt that they did not know what was expected of them might be linked to pedagogy (see 3.5.3).

According to Daniels *et al.* (2013:193), the introduction of service learning as a pedagogy in the higher education context has opened new doors of engaging with educational space (see 3.4.1). Furthermore, Daniels *et al.* explains that in the traditional classroom-based pedagogy more emphasis is placed on the learning of a subject and engaging with literature. Service learning pedagogy, however, focuses on problem-solving and engagement within a real-life context that will assist students in becoming critical consumers of knowledge (see Chapter 3, Tables 3.1 and 3.4).

The following are examples of how students expressed their perception in this regard:

*“This module is far different from the other modules because it is a practical module which will help me develop experience in engaging with the community.”*

*“Service learning differs from other modules.”*

*“This module is very different from other modules.”*

Even before the first formal lecture about service learning the majority of the students were already aware that the EGAP60206 module would be different from their other purely academic modules. One of the reasons could be that the facilitators of the preceding ESSD60106 module might have made students aware that the follow-up module would be different and they had to incorporate all the skills learnt in ESSD60106 in EGAP60206 (see 1.3.2, Table 1.1).

A less prevalent theme that emanated from the pre-implementation questionnaires included improvement/enhancement of one's own curriculum vitae.

### 5.3.6 An opportunity to improve ones' own curriculum vitae

Since the students had completed the preceding ESSD50105 and EGAP50105 modules during the course of which they had to compile their curricula vitae's (CVs) and a cover letter for an imaginary job application, it was expected that students would mention the benefit of being in a position to add the service learning to their CVs.

This indeed happened and the following remarks emerged having a bearing on their CVs:

*"I will be able to put it on my CV which already alone is very important because it will give me a more balanced CV."*

*"It also helps to build up and add to my CV so that I will be more employable by companies."*

*"The previous year we learnt how to compile professional Curriculum Vitae. This year there has been a massive milestone. EGAP can be added to our CV."*

The perception among a minority of students therefore was that the practical experience and the broadened scope of the curriculum (see 3.4; Table 3.1) would enhance their chances to secure employment because companies are usually in need of experienced candidates (see 2.3 and 2.5.1 to 2.5.4).

### 5.3.7 Summary of pre-implementation questionnaire data

The perceptions of students portrayed in the pre-implementation questionnaire data ranged from opinions that service learning would enable them to help less privileged people to the module being surprisingly different and beneficial. The aim of question number 3 in the questionnaire was to determine their perceptions of service learning before any formal lecture was delivered or content about service learning was actually shared with them. Service learning therefore was a totally new concept for the second-year BCom students. It is understandable that students felt surprised, confused, out of their comfort zone and/or challenged. The responses clearly demonstrated that they felt rather emotional about the prospect of the module and that they were not fully informed about what service learning knowledge really meant. Although the students were aware that it would be something 'different', they were not sure exactly what would be different. The policy directives for service learning discussed in Chapter 3 (see 3.2.1) confirm the stumbling blocks and difficulties that HEIs face when

implementing service learning. The negative perceptions that students might have regarding service learning and that have been reported here, add to those stumbling blocks and difficulties.

## 5.4 The Letter to a Friend

The first assignment the students had to complete in the module was to write a letter to a friend about the service learning module. The aim of this assignment was to find answers to the secondary research question 3:

*What are the experiences and perceptions of second-year students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS of service learning?*

The assignment to write a letter to a friend after the students had attended their first formal lecture in service learning and had their first small group session with a facilitator was meant to gauge their ideas and opinions about the module. The assignment was formulated as follows:

**Activity 2:** *How does service learning differ from other modes of education? Also explain your understanding of service learning?*

*Write a short letter to a friend and tell him/her about the service learning module you are doing and how it differs from more traditional modes of education. Remember your friend knows nothing about higher education or service learning, therefore you must explain it to him/her simply and shortly. (Activity adapted from Landis, 2008, chapter 2:51).*

Goal-directed practice alone is insufficient to foster students' learning. Goal-directed practice must be accompanied by targeted feedback in order to promote the greatest learning gains (Ambrose *et al.* 2010:137). In order to comply with this educational principle, the EGAP60206 students received individual and group feedback from their facilitators during small group sessions about their perceptions of the particular service learning module.

Specific themes emanated from the analysis of the students' 'letters' (assignments), which gave more insight into the perceptions of the students regarding service

learning. These themes are discussed below with elucidations from findings of the literature study.

#### **5.4.1 Something new and totally different**

Mezirow (1998:65) (see 3.6.3) explains how perspective transformation often occurs through a series of cumulative, transforming, meaning schemes. This boils down to learning experiences enabling individuals to construct meaning. During the introduction phase of this service learning module students were introduced to the meaning and outcomes of a service learning experience.

The opinions the students expressed in these 'letters' confirm their changing perceptions of service learning after these introductory lectures and small group discussions:

*“Service learning is a teaching methodology combining community participation with content-based class discussion and reflection.”*

*“This will be first time I actually apply my knowledge in a real work environment so it's quite nerve-wrecking and exciting at the same time.”*

*“Personally I am used to the traditional modes and I am not in favour of doing Service learning but I am everyday a little bit more willing to try Service learning and maybe I will like it more.”*

The analysis of the students' letters to a friend indeed confirmed that the majority of them saw the service learning experience as something new and totally different from what they were used to. Even the students who initially were negative towards the service learning module made the connection that this module and the experience related to it would be something new and totally different.

The theme of something new and totally different eventually also emerged in the pre- and post-implementation questionnaire (see 5.3 and 5.6). The letter to a friend confirmed that the students were gradually making the connection between traditional modes of learning and experiential learning (see 3.5.1).

#### **5.4.2 An alternative way of teaching and learning**

Expressions of some of the students in their letters to a friend that refer to the way of teaching in the module being different from what they were used to, are listed below:

*“Service learning is different from traditional mode of education in the sense that it takes place in both the classroom and community environment unlike the traditional mode which takes place in the classroom.”*

*“It engages students in active learning and integrates disciplinary theory and knowledge with practice. i.e. enhances academic learning.”*

*“This module does not just give us the theoretical side of the module. We have to go out to the community. In this module they show us how to apply the knowledge in the real world.”*

*“Service learning is a much more effective and efficient learning style as opposed to the traditional modes of education.”*

The majority of the students mentioned in their letters to a friend that service learning entailed a new/alternative way in which their learning was facilitated. They explained that in this module they could share knowledge, apply theory to practice and test their own knowledge in real-life situations. This directly links with Kolb’s experiential learning theory (see 3.5.1) and Mezirow’s transformative learning theory (1978a; see 3.5.3). An alternative way of teaching can also be linked to pedagogy (see 3.4.1).

### **5.4.3 Beneficial**

Flannery and Ward (1999:327) (see 3.3) describe, as an additional benefit of service learning for students, the fact that they develop cultural competence and have to interact with people from various cultural groups and ethnicities.

The remarks that the students made in their ‘letters’ that confirm that they had come to realise the benefits of a service learning experience are listed below:

*“Service learning offers a whole lot of benefits to me as student. The fact that I will be working with diverse people, it will develop my interpersonal skills that will be crucially needed one day at my workplace.”*

*“I think this is going to be the most interesting module that I have ever done and it will help me stop being shy around people.”*

*“The Service learning has numerous benefits that will be to our advantage.”*

Not only did the students acknowledge in their letters the personal benefit that they would gain from the service learning experience, but also the benefits service learning holds for the community and the UFS (see 3.2.1).

*“The thing that I like most about this module is that I won’t be the only one who will be giving to the community, I will also gain from the community that I will be doing my Service learning in.”*

*“Service learning process does not end when a service activity is complete. A project may be finished, but Service learning is a transformational process where young people, practitioners and communities continue to grow as they discover the root causes underlying the needs.”*

From the above verbatim quotes the EGAP60206 students realised the benefits of service learning. Students acknowledged that the service learning experience will not only have a benefit on themselves but also on the community which leads to a reciprocal relationship.

#### **5.4.4 Employability skills**

In their letters to a friend the majority of the students referred to the employability skills that they acquired through this service learning experience (see 2.2 and 2.5). The students felt strongly that this module and experience would increase their employability once their studies were completed.

Examples of employability skills mentioned by the students are:

*“We will be taking all that information to solve real life problems, situations and circumstances.”*

*“Our teamwork, communication skills, critical thinking and time management skills will improve with this project.”*

*“This experience will give us a better qualification for the job and will definitely set us apart from the rest.”*

*“And through this module I will gain more skills such as communicating, employee skills, informative skills, self-management, problem solving, teamwork, leadership, conflict management, life long learning, ethics, innovation and creativity. Lastly I’d like to grow spiritually and think it is best.”*

*“This module is different from any other module because it ensures employability.”*

*“Through this reflection we as students have the opportunity to analyze our experiences, question our own beliefs, values and attitudes and construct new meaning.”*

The employability skills that were mentioned by the majority of the students in their letters are as follows:

- Communication skills.
- Personal growth.
- Problem-solving / Critical thinking skills.
- Time management.
- Conflict management.
- Leadership.
- Spiritual growth.
- Social responsibility.
- Civic awareness.
- Self-confidence.

All the skills that were mentioned by students can be linked to employability skills identified in the literature discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.2.3 to 2.2.10) and Chapter 3 (3.4.1, 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 3.7 and 3.8). Employability skills indeed are cultivated and acquired through service learning and reflection.

#### **5.4.5 Give back and educate the community**

Another theme that emanated from the letters to the friend was about giving back and educating the community. Verbatim quotes that illustrate this particular theme include the following:

*“Basically we are going into the community and using what we have learnt so far at the university and implementing it into the community while at the same time improving the standard of living and intellect of the people within the community.”*

*“I am looking forward to be able to assist a community who is in need of assistance.”*

*“I must then go out to the community and offer my services in anything that I can teach them. For example I can teach them how to plan and draw up a cash budget. I can also teach them how to make records of the transactions that happen in their everyday of business.”*

*“The community will learn from us and we will learn from them, which will broaden our horizons and we will learn more skills.”*

The perception of educating the community and giving back implied by students in their letters may be linked to a reciprocal relationship. Through service learning, not only the community, business or organisation will benefit, but also the students and the HEI. Knowledge sharing, in the sense of mutual teaching and learning ('education') between the role players, play a significant role in reciprocal relationship building (see 3.4).

Notwithstanding the positive aspects students mentioned, a few students (a minority though) demonstrated that they still did not understand service learning fully. Even after completing the pre-implementation questionnaire, attending a formal lecture, taking part in a small group session and writing the letter to a friend about service learning, they struggled to provide an accurate account of what service learning entails, for example:

*“We could give extra class in subjects like accounting or economics in schools where students need extra help.”*

This type of remark and the way in which students think about service learning naturally are problematic, due to the one-way approach students then seem to have. It is of cardinal importance for students to realise that with service learning it is not only one role player that benefits from the experience – they have to recognise and acknowledge that both parties benefit from service learning. Therefore, when the students or the role players have a mind-set of helping, saving and doing all the work, it creates a problem and points to a misunderstanding of what service learning entails.

#### **5.4.6 Summary of the themes emanating from the letter to a friend**

The letter that students had to write about service learning in order to elucidate their understanding of this approach to teaching-learning provided rich data. The students expressed their feelings about the prospect of doing such a module, and referred to the difference between service learning modules and other modules. They also realised that by doing a service learning module, they would gain employability skills.

One student did not write his/her letter in the same format as the majority of the students who wrote about the effect of the module, their understanding of what they were doing and the different way of facilitation of learning. This particular student used quotes from famous historical and philosophical characters and related them to his/her understanding of service learning.

*“Socrates said: Wisdom begins in wonder. What is the current problem or situation? The current problem I have is that I lack any other qualification other than academic and sporting achievements.*

*Quintilian said: While we are making up our minds as to when we shall begin, the opportunity is lost. This is an opportunity and I must grab it with both hands.*

*Cicero said: Before beginning, plan carefully. This is not just a module that popped up from nowhere. Research was done on how best to take this module forward.*

*Plato said: I never did anything worth doing by accident, nor did any of my inventions come by accident, they came by work. I will not just be able to glide thru this module, if I do not give it the time it deserves, I will not reap the benefits it has to offer.*

*Aristotle said: Character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion.*

*After completing this module I will have shown future employers some of the skills that I have to offer, which I could only benefit from.”*

This student took a unique approach to explain his/her understanding and explanation of service learning. In the majority of the cases the students' understanding already had changed dramatically during the period from completion of the pre-implementation questionnaire (when they had not yet received literature or instructions about service learning) to when they wrote the letter to a friend following their first exposure to service learning literature (see 3.5.1 and 3.5.2).

## **5.5 The PowerPoint Presentation**

For the purposes of the study the students' final assessment task was also used for data gathering. The main aim of the PowerPoint presentation assessment task in this study was to collect data for the secondary research question 4:

*What type of employability skills do service learning projects create or foster, according to these students?*

The assessment task was explained carefully and in detail on the Blackboard. This is explained in the following textbox:

**Instructions for the PowerPoint presentation on Blackboard:**

Follow the step-by-step guide and assessment task rubric to compile your final PowerPoint presentation. This assessment task will count 45% of your final mark. Please contact me or your facilitator if you are struggling to find a community, organisation or business in which to conduct your 20 hours of service learning.

**Steps-by-step guide for final assessment task:**

1. Contact an organisation, community or business where you would like to do your service learning project.
2. Make an appointment with the contact person – Your curriculum vitae from EGAP50105 may be used.
3. Do a needs assessment to determine what the organisation, community or business expects from you.
4. Employ a SWOT analysis to determine your own strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and that of the community, organisation or business.
5. Compile a plan of action and discuss it with your service learning contact person (refer to Addendum A4 in study guide).
6. Arrange a time and date with the organisation, community or business and discuss with them when you want to do your 20 hours of service learning.

This PowerPoint assessment task was the final assessment task for the EGAP60206 module. The following headings were prescribed for the PowerPoint tasks:

1. Background of community, organisation or business.
2. Needs assessment compiled after first visit.
3. SWOT analysis: Students and community, organisation or business.
4. Plan of action.
5. Goals and how they were reached.
6. Discuss and explain how you spent your 20 hours (attach a time record sheet).
7. Thank you or celebration function.
8. Photos or images of the service learning experience.
9. Reflective journal regarding your experience and how it made you feel.  
Keep a reflective journal from the first visit to the community, organisation or business until the last day. The reflective journal entries should be included in your final PowerPoint presentation.

10. Do you think you are more employable after this service learning experience?
11. Conclusion and personal feelings.

The PowerPoint presentation assessment tasks of the students provided data for the secondary research question 4. This section in the PowerPoint assessment task that provided rich data for this study were the information students provided about their reflective journals, as well as sections 10 and 11 above.

### **5.5.1 The reflective journal on students' experiences of the EGAP60206 module**

The DEAL model is discussed in section 3.6.5 of this thesis. Parrillo (1994: online) asserts that reflection is critical to service learning pedagogy since it is the process through which true learning takes place. The reflection journal that students had to keep regarding their perceptions and experiences of the EGAP60206 module contributed to the students' learning process. The reflective journal made students aware of their own feelings, possible misconceptions and the value of service learning. The DEAL model (see 3.5.5; Figure 3.6) provided a framework for students to assist them with the reflection process. Another reason why the reflective journals provided valuable and rich data for the study is due to the fact that reflective journals focus on the assessment of the students' higher-order thinking skills by employing Blooms' taxonomy (see 3.6.1). Through the assessment of the reflective journals the facilitators were able to identify gaps in the students' knowledge about service learning and employability skills.

NVivo, a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package, was used to analyse the journals to identify themes. Figure 5.3 below illustrates the most used words and themes that NVivo picked up from the reflective journal data.\*

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\* "A tree map is one of the visual aids that NVivo provides. They can be used to view comparisons of nodes, sources, or attribute value combinations. The tree map will provide your audience with an idea of how often a certain node comes up in your set of data versus other nodes, or the quantity of different types of sources you have" (Digital Social Science Center: Online).



*“I learned to value personal involvement in community for socially constructive purposes and involvement in community.”*

*“Explaining what you have done to other people is also a good way of testing yourself on your knowledge of the work.”*

*“I had never been required to apply my knowledge practically and I felt uneasy about this whole thing. I learned conflict management so, I suppose it wasn’t that bad.”*

Knowledge sharing actually happens automatically within a service learning experience (see 2.5.1, 2.5.2 and 3.5.3). The SWOT analysis students completed beforehand actually set the wheels in motion and assisted them to think about what the relevant strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were. Through knowledge sharing with the community the students also gained more self-confidence and inclination towards lifelong learning (see 2.5.1, 2.5.2 and 2.6).

#### **5.5.1.2 Learning about diverse/different people**

The second theme that emanated from the reflective journal data was that students learned more about people. In section 2.3 (see Table 2.3) it was related that the Department of Education, Science and Training in Australia (Australia. DEST 2002) enquires employees to apply their learning about people issues (i.e. interpersonal and cultural aspects) before they enter the world of work (see 2.3). Working with people from diverse backgrounds is part of the world of work.

Comments made by students in this regard included the following:

*“Working with people other than those I normally interact with also helped me improve my social skills and gave me insight on professionalism from a practical point of view.”*

*“Om werklik iemand te help met iets in die lewe moet jy jousef eers in daardie persoon se skoene plaas.” (English translation: “To really assist someone with something in life, you should first place yourself in that person’s shoes.”)*

*“I have learned that a stranger is just a friend you do not know. Working with all the different culturals [sic] and guests was very exciting and my social skills developed.”*

*“One day he actually taught me something I will never forget; he said a person is most likely to be successful in life when they’re always on time.”*

*“Working with people I did not know was very challenging for me, we did not share the same views about things in life and I did not want to come across as being an antagonizing snob so I had to learn how to accept people as they are and mingle.”*

The world of work is filled with people from different backgrounds, with varying socio-economic statuses, and diverse cultures; therefore, it is very important that students get exposed to different personality types, diverse cultures and people from different backgrounds (see Tables 2.1, 3.2.1 and 3.4).

### **5.5.1.3 Time management**

Time management is one of the employability skills deemed important by future employers (see 1.3.2). One of the objectives of the EGAP60206 module was to assist students in acquiring time management skills. The remarks of the students that confirm the importance of time and its management are as follows:

*“The days were over so quickly.”*

*“Na ure se beplanning en worstel met idees was ek tevrede.” (English translation: “After hours of planning and struggling with ideas, I was satisfied.”)*

*“Gave me a sense of accomplishment because in the short time that I worked with her, I really was able to make a positive difference to her business. I believe that if I had more time, I would have been able to do more.”*

*“This was a long and tiresome project but at the same time, beneficial because it helps one apply the skills and knowledge acquired at varsity level.”*

*“Thinking back on the time spent with these women, I cannot help but feel grateful for the opportunities I got to study, to learn.”*

Time is very precious and in the context of reflection the time element is very important. In the world of work time is linked to money and productivity. Reflection also takes place over a period of time (see 3.5.5). The students had to reflect on their entire experience from April 2013 until their final submission of the PowerPoint task in October 2013.

Reflection is indeed critical to service learning as pedagogy (Parrillo 1994: online). The DEAL model (see 3.5.5) was used in this module to guide and assist the students with their reflection on the service learning module.

#### **5.5.1.4 Awareness**

Service learning as pedagogy has been created through a spirit of civic responsibility (Binard and Leavitt 2000:36) and to foster students' civic responsibility. The awareness theme might sound somewhat strange, but from the premise of enhancing responsibility, this theme fits perfectly with the goals of service learning. The analysis of students' reflective journals showed that they had an increased awareness of their mastering of specific skills and of their social responsibility, they had been sensitised for differences between people, and they were aware of their own personal growth. This awareness may be linked directly to the USEM model (see 2.5.3), with special reference to their metacognition. The following responses are indicative of the awareness theme:

*"It once again showed me the importance of service learning and my social responsibility."*

*"Really opened my eyes."*

*"The connection between the Service learning experience and my personal growth has also played a large part as this has taught me the importance of giving back to the community and identifying social needs."*

*"It looks easy of the business process, but actually, it is not that easy, it needs lots of work should do."*

*"I had to remind myself the whole time that I was dealing with someone who did not have the same background and education that I had."*

The aspects of awareness that came to the fore most prominently in the reflective journals of the majority of the students can be related to growth and the expansion of their skills (see 2.5.2); increased academic learning, broadened scope of the curriculum, and reflective learning (see 3.4, Table 3.1). Awareness of different cultures and people was also recognised as an important skill in the world of work.

#### **5.5.1.5 Work experience/skills**

In Chapter 2 work experience was elucidated as a pathway for students to gain skills required for the world of work (see 2.4.1, 2.4.2 and 2.4.3). Skills are acquired through teaching the curricula and assessing the students (see 2.5). In the service learning module, the students realised that they had grown in experience and had acquired new

and improved skills. This is illustrated by the following quotations from their responses and in their journals:

*“I also got to work more with learners and interact with them sharing my life experience, skills and knowledge.”*

*“I really think this was a great learning experience not just for now but also for the future. This experience is something no one can take away from you.”*

*“The connection I experience between the Service learning experience and my academic content was immense, as I faced real world situations and I was able to apply what I have learnt in my academics.”*

*“I also feel that this experience has truly made me more employable.”*

*“We used different ways of communication and he was very happy to help. All this enhanced my skills and grew me more personally, and at the same time opening paths to allow the company goals to be achieved more efficiently.”*

Work experience that is linked to a service learning experience, and acquiring and developing work-related skills such as mentioned by the students can be linked directly to the literature consulted and discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.4). Experience and skills go hand in hand (see 3.8) and the students were able to make this connection.

#### **5.5.1.6 Summary of the findings emanating from the reflective journal experience**

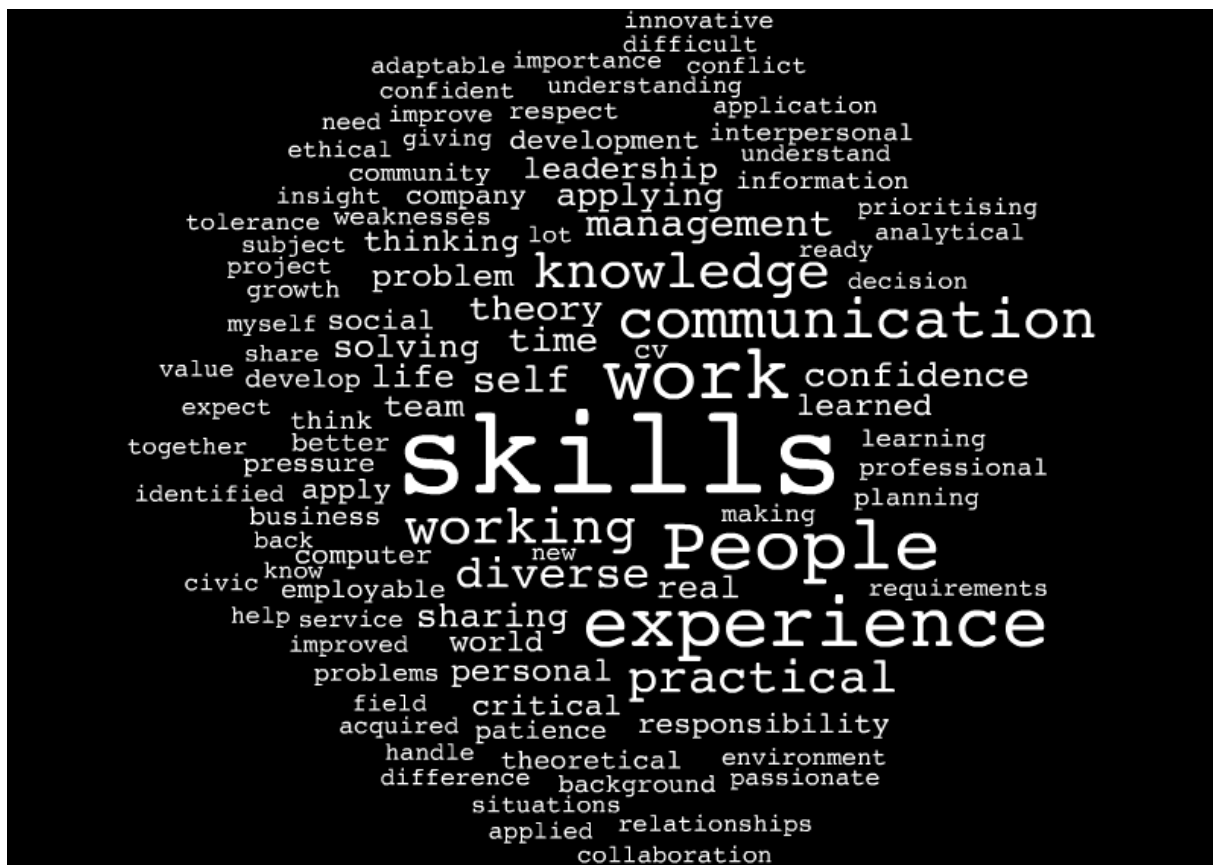
A total of 292 reflective journal entries formed part of this document analysis process. A vast number of themes were identified initially. However, a decision was made that the five themes that occurred most would suffice for the purposes of the study, as many of the themes were closely related. The five themes that were identified as those mentioned most often in the reflective journals are those that have been discussed in this section. Reading and analysing the journals gave the researcher insight in the experiences of the students and made a meaningful contribution to the exploratory research endeavour.

Students' reflective journals showed that they valued the service learning experience because they were able to share their knowledge with people from diverse backgrounds (see 2.2.4; Table 2.3), to develop a number of skills and to be made aware of important work-related skills (see 2.4). The students felt appreciated and indicated that their time spent in the community, organisation or business was worth

the effort. They gained work-related skills, experience and people skills through the time they spent as illustrated in this quotation from a journal: “I used my time very effectively and made sure that I learned as much as possible from as many people as possible and from this experience. I am a different person.”

### 5.5.2 The service learning experience and employability

In section 10 of their PowerPoint presentation, the students were required to indicate whether they thought they were more employable after the service learning experience, and to identify which skills were actually developed or mastered through the service learning experience. The keywords that NVivo highlighted and which are shown in the tree diagram in Figure 5.4 were skills, people, knowledge, communication, working, practical, experience, self-confidence and diverse (i.e. working with diverse people).



Source: Compiled through Nvivo.

**Figure 5.4: Tree map: Employability skills referred to by students**

According to Ambrose *et al.* (2010:151) (see 2.5.4), students often do not see the connection between or among assignments, tests and an exam if they do not reflect

on the assessment feedback they receive. Feedback enables students to effectively incorporate their knowledge and skills into future practices, performance or both in the world of work.

The NVivo software indicated that 93% of the students were of the opinion that they were more employable after their service learning experience. The majority of the students (93%) also identified about four (4) or more skills that they had acquired through their service learning experience when they motivated their responses. One student explained why he/she thought that he/she was more employable:

*“Barrack Obama once said: ‘With the changing economy, no one has lifetime employment. But community work provides lifetime employability.’ Yes, I am more employable than an average person who is seeking employment, I have gained a lot of knowledge and practical skills on how a business operates on a daily basis.”*

*“Yes: I have gained communication and presentation skills and this experience have somewhat boosted my self confidence in the sense that I now know I have something to offer others.”*

Most of the seven percent (7%) of students who expressed the opinion that they were not more employable after the service learning experience, nevertheless indicated that it had been a valuable experience and that it would make better employees of them because they had the opportunity to experience the world of work:

*“No: I feel that I can be more employable, but still lack huge amount of skill and that this one Service learning program will not be enough.”*

*“No: I don’t think Service learning is something that will really affect your CV in terms of employability but I do think that it will help prepare you for being an employee as you can better understand the different roles in a business.”*

The majority of the enrolled students therefore reported a positive feeling in their PowerPoint assessment task pertaining to the enhancement of their employability through the service learning module.

### **5.5.2.1 Skills obtained through experience**

The following employability skills were identified through the data analysis of students’ comments. These directly link with skills that were exposed during the literature review (see Chapter 3).

### 5.5.2.1.1 Communication skills

Communication can be defined as a “[t]wo-way process of reaching mutual understanding, in which participants not only exchange (encode-decode) information, news, ideas and feelings, but also create and share meaning. In general, communication is a means of connecting people or places. In business, it is a key function of management – an organization cannot operate without communication between levels, departments and employees” (Business Dictionary: online). In section 3.5.3, communication skills are listed as one of the many skills that a student can gain from a service learning experience.

Communication (verbal and non-verbal) is of utmost importance in the world of work. In Chapter 3, not only Yorke and Knight’s (2006) report (USEM model; see 2.5.3), but also the UFS Teaching and Learning Strategy (2013; see Appendix F), confirm the importance of communication skills. Tier 2 of the UFS Teaching and Learning Strategy gives a clear explanation of what is meant by communication skills as part of academic and professional competence (see Table 5.1):

**TABLE 5.1: TIER 2 OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY**

Academic and professional competence	Develop academic and professional competence that include <b>high level communication skills (written and oral)</b> that will enable them to negotiate and create new understanding through interaction with diverse others to further their own learning. They will also be expected to develop creative thinking, problem-solving and teamwork abilities as part of the learning experience.
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Source: UFS Teaching and Learning Strategy (2013).

Another angle pertaining to communication skills is the encouragement of dialogue between diverse educational sites and students who normally never would meet and learn from one another (Daniels *et al.* 2013:153 see 3.2). Before their service learning experience, most students never had been exposed to communicating (verbally and non-verbally) with communities, organisations or businesses.

Grobler and Schenk (2009:164) advise that dialogue within service learning should take place within a person-centred approach. The person-centred approach helps to put people and their multiple points of view at the centre. Dialogue and communication with the community, organisation or business is also an important factor in facilitating

any form of transformation or change in the society. Communication and dialogue facilitate the development of numerous other skills, for example working with diverse people, applying theory to practice and gaining more self-confidence in the process.

#### **5.5.2.1.2 People skills and working with diverse people**

Community engagement in the South African context can be described as an interaction between external interest groups (i.e. a community) and a HEI that involves exchanging knowledge, skills, expertise and resources that are required to develop a sustainable society (Osman and Petersen, 2013:231; see 3.2.1). The interaction between the external group and the HEI (students) is challenging. Jordaan (2013:209; see 3.4) also suggests that students should choose a project in a society or community that is different from their own. When the students choose a project outside of their normal framework (i.e. their own ethnic group, socio-economic status and education level) it exposes them to working with people from diverse backgrounds. This will demand the mastering of more and new people skills.

#### **5.5.2.1.3 Applying theory to practice and knowledge sharing**

The service learning models discussed in Chapter 3 (see 3.5.1 to 3.5.4) place emphasis on applying theory to practice. By applying theory to practice students are able to reflect on their experience. The following quotes from students' responses demonstrate the application of theory to practice:

*“Service learning is about individuals pollinating their surrounding with the seeds of knowledge.”*

*“I also feel that I may not be so employable because not everything we do can be learnt from books and have to be experienced.”*

When students reflect on their own experiences in service learning, it facilitates recognition of the connection between curriculum content and what they observed and experienced in the community (UFS 2006:9; see 2.7). Through service learning experiences, students develop both professionally and personally, while also attaining an enhanced sense of social responsibility (Bringle and Hatcher 1996:2), thus “empowering both students and communities” (CHE-HEQC 2006:xxi; see 3.2.1). Tier 2 of the Teaching and Learning Strategy of the UFS (2013) indicates that a UFS graduate

will be equipped and expected to use high level communication skills (written and oral) (see 2.7).

**TABLE 5.2: TIER 2 OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY 2013**

Effective knowledge workers	Develop the skills necessary to function effectively in the 21 <sup>st</sup> <b>century knowledge economy</b> where people have to “think for a living” (Cooper, 2006). This will entail the ability to know when there is a <b>need for information, and to be able to use the information effectively and responsibly to address a problem.</b>
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Source: UFS Teaching and Learning Strategy (2013).

In their PowerPoint presentation students referred to knowledge and skills they had mastered in specific other modules that were also used to their benefit during their hours spent in the community:

*“Almost all of the work I handled in my modules thus far came into hand when I worked. Namely drafting job descriptions (From EHRM from my 1st year), Labour Law (from ELRM this year) and even the financial side (from EBUS this year). I must admit that I needed to refer back to my handbooks for a lot of tasks assigned to me which also showed me the importance of handbooks and how valuable they will be in my future.”*

Before the service learning experience, the students saw the module content as a silo – a stand-alone. They already had great knowledge obtained from books, and teaching–learning activities, but did not yet know how to share practical knowledge with others.

Knowledge sharing is crucial for the fostering of life-long learning (see 2.6).

According to Daniels *et al.* (2013:153) (see 2.2.8), traditional higher education spaces equip students with theoretical knowledge and academic content, but not always provide opportunities for the practical application of it. Through service learning, students come to understand the theoretical content better because they can test its validity in practice (i.e. through their service learning experience).

#### **5.5.2.1.4 The world of work and real-life experience**

One of the themes that emerged from the qualitative PowerPoint assessment tasks reflects that students experienced how the world of work really operates (see 2.9). This

included not only the day-to-day operation of a business, NGO or community, but also what it takes to establish one's own business, working with staff and keeping everything afloat.

The Graduates' Work Research for the Dearing Committee (in Harvey *et al.*, 1997:316; see 2.2.4) points to the need for enhanced opportunities for students to undertake work-related learning opportunities. Increasingly, work experience is being seen as a major vehicle to enable students to make connections between their academic study and the world of work and to familiarise themselves with the skills necessary to be effective in the work setting. One of the students wrote:

*"All in all, I enjoyed Service learning. I realised that it is a fundamental tool to have, as it really prepares one for the work world. It gave me hands-on experience of kind of environment to expect in the future."*

#### **5.5.2.1.5 Working with diverse people**

Authors such as Bawa (2003:52), Bringle and Hatcher (1996:225) and Hay (2003:187) agree that service learning greatly enhances academic learning, personal development and civic responsibility at various levels (see 3.2). Keily (2005:17) theorises it as a transformational learning process and Bringle and Hatcher (1996:223) summarise it as follows (also see 3.2): "Research supports the contention that service learning has a positive effect on personal, attitudinal, moral, social and cognitive outcomes."

The following is a quote from a student to express working with diverse people:

*"While doing this assignment I at first wasn't really sure what the whole purpose was behind it but now it's done I feel grateful and happy I was given such an opportunity. I got to learn a lot about myself as well as how different people are out there. I learnt that when dealing with people body language is key."*

The students were confronted with working with people from diverse backgrounds. This is an employability skill that students need to acquire before entering the world of work. Working with people from diverse backgrounds ensures that a student is more flexible, learns how to argue matters, resolve conflict and negotiate skills (see 2.2.6, Table 2.1).

### 5.5.2.1.6 Self-confidence and self-esteem

The CareerEDGE model discussed in section 2.5.1 describes how self-esteem can improve when focusing and incorporating employability skills in the students' course. The data collected on students' experiences of the EGAP60206 service learning show that their self-esteem and confidence had improved. This might be attributed to working with people from diverse backgrounds and sharing their knowledge about the field of study with the community:

*“Self-confidence is a very important quality to have in the workplace, you can't second guess yourself when it comes to decision making and I believe that confidence is something that you work on early in your life. It's not just something you have or you don't.”*

Not only did the students' self-confidence and self-esteem improve, but they also saw a change in some of the community members they worked with:

*“I taught tannie Lidie how to use internet today and draw up a budget. I could tell that she was very nervous. I was careful not to be condescending. It was very satisfying when she gained more confidence and started to understand what to do and I was so proud when she started doing things right.”*

When students' share their knowledge with the community members they can see a change in attitude and self-confidence when the end product – drawing up a budget, designing marketing material for an entrepreneur, implementing human resource structures, sharing/tutoring their mathematics knowledge, working on different computer programs and drawing up a cover letter and CV – enables the community member to grow and learn new skills (see 2.5.1 and 3.6).

*“To be honest, when we were first told about this project I was hesitant and had my doubts. I was panicking in case I looked like fool near my Service learning contact person. Through this project I discovered myself more and I grew a confident personality.”*

The reason why students felt unsure about the assignment and the service learning projects may be due to them being only in their second academic year. They did not think that they could make a contribution to the community members with merely two years of academic knowledge acquisition. They thought they had to change the world, that is, change the way business is conducted at the community member's place.

However, from their side the community members merely wanted to obtain basic skills and knowledge about their business.

Once students realised that the community members only required basic skills they grew confident about what they knew and how they could apply it. The SWOT analysis that the students completed for themselves and for the community members also assisted them to 'sell' and 'market' their skills and knowledge. By completing the SWOT analysis for themselves and the relevant community member, ensured that both parties knew what to expect of the service learning project and what needs would be addressed during the prescribed 20 hours of service learning. Literature indeed shows that there is a link between service learning and the employability skills of higher self-esteem and self-confidence (see 2.7, 3.7 and 3.8). This can be attributed to students sharing their knowledge about their own field of study. Through the sharing of knowledge, they realise that they know something (3.7).

#### ***5.5.2.1.7 Summary of students' views on their employability after the service learning experience***

It is evident from the above data analysis section that the majority of students felt that they were more employable after completing the service learning module. Students discussed the employability skills (see 2.6, 2.7, 2.8 and 2.14) that they had acquired through the service learning experience (see 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 3.6.3 and 3.6.4) and this serves as confirmation that service learning has the potential to enhance and foster students' employability skills that in turn may assist them in the world of work.

## **5.6 The Post-Implementation Questionnaire**

The post-implementation questionnaire for the students (see Appendix C) was completed by EGAP60206 students after submitting their PowerPoint presentations as part of their final assessment task for the module. The response rate of the post-implementation questionnaire, however, was not as high as that of the pre-implementation questionnaire. Only 59.6% of the enrolled students' for EGAP60206 completed the post-implementation questionnaire.

The most prevalent themes that emanated from the post-implementation questionnaire are discussed below.

### 5.6.1 Knowledge sharing

Through experiential learning (see 3.5.1) students can learn new skills and knowledge. Students shared their knowledge about specific modules (i.e. EBUS1614, EHRM1514 and EACC16114) and content. Through the sharing of module content and knowledge the students' perceptions about what service learning is changed (see 3.4, Table 3.1).

The verbatim quotes below illustrate the knowledge sharing that occurred:

*“Learning is enhanced through direct application in the appropriate social contexts of practices and principle taught through formal instruction concurrent with guided reflection of the students’ experience.”*

*“Service learning involves knowledge sharing and skills learnt at school and at the same time learning something from the people you are helping out.”*

*“Service learning is a great way to make sure that what we are taught at school becomes more meaningful by actually getting to apply the knowledge to real life situations which encourages responsibility as opposed to gaining simple knowledge.”*

Knowledge sharing links directly to the CareerEDGE model (see 2.5.1) and the USEM models (see 2.5.3) discussed in Chapter 2. This highlights the importance of students' knowledge and knowledge sharing to prepare them for the world of work.

### 5.6.2 Practical experience

In Kruger's study (2014:389) reported in Chapter 2 (see 2.2.9), she found that:

*“[t]he majority of participants indicated that knowledge was adequately addressed during undergraduate years of study; however, graduate attributes were not explicitly addressed, or only superficially addressed (e.g. insufficient practice in terms of adaptability, real-world examples, communication skills, computer literacy and lack of a holistic understanding).”*

The BCom students were at risk of continuing along the same pattern mentioned because the students only had theoretical knowledge and no practical experience or real-world examples. The attributes indicated varied among participants, but the most prevalent views related to aspects of the self and self-management (e.g. patience, balancing time and quality, taking initiative, assertiveness and enthusiasm), lifelong

learning and continuous professional development that were discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.6). The following are examples of students' perceptions in this regard:

*"That is where you go out and into the community and learning more about your field of study through helping someone who needs your help or can benefit from your advice. By doing this we also gain practical experience and we learn to work with other people."*

*"Students get hand on approach to the content thus they tend to understand the work better."*

*"All we used to learn was the theoretical side of our various courses. We gain practical experience, which is priceless in any career."*

Practical experience in the context of service learning and employability skills are highlighted in relevant literature (see 2.5.1, 2.5.3, 3.5.1 and 3.5.2). Reflection in the service learning module (see 3.5.5) clearly aided the students to make the connection between academic knowledge and gaining practical experience in their own field of study.

### **5.6.3 Service learning is different from community service**

According to the literature reported in Chapter 3 (see 3.2, Figure 3.2 and 3.3) there is a difference between service learning and community service. Community engagement can take on many different forms and shapes within higher education, one of which is service learning. Service learning is a credit-bearing course where students participate in course relevant service to enhance their own learning experience. It is therefore not only service to the community.

The following extracts represent students' experiences and perceptions about how service learning differs from community service and the reciprocal relationship that was established between them and the community.

*"The benefit in this program is for the student and the community, thus it is mutually beneficial."*

*"Service learning differs from community service in that in Service learning students apply their theoretical knowledge to real life situations and therefore engage in reciprocal teaching and learning between them and community members."*

*“I believe the people of the community appreciate it and will walk away knowing we did a great deed.”*

Unfortunately, however, there was still a minority of students who had the perception of them especially “helping” (i.e. servicing) the community.

Nevertheless, it became clear that the students’ perception about service learning changed during the period from when the pre-implementation questionnaire was administered to when the post-implementation questionnaire was administered because they were able to experience the effect of service learning activities. In answering the post-implementation questionnaire students did not mention volunteering as a theme again. This shows that they learned to understand the difference between service learning and community service (see 3.2).

#### **5.6.4 More hours/Worth it**

After the occurrence of obstacles and initial negativity of students towards the EGAP60206 (see 3.7.3), it was a surprise to see that the majority of the participants mentioned that they would have liked to spend more hours on the project, and that spending these hours was worth it.

*“At first I was negative towards this module and the amount of hours I have to spend on it. But the time went so quickly. I would have liked more hours.”*

*“This module is also a credit bearing module and we thus need to pass it to graduate. This means we have to treat this module the same as all our other subjects and cannot neglect it.”*

*“As students we look back on our service activity experience in a way that we can understand all the information given within the subject and we learn to be more appreciative, more disciplined and we become more responsible for a community.”*

*“Time flies when you are having fun.”*

Mezirow’s transformative learning, and especially the ten phases of learning (see 3.6.3), are also visible in these data. Students went from a disorienting dilemma to a reintegration of one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s perceptive.

### 5.6.5 An alternative way of teaching and learning

Service learning makes theory and research more real (see 3.3) and makes students aware that alternative modes of their current teaching and learning involve more than only learning book knowledge. The following quotations indicate their newly found appreciation:

*“This module should enhance a student’s academic learning, personal growth and develop a deeper appreciation of social responsibility.”*

*“Service learning is, therefore, evidently different from traditional modes of education which often exclude experiential learning.”*

*“EGAP differs from all the other courses that I do in the sense that it makes use of practical experience to implement what you learn.”*

*“Service learning is to learn things while doing service for somebody that can learn from you.”*

The perception that students had in the pre-implementation questionnaire about ‘something different’ was therefore confirmed in this section. Students confirmed that the service learning experience and module were very different from other modules they were enrolled for previously (see 3.3).

### 5.6.6 Summary of the post-implementation questionnaire data findings

The perceptions of the majority of the students of service learning who completed the post-implementation questionnaires had changed in some or other way. Students referred to the positive effect it had on them as persons who had to practically apply their knowledge and the skills they learned during the semester in their two years of study (see 2.2.8.1, Table 2.3 and 3.4, Table 3.1). The data therefore reflect a growth of students’ emotional and knowledge capacity (see 2.5.3, Figure 2.7). Students expressed their strong feelings about the way in which the module differs from others and this happened due to the opportunity to apply theory to practice (see 2.5.1 to 2.5.2 and 3.5.1 to 3.6.4). It therefore made the students feel empowered and more confident in their subject knowledge.

## 5.7 Contribution to the Study and a Possible Framework

The most surprising theme that emerged from the data analysis, was that students had realised that they did not have prior work experience. The service learning module

forced them to go into the world of work in a community setting. With their 'forced' entrance into the workplace the students were able to see how an NGO, community initiative or company operates.

The students mentioned that the experience forced them to identify their own weaknesses and that it made them aware of the long journey before they formally enter the world of work on a permanent basis. The majority of students expressed gratefulness for the service learning experience because they got what some called a "wake-up" call. They also realised that a formal qualification is not necessarily enough to secure a job after graduation.

The experiences, perceptions and skills that students acquired, developed and learned through a service learning module are linked to the type of activities included in the curriculum design (see 2.2.9). Knight and Yorke (2004:3; see 2.2.1) define employability as "a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations". These achievements benefit themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy, and clearly illustrate the importance of skills, understanding and personal attributes of students.

The framework proposed in Chapters 2 and 3 (see 2.7 and 3.8), along with the data analysis results dealt with in this chapter, already demonstrates the importance of service learning as a pedagogical approach to enhance employability skills in BCom students at the UFS.

The data that were analysed and discussed in this chapter (see 5.3 to 5.6) will be incorporated into a final proposed framework that will be completed in Chapter 7.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

The complexity of service learning is reflected in the absence of a unified definition, blurred distinctions between different forms of community engagement and controversy regarding who constitutes the community (see 3.3).

The same applies to employability skills. There are so many skills that employees are looking for in graduates. They expect that students should have the complete package:

A set of attributes, skills, and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy (see 2.2.4).

Experience and perceptions go hand in hand. One verbatim quote from a student really puts the service learning experience and his/her ultimate perception in context:

“Even if it has only changed or improved one of my qualities and skills, one quality and skill can make a difference between being employable or not.”

Another student said:

“This type of project helps one to reflect on your own character and how far you want to touch people’s lives”.

In conclusion, the main aim of this chapter was to address the following two secondary research questions, namely:

*What are the experiences and perceptions of second-year students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS of service learning?*

*What type of employability skills do service learning projects create or foster, according to these students?*

The data discussed in sections 5.2 to 5.6 clearly showcase the experiences and perceptions of second-year students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS, and how they changed after formally introducing them to service learning literature. The employability skills the students identified correlated with the literature consulted and discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.2.6).

The students also clearly made a connection between their service learning experiences and the employability skills they should acquire for the world of work. The data were rich and by using verbatim quotes from the students the validity of the findings from the 2013 data could be confirmed.

Chapter 6 focuses on an analysis and interpretation of the 2015 data – these are focus group interview data. The data were collected in order to enable the researcher to triangulate the information and eventually complete the final framework that will be discussed in Chapter 7.

# Chapter 6

## STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE LEARNING AND EMPLOYABILITY: THE 2015-DATA

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*Without data you're just another person with an opinion.*

W. Edwards Deming

### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 addressed the analysis, interpretation and reporting of the data collected during 2013. This chapter builds on Chapter 5 in an attempt to answer the following secondary research question:

#### **Secondary research question 5:**

*What evidence is there of a relationship between service learning and employability skills?*

In the next phase of this study the students' experiences and perceptions of service learning as captured in 2013 were compared with their experiences and perceptions as reported in 2015. For this round, data were collected in 2015 by means of focus group interviews. The researcher specifically contacted the same students that participated in the study in 2013, because in 2015 most of these students would either be working, or be studying for their honours degrees and looking for full-time employment. The researcher invited all the 2013 EGAP60206 students (i.e. 292 in total) to be part of the focus group interviews as discussed in Chapter 4 (see 4.6.1). In total 40 participants eventually participated in the focus group interviews (see 4.6.4), although only 36 participants' interview responses were transcribed (see 4.5.2).

The purpose of the study was to investigate the second-year BCom students' experiences and perceptions of the service learning module in 2013 and the

influence or effect it had on their perceptions of the impact they believed it had on their employability skills by 2015.

The approach used to analyse, interpret and report the findings (in this chapter) is depicted in Figure 6.1 below.



Source: Author's own (2016).

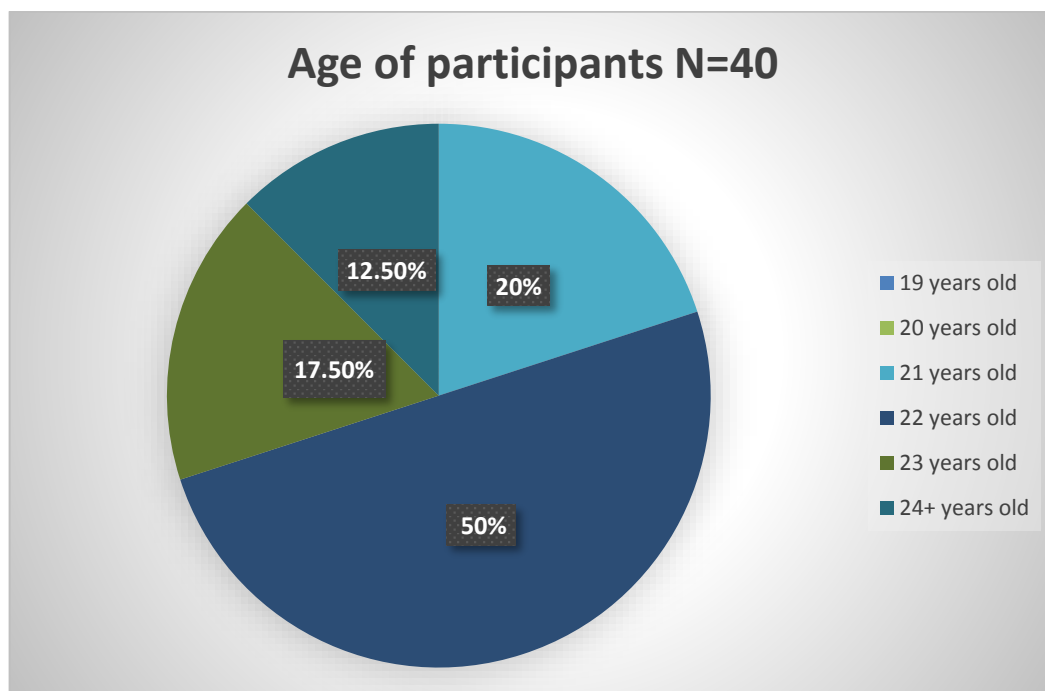
**Figure 6.1: Discussion of findings in Chapter 6**

## 6.2 Demographic Details of Participants

This section reports on the demographic information of the participants who were included in the data collection process during 2015. Please note that the term 'majority' is used in this chapter to refer to the highest frequencies of options/selections made during the focus group interviews and does not necessarily indicate a frequency of more than 50% of the total number of participants. Only 36 out of 40 of the participants' data could eventually be transcribed. The remaining four participants in the original sample did not participate actively during the relevant focus group interviews; they mostly listened to what the other students said, nodded or shook their heads in either agreement or disagreement and therefore did not really actively participate during the focus group interviews by making comments.

### 6.2.1 Age of the participants

The first question of the focus group interview was to determine the students' respective ages. By starting off with a neutral question such as this, the participants were able to get a feel of the 'mood and/or setting' of the focus group interview and how it would proceed. The total number of participants was 40; thus N=40. The results indicated that half (50%) of the students were 22 years old. The youngest participants were 21 years of age (20%) and the oldest participants' ages were 24 years and above (12, 5%). The researcher had a tick box with the different age groups in front of her and as the students answered she ticked the indicated age. Audio recording the interviews, with the consent of all the participants, enabled the researcher to also verify their ages. Figure 6.2 depicts the ages of the participants.



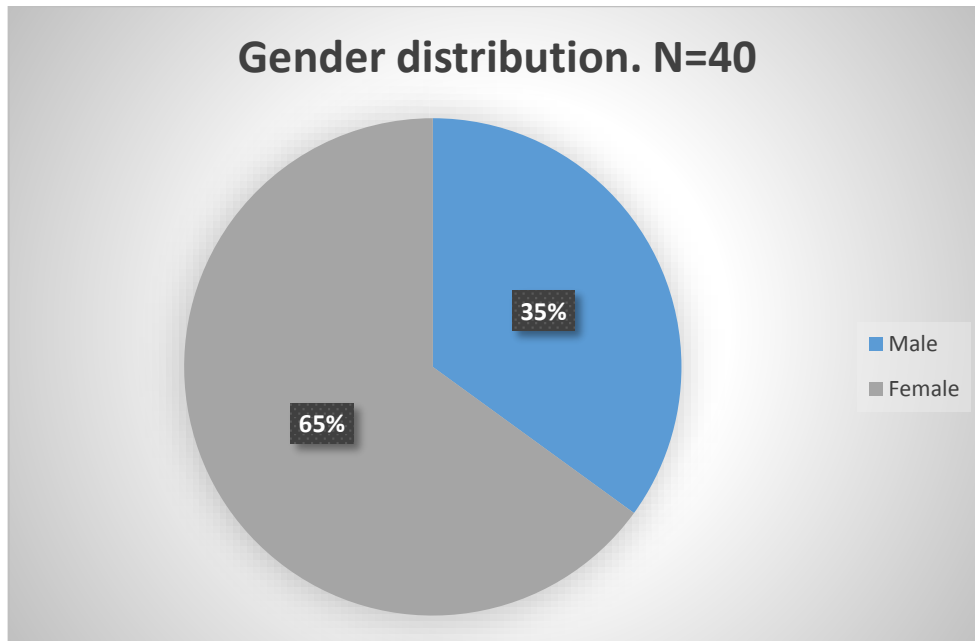
Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 6.2: Age distribution of the participants**

### 6.2.2 Gender of the participants

In answering Question 2 of the focus group interview the students had to confirm their gender to the researcher. In total, 26 female participants (65%) took part in

the focus group interviews and only 14 males (35%). Thus the majority of the participants were female (N=40). Figure 6.3 depicts these data.



Source: Author's own (2016).

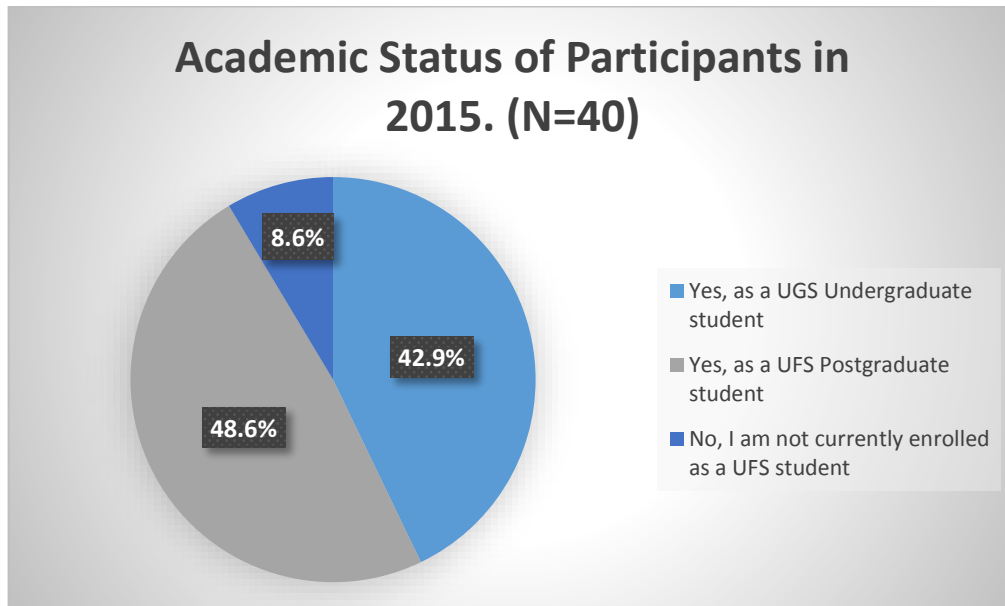
**Figure 6.3: Gender distribution of the participants**

Although the gender of the participants eventually did not show a direct influence on the findings, it assisted the researcher to create the mood and to make the participants feel at ease.

### 6.2.3 Status of the participants

Participants were asked to indicate whether they still were enrolled at the UFS in an undergraduate or postgraduate course, or were not enrolled at the time of the research and were already employed. In total, 48.6% of the participants who participated in the focus group interviews were still enrolled at the UFS, but as postgraduate students. This was in line with the participants' expected study career at the UFS, namely if they had followed the 2012 BCom curriculum it means that these students had passed all their modules, did not repeat a module or academic year and had already graduated. Therefore, in 2015 these participants enrolled for postgraduate studies because a BCom degree usually takes three (3) years to complete. Another 42.9% of the participants were still enrolled as undergraduate students at the UFS and thus had not finished their degree within the three (3)

years. The majority of these 42.9% undergraduate participants were accounting students who repeated their third year of study in order to qualify for the accounting honours degree. Figure 6.4 depicts these data.



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 6.4:** Academic status of participants in 2015

### 6.3 The Participants' Recollection and Understanding of Service Learning in 2015

The researcher started off the next section of the focus group discussion by first reminding the students of the EGAP60206 service learning module they had been enrolled for in 2013. The researcher also called to mind the students' final assessment task in EGAP60206 and, in particular, their experiences of service learning and their employability skills (see 4.6.3).

While talking about the final assessment task for the EGAP60206 module in 2013, some of the students commented on their service learning experiences in 2013. Some participants in the group confirmed what was said with remarks like, "O ja, now I remember"; "Yes that was fun and can't believe I actually did all of that". After recalling the final assessment task of 2013, the researcher continued by asking the following focus group question:

*Could you please explain your current understanding of service learning?*

The tree map that was created through NVivo (see Figure 6.5) from the transcribed comments of participants assisted the researcher to identify the most important themes from the data set. The above-mentioned question was put to the participants deliberately in order to be able to compare their perceptions as derived from the 2013 data with the perceptions derived from the 2015 data. The 2013 perceptions had been derived from the data emanating from the pre-implementation questionnaire (see 5.3), post-implementation questionnaire (see 5.6) and the PowerPoint assessment task (see 5.5).



Source: Compiled through Nvivo.\*

**Figure 6.5: Tree map of participants' keywords portraying their understanding of service learning**

\* Nvivo tree maps are used in this chapter to view comparisons of nodes, sources, or attribute value combinations. The tree map will provide the reader with an idea of how often a certain node comes up in the set of data *versus* other nodes, or the quantity of different types of sources the researcher has. (Digital Social Science Center: online).

The following verbatim quotes of participants' responses represent an overview of the participants' understanding of service learning in 2015 as expressed during the focus group interviews:

*“Service learning, in my understanding, is a system in which the students are put active within the society or corporate world. The intention is for students to exercise the knowledge imparted during their course of study and put it into action. Another way to put it: a process of gaining wisdom, i.e. applying knowledge along with identifying the problem.”*

*“A reciprocal relationship with the community where we provide our knowledge gained from our field of study and apply it to help the community and in return we learn and experience from them.”*

*“Service learning equips students with community and employability skills and constantly reassesses students' understanding as well as their ability in to applying these skills.”*

Table 6.1 shows the comparison of the 2013 and 2015 perceptions.

**TABLE 6.1: COMPARISON BETWEEN 2013 AND 2015 PERCEPTIONS**

2013 Perceptions	2015 Perceptions	Similarities
<p><b><u>Helping</u></b> (See 5.3.1 and 5.3.2). Students had the perception that they would be helping the community and would not gain anything from the experience.</p>	<p><b><u>Learning about people and skills</u></b> <i>“It is all about learning to work with a variety of people and serving others in the process gaining employability skills.”</i></p>	NO. There were no similarities between the 2013 data and 2015 data regarding the students' perceptions.
<p><b><u>Waste of time</u></b> (see 5.3.3) Some students had the perception that the module would be a waste of time.</p>	<p><b><u>Can be applied in the real life</u></b> <i>“My understanding of service learning is that it is a process whereby institutional learning or theory is applied or integrated to the community daily projects.”</i></p>	NO There were no similarities between the 2013 data and 2015 data regarding the students' perceptions.
<p><b><u>Something different</u></b> (see 5.3.5) Students were aware that the service learning modules were different from other modules (i.e. the teaching methods and outcomes).</p>	<p><b><u>Service learning is not only community service</u></b> <i>“Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience.”</i></p>	YES

2013 Perceptions	2015 Perceptions	Similarities
<p><b><u>Volunteering</u></b> (see 5.3.3) Students had the perception that they would be volunteering in the community.</p>	<p><b><u>Skills acquired</u></b> <i>“Service learning involves going out into the community and practise the skills you've obtained through higher and tertiary education in a way you can reflect on and contribute to the uplifting of the community which provides an enriching learning experience for the student as well.”</i></p>	NO There were no similarities between the 2013 data and 2015 data regarding the students' perceptions.
<p><b><u>Knowledge sharing</u></b> (see 5.4.1) Students reported in 2013 that they were able to share knowledge and gain insight into the world of work.</p>	<p><b><u>Knowledge sharing</u></b> <i>“When I think back to my service learning experience I would describe service learning as a meaningful way to enhance the community with those skills that I have, thus give back to the community. However, at the same time developing my skills to communicate, interact and share my knowledge with a variety of people. Yet, at the same time the community also teaches and develops me in return.”</i></p>	YES
<p><b><u>Practical experience</u></b> (see 5.4.2) Students reported that they gained practical experience in 2013 through the service learning module.</p>	<p><b><u>Experience</u></b> <i>“Service learning is a practical experience whereby you apply yourself in your current field of study in your local community.”</i></p>	YES

Source: Author's own (2016).

In Table 6.1 the verbatim quotes provide evidence of some similarities between the participants' perceptions of service learning in 2013 and those in 2015. However, a few themes identified from the 2013 data were not repeated, namely volunteering, waste of time and helping. This indicates that some of the participants' perceptions indeed changed over a period of two to three years and that they, at the time of the 2015 data collection, grasped the concept that service learning is a credit-bearing module requiring students to go out in the community in order to share their academic knowledge and form reciprocal relationships with community members (see 3.3 and 3.4).



**TABLE 6.2: PARTICIPANTS' RECALLING AND UNDERSTANDING OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS**

2013 Understanding of Employability Skills	2015 Understanding of Employability Skills	Similarities
<p><b><u>World of work and real life experience</u></b> (see 5.6.2.1.4) The 2013 data showed that students gained insight into the world of work and gained real life experience.</p>	<p><b><u>Skills acquired</u></b> <i>"The skills one grows in make an influential contribution to the workplace after your studies. These are skills that will make me more employable in future, skills that differentiate me from other applicants, and give me more of a chance of being employed."</i> <i>"Skills that give you a competitive edge when hunting for employment".</i></p>	YES
<p><b><u>Applying theory in practice and knowledge sharing</u></b> (see 5.6.2.1.3) Due to the service learning experience in 2013 the students reported that they were able to apply theory in practice and to share their knowledge about BCom module content.</p>	<p><b><u>Knowledge sharing</u></b> <i>"Employability skills are those skills that give one an edge when seeking employment unlike theoretical knowledge."</i></p>	YES
<p><b><u>Self-confidence and self-esteem</u></b> (see 5.6.2.1.6) The students' self-confidence and self-esteem improved due to the service learning experience, because they indicated that they felt empowered after they had shared knowledge and that this led to their improved self-esteem.</p>	<p><b><u>Individual growth</u></b> <i>"Employability skills involve much more than qualifying for the minimum requirements needed to be employed. It goes beyond a mere degree or qualification. It is something that puts you apart from others, something unique. Furthermore, it's not just about getting a job; the difficult part is keeping it. Thus, it is important to keep developing and bettering yourself, because you never know when a better version of you might take your place and leave you jobless and outdated."</i></p>	YES
<p><b><u>Communication skills</u></b> (see 5.6.2.1.1) Communication skills of the students improved through the service learning experience. They had to communicate with the community, organisation or business in an environment that they had not been exposed to previously.</p>	<p><b><u>Communication Skills</u></b> <i>"These are non-technical skills; knowledge and understandings that are important in order to gain employment and participate effectively in the workplace. Often referred to as soft skills, they include skills such as communication, self-management, planning, decision making and problem solving."</i></p>	YES
<p><b><u>People skills and working with diverse people</u></b> (see 5.6.2.1.2) Students had to work with people from diverse backgrounds during their 20 hours of service learning. They reported that working with people from diverse backgrounds assisted the students to learn people skills.</p>	<p><b><u>Workplace</u></b> <i>"Employability skills are the skills which are normally assumed by the employer the future employee possesses. These skills include a better understanding of how to act professionally and using computer skills, as well as planning duties once employed, and how to become the best at the position they are employed to, and maybe get a promotion or to increase the company's image."</i></p>	YES

Source: Author's own (2016).

Although the participants did not use exactly the same words or phrases that they used in their respective comments and answers in 2013, the skills they mentioned were acknowledged both in the 2013 and the 2015 data. This supports research objective 5 stated in section 1.3.3, namely:

*To investigate the possible relationship between employability skills and service learning in the 2013-year group and the 2015 students.*

The data and the comparison in Table 6.2 are also confirmed by the literature on employability skills in the higher education environment that was reported in Chapters 2 and 3 about employability skills and service learning as a pedagogy (see 2.2.1, 2.2.8, 2.2.9, 3.4.1 and 3.7). Participants' explanations of their understanding of employability skills were based on recollections from their service learning experiences of 2013.

## **6.5 Participants' Views on the EGAP60206 Service Learning Experience and their own Employability**

Follow-up questions were asked during the focus group interviews to determine whether the students were of the opinion that their EGAP60206 service learning experience in 2013 had made them more aware of employability skills (see Appendix E). The participants had to provide reasons for their responses, that is, why they were more (or less) aware of their own employability skills. Only 3% of the participants responded that the EGAP60206 service learning experience made them less aware of employability skills. One participant answered that he already knew everything:

*"I know how to work in groups, how to compile my CV and how to cope under pressure as well as know my strength and weakness."*

Figure 6.7 represents the distribution of awareness among the focus group participants. In total, 33% of the participants indicated that they were not sure whether the EGAP experience made them more or less aware of employability skills. The Employability Link model (see 2.5.4) addresses the transition conditions and contextual support for students who are not sure about their career path or employability. In the final framework, proposed in Chapter 7 (see section 7.8), the

researcher attempts to address the concerns of the unsure student: Students should be made aware of their own employability skills upon entering a course at any given HEI.

The following remark shows a participant's doubt about his/her 'awareness'.

*"It was a great experience to be involved with; I got out of my comfort zone and learned a different side of myself, the world and other people. However, I wish that it was more in line with what I was studying and are still studying. Thus, I did improve certain skills, but unfortunately I feel that it didn't assist me in a way to make me more employable or improve specific employability skills that I require."*

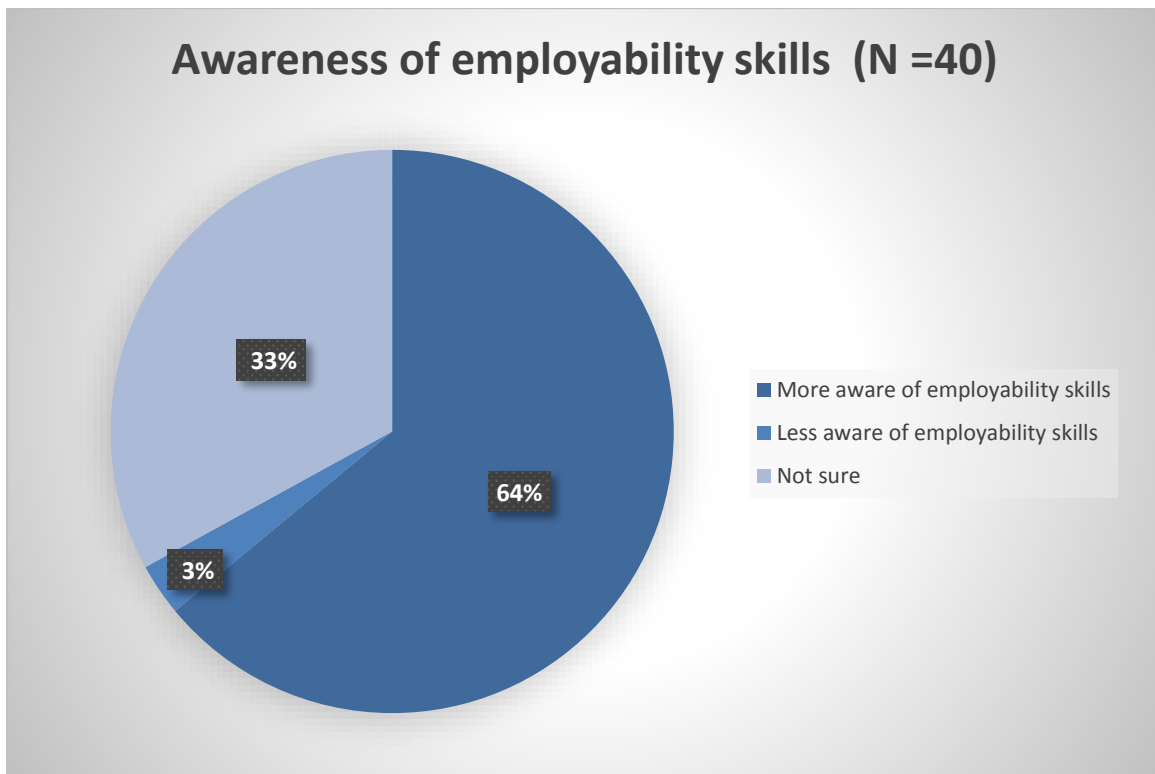
Nevertheless, the majority of the students (64%) were of the opinion that the EGAP60206 experience made them more aware of employability skills. This links directly to the consulted literature where one of the elements in each employability model discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.5.1 to 2.5.4) is creating awareness of employability skills. This is also seen in the following remarks that were made:

*"Because now since I am doing my honours degree and want to work next year, I have to use those employability skills to market myself to my potential employers."*

*"That there are certain skills that one needs in the work environment that are not taught at tertiary level, such as practical communication skills, how one sells and markets him/herself, time management and consistently being able to work under pressure."*

*"I believe that the skills acquired from EGAP, such as flexibility, communication and teamwork skills would make it easier to attract employment opportunities."*

These participants therefore showed that they understood the importance of service learning as pedagogy to enhance and foster the employability skills of BCom students.



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 6.7:** Awareness of employability skills

Students' reflective journal entries (see 5.5.1) completed in 2013 showed that service learning also fosters lifelong learning (see 2.6). The majority of the students who shared their experiences indicated that the module made them more aware of employability skills. Some mentioned that they realised after the experience that their degree, their studies and the usual classes they attended were not enough to secure employment in future (see 2.1.2 and 2.9).

The tree map shown in the figure (6.8) was compiled by NVivo and shows that many students maintained that they knew more about being employable in 2015 and that the skills developed through the EGAP60206 module had helped them to compile their CV for work. Participants also mentioned that they wanted to improve their communication skills. Thus, the conclusion that may be reached is that most students were more aware of their own employability skills after having completed the service learning module.





Experiential learning (see 1.2.1; Figure 1.1.) therefore came to a full circle for the students who participated in the focus group interviews. Students had the opportunity to test new concepts and realised the effect of the EGAP60206 module of 2013 (after a period of two years) on their own employability skills. The interviews created a valuable, concrete opportunity for the participants to reflect on the service learning experience and test the implications. As required in service learning, the students indeed reflected on their experiences and perceptions (see 3.5.6) and were able to 'test' their experiences and new knowledge in either the world of work for those who were already employed, or their undergraduate or postgraduate studies until 2015.

### 6.6.1 Expectations not met in the service learning module

The students who asserted that they had not acquired employability skills through the module were also given the opportunity to express their opinions about service learning. These participants indicated that they did not plan enough and that the sudden change of the envisaged group work into an individual task also influenced their perceptions (see 3.6.3), for example:

*"It could have been a lack of implementation of the action plan or a cut of activities that would have enhanced such skills. The timing of enhancement might have been the issue; for the skills could have been visible maybe a year later."*

*"I feel due to the unorganized method in which it was applied as well as the lack of commitment from the university to help students achieve their required tasks, hindered the ability of the students to gain from the project."*

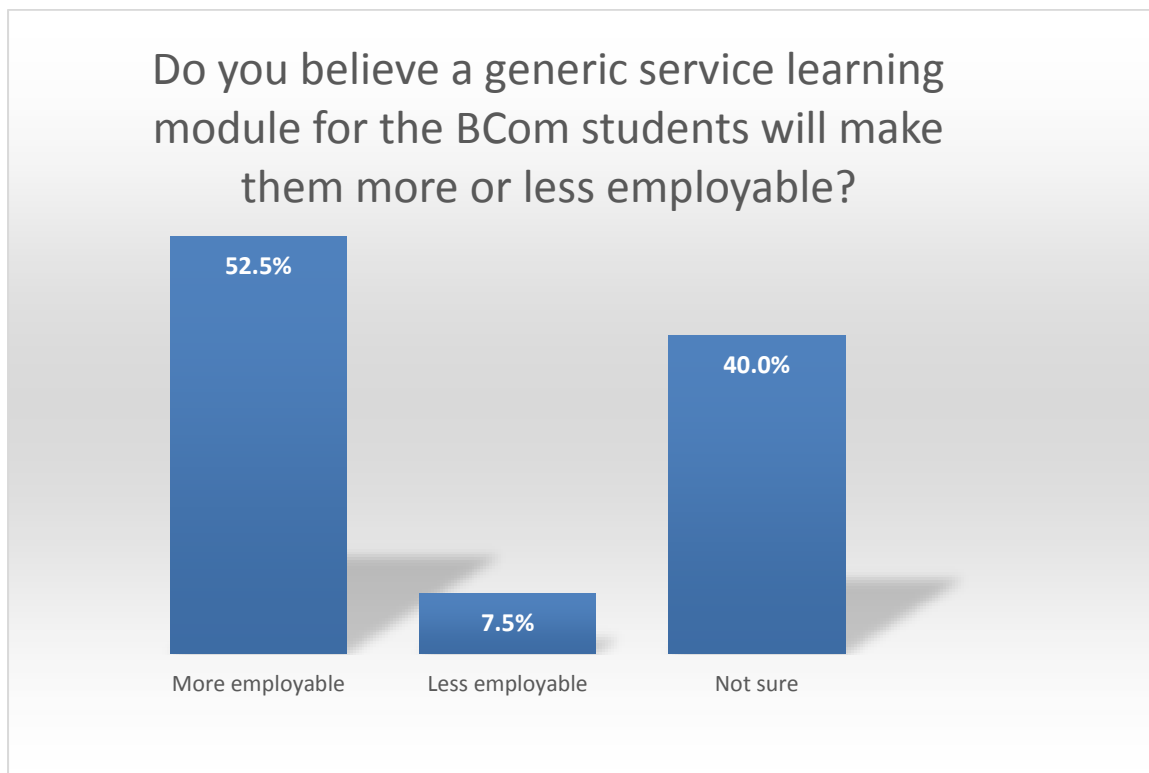
Since students have diverse personalities it should be obvious that not all the participants would experience the module as positively as others. It therefore also might be that some of the students did not acquire or enhance their employability skills in the process. Figure 6.10 shows an NVivo tree map of the participants' references to reasons why some of them maintained that they had not acquired the required skills.



expectations of the EGAP60206 module, the sudden change in the service learning task from group work to individual work apparently had a tremendous effect on some of them (see 3.7, 3.7.1, 3.7.3).

## 6.7 The Effect of a Generic Service Learning Module on Students' Employability Skills

The third last question in the focus group interviews was whether the students believed that a generic service learning module for BCom students would make them more employable, less employable or whether they were not sure. The responses of the participants are summarised in Figure 6.11.



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 6.11: The possible effect of a generic service learning module on the employability of BCom students**

The majority of the participants in the focus group interviews (i.e. 52.5%) confirmed that they believed that a generic service learning module would make BCom students more employable. Only 7.5% of the participants answered that a generic service learning module would make BCom students less employable. One of the reasons the participants gave for this answer was academic pressure, for example:

*“I think that it will only put more academic pressure on courses that already have too many credits to begin with.”*

The remainder of the participants (i.e. 40%) indicated that they were not sure whether a generic service learning module would make BCom students more or less employable. Some participants, however, mentioned that the service learning module should be more structured and that the UFS should support students more:

*“And only if the university ensures that the students can actually apply their field of studies in the community and not just perform any general task, this can be achieved by arranging with local businesses or communities beforehand.”*

The reasons that the participants mentioned for believing that a BCom student would be more employable after having completed a generic service learning module relate to the themes discussed in sections 6.7.1 and 6.7.2 below.

### **6.7.1 A different kind of module**

The theme ‘a different kind of module’ emanated from the data analysis reported in Chapter 5 (see 5.3.5, 5.3.7, 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.5.1.1, 5.5.1.5, 5.5.2.1.2, 5.5.2.1.5, 5.6.3 and 5.6.5). This means that the teaching in a service learning module is different from the traditional mode of teaching used in other modules. Quotes from students shown below, confirm this perception among the 2015 participants:

*“I do think it could since a lot of modules are merely theory based. However, I think it should be engineered to facilitate different degrees in BCom, because BCom has a vast variety of different degrees. If it is not more degree-specific one would lose the quantity and quality of what it could enhance. For example, different working areas will require different employability skills.”*

*“The knowledge gained from the subject on the various topics.”*

It is therefore clear that most of the participants mentioned that BCom students would be more employable after having completed a generic service learning module because such a module is different from conventional modules (see 5.5.1) and since students would have to practically implement their shared knowledge.

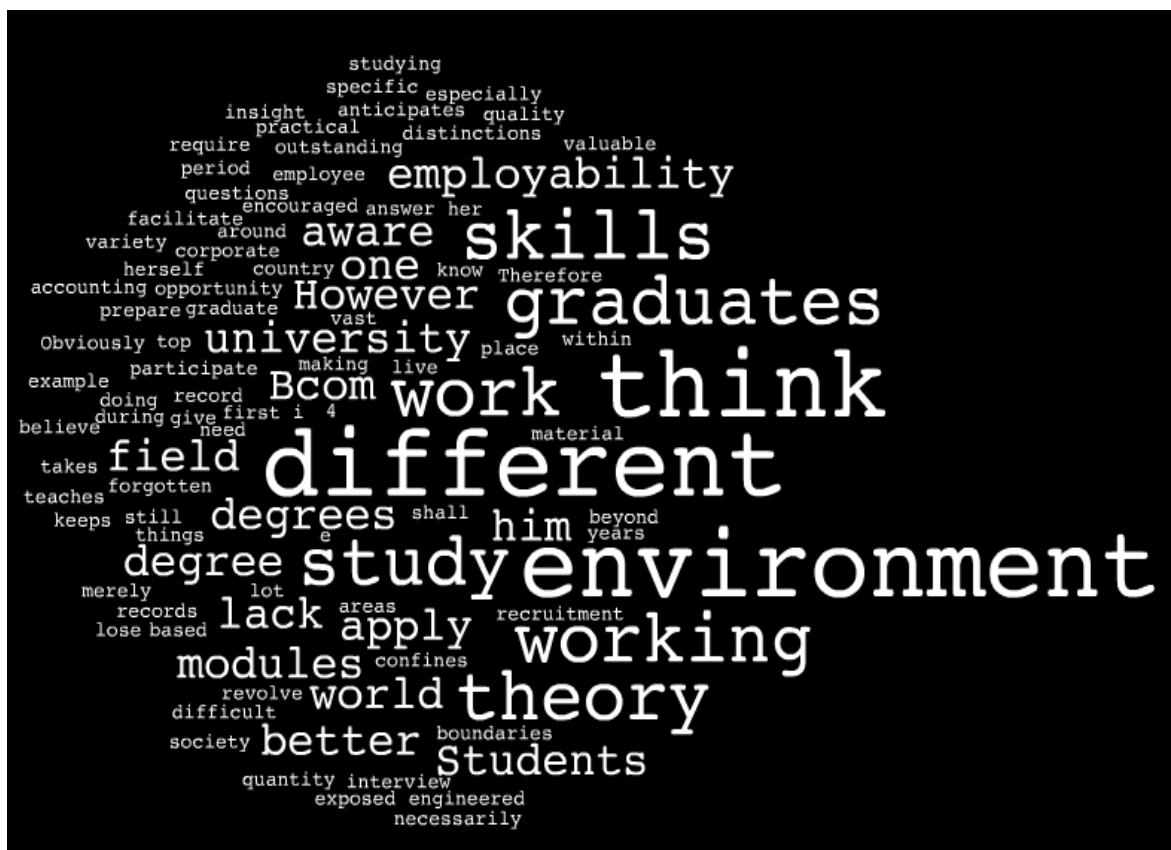
## 6.7.2 Preparation for the work environment

Entering the world of work (i.e. work environment) can be quite challenging (see 2.3). Companies expect to receive a well-trained graduate who is equipped with the necessary skills. The quotes below illustrate the participants' perceptions of the importance of being prepared for the work environment:

*"Being aware of what the work environment anticipates from oneself and how should one prepare him/herself for example how to answer interview questions."*

*"It teaches valuable insight into the working environment and society we do not necessarily get from other modules, especially if you are studying accounting."*

*"I believe it would expose them more to their field and environment, which will better develop them."*



Source: Compiled through Nvivo.

**Figure 6.12: Tree map - Relevance of a generic service learning module**

The NVivo tree map shown in Figure 6.12 shows the key themes in the participants' answers and especially the themes, 'a different type of module', 'work

environment', 'graduate skills' and 'working'. The tree map also shows other keywords such as think, study, theory and so on, but the two largest words (those occurring most often) according to the tree map, namely 'different' (see 6.7.1) and 'work environment' (see 6.7.2).

This is confirmed in a remark made by one participant on this topic:

*“This is because they will go out of their way to polish skills and attain new ones; it makes them more aware of what employers want.”*

One can therefore conclude that the majority of the participants confirmed what literature says about a service learning experience, namely that it prepares students for the world of work and that students should find it valuable (see 3.4; Table 3.1).

## 6.8 Service Learning as a Pedagogy to Improve Employability Skills

The second last question the researcher directed at the focus group interview participants was whether they thought that service learning could serve as a pedagogy to improve employability skills. The students first had to respond 'yes', 'no' or 'uncertain' and then motivate their answers. (The researcher explained to the participants that pedagogy is a method and practice of teaching.)

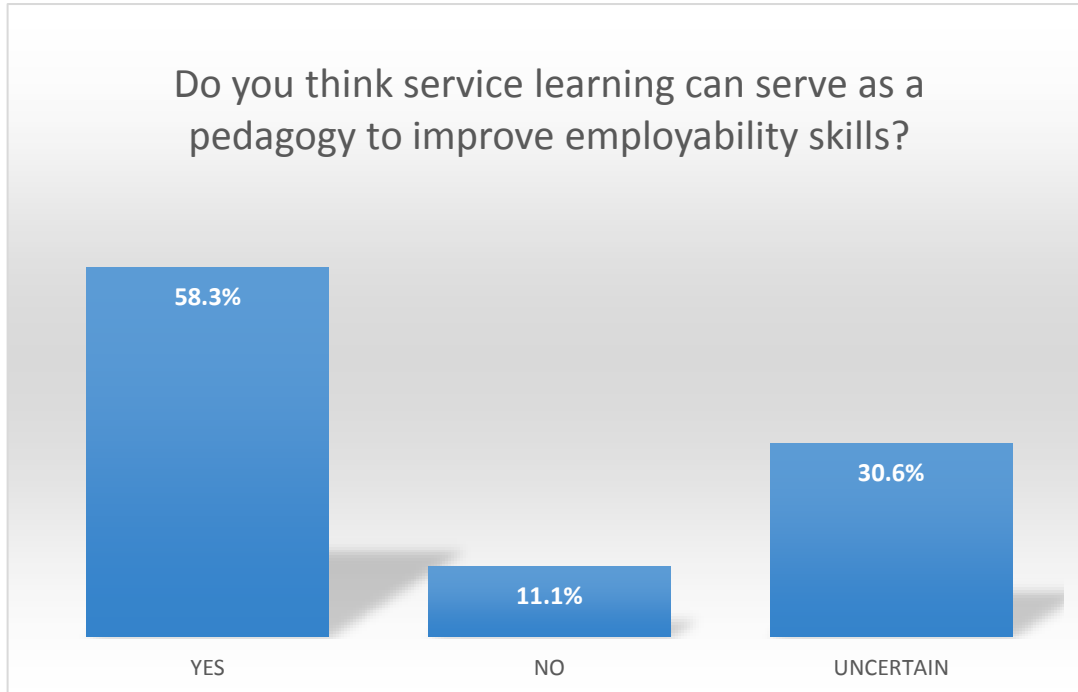
A majority of 58.3% of the participants confirmed that service learning could serve as pedagogy to improve employability skills. This confirmation is in accordance with the literature regarding service learning as a pedagogy that was reported in Chapter 3 (see 3.5.3). Only 11.1% of participants answered 'no', and 30.6% were 'uncertain'. The data distribution is portrayed in Figure 6.13.

The participants who answered 'yes' motivated their answers as generally portrayed in the following few remarks:

*“Yes, because what I have experienced in university, is that our course is more theory based which does not work well for us students because when we go out and work, we only know the theory not the practical work.”*

*“Our Faculty is very much theory-focused. Once graduates start working, it is like a three-year-old thrown into a swimming pool. Service learning will make students conduct themselves employable both in mind and in*

*appearance. Students will also discover their strengths and weaknesses; by the time they enter the corporate world, those weaknesses will be improved by then.”*



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 6.13: Service learning as pedagogy to improve employability skills**

Those students who answered 'no' mainly referred to time and credit overload as reasons why they did not agree that service learning could serve as a pedagogy for improving employability skills, for example:

*“I think more than that would not have worked ideally for me as it is very time consuming.”*

The motivations of those participants who indicated that they were 'uncertain' about the issue are portrayed in the following quoted remarks:

*“I do think it would require more structure in the sense that it would focus on specific employability skills. Thus, it should benefit a student studying a specific direction / degree.”*

*“If applied properly and a committed approach is taken by the University, they intend to teach the students in the method, it must be treated differently than other modules and cannot be expected of the students to attend a class, just explaining what must be achieved, and then expecting them to*



### 6.8.1 Theory application

The participants mentioned the application of theory in practice as motivation for their opinion that a generic service learning module could improve employability. This response surfaced in almost all the data sets, including those reported in Chapter 5 (see 5.4.2). Service learning is a unique experience, and students gain a deeper approach to learning and an inclination towards lifelong learning through the application of theory in the community, organisation or business (see 5.4.1). The following remarks made by participants confirm this:

*“Mostly we only acquire theoretical knowledge in academic education and think we are ready for the outside world, but certain skills are not learned in class, such as how to acclimatize in a completely new environment.”*

*“It takes you out of a purely academic environment into society.”*

The application of theory in practice is supported by all the service learning models discussed in Chapter 3 (see 3.5.1 to 3.6.4) and the employability models discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.5.1 to 2.5.4). This, therefore, confirms that service learning as pedagogy has the potential to satisfy the requirement of employability skills in BCom students.

### 6.8.2 Experience

Participants in the focus groups realised that experience is crucial for the world of work and that knowledge learned from books is not enough. In the twenty-first century companies are looking for experienced workers. In 2015, the focus group participants were two years older than in 2013 and most of them had already completed their studies for an undergraduate degree, or were busy with their postgraduate studies, or were already employed full time. The following remarks of participants confirm that the service learning experience provided valuable experiences, which in turn improved their employability skills:

*“This is also a form of training for the corporate world.”*

*“Some subjects you learn much better through actual working.”*

The importance of experience for enhancing students' employability skills can be linked with the CareerEDGE model discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.5.1), as well as with and Yorke and Knight's (2006) USEM model (see 2.5.3). In addition, 'the



*personal goals. Service learning has been a platform for me to be at service and reach self-actualisation at the same time."*

*"Most importantly, individuals running the programme had a huge effect on the outcome of the experience. Among the others, the lecturer is an influential person and she is very much passionate about empowering the personal development in students."*

*"I really liked the initial idea that we were going to do the service learning in groups. At that stage of my studies I was still very shy and my comfort zone was rather to do things on my own, because I knew that I would give 100%. Thus I missed the opportunity to work with colleagues and to teach myself to trust other people. Furthermore, I think it would have been a great experience to learn different skills from my colleagues and to see how they think and approach things. Furthermore, if everyone in the group would have done their part, then I am of the opinion that we would definitely have improved a greater variety of skills."*

The verbatim quotes above also illustrate the importance of careful planning and implementation of a service learning module, and the commitment required from all the role players.

The participants' remarks and comments in the focus group interviews are valuable because they also assisted the researcher to compile the final proposed framework, presented in Chapter 7.

## **6.10 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to address the following secondary research question:

*What evidence is there of a relationship between service learning and employability skills?*

From the focus group interview data, it is safe to make an assumption that, through reflection, the participants were able to identify a relationship between service learning and employability skills. The verbatim quotes and themes (see tree maps 6.5, 6.6, 6.8, 6.10, 6.12, 6.14 and 6.15) clearly show the connection that participants made between a service learning experience and the development of employability skills.

Even though participants also mentioned the obstacles experienced in the EGAP60206 module in 2013 (see 3.7.3), two years after completing the module most of them realised the importance of the service learning experience, namely sharing their knowledge, what is required in the world of work, and the effect the module had on their own personal growth.

Chapter 6 is rich in data and the verbatim quotes used exemplify the participants' recollection of their service learning experience in 2013, and how the experience had impacted their employability skills. The comparison and integration of the consulted literature findings reported in Chapters 2 and 3, as well as the data analysis and discussions in Chapters 5 and 6 eventually resulted in the framework that is provided in the final chapter (Chapter 7).

# Chapter 7

## CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, VALUE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

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*He who does not research has nothing to teach.*

Proverb

### 7.1 Introduction

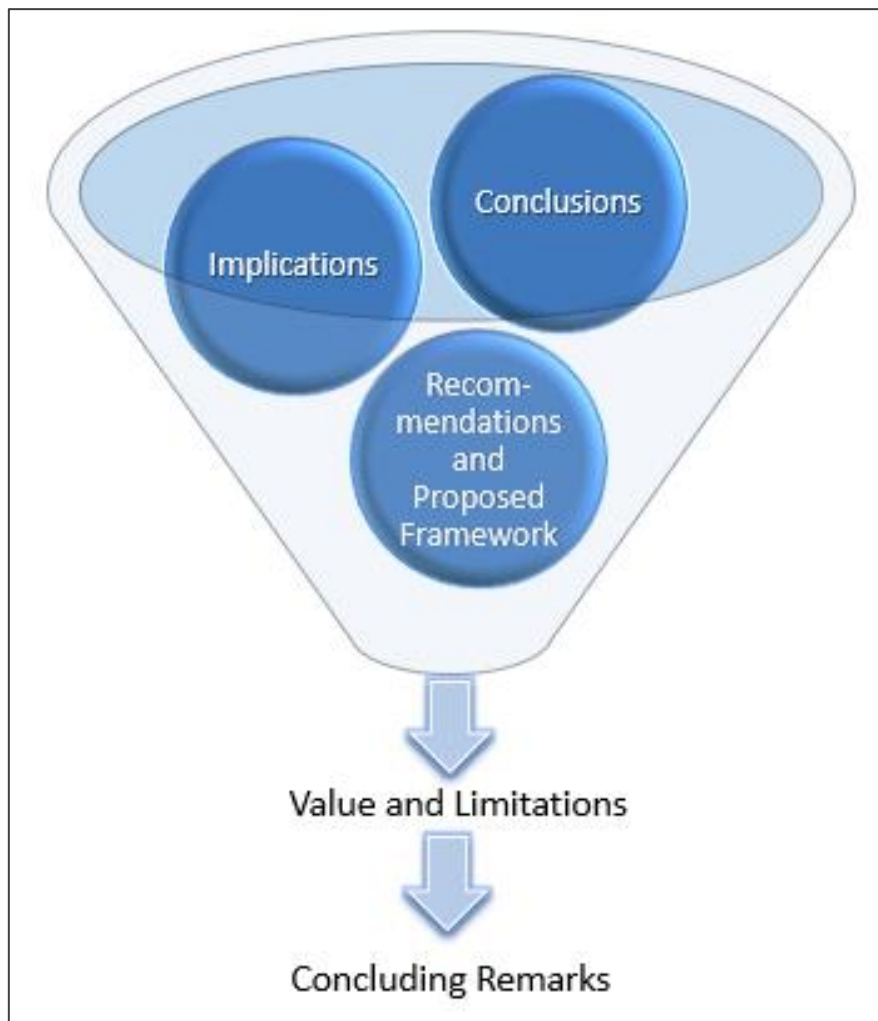
The aim of this study was to determine whether service learning can serve as pedagogy to improve employability skills in BCom students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS.

This chapter commences with an overview of the study by providing a synopsis of the main findings as related to the research questions. The conclusions formulated are followed by implications, a number of recommendations of how these implications could be attended to and, finally, a proposed framework with guidelines for the planning and implementing a service learning module that will foster and develops students' employability skills. The chapter is concluded by emphasising the value of the study, a discussion of the limitations that could be identified, and suggestions for further research.

The final secondary research question formulated in Chapter 1 is also addressed in this chapter, namely:

*What provisional framework and guidelines can be proposed for service learning modules to enhance the employability of students?*

The aspects addressed for the conclusion of this thesis are illustrated in Figure 7.1.



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 7.1: Aspects addressed in Chapter 7**

## 7.2 Conclusions

Chapter 1 in this thesis provided an outline of the study, including the various primary and secondary research questions that guided the study (see 1.3.3). The primary research question is answered in this chapter by comparing and integrating all the answers obtained to the first five secondary research questions as well as the proposed framework resulting from the sixth research question.

In section 7.2 the first five research questions, therefore, are reviewed along with the main findings related to each question in order to draw final conclusions. In section 7.3 the implications of the research findings are explicated followed by a number of recommendations and the final proposed framework.

### **7.2.1 What are the current local and global perspectives on employability skills within the higher education sector?**

The aim of the first secondary research question was to obtain clarity on the current local and global perspectives on employability skills in the higher education sector (see 2.2.4).

Chapter 2 provided a concept analysis of the definitions and descriptions used to describe 'employability skills' within the higher education sector. From the analysis, the researcher arrived at a definition and understanding of employability skills suitable for the purpose of this research (see 2.2.1).

The employability models discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.5.1 to 2.5.4) give prominence to a range of employability skills which the higher education sector should foster and embed in curricula, especially the BCom curricula. It was concluded that students should be equipped with these employability skills, namely verbal and non-verbal communication skills, leadership and working with diverse people to name a few (see 2.4) and not just theoretical knowledge.

The construct of employability is a complex phenomenon encompassing more than a mere set of practical skills. It is not the responsibility of HEIs alone to foster and embed employability skills in a curriculum, but it is also the responsibility of companies in the world of work, the students, government and professional bodies to make contributions in this regard (see 2.2.3 and 2.4). Not only do students usually believe that obtaining a degree automatically will secure them a job, but they also usually have the perception that they have the necessary skills required to be successful in the world of work (see Chapter 2; 2.2.8). Government documents and the teaching and learning strategy of the UFS emphasise the importance of employability skills (see 2.2.5 and Appendix F) for success in a career.

At the end of Chapter 2 the researcher proposed an initial framework based on the employability skills literature consulted and discussed in the chapter (see 2.7; Figure 2.10). This was the first step towards the proposed framework with guidelines that is proposed in this chapter.

In summary, due to the lack of a uniform definition or extensive list of employability skills that students should develop before they enter the world of work (see 2.3), further

investigations are needed with a focus on curriculum design that accommodates, fosters and develops employability skills within an undergraduate degree course.

### **7.2.2 What are the current local and global perspectives on service learning as a pedagogical approach in higher education and how does it link with employability skills?**

Chapter 3 of this report was devoted to addressing secondary research question 2. The chapter commenced with a clarification of the relation and difference between community engagement (see 3.2) and service learning (see 3.3), namely that service learning is one of different manifestations of community engagement, and that it differs from pure community service. The UFS has its own definition and guidelines for service learning modules (see 3.6). Service learning at the UFS does not imply volunteering to deliver a service to the community, but involves a credit-based course in which students should share their academic knowledge with the community in order to develop a reciprocal relationship among the student, university and the community.

The four service learning models discussed in Chapter 3 (see 3.5.1 to 3.5.4) do not only focus on a service learning experience or module, but also on the effect service learning has on students and the specific employability skills that are acquired through service learning (see 3.4.1).

In Chapter 3 it was concluded that service learning may be used as pedagogy to link with, and therefore foster and develop employability skills in students (see 3.5.3). The most prevalent employability skills referred to in the literature and that can be fostered and/or developed through service learning, include communication skills, increased civic awareness, conflict management, increased/enhanced academic learning, practical experience and lifelong learning (see 3.4; Table 3.1).

Having consulted literature and addressed the first and second research questions in Chapters 2 and 3, the researcher was able to expand the initial framework proposed in Chapter 2 (see 2.7; Figure 2.10). The extended framework provided at the end of Chapter 3 focuses on the importance of and the effect that service learning might have on students and how they could become more employable after completing a service learning module (see 3.8; Figure 3.8).

The researcher was therefore able to conclude from the literature consulted and discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, that service learning would have an effect on students' employability skills, their view about the world of work, and the importance of fostering reciprocal relationships between the students, the university and the community (see 3.7).

### **7.2.3 What are the experiences and perceptions of second-year students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS of service learning?**

Although Chapter 4 did not address any of the secondary research questions, it had a direct impact on the analysis, interpretation and reporting of the empirical research findings provided in Chapters 5 and 6. In responding to all the research questions, Chapter 4 outlined the design and methodology employed in the empirical investigation. The research design and methodology selected for the investigation was a qualitative, exploratory case study with multiple information sources and only limited quantitative enhancement (see 4.5).

The overarching aim of Chapter 5 was to address the third secondary research question as it appears in the heading of this section (see 7.2.3). The results reported in Chapter 5 entailed the experiences and perceptions of the students enrolled for the EGAP60206 service learning module in 2013. This was done by means of analysing and interpreting the students' responses to a number of assessment tasks, including a pre-implementation questionnaire (see 5.3), a letter to a friend (see 5.4), a PowerPoint presentation of their experiences of the service learning project they conducted (including a reflective journal; see 5.5) and a post-implementation questionnaire (see 5.6). The perceptions identified through this analysis and interpretation of the students' assessment tasks included a variety of themes such as volunteering, a waste of time and helping the community.

The students' perceptions clearly changed from the time they had completed the pre-implementation questionnaire to the time they did the PowerPoint presentation, and finally to completion of the post-implementation questionnaire (see 5.6). The analysis of the PowerPoint assignment (see 5.5) indicated that the students had acknowledged the value of the service learning experience, indicating that they were able to apply their knowledge in practice; thus they had gained experience and acquired different

employability skills (see 5.7). The analysis of the letter to a friend, the PowerPoint presentation (including the reflective journal entries) and the post-implementation questionnaire showed that the students eventually got rid of their initial perceptions that the aim of the service learning module was mainly to help or save the community.

Therefore, in 2013, for the majority of the students' service learning had a relatively positive connotation in terms of their experiences. Not only did the students' perceptions change, but they also experienced the value that the service learning module had on their own employability skills.

#### **7.2.4 What type of employability skills do service learning projects create or foster, according to these students?**

The fourth secondary research question was aimed at addressing the employability skills that, according to students, were fostered through service learning projects. Both Chapters 5 and 6 reported findings that relate to this specific secondary research question.

The fact that the PowerPoint assessment task in the EGAP60206 module was changed from a group task to an individual task affected the group work, leadership and conflict management skills that the task was supposed to support (see 5.5.1). Students initially offered resistance to the service learning project and especially, to working with diverse people, and explicitly made this known (see 5.5.2). Nevertheless, the data analysis reported in Chapter 5 (see 5.3 and 5.4) and Chapter 6 (see 6.4) clearly showed a change in the students' initial perceptions about service learning and revealed that they believed they had acquired specific employability skills through their service learning project. The following employability skills they referred to were identified explicitly (see 6.4; Table 6.2):

- Communication skills.
- Working with diverse people.
- Improved self-esteem/self-confidence.

Thus, specific employability skills could be identified during the data analysis. Moreover, these skills can clearly be linked to what is reported in literature and discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.2.6; Table 2.1).

### **7.2.5 What evidence is there of a relationship between service learning and employability skills?**

The qualitative data reported, analysed and interpreted in Chapter 6 were collected in 2015 by means of focus group interviews with a smaller, but purposefully selected, sample of participants who also had participated in the study in 2013. The focus group interviews took place two years after the students had completed the EGAP60206 service learning module. All the students who were enrolled for EGAP60206 in 2013 and whose contact information was available in 2015 were invited to part take in the focus group interviews. From those who volunteered, 40 were eventually purposefully chosen. Before the researcher put the focus group interview questions (see 4.5.2) to the participants, she requested them to call to mind the EGAP60206 module and, specifically, the second last assessment task they had to do (i.e. PowerPoint presentation that included, among others, entries in their own reflective journals).

The 2015 participants were also asked to explain/recall their current understanding and perceptions of service learning (see 6.3). It was clear that their perceptions had changed even more. The participants were also asked to explain what service learning experience entailed, without confusing it with community service or volunteering.

The participants' understanding of employability skills at the time (i.e. in 2015) was analysed in section 6.4 and it was concluded that the students believed that their knowledge sharing and practical experiences assisted them to understand the world of work better.

The participants were also asked explicitly to explain how the service learning module they had completed in 2013 eventually impacted their employability skills; their reactions confirmed that there was a relationship or link between their service learning and their employability skills.

The data analysis and interpretation reported in sections 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8 and 6.9 provided direct evidence that the students' service learning experience had made them more aware of employability skills and that service learning supported the development of employability skills (which is also confirmed in Chapter 2; see 2.7). Verbatim quotes were used to illustrate this. A focus group participant's remark about the effect of

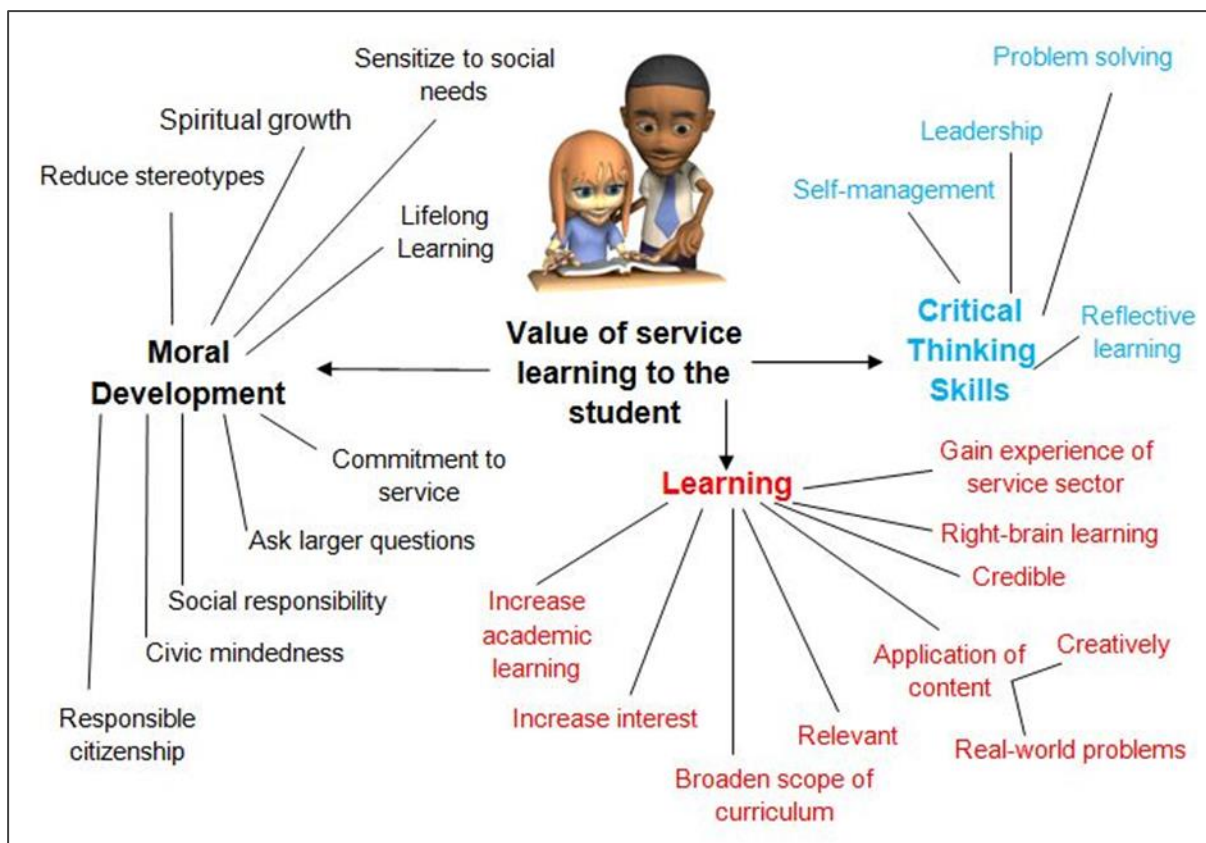
service learning on employment captures the essence of what the students' responses indicated:

*“Service learning will give them the opportunity to think beyond the confines of their study material. Therefore, they shall be encouraged to participate in making this country a better place in which to live; and to know that the world does not revolve only around distinctions on the study records. An outstanding study record may get the graduate in the corporate world during the recruitment period. However, what keeps them employed within the boundaries and takes him/her to the top is skills that most graduates lack.”*

The 2013 data were in accordance with the 2015 data, as well as with the findings of the literature review. This triangulation ultimately laid the foundation on which the proposed framework and guidelines were eventually constructed.

Figure 7.2 illustrates the framework emanating from the empirical findings in Chapters 5 and 6. Key themes from the analysed data provided in Chapters 5 and 6 were used to construct a visual framework (portrayed in Figure 7.2) that illustrates the possible outcome and effect if service learning is used as pedagogy to enhance students' employability skills. Students will not only gain employability skills as illustrated in the first dimension – reflective thinking skills (i.e. self-management, leadership and problem solving), but moral development of the student will take place too – second dimension (i.e. reducing stereotypes, spiritual growth, sensitising to social needs, lifelong learning, and increased social responsibility, but also commitment to service), and lastly the third dimension – learning – will occur (increased academic learning, interest, broadened scope of curriculum and application of content, etc.).

Eventually Figures 2.10, 3.8 and 7.2 were merged to form one final proposed framework (see 7.3.2; Figure 7.4). The final proposed framework is also explained in a practical, visual manner because service learning involves practical application of the knowledge and skills that leads to enhanced employability skills through critical thinking.



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 7.2: Framework emanating from the empirical findings in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6**

### 7.3 Implications and Recommendations

The sixth secondary research question, and therefore finally also the primary research question, can be answered by formulating the implications of and recommendations of how the conclusions made in section 7.2 might be attended to, as well as by proposing a framework of step-by-step guidelines for designing and implementing a service learning module that enables the cultivation of appropriate employability skills in university graduates.

The sixth secondary research question was as follows (see 1.3.3):

*What provisional framework and guidelines can be proposed for service learning modules to enhance the employability of students?*

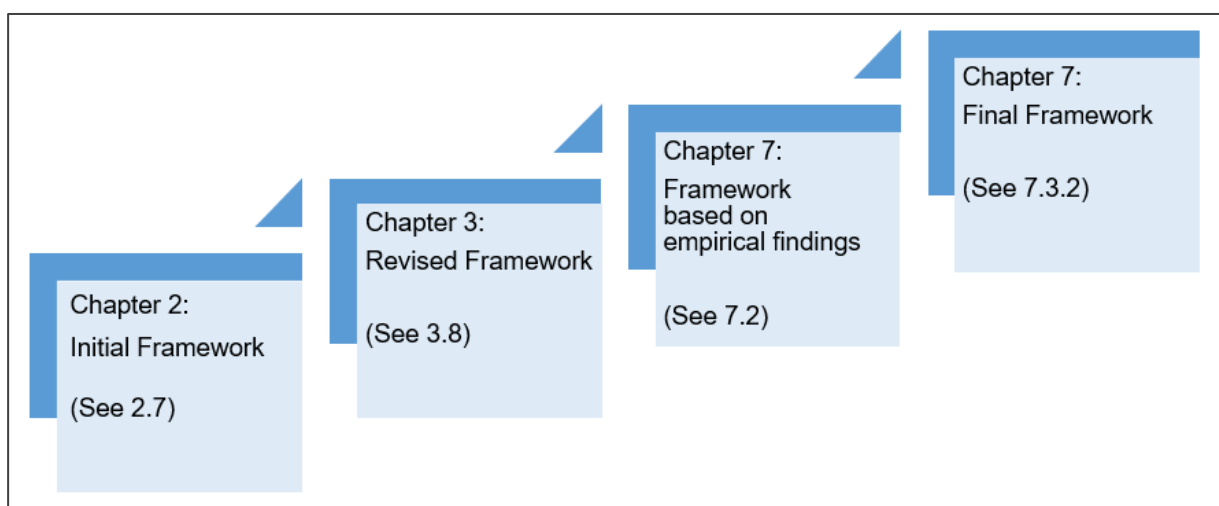
The research problem as formulated in Chapter 1 of this thesis was that it was not known how students experienced and perceived the effect that service learning activities might have on their employability skills (see 1.3.1).

Based on the findings of the literature review and the empirical investigation done and in response to the overarching research question posed, a final proposed framework is offered in section 7.4 of this chapter.

From the data collected in 2013 and 2015, respectively, it is evident that most of the students realised the important effect of what the service learning activities they were exposed to in 2013, eventually had on their employability skills. The reflective entries made in 2013 in their reflective journals (see 5.5.1) were indicative of their initial understanding of the importance of the service learning module. It gradually became clear, however, that the students gained practical experience of what they had learned through service learning (5.6.2), shared their knowledge with others (5.6.1), learned about people in the community (5.6.3), and became aware of their responsibility, employability skills and growth in this regard.

- **What provisional framework and guidelines can be proposed for service learning modules to enhance the employability of students?**

Take note that the final proposed framework in section 7.3.2 contains the revised/adapted features of the preliminary proposed frameworks provided in Chapters 2 and 3, as well as in section 7.2 above; thus the features are not necessarily identical to those presented in Chapters 2 and 3 and section 7.2. Figure 7.3 illustrates the changes in the framework after each chapter.



Source: Author's own (2016).

**Figure 7.3: Compilation of the final proposed framework**

### 7.3.1 General recommendations

The general recommendations included in Table 7.1 were formulated based on the five (5) conclusions discussed in 7.2.1 to 7.2.5, and their implications.

**TABLE 7.1: SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Conclusion	Implication	Recommendations
<p>See 7.2.1 Due to the complexity and no uniform definition of employability skills every HEI and company have their own preferred set of skills that university graduates should have mastered.</p>	<p>There is a need for a uniform definition of service learning as well as a uniform set of employability skills that university graduates should acquire and develop.</p>	<p>HEIs should focus on curriculum design that deliberately accommodates, fosters and develops employability skills. Thus they should ensure that these skills are identified by involving industry, and ultimately that these skills become part and parcel of their graduate attributes.</p>
<p>See 7.2.2 Service learning can be used as pedagogy to link with, foster and develop employability skills in students.</p>	<p>Service learning is an alternative pedagogy (compared to other traditional methods of facilitating student learning) and is especially suitable for fostering and developing employability skills in university students.</p>	<p>Service learning should be deliberately planned in an alternative way to foster, develop and accommodate employability skills. Thus the teaching and learning activities, assessment tasks and service learning projects should all facilitate the acquisition, fostering and development of specific skills that are required in the world of work.</p>
<p>See 7.2.3 Students' experiences and perceptions were evident from their assessment tasks done for the service learning module and were confirmed in focus group interviews two years later. The students had a relatively positive connotation about their service learning experiences.</p>	<p>Through written and reflective assessment tasks such as a letter to a friend and reflective journal entries, students were able to see the value and effect of the service learning experiences, especially as far as the fostering and development of employability skills is concerned.</p>	<p>Written and reflective, but short assessment tasks should be frequently conducted by students in order to facilitate their growth and development, with a focus on employability skills. Reflections should be done from the first encounter with service learning until the very last assessment task. This will be valuable for students because they will be able to reflect on their experiences, create awareness of their own employability skills, and learn to value their service learning experiences.</p>

Conclusion	Implication	Recommendations
<p>See 7.2.4</p> <p>Important skills that emanated from the data reported in Chapter 5 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication skills.</li> <li>• Working with diverse people.</li> <li>• Improved self-esteem/self-confidence.</li> </ul>	<p>Through their service learning experiences and in their assessment tasks, the BCom students not only realised that they had acquired employability skills, but also that they needed to develop some of these skills even more (for example, specific skills highlighted in the conclusion).</p>	<p>The service learning lecturer and facilitators/tutors should also demonstrate a clear link between the service learning activities and employability skills from the beginning of the module. This will aid awareness and enhancement of employability skills. In addition, it would be necessary to focus on these specific skills highlighted in the relevant conclusion.</p>
<p>See 7.2.5</p> <p>The data analysis and interpretation in Chapter 6 provide direct evidence that service learning experiences made students more aware of their own employability skills. This was especially evident in the students' written reflective tasks in 2013 and was confirmed in the 2015 focus group interviews.</p>	<p>Service learning should make students aware of their own employability skills and assist them in identifying and developing these skills continuously.</p> <p>The triangulation of the 2013 findings with 2015 data findings therefore laid the foundations for a possible framework.</p> <p>A service learning experience will have an immediate and lifelong effect on students' employability skills. If carefully and correctly designed and appropriate assessments are used, it might have an effect on their awareness of employability skills and fostering of skills and knowledge enablement in students.</p>	<p>In order for service learning to have an immediate and lifelong effect on the fostering and development of students' employability, it would be necessary to design the service learning module/programme in such a way that it becomes a pedagogy, which in turn confirms the need for proper guidelines in this regard, namely a framework.</p>

Source: Author's own (2016).

### **7.3.2 Final proposed framework**

The final proposed framework is supposed to be a practical, step-by-step and user-friendly tool for academic staff or HEIs. Therefore, it is not merely relevant and useful for the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS. The most important aspect of the framework is that academic staff members involved in service learning should integrate and make students aware of the employability skills that are linked to the service learning pedagogy in their service learning projects, as well as other teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks.

The final proposed framework has gradually come into being during the study (see 2.7, 3.8, 7.2). The literature consulted and reported in Chapters 2 and 3 enabled the researcher to create and validate the academic component of the framework. The constructs used in the framework were compared and integrated to the data analysis and interpretation reported in Chapters 5 and 6. The students' reported experiences and perceptions enabled the researcher to identify possible pitfalls and to implement suggestions to improve the framework.

The framework depicted in Figure 7.4 requires that employability skills and service learning should not be viewed in silos, but rather as a type of pedagogy that can impact and improve the students' chances of employment in the world of work. Students need to be able to adapt to the changing world of work and labour market through practical experience and application of skills. As stated in section 2.2.4, the CBI (2009:6) believes that the emphasis on employability skills should be a core part of a students' university experience. Yorke and Knight's (2006:3; see 2.2.1) definition of employability skills highlights the importance of a set of achievements, understanding and personal attributes that improve individuals' chances to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation. Service learning has been proven to have a pedagogical value in helping students learn core skills and develop community relationships, social skills, cooperation and tolerance skills (Eyler *et al.* 1999; Huckin, 1997:52; Jacoby and Associates 1996:5; see 3.3.1 and 3.4).

Figure 7.4 illustrates the final proposed framework in a step-by-step and practical manner.

## FINAL PROPOSED FRAMEWORK



New BCom student arrives at

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



in the Faculty



ECONOMIC AND  
MANAGEMENT SCIENCES  
EKONOMIESE EN  
BESTUURSWETENSAPPE  
UFS·UV



Enrols for an academic course → **Awareness** is created about the curriculum and module outcomes.



Realises that most modules are only **content-based**.

**Content-based = Factual knowledge without practical experience = Limited employability skills.**

**Guideline: Faculty involvement, Community voice and Module outcome**



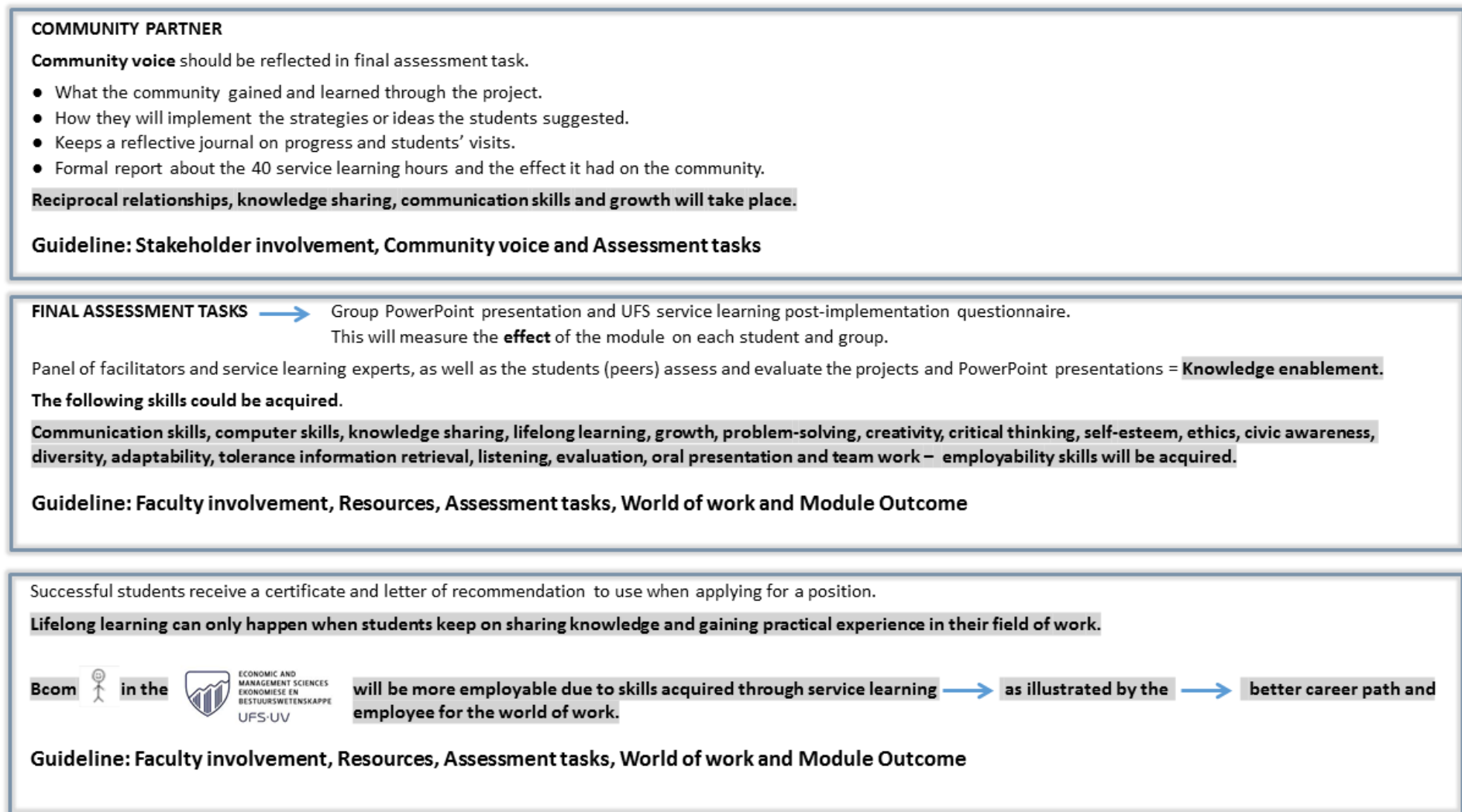
ECONOMIC AND  
MANAGEMENT SCIENCES  
EKONOMIESE EN  
BESTUURSWETENSAPPE  
UFS·UV

Generic service learning module as pedagogy to enhance students' employability skills. Only in second year of study students will have some academic knowledge and skills.

**Fostering of skills** takes place through:

- Lectures and small group sessions for one (1) term to explain service learning and the importance of working in a team = **conflict management, working with diverse people and communication skills will be acquired.**
- Assessment tasks:
  - UFS Service learning Pre-implementation Questionnaire – individual activity.
  - Facilitating in a group understanding service learning and importance of service learning – group activity.
  - Individual SWOT analysis assessment done by each student.
  - Draw up a task list according to SWOT that demonstrates each students' contribution – group activity.
  - Write a weekly **reflective journal** piece according to the DEAL model.
- Student groups are each assigned to a specific community project.
- Groups of students spend 40 hours in communities where they have a **hands-on** approach about the daily operation of a business (all five departments within the EMS module content will be used) – **gain practical experience and knowledge sharing.**
- Facilitators monitor projects and give weekly feedback on reflective journals and progress – **Critical thinking, personal growth and conflict management skills.**

**Guideline: Faculty involvement, Stakeholder involvement, Reflective practice, Resources, Assessment tasks, World of work and Module outcome**



Source: Author's own (2016).

Figure 7.4: Final proposed framework

The guidelines below are based on the proposed model and assessment tasks involved. They relate to the framework as depicted in Figure 7.4:

### **1 Faculty involvement**

A designated service learning coordinator in the faculty should be responsible for designing a generic service learning module and compiling the study guide and assessment tasks. The coordinator should also take responsibility as the main lecturer in the module and should introduce the students enrolled for the service learning module, to meet with community members and ensure good relationships between all the stakeholders. Facilitators, also referred to as module tutors, should be responsible for the small-group sessions during which students should do role play, and act out and discuss service learning and employability skills.

### **2 Financial Support**

The researcher suggests to obtain financial support from the HEI and the faculty involved in order to support the service learning coordinator to design the generic module as a pedagogy aiming to create and enhance the students' employability skills. A generic service learning module is costly due to the need to appoint additional staff who has to facilitate the small-group sessions, to meet the transport costs of the students involved in order to enable them to visit their community partners, as well as to defray the costs of printing the certificates and letters of recommendation for each student.

### **3 Reflective practice**

Make use of a learning management system (LMS) (for example Blackboard, Moodle, etc.) that provides equal access to information for all students. Reflective journals and the pre- and post-implementation questionnaires may also be made available on the LMS. This process creates a backup for all the assessment tasks of students, as well as a platform for facilitators to provide individual feedback to students and to student groups. Students' assessment marks can also be uploaded onto the platform and thus students can keep track of their own progress throughout the service learning experience.

## **4 Resources**

Make use of online questionnaire software for the pre- and post-implementation questionnaires. This enables the facilitator to get a quick report on students' understanding and perceptions of service learning before and after the experience. The perceptions before the start of the service learning experience can be discussed in class, and activities to address the issues and perceptions can be role played in class. Making use of online questionnaire software also keeps students' answers safe and secure.

## **5 Community voice**

The service learning coordinator should look for sufficient community projects and community partnerships for the different student groups in order for them to perform their 40 hours of required service learning. This should be set up in advance in order for the coordinator to identify possible risks and to ensure that the community partners are properly informed and prepared for what is expected from it during the service learning project.

## **6 Assessment tasks**

It would be wise to compile frequent, but short assessment tasks (including frequent journal activities) throughout the duration of the course. The facilitators also should provide weekly feedback to the students on these assessment tasks in order to create opportunities for them to grow and improve their understanding of the projects. In other words, continuous assessment practices should be employed in this module.

## **7 World of Work**

The service learning coordinator need to liaise with corporate businesses to determine what skills students are required to have when they enter the world of work. Businesses may also be invited to some of the lecture sessions to make students aware of the lack of skills they see in graduates and the importance of service learning in the work environment.



## 8 Module outcome

Lastly, the service learning coordinator and the group facilitators should expect that students might initially be negative towards a generic service learning module because it involves a major change in focus and mode of instruction. However, if there are sufficient financial support from the Faculty, enough community projects, feedback on students' assessment tasks and proper communication amongst all the stakeholders, it could have a ripple effect on the students' employability skills, the community, businesses and the quality of higher education outputs.

Service learning as pedagogy therefore may have a major effect on students' employability skills and career paths, but to succeed it needs commitment from all the stakeholders.

Arthur Ashe (2016) once said: *“From what we get, we can make a living; what we give, however, makes a life.”*

### 7.4 Value of the Study

The major value of this study lies in the development of the framework of guidelines for implementing service learning as pedagogy to enhance employability skills in BCom students in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of the Free State.

The researcher first paid attention to national directives from governing bodies and professional associations in an attempt to align the framework with what is required at national level (see 2.2.9 and 3.2.1). Chapter 2 delivered information and initial directives for cultivating employability skills in the higher education sector. In turn, Chapter 3 provided information and ethical guidelines on how service learning can be used as pedagogy. In addition, the data analysis of students' EGAP60206 experiences and perceptions in 2013 and a follow-up data analysis of a limited number of these students' experiences and perceptions of service learning and its relation to the development of employability skills in 2015, were utilised to triangulate and corroborate the finding/conclusions.

The final framework and guidelines are not the only significant contribution of the study. The researcher also was able to address all the secondary research questions through consulting literature, analysing data and interpreting it. The overarching question guiding the study could therefore be answered. Throughout the study the researcher ensured the confidentiality of the students' identity and portrayed a true reflection of the students' experiences and perceptions of their service learning experience in 2013.

It is hoped that the framework that resulted from the study will stimulate further institutional discussion about issues such as the relative value, applicability, and resources and policy implications related to implementing service learning as pedagogy to enhance BCom students' employability skills. Although far from complete and generalisable, it is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to and provide some contextual understanding in this regard in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS and even beyond this context (if possible).

## **7.5 Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of a study are those characteristics of a research design or methodology that affected or influenced the interpretation of the research findings, and the formulation of the conclusions and recommendations in such a way that they are imperfect and that their transferability is weakened. The limitations of this study are discussed in sections 7.5.1 to 7.5.4 below.

### **7.5.1 General limitations**

Although the intent of the study was not to generalise the findings and make inferences in terms of the demographic attributes of participants, a more equal distribution in terms of gender and ethnicity of the 2013 and 2015 participants in the study could have enhanced the richness and trustworthiness of the data (see 4.7.1). Shumer (2003:149) (see 3.5.4) states that service learning requires a reflective approach, where the effect and learning of service experiences are continuously assessed. In the design, as well as implementation of service learning and service learning research, there should be an interlinking process of action and reflection. More reflective assessment tasks might have impacted the research differently.

However, the researcher acted as the module coordinator, but did not grade the final assessment tasks. This ensured that the researcher was not biased when analysing the data.

In addition, the sudden change of the PowerPoint presentation task from a group task to an individual task could also have had an effect on the data collected, especially as far as employability skills such as the ability to work with others in a team/group, conflict management and healthy interpersonal relations are concerned (see 3.6.3).

### **7.5.2 Sample size**

The sample size for the 2013 data was sufficient and rich data were collected and discussed (see Chapter 5), since all the students enrolled for the EGAP60206 module eventually participated. However, it was not possible to trace and involve all those students in 2015 – the researcher could only succeed in tracing a limited number of the 2013 students in 2015. Thus a different sampling approach was required. A number of eight participants per focus group were eventually purposefully selected for five focus group interviews. This rendered a total of 40 participants. It might be argued that more focus group interviews might have been conducted in order to improve the transferability of the findings to the total 2013 student population. Bringle and Hatcher (2000:287), Furco (2003:16), Furco and Billig (2002), and Howard (2003:7) warned against the generalisation of study findings based on small and homogeneous samples (see 4.7.1). Although the researcher attempted to involve a larger sample in 2015, practical limitations such as the unavailability of the contact information and/or accessibility of many of the 2013 students two years later in 2015 made this option impossible (see 4.7.1)

### **7.5.3 Operational constructs**

Various researchers emphasise the importance of clearly defining and conceptualising what is meant by service learning (Billig, 2000:637; Furco, 2002:57; Hecht, 2003:107; see 3.3). Many also warn against the incorrect use of the term. Furco (2003:15) reiterates that the lack of a single clear definition of service learning makes general conclusions about the effect of service learning impossible. In recognition of this, the researcher adopted the definition of service learning provided by Bringle and Hatcher (1996:223; 2004:138; see 3.3):

*Service-learning is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community goals and reflects 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 civic responsibility.*

Although students received the same study guide (see Appendix G), had equal access to lecture sessions, the LMS (i.e. Blackboard) and small-group sessions, some of the students still did not do the service learning activities required for their final assessment task. More frequent submission of smaller assessment tasks therefore might have ensured that facilitators guided the students better to perform pure service learning activities, as implied by the adopted definition above.

The researcher also became aware that the conceptual clarification and classification of employability skills was a very complex task since employability skills are understood and interpreted differently by different individuals, and stakeholders and HEIs are influenced by contextual experience and discipline-specific nuances (see 2.2.4).

#### **7.5.4 Inclusion of the community voice**

This research was focused on the experiences and perceptions of BCom students regarding service learning and the effect that it had on their employability skills. However, the student participants represented only one partner of the triad partnership involved in service learning (see Figure 3.2; 3.2). The results of this study thus are skewed towards the value of service learning for the students, at the expense of the value it could have had for the other partners. Even though students performed 20 hours of service in the community, the voice of the community was not included in this study. Their views of employability skills observed in the engagement of the students would have been of great value.

Criticism has been raised about service learning research emphasising student learning and pedagogical issues at the expense of the community's voice (Vernon and Ward, 1999:34; see 3.2). Subotsky (2000:91) also warns that in the South African community, service learning is focused more on achieving academic aims than on facilitating social change. Awareness of this tendency should guide future studies building on the present research (see 3.2).

## 7.6 Implications and Recommendations for Further Research

Conducting similar studies on a larger quantitative and qualitative scale may produce results that might be more generalisable than the findings in this study. Further quantitative research also may aid the validation of the findings of this research.

Involving experts in the field of service learning as participants may also be valuable for further studies.

It has been acknowledged previously in this thesis that the research findings have limited value in terms of broader generalisations (see 7.5). Various replications of this study might thus be of value. Replications of service learning research are often needed due to the diversity of stakeholders (Waldstein, 2003:36). Furco and Billig (2002) also confirm that a replication of findings in different contexts is needed. Furco (2003:28), for example, suggests a grand design approach, that is, a new, larger study that includes a multi-site cross-section of service learning programmes with a combination of selected constructs, instruments, and methodologies. Astin and Sax (1998:253) agree that longitudinal, multi-institutional data about how students experience and perceive service learning need to be considered. Nevertheless, the exploratory nature of this study involved a longitudinal approach that was taken in order to understand the students' experiences and perceptions regarding service learning and employability skills.

## 7.7 Concluding Remarks

According to Brandenberger (1998:71; see 1.2), higher education is the start of a conversation with life. If the educational system wishes to do justice to the unique South African multicultural situation, it should focus on developing holistic and civic-minded individuals.

This study was both a thought-provoking and educational experience for the researcher, leading to personal growth and a better understanding of the complexities when service learning is used as pedagogy to develop employability skills in students.

The researcher hopes that the intentions of the proposed framework with guidelines will not be viewed as an intimidating procedure to be strictly applied, but rather as a

guideline for the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the UFS to reconsider the importance of a generic service learning module which can give BCom students an advantage when they enter the world of work.

Wes Moore (2010b:220) writes the following in his book, *The other Wes Moore*: “Higher education institutions do not just give degrees, but give freedom, opportunity and hope.” It is evident from the study that knowledge from a book is not sufficient to ensure that students acquire employability skills.

Community engagement is one of the three pillars of a HEI. As a form of community engagement, service learning needs to be embedded into higher education curricula in order for students to gain practical experience, communication skills, be able to work in a team, working with diverse people, improve their self-esteem and much more.

Service learning may be positively seen as pedagogy to acquire employability skills. After concluding this study, the researcher strongly believes that service learning is an excellent pedagogical approach to ensure that students in higher education acquire and develop the skills that will ensure their employability in the world of work.

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**A**

**EDUCATION: APPROVAL**



## Faculty of Education

01-Jul-2015

Dear Mrs Elanie Myburgh

**Ethics Clearance:** Service learning as a pedagogical approach to enhance employability skills in BCom students

**Principal Investigator:** Mrs Elanie Myburgh

**Department:** School of Higher Education Studies (Bloemfontein Campus)

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education. I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is:

**UFS-HSD2015/0299**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M.M. Nkoane'.

Dr M.M. Nkoane  
Chairperson: Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Education



**B**

**PRE-IMPLEMENTATION  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

## Service Learning Student Survey Pre-Implementation Questionnaire

**Note:**

This questionnaire is to be administered after the module introduction and orientation.

Module code:

Date on which questionnaire was completed: / /20

Dear Student

You are asked to complete this questionnaire because you are enrolled in a service learning module, which differs from other modules in various respects. We want to know what your understanding and expectations of this module are. Please note that your responses will be treated confidentially. If the survey is to be used for research purposes, your name will not be associated with the findings in any way.

Thank you, in advance, for your insights and 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 with which you will work during the module:

2.2 In which community will your service learning take place?

## 3. Understanding of Service Learning

Please state your understanding of service learning by completing the following:

"Service learning is ..."

## 4. Involvement in Module Development

4.1 Were you involved in the planning of the service learning module in any way?

Yes	1
No	2

4.2 If YES, please specify in what way:




## 5. Expectations Regarding the Service Learning Module

We would like to know about your expectations of the service learning module for which you have enrolled. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the statements below:

	1 = Strongly agree	2 = Agree	3 = Neutral	4 = Disagree	5 = Strongly disagree
5.1 I think that I shall learn from the community in which I am going to 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"/>
5.2 I think that I shall learn 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 I expect that this module will provide 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 I expect that the service learning module will assist 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 I think that the service learning experience will help 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 I think that the service learning module will contribute 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 I think that the service learning module will require 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"/>

## 6. Learning Outcomes of the Module

6.1 Do you know what the learning outcomes of the module are?

Yes	1
Partially	2
No	3

6.2 If YES or PARTIALLY, please specify what you regard as the most important outcomes:


6.3 What is your understanding of the intended outcomes of the module for the community?


6.4 What do you regard as the module's intended outcomes for the service sector?


## 7. Guidelines for Working in the Community

7.1 Have you been given sufficient rules and guidelines for working in the community?

Yes	1
No	2

7.2 If YES, please specify what you regard as the most important of these guidelines:


7.3 Please outline the kind of additional preparation you think you will need for working in and with the community:








**C**

**POST-IMPLEMENTATION  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

## Service Learning Student Survey Post-Implementation Questionnaire

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 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 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
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

6.1 Do you know what the learning outcomes of the module are?

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 know what the learning outcomes of the module are?

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	3



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 achieved:


## 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	3

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?


### 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!





**D**

## **INFORMED CONSENT**

**Researcher****Study Leader**

Elanie Myburgh

Dr Fanus van Tonder

Flippie Groenewoud  
Building, Room 267Winkie Direko Building,  
School of Higher Education

MyburghE1@ufs.ac.za

vTonderSP@ufs.ac.za

051 401 9593

051 401 9174

Date:

**INFORMED CONSENT:**

Dear Participant

I would like to invite you to take part in the following research project:

**SERVICE LEARNING AS A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO ENHANCE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN BCOM STUDENTS**

Broadly speaking, the study is about service learning and employability skills.

We would like you to participate in this research because you comply with the inclusion criteria:

- BCom students who were enrolled for EGAP60206 during the year of 2013.  
Gender: male and female.  
Ethnicity: white, coloured, black, and other.  
Socio-economic level: low to high.  
Education level: Undergraduates.
- BCom honours students enrolled at the UFS in 2015 who successfully completed the EGAP60206 module in 2013 who volunteer to participate in the study.

The reason why I am doing this study is to determine if service learning can serve as a pedagogical approach to enhance employability skills in BCom students.

There are no known risks associated with taking part in this study. The researcher will ensure that the focus group interview discussion will be kept private and confidential.

I am sure you will benefit from this study as you are, at the same time, given a chance to reflect on your own employability skills.

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

If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, and also note you are free to contact my study leader (indicated above).

Should any difficult personal issues arise during the course of this research, I will endeavour to see that a qualified expert is contacted and able to assist you.

Yours sincerely

Elanie Myburgh



**E**

**FOCUS GROUP  
PROTOCOL QUESTIONS**

## Service Learning experience and perceptions of BCom students after EGAP60206 module Focus Group Discussion Protocol

Target group:

Module

Attended by:

(Please sign the attendance register)

Date:

Time:

From

to

Venue:

Facilitator:

### Introduction

The purpose of the focus group discussion is to hear everyone's ideas. Generally, in a focus group, hearing what others say may stimulate your own thinking and reflection on your experience. You do not need to repeat what others have said, but rather offer your own unique view or expand, clarify or elaborate on what others have said. If you hear comments or ideas with which you disagree, do not hesitate to describe your perspective or contradictory view. A focus group, however, is not meant to resolve those differences or to press for consensus. The idea is to hear everyone's thoughts, not to reach agreement. There are no right or wrong answers. The purpose is to capture a wide array of comments, opinions, ideas and suggestions.

This discussion will be recorded. To ensure high quality transcription, it will be helpful if only one person speaks at a time. Please also speak clearly and with more volume than usual.

## Questions

### 1. Introduction

Please introduce yourself and briefly describe what you can remember about the 2013, EGAP60206, service learning module. The following information serves as a reminder of what you did.

**In 2013, for the final assessment of the EGAP60206 module, you had to compile a power point presentation with the following headings:**

1. Background of community, organisation or business
2. Needs assessment
3. SWOT analysis
4. Plan of action
5. Goals and how they were reached
6. Discuss and explain how you spent your 20 hours (Attach time record sheet)
7. Thank you or celebration function
8. Photos or images of your service learning experience
9. Reflective journal regarding your experience and your employability skills.
10. Do you think you are more employable after this service learning experience? If Yes, please name the skills your acquired.
11. Conclusion and personal feelings

### 2. Your understanding and experience of the module

- 2.1 Could you please explain your understanding of service learning?
- 2.2 Could you also explain your understanding of employability skills?
- 2.3 Do you think the EGAP60206 experienced made you more or less aware of employability skills?
- 2.4 If any employability skills *were* acquired or enhanced:  
  
Were the employability skills gained or enhanced different from what you expected at the beginning of the project? Please explain.
- 2.5 If *no* employability skills were acquired:  
  
Why do you think you did not acquire employability skills as planned?
- 2.6 As an honours student, do you believe a generic service learning module for the BCom students will make them more or less employable?
- 2.7 Do you think service learning can serve as a pedagogy to improve employability skills? If yes, why do you say so?

### 3. Final comment

Is there anything else you want to say about the service learning experience?

***Thank you for your time and participation!***





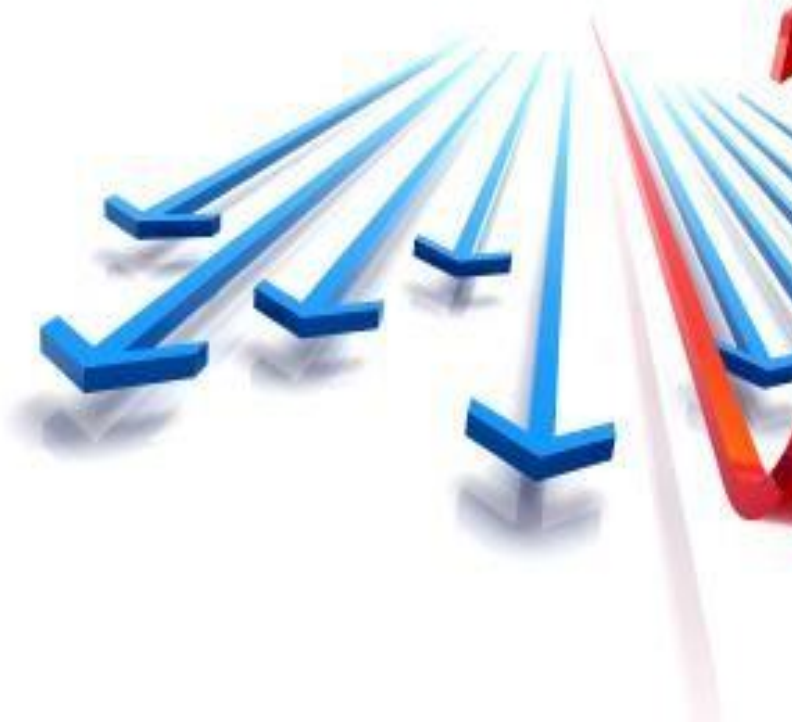
**F**



**2013 TEACHING AND  
LEARNING STRATEGY**

# 2013

## UFS Teaching and Learning Strategy



Centre for Teaching and Learning

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## Executive Summary

The aim of this document is to propose a strategy for teaching and learning at that will support the University of the Free State's (UFS) drive to become a research led institution. Altbach and Salmi (2011) indicated that quality teaching and learning is one of the distinguishing features of international elite research institutions. Cole (2009) argues that excellence in teaching and excellence in research are mutually reinforcing and that at great universities the best researchers are amongst the most brilliant lecturers or mentors since they are at the cutting edge of their discipline and are able to impart a sense of excitement about their scholarship to students.

Any strategy requires robust analysis of the external and internal challenges and pressures facing the University of the Free State. The external pressures and challenges include the global and national demand for quality teaching and learning that will produce the graduates that can help the world and country to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Within a nationally differentiated environment quality teaching and learning is vital to help the UFS perform itself into the cluster of research-focused institutions. Internally, success and throughput data emphasise the importance of quality teaching and learning to develop a strong graduate pool that will enrol for post-graduate studies; so helping the UFS become a research led institution. Research data supports the internationally reported nexus between teaching and learning and research and the necessity of a focus on teaching and learning to help the UFS to meet its strategic aims.

The document articulates the improvement objectives a UFS teaching and learning strategy should include to promote quality teaching and learning and student success in the 21st century. The objectives are informed by an international analysis by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) of 50 initiatives in 29 institutions across the world. All the objectives are mutually reinforcing and intended to facilitate the development of a teaching and learning culture that enables the university to meet its strategy goals. The objectives are the following:

- Raising awareness of quality teaching and learning
- Developing excellent teachers
- Engaging students for success
- Building an organisation for change and teaching and learning leadership
- Aligning institutional policies to foster quality teaching and learning
- Highlighting innovation as a driver for change
- Evidence based change through assessment

By addressing the abovementioned strategic improvement objectives, the UFS can facilitate the development of graduate attributes that will differentiate the UFS within South African higher education. This strategy proposes a framework to facilitate an institutional conversation on what graduate attributes Kopsie students should have.

The strategy closes by highlighting the critical elements necessary for quality teaching and learning that will enable the UFS to align with the fundamental shift towards a focus on student learning that requires institutions to empower lecturers to develop effective pedagogical skills to deliver skilled and more graduates within the ambit of a research led institution.

## **1. Rationale for the teaching and learning strategy**

The aim of this document is to propose a strategy for teaching and learning that will support the University of the Free State's (UFS) drive to become a research led institution. Altbach and Salmi (2011) indicate that quality teaching and learning is one of the distinguishing features of international elite research institutions. Cole (2009) argues that excellence in teaching and excellence in research are mutually reinforcing and that at great universities the best researchers are amongst the most brilliant lecturers or mentors since they are at the cutting edge of their discipline and are able to impart a sense of excitement about their scholarship to students.

A focus on quality teaching helps to develop professionals and research talent, thereby creating the next generation of academics and leaders to help South Africa meet the complex challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For the UFS, quality teaching and learning ensures financial sustainability since teaching and learning relates to 79% of the total subsidy from the state and about 85% of SLE allocation to faculties. This emphasises that a critical challenge for the UFS is to balance the importance of quality teaching and learning with the importance of growing a new generation of researchers, while also increasing research outputs. Finally, the disruptive impact of technology, such as the rise of free Massive Open Online Courseware (MOOC) requires universities to think about new approaches to teaching and learning that illustrate the extra value that a local degree would add in a world where students can enrol for undergraduate courses from top ranked universities at a fraction of the cost via the internet.

The Oxford Dictionary defines strategy as a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term goal. Sevier (2003) emphasises that the purpose of strategic planning within the context of higher education is to (1) recognise the relationship between the institution and its environment, (2) is based on robust environmental scanning (3) becomes a central organising principle for teaching and learning (in this case) within the institution and (4) involves monitoring and evaluation of return on investment in goals set. This strategy document will focus more on environmental alignment through scanning and the formulations of goals because the development of action plans is regarded as part of the implementation of the plan.

## **2. Positioning the UFS within the broader higher education context**

To effectively position the UFS in higher education national and globally requires evidence based environmental scanning that reflects on the external and internal challenges related to teaching and learning.

### **2.1 External challenges and Pressures**

#### **2.1.1 Global environment**

Quality teaching and learning is one of the distinguishing features of international elite research institutions (Salmi, 2009). Higher education institutions internationally are focusing on fostering quality teaching and learning for the following reasons:

- The growing accountability demands from governments and employers for meaningful and relevant teaching, that provides students with skills they need to get employment and to contribute to society as democratic citizens. this is at odds with research skills in a grad unless carefully aligned how do we word this later.

- Higher education institutions need to show that they are reliable providers of good quality education that meets the expectations of multiple stakeholders. Who we call good quality and how does this stack up against various stakeholders' views of quality
- A need to balance teaching and learning achievements with research outputs since research performance alone is not sufficient to build and maintain reputations. The increase in the diversity of the student population as well as increased pressure from the public and other stakeholders for graduates prepared for the job market are contributing to a greater awareness of the importance of quality teaching for the reputation of major research universities.
- Greater competition for students in a global and national higher education market.
- The need to improve financial sustainability through greater efficiency in the teaching and learning process.

(Henard & Roseveare, 2012)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) emphasises fundamental changes that have resulted in the demand for non-routine and interpersonal skills and a decline in routine and physical tasks in the world of work (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012). The need for graduates that can operate in a world characterised by greater uncertainty, speed, risk, complexity and interdisciplinary work requires universities to think differently about knowledge creation and learning being rooted in work life. Knowledge is no longer owned by a "community of disciplinary connoisseurs who transmit knowledge to students". Student learning has become the focal point requiring lecturers "to have effective pedagogical skills to deliver student learning outcomes" (Henard & Roseveare, 2012, p.9).

Lecturers now have to co-operate with students, colleagues from other departments and external stakeholders (such as professional boards) as part of a new dynamic learning environment that is characterised by:

- New relationships regarding access to teachers, and a wider range of communication and collaborative working through learning platforms;
- Re-designing of curricula;
- Bridging teaching and research more intensively;
- Re-thinking of student workload and teaching load;
- Continuous upgrading in pedagogy, use of technologies, assessment models aligned with student-centred learning;
- Creating of innovative learning platforms;
- Providing guidance and tutoring to students with new means and methods; and
- Assessing impacts and documenting effectiveness of the teaching delivered.

(Henard & Roseveare, 2012, p.9)

The abovementioned challenges being faced by lecturers requires a strategic response from the university that not only looks at how it can support academic staff to address these challenges but how the teaching and learning context can be used to develop distinctive graduate attributes that help to position the university in the national and global higher education market (Farrell, Devlin, & James, 2007). The graduate attributes for the University of the Free State is explored later.

## 2.1.2 National environment

In the South African higher education context, the Draft Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement in the Second Period of Quality Assurance of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) will focus on enhancing the quality of undergraduate teaching and learning (Council on Higher Education, 2013). The main intended outcomes of the second audit (now called a review) are the enhancement of quality undergraduate provision and the quality of graduates with the overall aim of improve student success. The importance of improving teaching and learning is also emphasised in that National Development Plan (2011) as well as the Green Paper for Post-school education and training (2012).

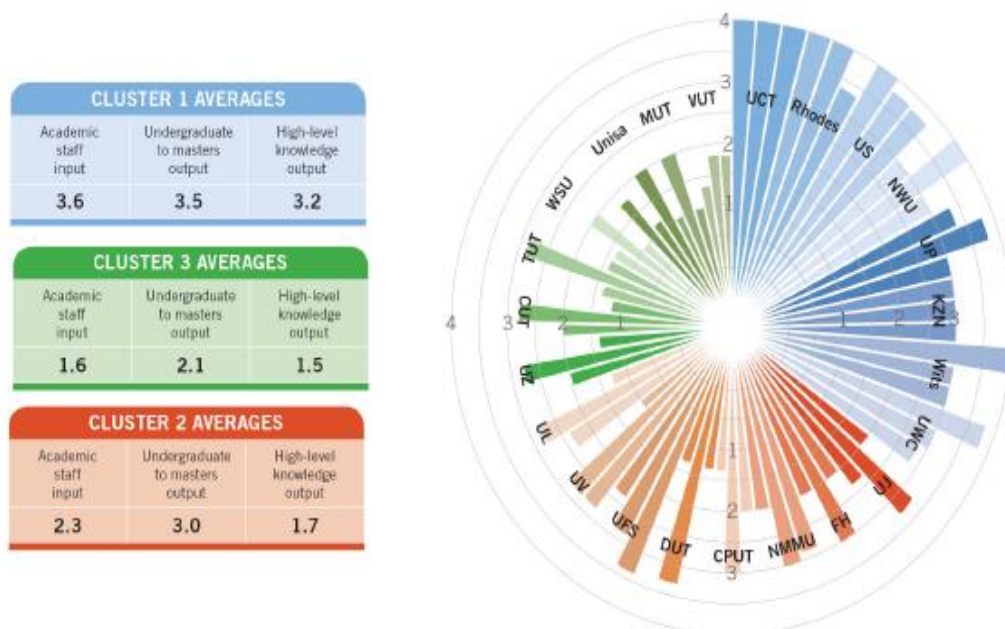
### 2.1.2.1 UFS position in a differentiated landscape

In terms of differentiation in the South African higher education system, the UFS, is positioned in cluster 2, behind cluster 1 which includes UCT, Rhodes, Stellenbosch, NWU, UP UKZN, Wits and UWC. Cluster 2 has staff with lower qualifications, less outputs of undergraduates and masters and lower high-level knowledge outputs (Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET), 2012) (see Figure 1 below). Clusters are based on a series of performance indicators.

Figure 1: CHET differentiation of the higher education landscape

## A DIFFERENTIATED UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

- Empirically South Africa has a differentiated system that is more unequal than what it is diverse.
- Despite the high statistical correlation between having a doctorate and publishing, high staff inputs don't always translate into high undergraduate throughput or knowledge output.



(Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET), 2012)

The current position of the UFS nationally highlights the importance of defining the research and teaching and learning nexus in the strategic interest of the institution to ensure that it develops towards becoming a research led institution which would help it to shift to cluster 1.

## 2.2 Internal challenges and pressures

From an institutional point of view, the UFS Strategic plan 2012-2016 has identified improving staff and student performance as key components of the academic project. The creation of the Centre for Teaching and Learning and several other initiatives are part of the institutional strategy to improve the positioning of the UFS. This strategy focuses specifically on the strategic aims related to teaching and learning.

From a financial sustainability perspective, the combination of the teaching input and teaching output components of the 2012 subsidy to the UFS constitutes 79% of the total subsidy from the state. Student numbers (retention and success, which can be improved by better teaching and learning) constitute about 85% of SLE allocation to faculties. Therefore, the critical challenge for the UFS is to balance the importance of quality teaching and learning with the importance of growing a new generation of researchers, while also increasing teaching and learning and research outputs.

### 2.1.2.3 Enrolment, Success and Throughput Rates

The UFS has one of the lowest success rates in the South African higher education system. In 2011 the success rate was 73%. On the positive side there has been rapid growth in the numbers of doctoral graduates from 55 in 2008 to 107 in 2011 (Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (DIRAP), 2013). However, an analysis of enrolment shows a decline in postgraduate enrolment as well as a decline in graduation rates. Figure 2 and 3 provides a graphic representation of the enrolment data as well as graduation rates.

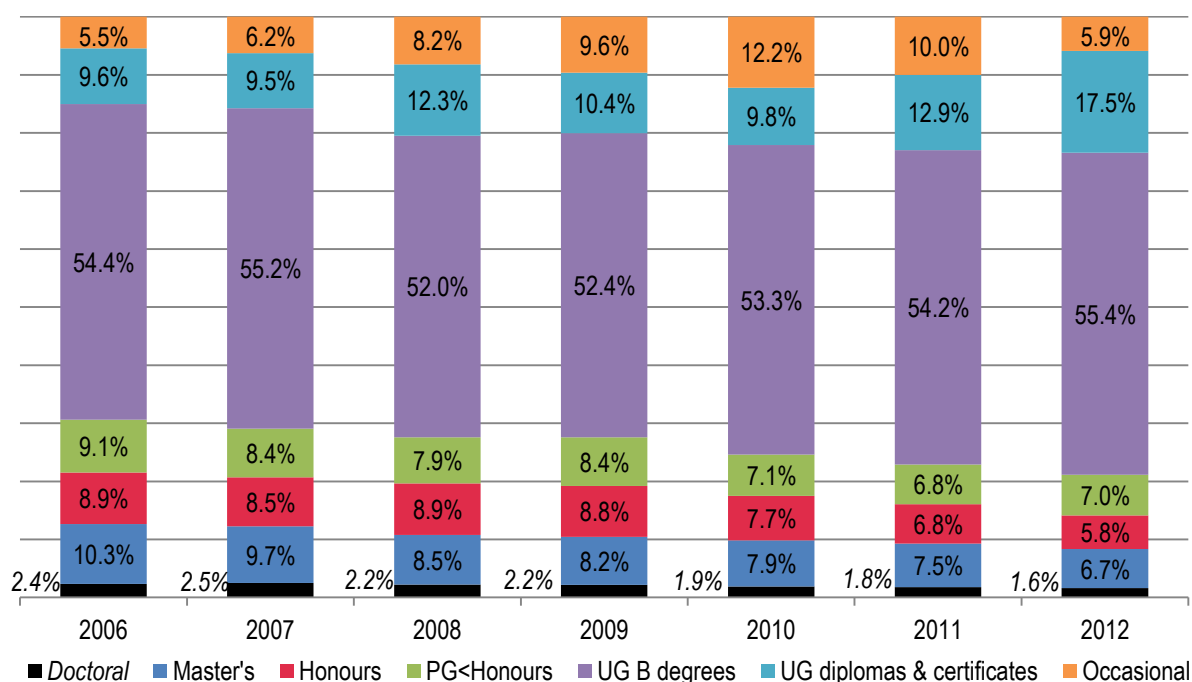


Figure 2: Distribution of enrolments by education level, 2006 to 2012

Figure 2 shows a concerning decline in the enrolment numbers for post-graduate students which undermines the UFS's strategic focus on becoming a research led university.

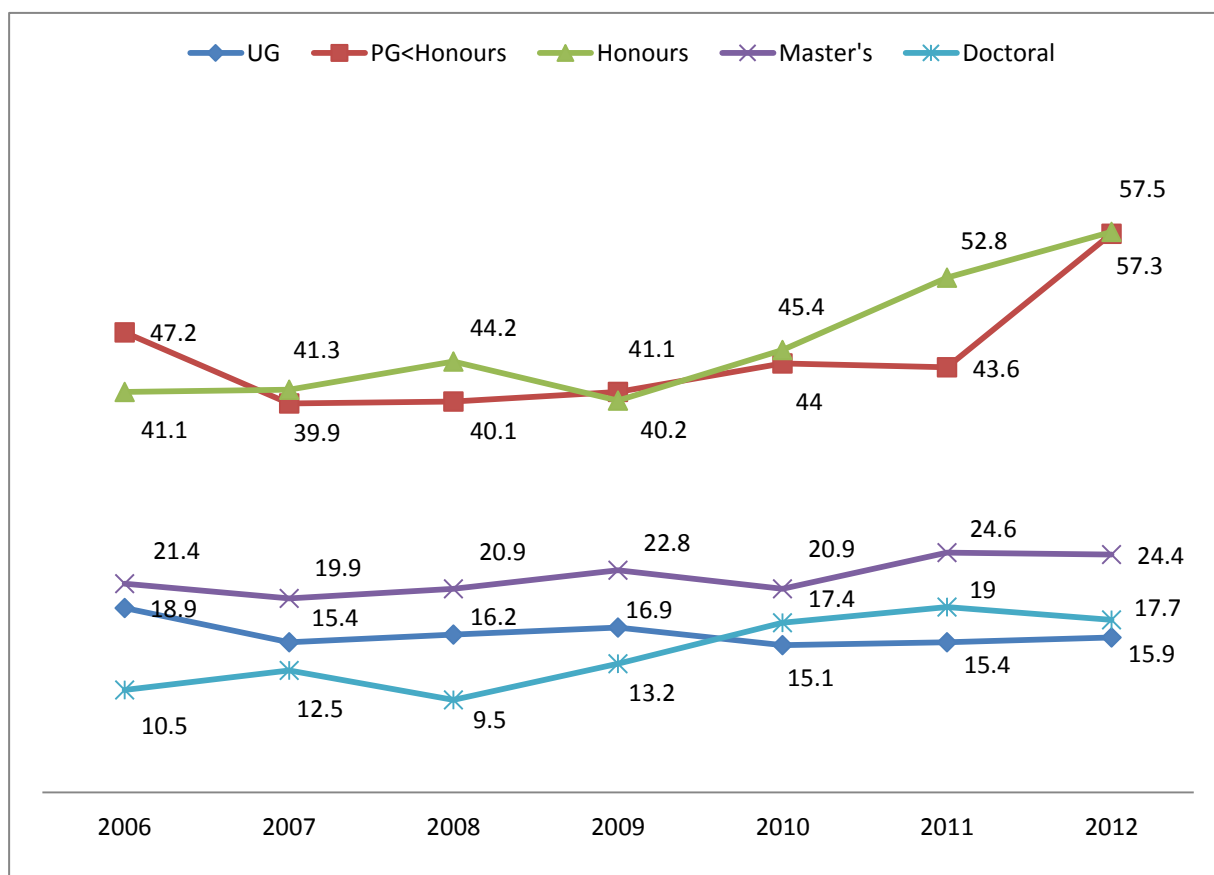


Figure 3: Graduation rates, 2006 to 2012

The decline in post-graduate enrolment and decline in undergraduate graduation rates highlight a significant challenge for the UFS to develop a pipeline of undergraduate that will enrol in post graduate study. These data emphasise the importance of quality teaching and learning to develop a graduate pool that could enrol for post-graduate to help the UFS become a research-led institution. As such, the data support the internationally reported nexus between teaching and learning and research (Albach & Salmi, 2011; Salmi, 2009; Henard & Roseveare, 2012).

### 3. Improvement objectives

This section articulates the improvement objectives a UFS teaching and learning strategy should include to promote quality teaching and learning and student success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All the objectives are mutually reinforcing and intended to facilitate the development of a teaching and learning culture that enables the university to meet its strategic goals.

#### 3.1 Raising awareness of quality teaching and learning

Not all actors in the higher education sector prioritise quality teaching and learning. World ranking systems as well as institutional promotion policies emphasise the value of research or “publish or perish” to individual academics (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). Yet several studies are pointing to the increasing recognition of the importance of quality teaching (Altbach & Salmi, 2011; Salmi, 2009). An increasingly

common trend is for institutions to adopt a more strategic approach to their development that includes specific objective that signal institutional commitment to quality teaching through a set of initiatives (Henard & Roseveare, 2012)

For the UFS to meet the aim of academic excellence set out in the Strategic plan 2012-2016 it is essential that the nexus between teaching and learning and research be clearly articulated to staff and as well as the importance of quality teaching and learning for a research led institution. This will position quality teaching and learning as being of strategic importance. It is therefore critical to build research capacity by (1) demonstrating how research informs teaching, (2) engaging in research-inspired teaching and (3) developing undergraduate students' research-skills.

Quality teaching is also vital for the improvement of student success and the delivery of graduates that differentiate the institution in the South African higher education landscape.

### **3.2 Developing excellent teachers**

The massification of higher education, the paradigm shift toward a focus on student learning and the “disruptive” impact of new technologies requires that staff need to consider new pedagogical approaches. Academics are expected to work with peers in group teaching, multi-disciplinary collaborations and increasingly with international colleagues using new technology. Thus a well-designed professional development programme needs to be an outcome of a collaborative reflection on the quality of teaching and learning that is aligned with university values, identity and faculty expectations (Henard & Roseveare, 2012).

Appropriate resources need to be deployed to ensure the development of leading academic staff development interventions. The CTL is busy with the alignment of staff development interventions with the national focus on professionalising teaching professional development as a focus of the National Development Plan and the DHET. The process aims to align continuous professional development with performance management and promotion. Professional development and promotion needs to be based on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to ensure that the importance of research for quality teaching and learning and the nexus between research and teaching and learning is emphasised. Recognising the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as a route to becoming a full professor is critical so that staff that focus their work on Scholarship on Teaching and Learning do not feel that it is end of their academic careers to prioritise teaching and learning (Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), 2013).

### **3.3 Engaging students for success**

The most important space to engage students is the classroom, therefore the development of excellent teachers is vital

Engaging students in quality teaching can involve dialogue and participation in specific structures that inform the improvement of teaching in the institution. Research on improving undergraduate education shows that student engagement data has been shown to provide data-driven student voice that can be used to create a culture of evidence in higher education institutions. Student engagement has also been shown to help promote students' success (McCormick, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2013). Measures such as the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) and related surveys have the “hallmark” that they have a capacity to create a bridge between the world of the researcher and practitioner in the interest of research-informed improvement (McCormick, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2013).

A focus on student engagement is vital as it aligns teaching and learning at the UFS with the global focus on student learning. The data from student engagement measures can be used to further the assessment of impact as well as national and international benchmarking. By involving students in appropriate institutional structures the importance of improving quality and student success will be highlighted. The CTL and DIRAP are working with faculties on combining student engagement and module evaluation data to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning at the module level.

### **3.4 Building an organisation for change and teaching and learning leadership**

Effective change towards better quality teaching in an institution is only possible through internal organisational support that combines top-down and bottom-up initiatives that evolve over time. Understanding the role of different change agents (leaders, academics, students and support staff) is vital for building a quality teaching culture (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). Kuh (2005) emphasises that student success is not the result of one initiative, but needs to become “everybody’s business” through the academic, support and leadership structures of a university. Similarly, quality teaching and learning is the result of the creation of systems to facilitate and effectively manage quality teaching and learning such as a learning management system, programme and curriculum design processes (Henard & Roseveare, 2012).

Quality teaching for student success therefore requires that academic, support and leadership structures are empowered to lead organisational change to create enabling environments for quality teaching and student success. The UFS has taken some initial steps in this direction by focusing on the empowerment of Academic Heads of Department in managing the complex challenge related to teaching and learning.

### **3.5 Aligning institutional policies to foster quality teaching and learning**

Although the individual performance of academics in the classroom is essential for the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning real improvement at an institutional level requires a systemic approach. The alignment of institutional policies is critical to create an environment that promotes quality teaching and learning for student success. More specific policy areas that need to cohere are: human resources; information and computing technology; learning environments; student support; and internationalisation (Henard & Roseveare, 2012).

This Teaching and Learning strategy is the first step in creating a framework within which policies can be reviewed and re-aligned. The CTL is in the process of mapping teaching and learning policies that will then be reviewed in consultation with Teaching and Learning Managers and other stakeholders and structures. The review includes a review of the alignment of staff development, performance management and promotion to provide academic staff with the support they need to advance their careers while meeting the challenges they face in the classroom.

### **3.6 Highlighting innovation as a driver for change**

Innovations spurred by different factors can be an important driver for the improvement of teaching quality. Innovation in teaching and learning can hold the risk of threatening students and staff and therefore requires careful pre-implementation planning and conjoining monitoring to ensure that the minimise the risk of unintended consequences (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). Factors that can catalyse innovation in teaching and learning are curriculum renewal, internationalisation, new approaches to increasing access, initiatives to promote retention and success as well as adaptation to new learning environments made possible by technology that accommodate the needs of different students.

An example of new technology driven teaching and learning environments is the Massive Open Online Courseware (MOOC) movement which some consider to be a game changer for higher education. The nagging question posed by these and other technological developments is “What is the extra value added by the local degree and what does this mean in terms of course content and integrating technology into teaching and learning?” (Marginson, 2012). The development of MOOCs creates opportunities for institutions to test new delivery models and pedagogies based on open and distance learning.

Within the UFS initiatives such as UFS101, the revitalisation of the academic tutorial systems that integrates academic advising and tracking systems as well as the development of a new Electronic Teaching and Learning Environment (ETALE) are examples of additional drivers of innovation in teaching and learning focused on improving student success.

### **3.7 Evidence-based change through assessment**

Realistic assessment of the current quality of teaching and learning at the institution is an essential starting point for improvement. Evaluation of both the support of teaching and learning as well as the quality of teaching and learning is essential to help further a culture of evidence- based change and improvement.

Evidence based decision-making at every level of the institution is vital for improving teaching and learning and student chances of success (Strydom & Mentz, 2010). Student engagement data help to provide institutional and classroom level data that can be used to facilitate the analysis of institutional indicators such as success and graduation rates (Banta, Pike & Hanson, 2009).

The focus now moves to how the abovementioned improvement objectives will facilitate the creation of an environment in which the UFS can develop a new generation of graduates with attributes that will differentiate them in the world of work.

## **4. UFS graduate attributes**

Research shows that carefully identified graduate attributes are globally recognised as being a critical outcome of higher education (De la Harpe & David, 2012). The HEQC’s, Draft Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement, defined quality student learning in South African higher education as a combination of an increase in the number of graduates that have 2“attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable” (HEQC, 2013). Australian universities have been engaging with the challenge of developing graduate attributes since the 1990’s (De la Harpe & David, 2012). In the light of the importance of graduate attributes within the national and international context it is vital the UFS identifies those attributes which it will seek to develop through teaching and learning and the alignment of co-curricular activities and student life with formal teaching and learning. Graduate attributes help an institution to develop a unique reputation and differentiate an institution from others in a competitive higher education market. The reputation for intentionally developing unique graduates can facilitate third stream income generation and advancement efforts. In light of the scope and diversity of the field of graduate attributes this strategy sought to identify a commonly used framework that could be adapted to develop unique UFS graduate attributes. The work of Simon Barrie across the Australian higher education system provided such a framework (Barrie, 2004). This framework has also been adapted for use by the University of the Western Cape in South Africa and aligns well with South African research on the expectations of employees (Griesel & Parker, 2009).

## 4.1 Proposed UFS graduate attributes

*It is important to emphasise that this framework is shared to stimulate an institutional conversation regarding graduate attributes. Sustained institutional work will be needed to identify and finalise a set of graduate attributes for the UFS. A mapping exercise will help to identify where these attributes are already being promoted in the curriculum and where curriculum renewal and adjustment in teaching and learning approaches is needed to facilitate the development of these attributes. The curricular mapping exercise should be followed by a co-curricular mapping exercise.*

Within the context of this model graduate attributes can be understood as the qualities, values, attitudes, skills and understandings that a particular university sets out as being important for students to develop by the end of their studies-across all qualifications offered. These attributes are both intended to equip students for future employment and as critical and responsible citizens, contributing to the social and economic well-being of society.

The framework has two tiers. Tier 1 includes “complex interwoven aspects of human ability which are difficult to explicitly teach or assess in traditional university experiences” whereas Tier 2 consists of more explicit clusters of personal skills and abilities that can be developed differently in different disciplines (Adapted from Barrie, 2005) (see Table 1 and Figure 4).

**Table 1: Proposed UFS graduate attributes**

Tier 1- Complex interwoven aspects	Tier 2 – More explicit clusters of personal skills and abilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scholarship;</li><li>• Active glocal citizens; and</li><li>• Lifelong learning.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inquiry focused and critical;</li><li>• Academic and Professional competence;</li><li>• Effective knowledge worker; and</li><li>• Leaders in communities.</li></ul>

Figure 4, below, will graphically illustrate how the Tier 2 attributes help facilitate the development of Tier 1 attributes. As Tier 2 attributes are more explicit in nature it is easier to map or design them in existing curricula and measure them through assessment. The Tier 1 attributes of Scholarship, Active glocal citizens, and Lifelong learning are viewed as resulting from the complex interactions between Tier 2 attributes throughout an undergraduate programme. Therefore, Tier 1 attributes are more difficult to assess directly as they are broader interwoven aspects of graduate attributes.

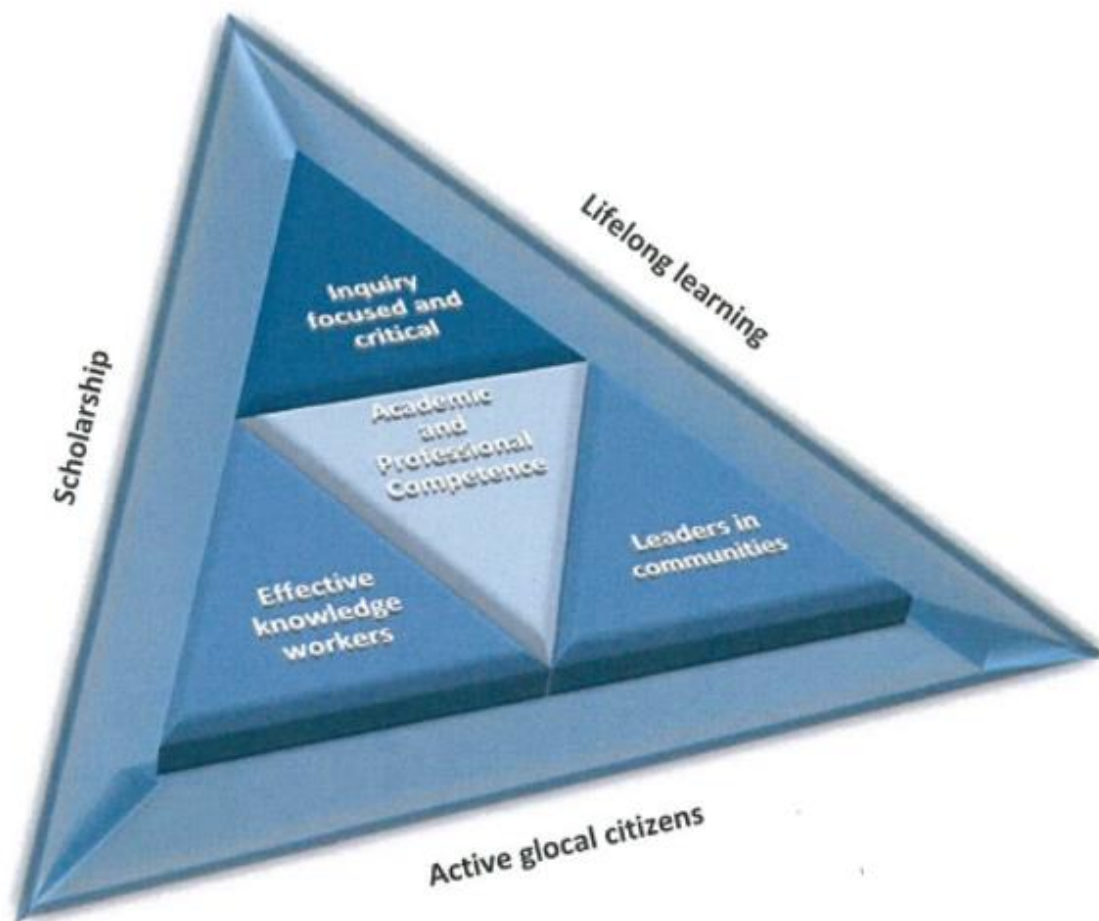


Figure 4: Graphic representation of the proposed UFS graduate attributes

#### 4.1.1 Description of proposed UFS graduate attributes

In the context of the UFS the 'generic' attributes on Tier 1 could be translated as follows in Table 2:

Table 2: Description of graduate attributes

Attribute	Description
<b>Tier 1</b>	<b>UFS graduates will be equipped and expected to...</b>
<b>Scholarship:</b> A critical attitude towards knowledge	Have a scholarly attitude to knowledge and understanding. They should be able to generate knowledge through inquiry, critique and synthesis. They should also be able to apply this knowledge to relevant problems and communicate their understanding in a professional, effective and confident manner.
<b>Active glocal citizens:</b> An attitude or stance towards the world	Develop an understanding of complex, interdependent global systems and aspire to contribute to society in meaningful ways. This contribution includes among others accepting social responsibilities, advocating for improving the sustainability of the environment, and have a broad understanding and high regard for human rights, equity and ethics in local, national and global communities.

Attribute	Description
<b>Tier 1</b>	<b><i>UFS graduates will be equipped and expected to...</i></b>
<b>Lifelong learning:</b> An attitude or stance towards themselves	Be lifelong learners, committed to and capable of continuous collaborative and individual learning and critical reflection for the purpose of furthering their personal knowledge skills and competence and understanding of the world and their place in it.
<b>Tier 2</b>	<b><i>UFS graduates will be equipped and expected to...</i></b>
<b>Inquiry focused and critical</b>	Develop a focus on creating new knowledge and understanding through the process of inquiry, analysis and critical thinking. Inquiry refers to a systematic process of exploring issues, objects or works through the collection and analysis of evidence that results in informed conclusions or judgments. Analysis refers to the process of breaking complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them. Inquiry and analysis will be developed within the context of a critical disposition defined as a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.
<b>Academic and professional competence</b>	Develop academic and professional competence that includes high level communication skills (written and oral) that will enable them to negotiate and create new understanding through interaction with diverse others to further their own learning. They will also be expected to develop creative thinking, problem solving and teamwork abilities as part of the learning experience.
<b>Effective knowledge workers</b>	Develop the skills necessary to function effectively in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy where people have to “think for a living” (Cooper, 2006). This will entail the ability to know when there is a need for information to be able to use the information effectively and responsibly to address a problem.
<b>Leaders in communities</b>	Initiate and implement constructive change in all communities. Their leadership should be characterised by integrity and an awareness community needs and ethics involved. UFS graduates should also lead in a way that mentors the next generation of learners in a way that values different cultures and viewpoints.

To provide an illustration of how these how these graduate attributes could be aligned with national and international student learning outcomes, Appendix 1 integrates the Value Rubrics of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2010) rubrics with the Higher Education Sub Qualifications Framework (SAQA, 2013) to show how attributes can be developed and promoted within disciplines as part of the curriculum renewal process at the UFS.

## 5. Critical elements of quality teaching and learning

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) emphasises that higher education there has been a paradigm shift away from the traditional model of disciplinary experts who transmit knowledge to students, to a paradigm where higher education teachers are required to have the pedagogical skills to deliver student learning outcomes. To rise to these challenges higher education institutions should cast themselves as learning organisations in order to embrace quality teaching. The

key elements associated with promoting quality teaching and learning within institutions have been grouped in specific areas:

### ***Teaching and Learning Policies***

- The ultimate goal of quality teaching policies is to improve the quality of the learning experiences of students and – through this – the outcomes of learning. Policies and practices to foster quality teaching should therefore be guided by this ultimate goal.
- Sustained quality teaching policies require long-term, non-linear efforts and thus call for a permanent institutional commitment from the top-leadership of the institution.
- Quality teaching policies should be designed consistently at institutional, programme and individual levels. The programme levels are the pivotal place where quality teaching is likely to flourish.

### ***Strategies for change***

- The temporal dimension counts in quality teaching: what can be done at a certain point of time cannot be done later and vice-versa. **There are “opportunity windows” to catch.**
- Definitions and conceptions of quality teaching are varied across contexts and evolve over time. They require adaptability and an empirical basis to remain useful for development. Instilling a culture of change will be key in ensuring relevance and sustainability.
- Teaching and learning are inherently intertwined and this necessitates a holistic approach to any development initiative.
- Learning experiences can be gained in many different forms of learning environments, not to be limited to auditoriums and class-rooms. Learning happens also outside the institution and also from a distance.
- Orchestrating the implementation, setting the right pace of change, leaving room for experiments enable a steady improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Incentives are more impactful than regulations and coercive stands. Ministerial authorities, funding bodies and quality assurance agencies should contribute to foster a climate for change.
- Quality teaching happens first in the classroom. Not all teachers are innovators, and few innovations can be disseminated and sustained without an efficient organisational structure.

### ***Culture and context sensitivity***

- Quality teaching is a part of a global quality approach and of the institutional strategy and should not be isolated from the institutional quality culture.
- Quality teaching initiatives respond to specific objectives of an institution and could therefore be irrelevant when implemented in another institution, or in another department or school within the same institution. Ensuring the alignment of differing approaches in regard to teaching and learning and their contribution to the institutional strategy are key.
- Encouraging a quality teaching culture will consist in inter-linking the various types and levels of support so that collaboration and its likely impacts on the teaching and learning are enhanced among leaders, teachers, students, staff and other stakeholders.

- The size of an institution is irrelevant with respect to quality teaching. Small specialised institutions or large multi-disciplinary universities can equally improve quality teaching provided:
  - A teaching and learning framework is set and understood by the community,
  - Resources, time and provisions are provided consistently,
  - Leadership is a driver for change and is clearly identified at all levels,
  - Synergy of policies is sought as it serves teaching and learning improvement.

(Henard & Roseveare, 2012, p. 9-11)

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this document was to propose a strategy for teaching and learning that will support the UFS's drive to become a research led institution. The strategy highlights the importance of robust environmental scanning which includes an analysis of the external and internal challenges and pressures facing the institution. It outlines and describes seven strategic improvement objectives for teaching and learning. Meeting these objectives will be critical if the university is going to produce a different kind of graduate with specific attributes. The final section provides an overview of the critical elements that need to be considered in the in creation of a quality teaching and learning culture. The strategy emphasises Cole's (2009) assertion that excellence in teaching and excellence in research are mutually reinforcing and that at great universities the best researchers are amongst the most brilliant lecturers or mentors since they are at the cutting edge of their discipline and are able to impart a sense of excitement about their scholarship to students.

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Appendix 1: *Draft* Example of how graduate attributes could be aligned with national and international outcomes\*

Graduate attribute for Bachelors degree	Description	Components/ Description by Association of American colleges and Universities	SAQA critical cross field outcome	NQF/ HEQF	Examples of what can be taught and assessed with the <u>integration of discipline specific knowledge</u> ?
<p><b>Effective Knowledge workers</b></p> <p><b>(Information Literacy)</b></p>	<p>Graduates of the university will be able to use information effectively in a range of contexts.</p>	<p>The ability to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively defines the scope of the research question or thesis. Effectively determines key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected directly relate to concepts or answer research question.</li> <li>Accesses information using effective, well designed search strategies and most appropriate information sources.</li> <li>Thoroughly analyses own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.</li> <li>Communicates, organises and synthesises information from sources to fully achieve a specific purpose, with clarity and depth</li> <li>Students use correctly all of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrate a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.</li> </ul>	<p>Collecting, analysing, organising and critically evaluating information</p>	<p><b>Level 5 (Year 1 of study)</b>                      Accessing, processing and managing information, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to gather information from a range of sources, including oral, written or symbolic texts, to select information appropriate to the task, and to apply <b>basic processes</b> of analysis, synthesis and evaluation on that information.</p> <p><b>Level 6 (Year of 2 study)</b>                      Accessing, processing and managing information, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to evaluate different sources of information, to select information appropriate to the task, and to apply <b>well-developed processes</b> of analysis, synthesis and evaluation to that information.</p> <p><b>Level 7 (Year 3 of study)</b>                      Accessing, processing and managing information, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to <b>develop appropriate processes</b> of information gathering for a given context or use; and the ability to independently validate the sources of information and evaluate and manage the information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plagiarism and plagiarism policy of the UFS.</li> <li>Copyright and creative commons licences.</li> <li>Assessing the credibility of information – especially internet sources.</li> <li>Appropriate referencing systems APA, Harvard etc.</li> <li>Conducting information searches on applicable and available databases.</li> <li>Report writing based on data obtained (relevant to the subject matter).</li> <li>Analysis and presentation of numerical information and data related to to discipline specific knowledge (based on real world assignments).</li> </ul>

\*Based on the integration of the Value Rubrics of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2010) rubrics with the Higher Education Sub Qualifications Framework (SAQA, 2013).



**G**

# **EGAP STUDY GUIDE**

# Introduction

## Overview of module

EGAP60206 (Graduate assessment programme – Service learning) is a compulsory, eight credit module for every student enrolled for an Economic and Management Sciences qualification. The eight credits require the average student to spend 80 notional hours on this module. EGAP60206 consists of five units (Figure 1). Each of these units has a unit outcome with specific outcomes. You, as the student, must master these outcomes to pass the module.

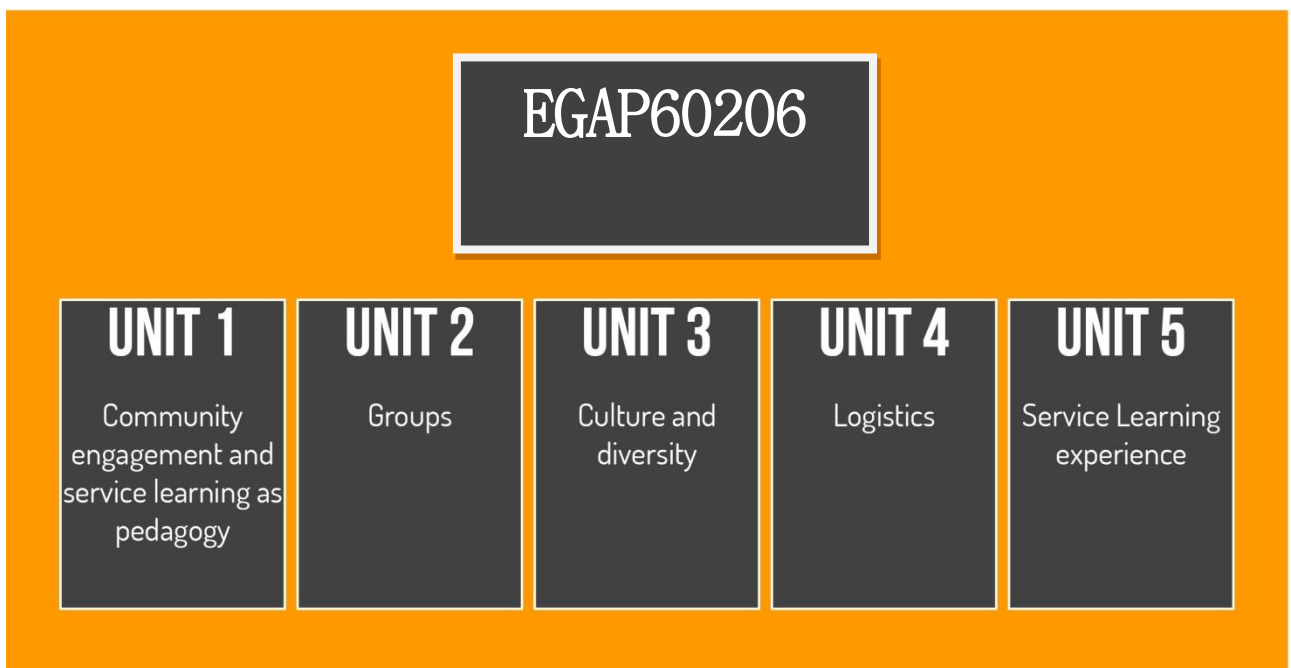


Figure 1: Outline of EGAP60206

The module will stretch over a period of two semesters in which you will be faced with learning opportunities in a service learning module to help you link the real world to academic content (Petersen & Henning, 2010:66). During the first two weeks of the semester, you will attend a one-hour lecturer and facilitation session each week where you will cover the first four units. The fifth unit is the practical service learning section of the module. It consists of weekly two-hour service site visits.

## Learning outcomes

### Module outcome

By the end of this module, you should demonstrate a clear understanding of service learning and the principles that underline it. You should also be able to apply your knowledge about groups, culture and diversity on the service learning module, as well as, the logistics that go therewith. You should be able to develop your theoretical competence, personal growth and social responsibility through the service learning experience.

### Developing the outcomes

Service learning has explicit learning outcomes for students. Specific outcomes for the units of this module can be found at the start of each unit. According to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) (RSA CHEQC, 2006:41) the outcomes for service learning should enhance a student's academic learning, personal growth and develop a deeper appreciation of social responsibility. All academic modules and programmes are required to address critical cross-field and development outcomes (CCFO's) (SAQA, 2000). According to De Villiers, Botma and Seale (2009:60) these outcomes promote lifelong learning. The authors further argue that the outcomes form the basis for developing specific outcomes for any learning programme. Furthermore, SAQA has National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level requirements that must be adhered to when learning outcomes are developed. These NQF level requirements ensure that there is coherence across all learning and qualifications in South Africa (SAQA, 2000).

The outcomes for EGAP60206 were structured on the basis of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom & Karthwohl, 1984 in RSA CHEQC, 2006:42-44). Bloom classifies the verbs used to describe an outcome according to cognitive levels, from lower-order thinking to higher-order thinking. Since you, the EGAP60206 students are on NQF level 6, most outcomes were concentrated in the first few levels of cognition, namely knowledge, comprehension and application, although specific outcomes from the other cognitive levels (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) were also included.

Therefore, learning outcomes were created with CCFO's, NQF levels and Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives in mind. All outcomes are concise and specific. The outcomes are also linked to matters that you will encounter during the service experience, since these types of outcomes facilitate student learning (RSA CHEQC, 2006:41).

# Unit 1: Community engagement and service learning as pedagogy

## 1.1. Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are grounded on three pillars, namely, teaching and learning, research and community engagement (figure 2). Recent research has called for the integration of community engagement into the other two areas of HEIs, rather than it being an add-on activity (Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:418; Bender, 2007:129; Bender, 2008:90; Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks,

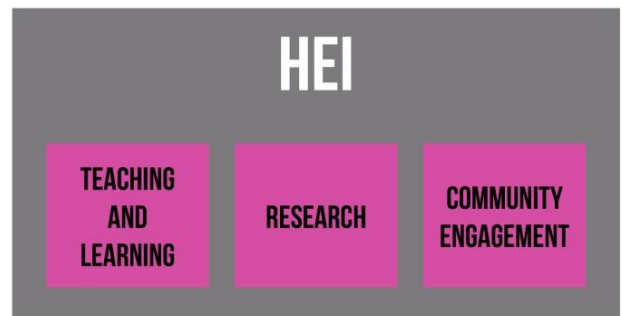


Figure 2: Three pillars of HEI.

Nduna & Slamati, 2008:60). Therefore, community engagement needs to be infused into teaching and learning and research in order to create 'a sense of context, relevance and application' for HEIs (Bender, 2007:129). Consequently, the three aspects of HEIs are no longer seen as separate pillars, but rather three, integrated functions enriching each other (figure 3). This unit focuses on community engagement as a vital part of the HEI.

## 1.2. Learning outcomes

### 1.2.1. Unit outcome

By the end of this unit you should be able to explain service learning as pedagogy as well as understand all the principles that underline service learning and evaluate the value of service learning to all partners.

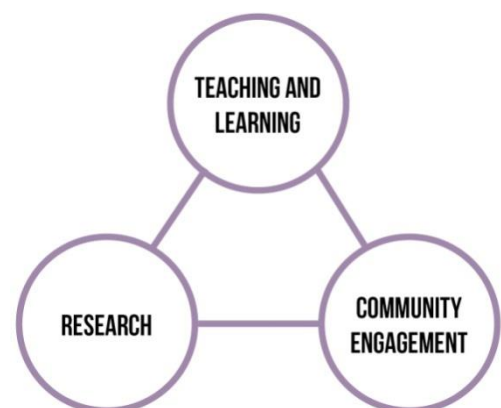


Figure 3: Integrated functions of HEI.

### 1.2.2. Specific outcomes

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Define community engagement and explain the transformation thereof, with specific reference to recent policies.
- Explain the link between community engagement and service learning.
- Define service learning as pedagogy.
- Apply reflection activities in the service learning module and evaluate the value thereof.
- Outline the benefits of service learning for students.
- Identify the partners in service learning by using the CHESP triad.
- Describe what is meant by “social responsibility”, by referring to the unique South African context and the business world.
- Describe what a “community of practice” is and how this term relates to service learning.
- Indicate what is meant with “the balancing act of service learning”.
- Recognise the importance of service learning as part of his/her studies.

### 1.3. Reading material

Please read the following articles in your reading bundle as preparation for this unit:

Bender, G. 2008. Exploring conceptual models for community engagement at higher education institutions in South Africa. *Perspectives in Education*, 26(1):81-95.

Bingle, R.G. & Hatcher, J.A. 1996. Implementing service learning in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 67(2), March/April.

Hall, M. 2010. Community engagement in South African higher education. In: *Community Engagement in South African Higher Education*. Kagisano No.6. January 2010. South African Council of Higher Education.

Van der Merwe, M. & Albertyn, R.M. 2009. Transformation through training: Application of emancipatory methods in a housing education programme for rural women in South Africa, *Community Development Journal*, 45(2):149-168.

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)

Downloaded on 12 August 2012.

## 1.4. Introduction to community engagement and service learning

### 1.4.1. Community engagement

According to Bawa (2003:49-50) there has been three global changes that has created a new global context. These include globalisation, a rapid innovation in information technologies and increase in the network society and lastly, the emergence of the 'knowledge society' or rather the increased role of knowledge in the society and industry.

These global changes are forcing local HEIs to also evolve. In the past HEIs have been seen as isolated, irrelevant, 'ivory towers' where privileged students get their credentials (Boyer, 1996:415; Bawa, 2003:52; Bender, 2008:85). Fortunately, "[s]ince 1999 a quiet revolution has taken place" (RSA CHEQC, 2006:xxi). There was a realisation that the knowledge, skills, competencies and values that HEIs equip students with, are not meeting the needs of employers or the requirements of the rapidly changing world of work (Griesel & Parker, 2008:19). It is crucial for HEIs to prepare students for the globally changing world while ensuring that they are able to address local issues in their developing country (Erasmus, 2007a:34).

The Mode 2 society is a response to the increasingly complex issues that needs to be addressed in a global and local perspective (Erasmus, 2007a:27). There has been a move in HEIs from a Mode 1 society to a Mode 2 society. Mode 2 knowledge is created in broader, transdisciplinary contexts that occur when knowledge and theory are applied (Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:410). Mode 2 societies are more focused on application and create socially accountable students. Therefore, the outcomes-based, student-centred and community orientated approaches of community engagement are crucial in creating students that are prepared for the Mode 2 society (Erasmus, 2007a:37).

In HEIs students are not just prepared for employment, but are also developed into responsible citizens that show a civic duty and a social responsibility (Bender, 2008:91). This can be done by creating opportunities for students where they can put the theories they learn in class into action in real-world situations (Daniels in Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:418), thus community-based learning is an important tool to prepare students for the demanding world of work as well as turn them into responsible human beings. It is therefore, critical for HEIs to "embrace community engagement as a core value" (Erasmus, 2007a:28).

The University of the Free State (UFS) defines community engagement as:

*“Continuously negotiated collaborations and partnerships between the UFS and the interest groups that it interacts with, aimed at building and exchanging the knowledge, skills, expertise and resources required to develop and sustain society.” (UFS, 2006:9)*

It is important for the term ‘community’ or ‘interest groups’ in the definition of community engagement to be flexible according to the discipline and context in which the term is functioning (Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:417). Community engagement has experienced a transformation, specifically in the terms used to describe this type of community-based learning. There has been a shift from ‘community service’, to ‘academically based community service’, to the current ‘community engagement’ and upcoming re-emphasis on the ‘scholarship of engagement’ (Bender, 2008:83; Boyer, 1996; Lazarus *et al.*, 2008:60). Most importantly there has been a transformation from a needs-based approach to asset-based community development (Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:420), regarding community engagement. Thus, rather than HEIs going to communities and ‘fixing’ their problems, community engagement is now focused on a reciprocal partnership where all role players benefit from the relationship.

#### **1.4.2. The link between community engagement and service learning**

Community engagement can take on many different forms. These include distance education, service, community based research, participatory action research and professional community service and service learning (figure 4). According to RSA HEQC (2006:11) service learning is the combination and integration of teaching and learning in community engagement. With the transformation in South Africa, and the central role of teaching and learning in all HEIs, service learning is used as the entry point for community engagement (Lazarus *et al.*, 2008:62). Thus when referring to the link between community engagement and service learning, Erasmus (2007a:29) describes the relationship as community engagement being the catalyst for transformation and service learning being the vehicle used for embedding community engagement in academic work through teaching and learning.

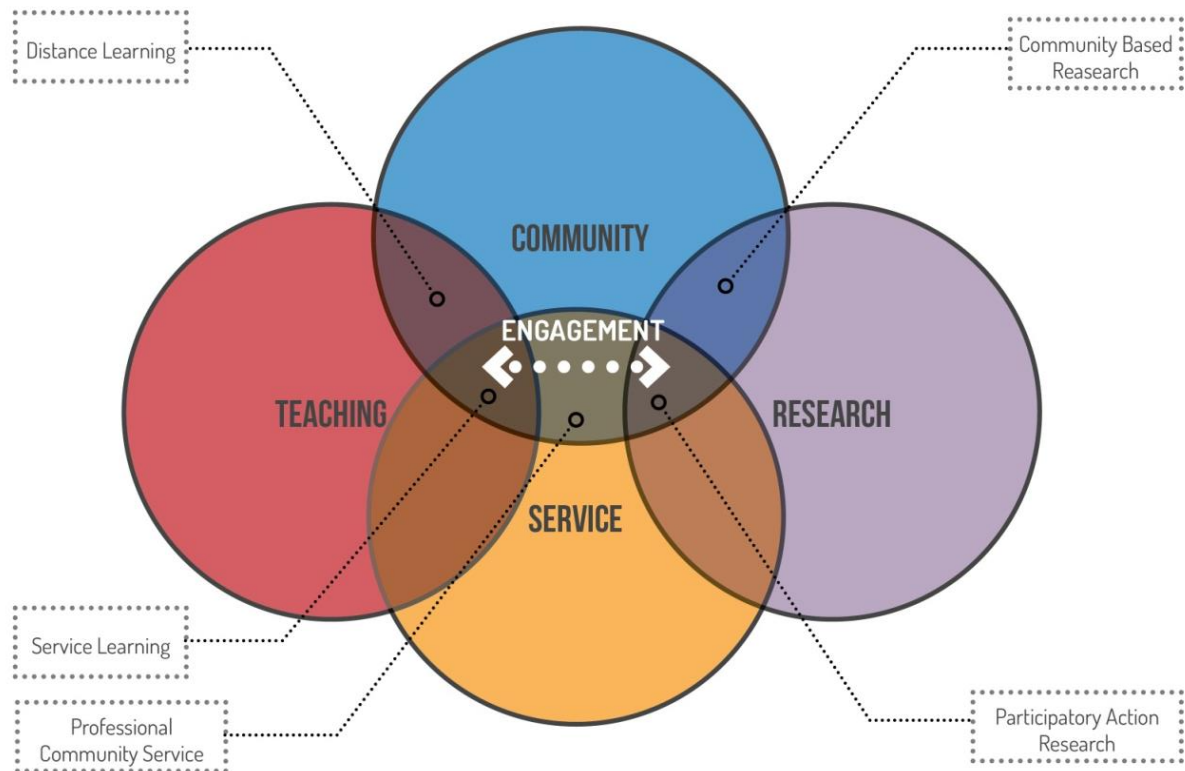


Figure 4: Link between community engagement and service learning (Lazarus *et al.*, 2008)

### Activity 1: The relevance of higher education community engagement

**Viewpoint 1: Community engagement is not relevant to higher education.**

**Viewpoint 2: Community engagement is relevant to higher education.**

Each group receive a viewpoint (regardless of their real viewpoint). You then have five minutes to discuss the merits of each viewpoint. During these 5 minutes you must refrain from criticising the viewpoint and make every effort to believe it. Only those who can speak in support of it are allowed to speak, using the questions below as prompts:

**What is interesting or helpful about this viewpoint?**

- What would be different if you accepted this viewpoint and believed it as true?
- In what sense or under what conditions might this idea be true.

**After both viewpoints had five minutes, we will discuss both as a class and come to a conclusion about the relevance of community engagement to higher education. (Activity adapted from Landis, 2008.)**

## 1.5. Service learning

### 1.5.1. Service learning defined

The UFS defines service learning as:

*“An educational approach involving **curriculum-based, credit-bearing** learning experiences in which students (a) participate in **contextualised, well-structured and organised** service activities aimed at addressing identified **service needs** in a community, and (b) **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 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 2006:9-10).*

Another frequently quoted and comprehensive definition of service learning is that of Bringle and Hatcher (1996:2):

*“Service learning is a course-based, **credit-bearing** educational experience in which students participate in an **organized** service activity that meets identified community goals; 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 **civic responsibility**.”*

#### Activity 2: Service learning key words

**From these definitions, important concepts of service learning are evident. Can you identify five?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Service learning started in South Africa thanks to policy documents and the work of various academic and service provider staff and community leaders (RSA HEQC, 2006:xxi). Service learning is based in experiential learning (Lazarus *et al.*, 2008:62). According to Furco (1996:6) the main aspect that distinguishes service learning from other experiential approaches is the fact that service learning programmes benefit the student and the community, thus it is mutually beneficial. It is not the traditional, top-down, philanthropic mode (RSA HEQC, 2006:xxi) that has been evident in more traditional community-based

activities. Service learning is a relatively new pedagogy and therefore, differs from the more traditional modes of education.

	<i>Traditional modes of education</i>	<i>Service-learning</i>
<i>Place</i>	<i>Classroom</i>	<i>Classroom and community-based</i>
<i>Educators</i>	<i>Lecturers on different levels (superior to student)</i>	<i>Lecturers, supervisors, clients, peers, community members on different levels</i>
<i>Preparation</i>	<i>Readings, previous modules</i>	<i>Expanded readings, previous modules, personal characteristics and experiences, site visits</i>
<i>Learning</i>	<i>Theoretical, linear, structured, deductive</i>	<i>Affective, practical, non-linear, active, inductive</i>
<i>Assessment</i>	<i>By lecturers</i>	<i>By lecturers, supervisors, self, community members</i>

Table: Adapted from Hay (2003:85)

## 1.5.2. Service learning as pedagogy

### 1.5.2.1. Experiential learning

Service learning as pedagogy is grounded in experiential learning (RSA CHEQC, 2006:14). Kolb (1984) proposed an experiential learning cycle (figure 5). The cycle consists of four elements and can start at any stage. It entails students having a practical experience (academic or service experience) and is followed by a reflective stage where students write down what they have experienced and question its meaning. Thereafter, the student moves on to the abstract conceptualisation phase and tries to give meaning to the experience by relating it to what he/she already knows and thus draw conclusions from the experience. During the last stage, the student makes a connection between the experience, academic content and the real world. The student then applies the conclusions he/she made in the previous phase and experiment with these conclusions. This leads to a new cycle since the student will have a new concrete experience through his/her experimentations.

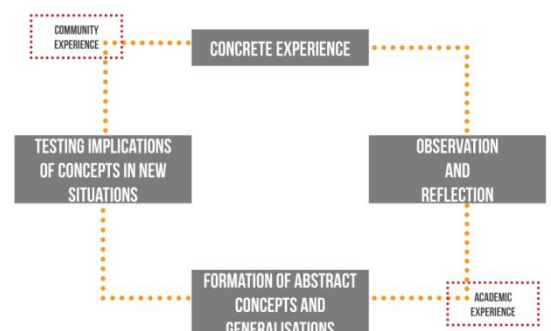


Figure 5: The experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984)

Kolb's cycle gives students the opportunity to make connections between their service experience and their academic experience through the use of reflection. Therefore,

reflection can be seen as the link between service and learning “in a mutually reinforcing relationship” (Eyler, Giles & Schmiede, 1996 in RSA CHEQC, 2006:58).

If Kolb’s cycle is applied to this service learning module, the service learning experience will be the practical experience. With a reflection activity you will question the meaning of your experiences and relate it to your academic knowledge. In the end, you will make a connection between the service learning experience, your academic knowledge and the real world and then apply it in the following service learning experience.

### 1.5.2.2. Reflection

Kottkamp (1990:182) defines reflection as:

*“a cycle of paying deliberate, analytical attention to one’s own actions in relation to intentions – as if from an external observer’s perspective – for the purpose of expanding one’s options and making decisions about improved ways of acting in the future, or in the midst of the action itself.”*

Through reflection, you, as the student, have the opportunity to analyse your experiences, question your own beliefs, values and attitudes and construct new meaning (RSA CHEQC, 2006:58). Reflection also prepares you for working in the business world. Mintzberg (2004 in Carmichael, 2009:233) states the importance of reflection for managers. In light of this importance; management education should give students the opportunity to develop this reflection skill.

Reflection needs to be continuous and implemented before, during and after the service experience (RSA CHEQC, 2006:61). Different activities are seen as reflection; these include reflective journals, presentations and role-playing. The UFS also have questionnaires available to explore students’ perceptions on the service learning module pre- and post-implementation (UFS, 2011a, 2011b) (can be found in your reading bundle). You will be better acquainted with these questionnaires, during the orientation session and at the end of the service learning experience.

Journals are a popular manner of reflection for service learning students. These journals should not be just a summary of events, but should examine and analyse your experiences on a deeper level (RSA CHEQC, 2006:63). Structured reflection activities such as journal entries create opportunities to monitor your progress towards the learning outcomes, as well as the opportunity for the facilitator for formative assessment and to provide feedback (RSA CHEQC, 2006:78). The assessment of reflective journals enables the facilitator to assess

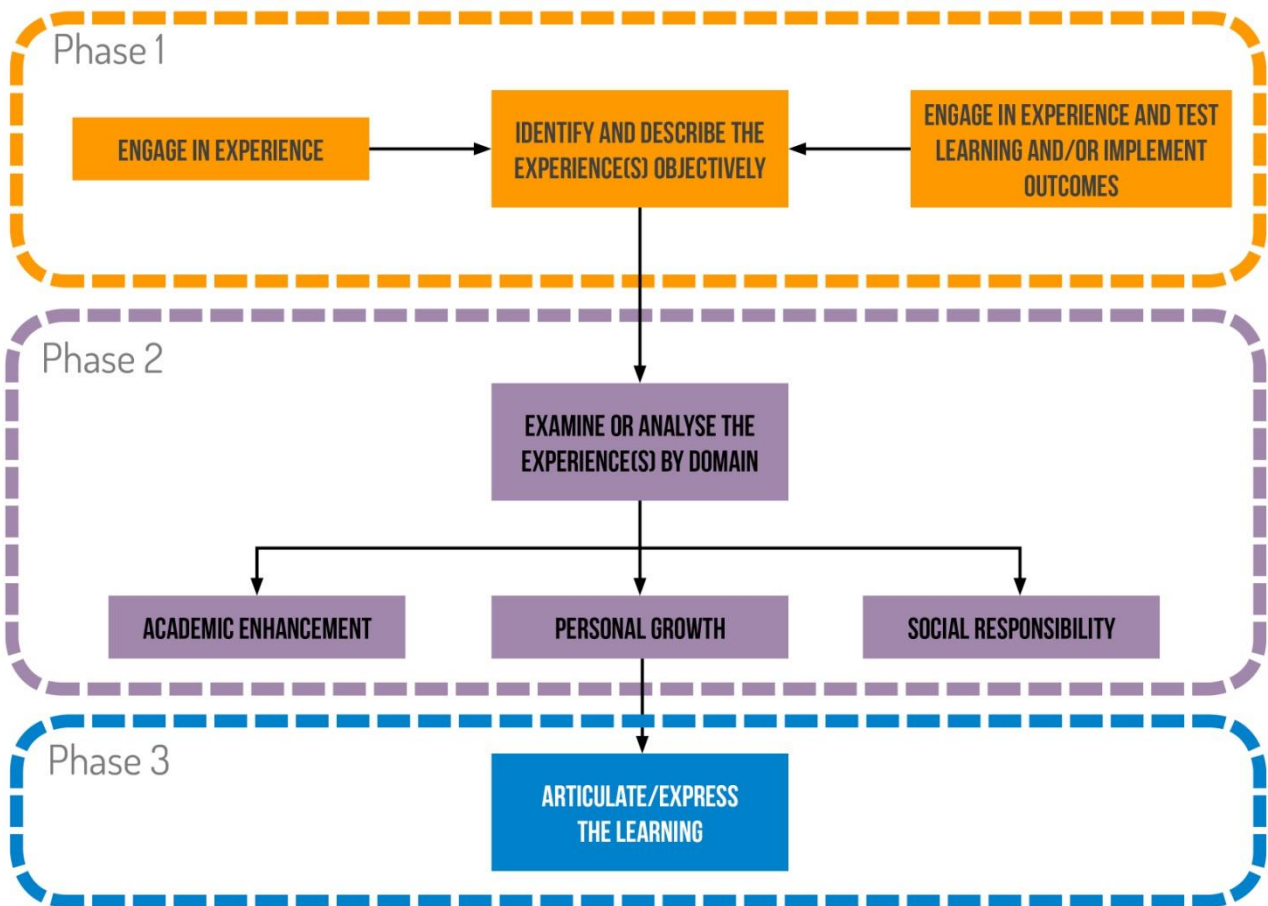
higher-order thinking skills, such as Bloom's taxonomy of educational outcomes (Carmichael, 2009:234) as is used to create the outcomes of this module.

Journal entries will be made and assessed online, using the learning management system, BlackBoard. According to Mills (2001:24) online journaling maximises the benefits of journaling and minimises the logistical difficulties thereof. With online journaling the student still has the private, safe space to record his/her thoughts, while the facilitator is not faced with the worries that go along with physical journals, like taking it in, carrying it around, marking it on time and then trying to find the student on time in order to return their journal for them to do the next entry. Cut-off times and dates for activities or journal entries can be created on BlackBoard. The cut-off times will force you to do the journal entry shortly after the service experience. BlackBoard also enables the facilitator to give real-time feedback on entries. Take note of the cut off times. It will usually be 24 hours after your service site visit. If the cut off time has passed, you will not have the opportunity to do that journal entry and lose the marks.

The online journal will be a critical incident journal, thus you will choose one or two important incidents from the whole experience for the journal entry (Carmichael, 2009:237). The journal will also be structured by using the DEAL (discover, examine, articulate, learn) model (Ash, Clayton & Atkinson, 2005 in RSA CHEQC, 2006:70). You are welcome to use photos in your reflective journal as an additional communication method. By doing reflection early and on a continuous basis, you will undergo deeper learning and gain new insights each time you revisit your learning (Bernam, 2006:11).

### 1.5.2.3. The DEAL model of reflection

Figure 6: The DEAL model (RSA CHEQC, 2006:72)



The reflection, activities and outcomes of this module have been based on the DEAL model of reflection. The DEAL model supports students in connecting the service experience with their academic content, as well as with their personal growth and social responsibility.

Reflection, using the DEAL model, takes place in three phases (RSA CHEQC, 2006:72-76):

*Phase 1: Describe the experience(s) objectively.*

You must be completely objective in this phase and only review what happened at the service site or during the facilitation session.

*Phase 2: Examine the experience(s) in terms of:*

- Academic outcomes

This enables you to better understand the module content and the experiences. You can make connections between what you read and discussed and your experiences in the community and service agencies. You must compare and contrast what theory suggests and what really happened.

- Personal development

You explore what the service experience actually revealed about yourself: your strengths and weaknesses, your sense of identity, the assumptions you intend to make and your beliefs and convictions as well as personal traits. You may learn something new, question why you are the way you are and whether you want to change the way you are.

- Social responsibility

This will deepen your understanding of citizenship. It helps you to learn how individuals in a particular profession act in socially responsive ways, and to understand why things are the way they are and how they might be changed. It is important to understand what outcomes are at stake, what was done in order to try to accomplish them and what might have been done differently.

The ideas of phase 2 and then expanded in phase 3.

*Phase 3: Articulate (express) the learning that results.*

One or more core ideas that were captured in phase two are built on to create more significant and deeper learning.

#### **1.5.2.4. EGAP60206 reflection**

The journal entries are structured and thus, you have to answer certain questions for every journal entry.

Journal entries will consist of three parts according to the DEAL model:

Part 1: Identify and describe the service learning experience(s) objectively.

Part 2: Examine or analyse the service learning experience(s) in relation to the following:

- Your academic enhancement.
- Your personal growth.
- Your social responsibility.

Part 3: Express the learning that took place during the service learning experience.

To help you organise your thoughts and to make sure that you have addressed all relevant issues, there are certain questions you can use to lead you in writing your journal entries. You must also make use of the learning outcomes of each unit.

### Part 1: Identify and describe the experience(s)

- *Where was I?*
- *Who else was there? Who wasn't there?*
- *When did this happen?*
- *What was said?*
- *What did I/others do?*
- *What emotions did I/others show?*
- *What did I sense? See? Touch? Hear?*
- *What actions did I/we take?*
- *Who didn't speak or act?*
- *Why were we there? Why did the situation occur?*

### Part 2: Examine or analyse the service learning experience(s) in terms of

#### Academic enhancement

- *What specific academic concepts relate to this experience?*
- *How was I able to apply the academic content?*
- *What similarities and differences are there between how a person perceives a situation from academic material and how it unfolds in the real world? Reasons?*
- *How does this experience enhance my knowledge of a specific reading, theory or concept? Does it challenge or reinforce prior understanding? How?*
- *What questions can I ask to put myself in a better situation to judge the adequacy of the module content?*

#### Personal growth

- *How did the experience make me feel?*
- *How did I react? What would I do differently next time?*
- *Why did I, or did I not experience difficulty interacting with others? What can I do differently next time?*
- *What assumptions or expectations did I bring to the situation that affected my actions or decisions? Did they prove true?*
- *What personal skills did I draw on in handling this situation? What personal skills will enable me to handle it better and how may I develop these?*
- *How have past experiences influenced my actions and decisions? Am I comfortable with this influence? Why/why not?*
- *What personal strengths/weaknesses of mine did the situation reveal? What ways did it affect the situation positively or negatively? What can I do to build on strengths and overcome weaknesses?*
- *How did the situation challenge and reinforce my personal values, beliefs, convictions?*

#### Social responsibility

- *What was I/someone else trying to accomplish?*
- *What roles did each person/group/organisation play? Why? What alternative roles should each play?*
- *Did I/others act alone or collaboratively? Why? Should I have worked differently?*
- *How did leadership emerge in the situation? Was it initiated?*
- *How were outcomes or goals established?*
- *In what ways did power imbalances emerge in this experience? What was the source of power? Who benefits and who is harmed by the use of power here?*
- *Are dependencies created in this situation? Should they be eliminated? Why?*
- *How does this experience highlight the relationship between individual choices or actions and the operation or constraints of institutions or larger systems?*
- *In taking action, was the focus on symptoms or causes of problems and was this appropriate to the situation? If not, how might the focus be changed?*

### Part 3: Articulate/express learning

- *What did I learn?*
- *How, specifically, did I learn it?*
- *Why did this learning matter? Why is it significant?*
- *In what ways will I use this learning?*

Feedback will be given on each journal entry with prompting questions, if necessary.

Your journal entries will be assessed using the following rubric:

<i>Assessment Criteria</i>	<i>Insufficient (1 mark)</i>	<i>Unsatisfie d (2 marks)</i>	<i>Sufficient (3 marks)</i>	<i>Accomplishe d (4 marks)</i>	<i>Exemplary (5 marks)</i>
<i>Experience(s) are fully identified and described.</i>					
<i>Experience(s) are fully analysed and synthesised under the following topics:</i>					
<i>Academic learning and enhancement</i>					
<i>Personal growth</i>					
<i>Social responsibility</i>					
<i>The learning that took place is expressed.</i>					
<i>The journal entry is concise, but does not lack detail.</i>					
<i>Comments:</i>				<i>Total:</i>	<u>30</u>

Remember to check the cut off times and dates for the journal entries.

#### **1.5.2.5. The benefits of service learning for the student**

According to national policies all qualifications should include certain outcomes. These outcomes are known as the Critical Cross-Field Outcomes (CCFOs) (SAQA, 2010). Thus all qualifications make provision for learning opportunities such as:

- Identifying and solving problems by using critical and creative thinking.
- Working effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation and community.
- Organising and managing oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collecting, analysing, organising and critically evaluating information.
- Communicating effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written persuasion.
- Using science and technology responsibly, effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
- Demonstrating an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.
- Contributing to the full personal development of each student, and the social and economic development of society at large by making it the underlying intention of any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of:
  - Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.

- Participating as responsible citizens in the local, national and global communities.
- Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
- Exploring education and career opportunities and
- Developing entrepreneurial opportunities (SAQA, 2010).

According to Erasmus (2007a:34) these CCFOs are best facilitated through authentic learning experiences that are evident in community engagement and service learning. There are many valuable outcomes of service learning and community-based learning that can be identified from recent studies and available resources. The main advantages of service learning are illustrated in figure 7.

Benefits of service learning to students				
Moral development		Learning		Critical thinking skills
Spiritual growth	Civic mindedness	Increased academic learning		Problem solving
Reduced stereotypes		Increased interest	Relevant	Leadership   Self-management
Lifelong learning	Commitment to service	Broaden scope of curriculum		Reflective learning
Social responsibility		Application of content		
	Ask larger questions	Real world problems	Creative	
Responsible citizenship		Credible	Right brain learning	
		Experience of service sector		

Figure 7: Benefits of service learning for students (Albertyn & Daniels, 2009; Bawa, 2003; Bender, 2007; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Coles, 2005; Erasmus, 2007; Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008)

### 1.5.2.6. Service learning and this module

According to Yorke and Knight (in Griesel & Parker 2008:5) employability are influenced by four main components:

- Skilful practices (communication, management of time, self and resources, problem solving and lifelong learning).
- Deep understanding of module content (specialised knowledge of study).
- Efficacious beliefs about personal identity and self-worth.
- Meta-cognition (self-awareness and the capability to reflect).

#### Activity 3: The relevance of service learning

**How many of these concepts are related to the advantages of service learning? Go back to p.336 and check!**

With globalisation, a very competitive arena has been created for businesses. To gain a competitive advantage businesses are focusing on distinguishing themselves from others by being socially responsible (Borza, 2012:111.). It has come to a point where the public expects organisations to be socially responsible (Carroll, 1999:292). If you are exposed to community based activities in HEIs, as students, you will be prepared to work in organisations that pay attention to corporate social responsibility. Thus, the role the HEI plays in preparing students for the working world must not be viewed as only knowledge driven, but the HEI also needs to produce 'thinking, responsive and intellectually well-grounded individuals' (Griesel & Parker, 2009:20).

In 2009 the revised Code of and Report on Governance Principles for South Africa (King III Report) was released. This report requires organisations' practices to be sustainable. It gives an opportunity for organisations to embrace its principles and in effect embrace corporate governance or corporate social responsibility (RSA, 2009). Thus, organisations are forced by this policy to do business in such a way as to positively affect its surrounding community. Students need to be prepared by HEIs to work in such an environment, thus community engagement and service learning is crucial to develop employable individuals.

In the UFS a study was done in order to explore the employability of its students, especially the students of the Department of Economic and Management Sciences. These studies showed that students lacked basic employability skills such as communication skills, information skills, self-management, problem solving, teamwork, leadership, conflict management, lifelong learning, ethics, innovation and creativity. A new service learning module (EGAP60206) is therefore introduced for Economic and Management Sciences students in their second year as part of the Graduate Assessment Programme in order for you to learn these crucial employability skills and prepare you for the world of work.

#### Activity 4: How does service learning differ from other modes of education?

Write a short letter to a family member and tell him/her about the service learning module you are doing and how it differs from more traditional modes of education. Remember your family member knows nothing about higher education or service learning, therefore you must explain it to him/her simply and shortly. (Activity adapted from Landis, 2008.)

#### 1.6. Important policies and national documents

To ensure the empowerment and reciprocity in community engagement and service learning, policies and national documents need to be in place (Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:417). It is important to view these policies as guidelines for mutually beneficial relationships, rather than set in stone rules.

The key policies and national documents that a service learning student needs to be aware of can be summarised as follow:

<i>Policy or national document</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation (1996)</i>	<i>This document states the goals of HEI and calls for more responsive tertiary education with regard to civic responsibility and community engagement (RSA DoE, 1996).</i>
<i>Education White Paper 3 (1997)</i>	<i>This document gives recommendations on the social responsibility of students and focuses on the growing interest in community service programmes (RSA DoE, 1997).</i>
<i>Higher Education Act (1997)</i>	<i>The Higher Education Act of 1997 gives effect to the recommendations of the White Paper 3. It also gives information on the Council of Higher Education (CHE) (RSA, 1997).</i>
<i>Founding Document of HECQ (2001)</i>	<i>This document states the details surrounding the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC, 2001).</i>
<i>Service Learning in the Curriculum – HEQC CHE (2006)</i>	<i>This is the first publication that provides support for academic staff about the implementation, design and access of community based service learning programs (RSA CHEQC, 2006:xxi).</i>
<i>UFS Risk Management Guidelines for service learning: students (2011)</i>	<i>Measures and procedures students have to take when engaging in service learning activities (UFS, 2011c).</i>
<i>UFS Community Service Policy (2006)</i>	<i>Provides a framework and guidelines for the Community Service activities of the UFS (UFS, 2006).</i>
<i>New Green Paper on Post School Education and Training (2012)</i>	<i>It provides a vision for a single, coherent, differentiated and highly articulated post-school education and training system. It also addresses many issues facing HEI (RSA DoHET, 2012).</i>

## 1.7. Service learning partnerships

### 1.7.1. The CHESP Triad

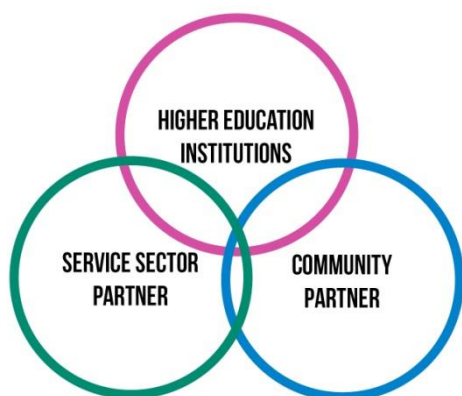


Figure 8: The CHESP triad

There are three key role players in a service learning partnership and in South Africa this partnership is known as the CHESP (**Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships**) triad and consists of the HEI, community and service sector partner (Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008:50). This relationship is mutually beneficial to all the partners (Bender, 2007:128) and if the interaction is effective all partners will value this reciprocal relationship. The CHESP triad model for partnerships

give a voice to the community and engages all the partners

in the planning, implementations and evaluation of the service learning module (Gelmon, 2003:45). It is important for HEIs to not make assumptions about the community and just engage with the community (more traditional approach), but also for the community to engage with the HEI (Bender, 2008:87) which will strengthen the mutual benefits for both.

According to the Joint Education Trust (2002 in Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:68) the purpose of this CHESP triad is that the service learning partnership should contribute to empowering and developing the local communities, make higher education policies and principles more relevant and responsive to the needs of the community, and enhance service delivery to the communities.

### 1.7.2. Service learning site

Before a service learning programme is initiated in the community, sites where the facilitator intends to place service learning students are thoroughly examined. Therefore, a site visit for the purpose of doing situation analysis was done before this module to understand the context of the community and other partners. The situation analysis will ensure that the module and service learning intervention is relevant to the community's goals and that the community partners are appropriate for the service learning module (RSA CHEQC, 2006:37).

### 1.7.3. The service learning project:

Relationships between corporate companies, universities and communities are emerging, since the corporate world are realising that their well-being are dependent on the well-being of the community (Riemer & McKeown, 2003:234).

### 1.7.4. Community of practice – The process of service learning

#### Activity 5: We are all different

**Make groups of two with a student that you don't know. Without talking or communicating in any way, write down a list of things you think that person has in his/her fridge/cupboard at home (the other person may not see your list). You will have 3 minutes for this action. Thereafter, show your list to your group member and ask how many items you guessed right.**

- Were all of the items in his fridge/cupboard?
- What did you miss?
- Were there items that you just assumed were basic and should be in everyone's fridge/cupboard?
- What did you learn from this activity?

**(Activity adapted from Landis, 2008.)**

#### *Community of practice*

Gilbert (1997:281) identified different human contexts as a 'community of practice'. This can be described as the way in which people think and is in turn determined by the person's experiences and context, but since all experiences and contexts differ, every community of practice also differs. When students come into contact with community members, through a service learning module, it is essentially the meeting of two different communities of practice (Gilbert, 1997:286). The approach of this meeting of communities of practice and therefore, the approach of the service learning module, will determine the community member's reaction to the module and the changes it brings.

Students or higher education institutions (HEIs) enter a service learning experience with a way of thinking (community of practice) that differs from that of the community members. This diversity can be beneficial to other partners, but can also have the potential to destroy the self-esteem of community members with conflict and threats during times of transformation (Gilbert, 1997:277). As mentioned before, the manner in which community members react to this new way of thinking will be determined by the approach of the service learning module.

According to Gilbert (1997:286-288) community members can react in three different ways:

- The community members can reject the students' community of practice and even be estranged from their own knowledge in the process, since they feel it is inferior and worthless.
- The community members can abandon their own practices and knowledge, whilst totally adopting the change agent's practices; unfortunately, with this reaction valuable, local knowledge will be lost.
- Cooperative activity between the students (change agents) and the community members can generate new knowledge that is built on the local knowledge, as well as the HE partner's practices. This approach will minimise the chances of domination and conflict in the partnership. The only way this outcome can be achieved is if all partners have an opportunity to participate in all areas of the service learning process.

For the partnership to be successful, it should be a cooperative, dynamic liaison in which all the partners involved can collaborate in creating knowledge, sharing power, blending interests and in the process create new meaning or a new community of practice (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:68-69). Thus, it is ideal that the outcomes for all partners should be aligned to ensure that every one of the parties benefit from the service learning interactions.

#### **1.7.5. Taking it further than serving and learning: Empowerment**

Often, a module should go beyond the teaching of skills and knowledge to create an opportunity for students and community members to challenge and possibly change their own distorted assumptions and in the process create a sustainable process (Van der Merwe & Albertyn, 2009:166). For the project to be successful, a sense of ownership of the community and social responsibility must be instilled in the community. According to Van der Merwe and Albertyn (2009:150) this can be done through creating a deeper level of learning, or transformation in order to empower the individuals.

To change the communities' perspectives and assumptions, they must be exposed to alternate ways of thinking (Mezirow, 1991 & Cranton, 1996 in Van der Merwe & Albertyn, 2009:160)

#### **1.7.6. The alignment of intended outcomes/benefits for all partners**

Nduna (2007:75) argues that not all service learning projects are responsive to the needs of the community, this may happen when all outcomes of the module is not aligned. Service

learning must not only focus on the beneficial outcomes for the HE students, but should also address relevant community challenges (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:66). All involved partners are expected to teach the others and offer services, on the other hand, all partners should also benefit or learn from the service learning experience (Conner, 2011:19), which is merely possible when community needs are matched to learner outcomes (Nduna, 2007:75). Thus, the partnership can be mutually beneficial if partners strive to align their outcomes.

To create an environment for transformation and learning, all partners must have an attitude of trust, compassion, honesty and receptivity between them (Cranton, 2004 in Van der Merwe & Albertyn, 2009:161). Each partner in the CHESP triad must respect the contribution of the other partners as co-educators in the service learning initiative (Rubin, 2001:20). During the initial contact between the facilitator and community, the concept of service learning should be thoroughly explained, as was done in this module, to ensure that the community fully comprehend their role as co-educators of the service learning module (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:77). When the strengths of all partners are seen as valuable and important, a climate of reciprocity will be created (Conner, 2011:19).

Service learning is based in experiential learning (HEQC/JET 2006:16). Kolb (1984) argued that experiential learning is a strategy where education, personal development and work is integrated. Within service learning the theoretical knowledge (education) students have will be integrated with work (service learning experience) where they will undergo personal development in the process.

During the service learning experience, you will be required to use your theoretical knowledge to guide your actions in the community. For this reason, you, the student need an “epistemic space” where the theory and practice of service learning can come together (Petersen & Henning, 2010:64). There is an opportunity to create this space

within a community. You then have the opportunity to make links between your academic work and the real world (Petersen & Henning, 2010:66) and hopefully instil a holistic approach within you, where you see the world as various interrelated components and understand that problems and thus solutions do not exist in isolation (Seale, Wilkinson & Erasmus, 2005:209). According to Nduna (2007:75) the community sees student involvement as critical for encouraging a commitment for the welfare of the community in students.

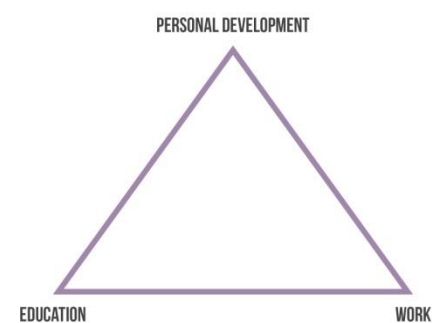


Figure 10: Experiential learning (Kolb, 1984)

Nduna (2007:73) identified the following benefits of service learning for the community:

- Students are extra human resources.
- The organisation and products get marketed.
- Receive assistance with office administration.
- Receive free training and learn new skills.
- Gaining new knowledge.
- Assistance with fundraising.
- Get creative and exciting ideas from students.
- The opportunity to generate income.
- Receive support and encouragement from students from different backgrounds.

Nduna (2007:76) states that to ensure an effective HEI-community relationship along with, the development of social responsibility among students, all partners should be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes of service learning. This will contribute to the limitation of exploiting relationships and ensure that the community act as co-educators of the students by making a valuable contribution to the academic part of the service learning module (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:66).

#### **1.7.7. The balancing act**

According to Erasmus (2005:5-6 in Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:65) service learning requires cooperative use of competencies between the triad partners with reciprocal teaching and learning in a context where local and indigenous knowledge of all participants can be applied, in a perpetual balancing act.

Howard (1998:21 in RSA CHEQC 2006:31) proposes a “synergistic model” for service learning. In this model the students’ learning outcomes for the module are incorporated with their service learning experiences. The same attention paid to designing transformative, reflective learning experience for students should be paid to ensuring community members experience their participation as empowering and emancipatory (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:78).

Service learning requires activities that are mutually beneficial to the students and community members and where the primary goal is to serve the community members as well as enhance student learning (RSA CHEQC, 2006:23). Reciprocity is therefore critical to any service learning module.

To facilitate reciprocity Conner (2011:17) identified four core aspects that must be included in the service learning module:

- All the participants should have the opportunity to act as teachers, as well as students.
- All the participants should have the opportunity to enter and experience the other's world.
- All participants should have the opportunity to engage and react to the other's work.
- All participants should have the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate the service learning module.

### Activity 6: Connor's aspects of reciprocity

**Draw up a short action plan that gives practical suggestions to include each of Connor's aspects in the service learning module.**

**Opportunity to act as teachers:**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Opportunity to experience each other's worlds:**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Opportunity to engage and react to each other's work:**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Opportunity to reflect on and evaluate the service learning module:**

.....  
.....  
.....

Furco (1996:3) identified two dimensions of service learning. The first is the focus of the activity, which is balanced between service and learning. Secondly, the intended beneficiary is at the same time the service provider and the service recipient. Conner (2011:4) later added an overarching dimension to the existing two, named agency. Agency consists of three domains: the power to design, the power to act and the power to evaluate. If there is balance in these powers true and meaningful reciprocity will be achieved (Conner, 2011:20). Figure 11 states that all partners have the power to ensure their needs are met (power to design), to learn and act (power to act), as well as the power to reflect on and assess the service learning experience (power to evaluate). This is a cyclical process where information is used redesign the service learning experience.

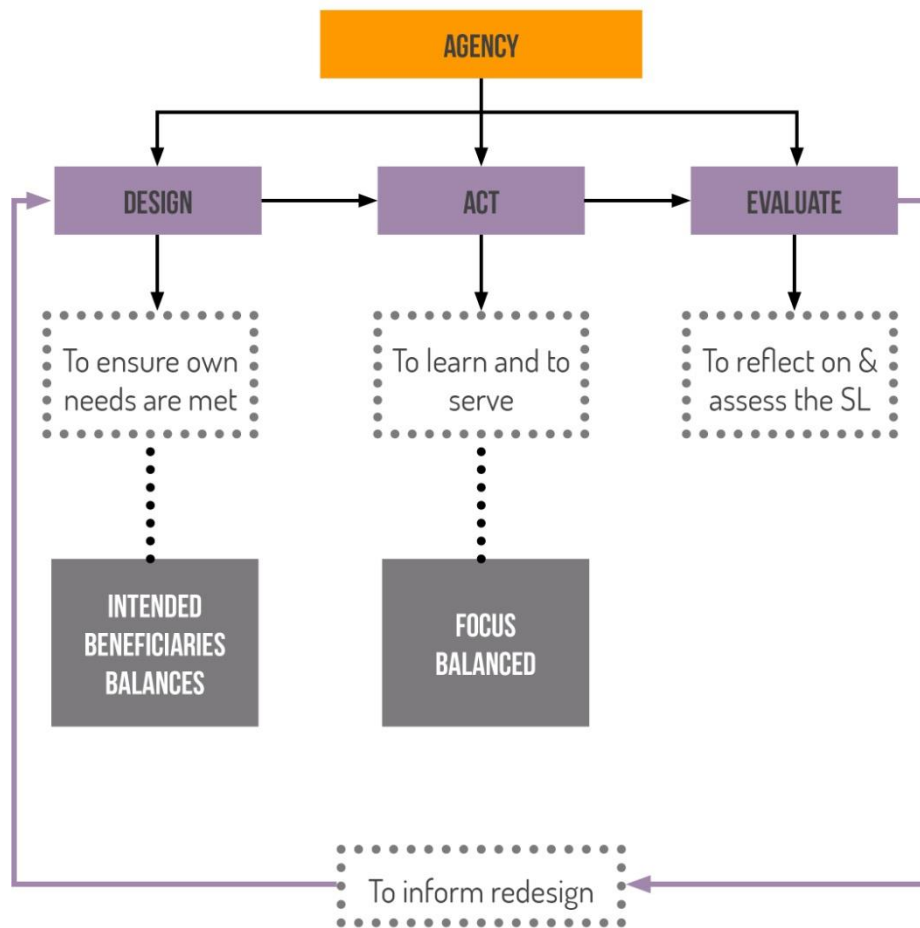


Figure 11: Conner's dimension of agency (Conner, 2011)

The focus of development in service learning is on self-sufficiency or agency. Agency is the human ability to create order in the world, to create, reproduce and change (Battacharya, 2004:12). By acting as agents from the beginning of the service learning process, 'people can regain or reaffirm solidarity and their agency' (Battachary, 2004:24). To achieve balance between service and learning, intended beneficiaries of service learning and agency, all partners must collaborate in the processes of designing, implementing and assessing the service learning experience (Rickeral 2003 in Conner:2011:4).

Service learning represents a balanced approach between community service and student learning (HEQC/JET, 2006:13-16). Service learning partnerships provide a facilitating platform for collaborative efforts of all partners to become more meaningful, reciprocal and viable (Seale *et al.*, 2005:207).

**Activity 7: Your initial thoughts about the prospect of doing service learning.**

**Write an anonymous sticky note with one or two thoughts about the prospect of doing a service learning module. The sticky notes will then be thrown into a hat, drawn randomly and then discussed in the class.**

## 1.8. Assessment: Concept map and essay

You are required to draw a concept map of service learning and its underlining principles. The concept map must include all the outcomes of Unit 1. Then, this concept map is used to write an essay on service learning, of no more than five pages. The essay must cover all the learning outcomes of Unit 1 and be structured correctly. You also have to bring your “own voice” into the essay and your opinion regarding the aspects discussed. Remember to adhere to the EBW Skills as available on Blackboard and the essay requirements that are stated there.

Your concept map and essay will be assessed according to the following rubric:

Assessment Criteria	Not achieved (0 marks)	Partially achieved (1 mark)	Fully achieved (2 marks)	Surpassed (3 marks)
<b>CONCEPT MAP</b>				
<i>Concept of service learning and terminology</i>	<i>Shows no understanding of the topic's concepts and principles.</i>	<i>Makes many mistakes in terminology and shows a lack of understanding of many concepts.</i>	<i>Makes some mistakes in terminology or shows a few misunderstandings of concepts.</i>	<i>Shows an understanding of the topic's concepts and principles and uses appropriate terminology and notations.</i>
<i>Knowledge of the relationships among concepts</i>	<i>Fails to use any appropriate concepts or appropriate connections.</i>	<i>Makes many incorrect connections.</i>	<i>Identifies important concepts but makes some incorrect connections.</i>	<i>Identifies all the important concepts and shows an understanding of the relationships among them.</i>
<i>Ability to communicate through concept maps</i>	<i>Produces a final product that is not a concept map.</i>	<i>Places only a few concepts in an appropriate hierarchy or uses only a few linking words; produces a concept map that is difficult to interpret.</i>	<i>Places almost all concepts in an appropriate hierarchy and assigns linking words to most connections; produces a concept map that is easy to interpret.</i>	<i>Constructs an appropriate and complete concept map and includes examples; places concepts in an appropriate hierarchy and places linking words on all connections; produces a concept map that is easy to interpret.</i>

ESSAY				
<i>Understanding</i>	<i>The student has no understanding of service learning and its underlying principles.</i>	<i>The student has a vague understanding of service learning and its underlying principles.</i>	<i>The student has a sufficient understanding of service learning and its underlying principles.</i>	<i>The student has a clear understanding of service learning and its underlying principles.</i>
<i>Correctness of facts</i>	<i>Most facts are wrong.</i>	<i>Some facts are wrong.</i>	<i>Most facts are correct.</i>	<i>All facts and details are correct, concise and complete.</i>
<i>Completeness</i>	<i>Most of the outcomes were not addressed.</i>	<i>Addressed most outcomes, but did not discuss.</i>	<i>Addressed most outcomes, but only supplied a few details.</i>	<i>Addressed most outcomes and discussed in detail.</i>
<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Ideas were difficult to follow and lacked organisation.</i>	<i>Ideas were somewhat organized, not always easy to follow.</i>	<i>Ideas were organized, mostly easy to follow.</i>	<i>Ideas were organized and flowed smoothly.</i>
<i>The student's voice</i>	<i>The student's purpose of writing is unclear. The student did not give any opinions regarding the topic.</i>	<i>The student's purpose of writing is somewhat clear. The student did mention his/her own opinion, but it is not logical and not motivated.</i>	<i>The student's purpose of writing is somewhat clear. The student did mention his/her own opinion, although it is not sufficiently motivated.</i>	<i>The student's purpose of writing is very clear. The student's understanding and opinions regarding the topic are logical and motivated.</i>
<i>Comments:</i>			<i>Total:</i>	<u>25</u>

# Unit 2: Groups

## 2.1. Learning outcomes

### 2.1.1. Unit outcome

By the end of this unit, the student should be able to understand the working of groups and evaluate as well as devise ways to improve groups.

### 2.1.2. Specific outcomes

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Define a group.
- Explain the importance of group work.
- Describe the four stages of group development.
- Distinguish between different types of group members and their responsibilities.
- Apply the guidelines for making groups successful by working effectively as a member of a group.

## 2.2. Reading material

Please read the following articles in your reading bundle as preparation for this unit:

Chiriac, E.H. & Granstrom, K. 2012. Teacher's leadership and students' experience of group work. *Teachers and Teaching*, 18(3):345-363, Jun.

Clements, J.A. & Dorlisa, M. 2012. "But I'm too stressed to learn about groups!" Using stress-management groups to teach group work skills. *Social Work with Groups*, 35(4):330-344, Oct-Dec.

Teo, S.T.T., Segal, N., Morgan, A.C., Kandbinder, P., Wang, K.Y. & Anurag, H. 2012. Generic skills development and satisfaction with group work among business students – effect of country of permanent residency. *Education and Training*, 54(6):472-487.

## 2.3. Divide into groups

Divide into groups of 5. Create the groups according to your study areas, for instance:

- The accounting group
- The marketing group
- The entrepreneurship group
- Industrial psychology group

Other groups can also be formed, if needed. These groups will stay together until the end of the service learning module; thus the service learning experience will also be completed in these groups.

## 2.4. Assessment: Case study

The case study involves a few university students working in a community as part of their service learning module. The case study students are required to work in groups and experience some difficulty with group work. The facilitator will show you a video during your facilitator session. Pay attention to the problems the students are experiencing and how each of them are reacting within this setting.

Within your newly formed groups discuss and answer the following questions based on the case study:

- Why is it important for these students to work in a group?
- In what stage of development is the group at the moment?
- If you were the group leader, what responsibilities will you assign to each group member in order to resolve the conflict?
- Give the group a few guidelines to function more effectively as a group.

A memorandum will be set up according to the information that is discussed during the facilitation sessions. These will not be the only correct answers and the facilitator may use her discretion when marking according to your motivation.

# Unit 3: Culture and diversity

## 3.1. Learning outcomes

### 3.1.1. Unit outcome

By the end of this unit, the student should be able to understand cultural diversity and be able to act effectively in a diverse culture.

### 3.1.2. Specific outcomes

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Recognize what are a culture and the existence of cultural diversity.

- Express why it is important to understand cultural diversity.
- Employ guidelines to build a diverse culture.
- Question your own stereotypes, impressions and assumptions about other cultures.
- Identify and solve problems in regard to cultural diversity by using critical and creative thinking.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

### 3.2. Reading material

Please read the following article in your reading bundle as preparation for this unit:

Maxwell, P. 2011. What were they thinking: a reflective look at students' attitude toward ethnicity, culture and diversity? *Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 3(11):39-46.

### 3.3. Assessment: Role-play

The whole class will be divided into two groups. One group are Kiki's (Addendum A2) and have to take on the characteristics of that culture as stated below. The other students are Bobo's (Addendum A1) and have to take on the characteristics of that culture.

Look in the addendum for your role card. The role card will state your culture characteristics. Don't peek at the other culture's role card. The Bobo's are not aware of the characteristics of the Kiki's and vice versa. The facilitator will give you quiet-time to take in the information on the card and think about the way you will act.

The scenario: There is an international student party where the two groups will meet each other. You must act true to the culture you were assigned.

You have 20 minutes to interact as Bobo's and Kiki's. The facilitator will walk through the room and complete a small rubric for each student. After the 20 minutes, you can sit back down and try to guess what the rules of the other culture were. This is also an ideal opportunity to discuss how you felt when your culture was not respected by the others. We will discuss the assumptions of each group about the other and the reasons for that. You then individually write a short paragraph on the following before you give feedback:

- Why is it important to understand cultural diversity?
- What guidelines do you think should be followed to build a diverse culture?
- What stereotypes, assumptions or preconceptions do you have of other cultures?

Your actions during the role-play will be assessed using the following rubric:

<i>Assessment Criteria</i>	<i>Poor (1 mark)</i>	<i>Need some improvement (2 marks)</i>	<i>Satisfying (3 marks)</i>	<i>Good (4 marks)</i>	<i>Excellent (5 marks)</i>
<i>Presents character appropriately.</i>					
<i>Contributes to role-play.</i>					
<i>Expresses the importance of understanding cultural diversity.</i>					
<i>Create effective guidelines to build a diverse culture.</i>					
<i>Identifies own stereotypes, assumptions and preconceptions.</i>					
<i>Comments:</i>				<i>Total:</i>	<u>25</u>

## Unit 4: Logistics

### 4.1. Learning outcomes

#### 4.1.1. Unit outcome

By the end of this unit, students should be able to construct plans regarding the logistics of the service section of the module.

#### 4.1.2. Specific outcomes

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Plan logistics for the service experience of module.
- Employ the UFS Risk Management Guidelines for UFS students.
- Organise and manage your activities in an ethical manner.
- Propose solutions to ethical dilemmas.
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information for the use of module quality management.

### 4.2. Reading material

Please read the following articles in your reading bundle as preparation for this unit:

Erasmus, M. 2009. Embedding service-learning in South African higher education through good practices and quality management. In: Moore, M. & Lin, P.L. (Eds), *Service-learning in higher education: Paradigms and challenges*, pp.45-64. Indianapolis, In: University of Indianapolis Press.

Rubin, M.S. 2001. A smart start to service-learning. *New Directions for Higher Education*, Summer, No.114:15-26. John Wiley & Sons.

UFS (University of the Free State). 2011c. *Risk Management Guidelines for Service-Learning: Students*. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State.

### 4.3. Logistical implications

#### 4.3.1. Finances

The biggest part of the service learning module will be funded by the UFS Service Learning Offices. Depending on the specific service learning project you are working with, corporate companies such as KPMG Accountants, Ernst & Young and Elite Ideas Marketing will also be involved as part of their corporate sociability responsibility projects. Local recyclers will also supply equipment that is needed for the drop-off centre. Therefore, it is not necessary for you, as student, to carry any financial burden for this module. Transport costs will be covered if you comply with the transport requirements and submit the necessary documentation to your facilitator on time.

If you foresee any costs for your service learning programme or if you need any equipment, you must complete the request form (Addendum B1) a week before the applicable site visit. The request will be discussed with the facilitator and site supervisor to ensure that it is reasonable and do-able.

#### 4.3.2. Transport

Each service learning group consist of five students. You need to create a schedule (Addendum B2) between yourselves to determine how you will get to the service learning site for the eight weeks of the service learning experience. You have two options in regards to transport:

Option 1 - Make use of taxi services

Option 2 - Make use of personal vehicle

Remember that the driver of the vehicle must review the Risk Management Guidelines of the UFS (UFS, 2011c) and comply with all the rules as stated in that document.

#### 4.3.3. Communication

Clear and honest communication is critical for reducing risks in service learning (RSA CHEQC, 2006:119). During this service learning module communication will be used to

monitor your progress and involvement in the experience (RSA CHEQC, 2006:131), as well as to provide all partners with the opportunity to raise any concerns, issues or problems as soon as it arises.

You have the following modes of communication:

<i>Communication partners</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>
<i>Student ↔ Community ↔ Facilitator</i>	<i>Direct communication – Weekly service learning site visit</i>
	<i>Online BlackBoard journal with feedback.</i>
	<i>Cell phone (when necessary).</i>
<i>Student ↔ student</i>	<i>Online BlackBoard discussion forum (note that this is also visible to the facilitator and other partners, although they will not contribute).</i>

#### 4.4. Risk management

Risk management is:

*“the process whereby an organization (the UFS) establishes its risk management goals and objectives, identifies and analyses its risks and selects and implements measures to address its risks in an organized fashion” (Young & Tomski, 2002 in RSA CHEQC, 2006:112).*

The safety of staff, students and other service learning partners are important to the university, on the campus, as well as at the service learning site. Your safety is not just the responsibility of the university, but you have to ensure your own safety by obliging to the Risk Management Guidelines of the UFS (UFS, 2011c) as well as any rules or procedures put in place for the service learning experience. Taking responsibility for your own safety contributes to your development into a responsible citizen (UFS, 2011c:2).

How can you ensure that you are safe?

- Sign the risk form and hand it in during the orientation session.
- Follow the Risk Management Guidelines (UFS, 2011c)(included in your reading bundle).
- Make sure you follow the service learning schedule precisely.
- Complete your time record form and hand an updated copy in at least two days before your site visit (Addendum B4).
- Talk to the facilitator about any issues, before they become problems.
- Attend all campus and on-site orientation sessions in connection with the service learning course.

- Attend all facilitation sessions.
- Make sure the group have a working cell phone with airtime.
- Keep your emergency handout and map to Reach with you at all times (Addendum B5).

Possible risks that you may encounter:

Transport problems	Accidents
Hijacking	Theft
Ethical issues regarding your work	Moral dilemmas

Remember: Just use general safety tips when you are busy with the service learning experience.

## 4.5. Ethical aspects involved in working in and with the community and service sector staff

### 4.5.1. Ethics defined

Ethics is the process of deciding what is the best thing to do when you are faced with a difficult situation. The most important part of ethics is analysing the situation before making a decision. You have to take the moral issues, value differences, differing principles and possible solutions into account before you decide what will be an ethical way to act (Chapdelaine, Ruiz, Warchal & Wells, 2005:10,12). When you, as student, engage in a service learning module, you may find that your value systems, moral beliefs and the way you think are challenged through the unique issues, problems and situations that service learning present (Chapdelaine *et al.*, 2005:25, 13). To address these challenges you can follow the code of ethics for students and if you find yourself in an ethical dilemma, you can use the model of ethical decision making. The community is an important part of service learning; therefore, the solution you find to your ethical dilemma must take the needs of the community and the individuals into consideration (Chapdelaine *et al.*, 2005:12).

Remember: It is important to report all ethical challenges in your feedback journal, and if you find yourself in an ethical dilemma, please be sure to talk to your facilitator immediately.

### Service learning code of ethics for students

1. Students in service learning shall behave as professional representatives of the UFS at all times.
2. Students in service learning shall understand their role and its limitations in the context of the service learning assignment.
3. Students in service learning shall adhere to the policies and procedures of the community agency.
4. Students in service learning shall treat service recipients in a manner consistent with ethical principles.
5. Students in service learning shall fulfil their service learning commitment to the agency in accordance with the course requirements.
6. Students in service learning shall agree to abide by any applicable legal and ethical guidelines.
7. Students in service learning shall recognize and reflect upon potential challenges to their personal value systems.
8. Students in service learning shall carefully consider all aspects of the service learning assignment and consult with faculty members if participation would cause undue distress due to personal circumstances.

Source:Chapdelaine *et al.* (2005:17).

#### **4.5.2. Possible ethical dilemmas**

During your service learning experience, you may find yourself in situations that are not like your normal university or work experiences. Since you are not used to these situations, you won't always be sure what would be the right way to act (Chapdelaine *et al.*, 2005:23) and since you will usually be required to act without direct supervision you need to be prepared for these situations.

What are the possible dilemmas you can expect?

- Conflict between your personal commitments and the service learning module requirements.
- Conflict between confidentiality and your responsibility towards the service sector.
- Conflict with informed consent.
- Treating service recipients with respect, while still keeping the limits of the service learning assignment.
- Possible psychological burden.

How do you deal with these and other ethical issues?

- Follow the service learning code of ethics for students.
- Use the model to make ethical decisions.

#### 4.5.3. Model of ethical decision making for service learning

If you find yourself in a difficult situation, there are certain steps that you can follow to reach an ethical solution. Chapdelaine *et al.* (2005:19-20) proposed the following model for ethical decision making in service learning:

Step 1:	<i>Identify and define the dilemma.</i>	<i>Simplify the problem and identify what the most important factors or issues are.</i>
Step 2:	<i>Address relevant principles and gather information.</i>	<i>Get information from different sources (laws, rules, codes, facilitator, supervisor, other students). Analyse all the information, determine if more information is needed and organise the information into possible solutions.</i>
Step 3:	<i>Propose as many courses of action as possible.</i>	<i>Create as many good solutions as possible. Take all factors and service learning partners into consideration. Group the related solutions together.</i>
Step 4:	<i>Determine and analyse the consequences for each proposed course of action.</i>	<i>Critically examine every cause of action. Determine why each one of them might work or why it might fail. Eliminate inappropriate solutions and generate more courses of action from the analysis.</i>
Step 5:	<i>Decide on the best course of action.</i>	<i>Consult with appropriate sources to seek feedback on one's decision.</i>
Step 6:	<i>Evaluate and reflect on whether the selected course of action is the best one.</i>	<i>This step will help you develop your morals through finding a solution for your ethical dilemma. Ask yourself: Will I mind everyone on campus knowing what decision I took?</i>

Figure 12: Model for ethical decision making

Remember to reflect on the ethical dilemmas you might have encountered and the steps you followed in your on-line journal. If there is a serious situation, report it to your facilitator as soon as possible.

## 4.6. Quality management (monitoring and evaluation)

### 4.6.1. The importance of quality management

Service learning is still a relatively new pedagogy in South Africa and is often received with criticism and scepticism (Erasmus, 2009:46). With the use of quality management, facilitators and lecturers can give proof concerning the value and benefits of service learning (Erasmus, 2007b:123). Furthermore, both the successes and failures of the module need to be documented in order to improve future modules (Nduna, 2007:75).

The quality of a module is managed through the monitoring and evaluation thereof. “Quality management should entail a collaborative effort on the part of all stakeholders” (Erasmus, 2009:50) since they can provide valuable information and recommendations for the future (RSA CHEQC, 2006:135). Quality management is an ongoing cycle that enables the module to be continuously improved (Forbes, 2006:10; RSA CHEQC, 2006:14).

Your progress will be monitored throughout the module to ensure that you meet your deadlines, work towards the module outcomes and to identify any problems before they become issues (RSA CHEQC, 2006:132). This will be done through facilitation sessions, pre- and post-implementation questionnaires, reflection journals and the facilitator’s observations when he/she accompanies you to the service learning site (Forbes, 2006:15).

Like mentioned before, all partners will be involved in the evaluation of the service learning experience. Care must be given to choose an evaluation method that puts the least burden on the community, with the most valuable information for the HEI (Gelmon, 2003:58). Focus group interviews will be held with the staff of Reach and continuous discussions between the facilitator and Patrick Kaars, the head of the service sector partner, will add to the quality management of the module. When community and service sector partners have a chance to voice their opinion, they don’t just help in improving the module, but this is also an important step to improving the reciprocity of the partnership and developing trust between the partners (Alperstein, 2007:66). High-trust relationships between the partners will create more opportunities of learning for students (Langseth, 2000:251).

## 4.6.2. Quality management timeline

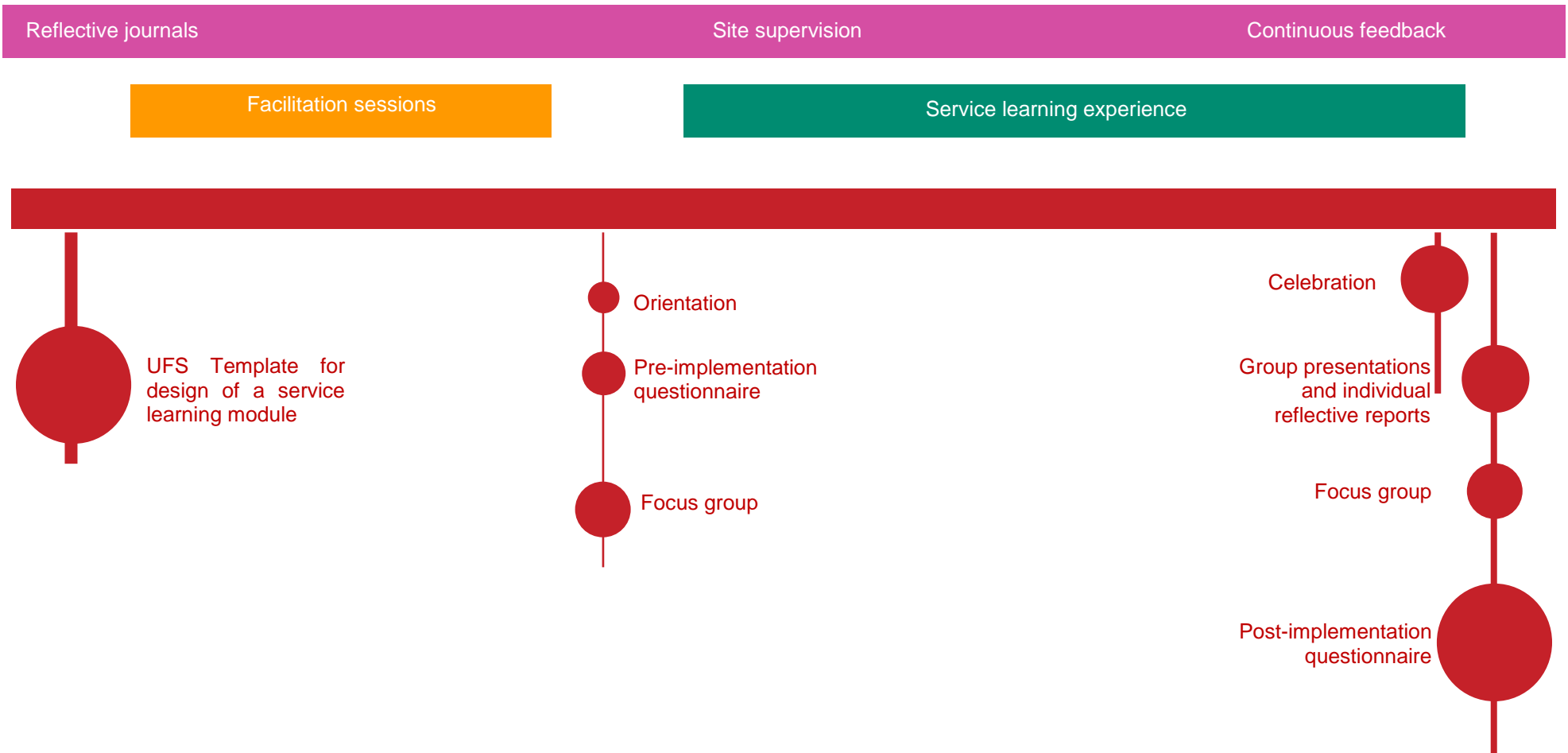


Figure 13: Quality management timeline

An orientation session will be held before the service learning module where all measures taken for quality management will be discussed with you. The schedule and time line of the module will also be discussed in detail.

#### 4.7. Assessment: Logistical plan

Work in your groups of 5. After the discussion about logistics, risk management, ethics and quality management draw up a logistical plan for the service learning experience (Unit 5).

Your logistical plan has to include:

- Possibilities of a project that relates to the drop-off centre and your academic studies for the service learning experience. To choose the most plausible possibility use the project evaluation rubric (Addendum A3)
- A timeline for your action plan. Remember! This is not set in stone and can be adapted during your service learning experience.
- Possible financial burdens that you foresee (not transport costs), for instance equipment, gifts and so forth. Write reasons for the need as well as estimated costs.
- Completed transport plan (Addendum B2). Your transport plan must include times and locations where students can meet, for departure and arrival at both the service site and the university. Make use of the transport schedule.
- Interpretation of the risk management guidelines. With a short report (maximum one page) where you state what the most important risk management guidelines are for you as students and how you will ensure that you apply these.

You will be assessed on to the comprehensiveness and usefulness of your logistical plan according to the following rubric:

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Not achieved 0-1 mark</i>	<i>Achieved 2-3 marks</i>	<i>Surpassed 4-5 marks</i>
<i>The action plan is comprehensive and practical.</i>			
<i>The time line or schedule is doable and realistic.</i>			
<i>The financial burdens are reasonable and contains sensible reasons and costs.</i>			
<i>The transport plan is complete and has a clear time schedule.</i>			
<i>The risk management report is clear and complete.</i>			
<i>Comments:</i>			<i>Total:</i> <hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/> 25

## Orientation session

It is important for you, as students, to undergo an orientation session before the service learning experience start. All the service learning partners will attend this compulsory lecture. One of the main challenges that HEIs face with service learning modules is that there is often a misunderstanding regarding the expectations and understandings of various partners (Gelmon, 2003:43) After the orientation session you will know exactly what is expected of you and be more familiar with the other partners. Remember that your experience does not only affect you, but it also affects all the other partners (Chapedelaine *et al.*, 2005:24).

This orientation session will include:

- Introduction to all service learning partners and an overview of the service learning experience.
- Discussion of the module timeline.
- Review of to the UFS Risk Management Guidelines.
- Signing risk forms (Addendum B6).
- Complete UFS pre-implementation questionnaire.
- Confirmation of transport.
- Review modes of communication.
- Talk from representative of local recycler business.
- Talk from previous service learning student.

## Unit 5: Service learning experience

### 5.1. Learning outcomes

#### 5.1.1. Specific outcomes for academic learning and enhancement

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Identify the connection between the service experience and your academic learning.
- Examine education and career opportunities.
- Develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

- Apply curricular content on the service by creating a business plan, doing marketing research etc.
- Analyse the content of unit 1-4 in light of the service experience.
- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively through an online journal.
- Evaluate the adequacy of module 1-4 in the light of the service experience.

### 5.1.2. Specific outcomes for personal growth

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Use science and technology responsibly, effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
- Communicate your feelings, experiences and facts effectively using an online journal as well as a presentation.
- Re-evaluate your own stereotypes and assumptions.

### 5.1.3. Specific outcomes for social responsibility

At the end of this unit you, the student, should be able to:

- Participate as responsible citizen in the lives of a local community.
- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
- Develop your own social responsibility.
- Identify and describe what steps have been taken to ensure that the goals, decided upon in the first meeting between the partners, are met.
- Apply your understanding of these steps to your own context.
- Analyse how appropriate these steps were and how it can be improved for future use.
- Evaluate each partner's role in the service experience.

## 5.2. Assessment: Group presentation and individual reflective report

After the service learning experience, each group are required to create a 20-minute presentation about their experience, as well as hand in an individual reflective report. The presentations will give you the opportunity to speak in public and is a form of post-implementation reflection, since the presentation require you to describe, analyse and evaluate the service experience, whilst integrating it with academic content (CHE-HECQ, 2006:64). Your presentations need to be clear and concise and cover the following topics:

- An overview of their service learning experience.
- The connection between the service learning experience and your academic content.
- The connection between the service learning experience and your personal growth.
- The connection between the service learning experience and your development as socially responsible citizens.
- What you have learned and why it is significant.

You can make use of the outcomes for Unit 5 to guide you in designing your presentation.

The individual reflective report is based on the reflective journal entries of the year. This will enable you to reflect on all these journal entries and write a report of no more than three pages covering the following:

- Academic learning during the service learning experience, especially the linking of academic knowledge to the practical service.
- Personal growth during the service learning experience.
- The development of your social responsibility.
- The alignment between your learning and the community goals. Make use of the provided table to illustrate this point (Addendum A4).
- Your views on service learning as pedagogy and recommendations to improve this module.

The presentation will be the *grand finale* of the module. A community or service sector partner will be invited to visit the university and also give feedback on each presentation. This is an important step towards reciprocity. Conner (2011:19) states that when partners have the opportunity to visit the site of the other, learning is enhanced as well as conditions for reciprocity. You will therefore receive marks from two sources: the facilitator and a service learning representative (someone from the service learning offices or another service learning lecturer) and then feedback from three sources: the facilitator, service learning representative and service sector partner.

The following rubric will be used to assess your group presentation:

<i>Assessment criteria</i>	<i>Not/partially achieved (0-1 marks)</i>	<i>Achieved (2 marks)</i>	<i>Surpassed (3 marks)</i>
<i>Collaboration: All group members contributed to the presentation.</i>			
<i>Organisation: The information follows a logical order.</i>			
<i>Time frame: The presentation was clear, concise and 10 minutes or less.</i>			
<i>Presentation: The presentation was logical and well presented.</i>			
<i>Overview: A complete overview of the service learning experience was given.</i>			
<i>Academic content: A connection was made between the students' service learning experience and their academic learning.</i>			
<i>Personal development: A connection was made between the students' service learning experience and their personal growth.</i>			
<i>Social responsibility: A connection was made between the students' service learning experience and their development as socially responsible citizens.</i>			
<i>Depict learning: What the students have learned was clearly demonstrated.</i>			
<i>Reflection: It is clear that students reflected effectively on the module.</i>			
<i>Comments:</i>		<i>Total:</i>	_____ 30

The following rubric will be used to assess your individual reflective report:

<i>Assessment criteria</i>	<i>Not/partially achieved (1 mark)</i>	<i>Achieved (2 marks)</i>	<i>Surpassed (3 marks)</i>
<i>Academic learning: A connection was made between the students' service learning experience and their academic learning.</i>			
<i>Personal growth: A connection was made between the students' service learning experience and their personal growth.</i>			
<i>Social responsibility: A connection was made between the students' service learning experience and their development as socially responsible citizens.</i>			
<i>Alignment of outcomes: Students show the alignment between student outcomes and community goals in a clear table.</i>			
<i>Service learning as pedagogy: Student can clearly give a sensible opinion on service learning as pedagogy and make practical recommendations for future modules.</i>			
<i>Comments:</i>		<i>Total:</i>	<u>15</u>

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# Addendum A: Assessment

## Addendum A1: Role-play – Bobo’s role card

<i>Characteristics for Bobo’s</i>
<i>You are an informal and friendly culture.</i>
<i>You like meeting new people.</i>
<i>You call everyone by their first name.</i>
<i>Men and women are equal. There are no separate roles.</i>
<i>You like using slang and informal language.</i>
<i>You like long conversations. If someone walks away, you follow them and continue talking.</i>
<i>You like making new friends.</i>
<i>You believe men and women should talk to each other as much as possible.</i>
<i>You like to touch people when you talk to them.</i>

## Addendum A2: Role-play – Kiki's role card

<i>Characteristics of Kiki's</i>
<i>You prefer talking to people of your own culture.</i>
<i>You only speak when spoken to.</i>
<i>You are very formal and polite.</i>
<i>Women have more status than men. Women should always accompany men.</i>
<i>Men do not talk directly to women from another culture. They talk through the woman who is with them.</i>
<i>Men do not make eye contact with women from other cultures. If a man gets touched by a woman from another culture, he is scared and his female companion should take him away immediately.</i>
<i>Men do talk to other men.</i>
<i>Among your own people, you can speak to whomever you want.</i>
<i>You like to have very short conversations. If someone tries to talk to you for a long time, you will walk away.</i>

## Addendum A3: Project evaluation rubric

Proposed title:				
Criteria	1 (low)	2 (medium)	3 (high)	Comments
Interest	Low	Medium	High	
Need	Little	Some	Great	
Accessibility	Difficult	OK	Easy	
Appropriateness	Poor	Fair	Good	
Time frame	Much too rushed or prolonged	Somewhat rushed or prolonged	Just right	
Total:				<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/> 15

The higher the score is, the more viable is the proposed project.

Adapted from Bernam (2006:4)

## Addendum A4: Alignment of learning outcomes and community goals

Student learning outcome		Community goal
Academic learning		
Subject	Content	
Development of personal growth		
Development of social responsibility		

# Addendum B: Logistic documentation

## Addendum B1: Request form

Student name:	
Student number:	
Contact number:	
Other group members:	1. 2. 3. 4.
Item requested:	
Reason for request:	
Date request will be needed on:	



## Addendum B3: Transport form

### Section A: Making use of personal vehicle

Driver:	Passengers:
<input type="text"/>	1. <input type="text"/>
Vehicle (make and registration number):	2. <input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	3. <input type="text"/>
Contact number:	4. <input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	

Date	Departure time at UFS	Arrival time at service site	Departure time at service site	Arrival time at UFS	Kilometres travelled

Please attach: Log sheet, copy of driver's licence

### Section B: Making use of taxi

Driver:	Passengers:
<input type="text"/>	1. <input type="text"/>
	2. <input type="text"/>
Group contact number:	3. <input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	4. <input type="text"/>

Date	Departure time at UFS	Arrival time at service site	Departure time at service site	Arrival time at UFS	Kilometres travelled

Please attach: Original invoice from taxi driver.

## Addendum B4: Time record form

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Signature of student</i>	<i>Signature of facilitator</i>
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					

Adapted from (RSA CHEQC, 2006:201)

## Addendum B5: Emergency contact numbers

UFS facilitator (Magda Barnard)	051 401 3184
UFS coordinator (Elanie Myburgh)	051 401 7066
Flying Squad (SAPS)	051 10111
Ambulance	051 10177
Emergency services	
Discovery	086 0999 911
ER24	082 951 3009
Medi-Clinic Emergency Unit	0800 051 051
Community/service sector contact person (Patrick Kaars)	082 764 5685

**Acknowledgement of Risk Form for Students**

I am aware of the possible risks inherent to the nature of \_\_\_\_\_ (module code) at the \_\_\_\_\_ (service learning site). I have made an informed decision to participate and feel that I possess the skills, capabilities and knowledge that are prerequisite. I am aware that such participation has the potential for accidents or illness while travelling to and from this activity as well as during this activity. I will conduct myself in a responsible manner and in accordance with the University Student Conduct Guidelines, as well as the UFS Risk Management Guidelines.

If you have questions or concerns about the nature of this activity or possible risks involved please contact your facilitator, \_\_\_\_\_. If you wish to share emergency medical information, please notify the coordinator or the facilitator 72 hours before the event.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent signature of minor participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

Special Needs:

Dietary: \_\_\_\_\_

Other, including medical treatment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from (RSA CHEQC, 2006:193)

## Student roles and responsibilities

1. Students should clearly understand the requirements of their service learning module.
  - 1.1 I have a clear understanding of both my lecturer and my community partner's expectations of me.
  - 1.2 I have identified the skills needed to carry out this project, and I feel comfortable with those skills.
  - 1.3 I will endeavour to understand the needs of the community partner from their perspective.
  - 1.4 I know what to do in case of emergency.
2. Students need necessary documents and awareness of legal issues.
  - 2.1 If I will be driving, I have a valid license and insurance.
  - 2.2 I understand that negligence involves a mistake, lack of attention, reckless behaviour, or indifference to the duty of care of another person.
  - 2.3 I understand that intentional misconduct or criminal misconduct involves potential harm caused to an organisation or individual if the harm resulted from intentional or criminal misconduct.
  - 2.4 I understand that invasion of privacy involves confidentiality. I will therefore request and follow the confidentiality policies of the community partner and treat confidential information as privileged.
3. Students should take responsibility for their behaviour throughout the community-based project
  - 3.1 I shall be punctual, responsible and reliable to the community and the organisation.
  - 3.2 I shall respect the privacy of the community and the organisation.
  - 3.3 I shall call or inform the community partner, my lecturer and student team if I anticipate lateness or absence in case of emergency.
  - 3.4 I shall maintain a high level of awareness of the community's surroundings, and when appropriate, demonstrate respect for those with whom I work by adapting to the surroundings.
  - 3.5 I shall be flexible to changing situations as the level or intensity of activity within a community project is not always predictable.
  - 3.6 I shall ask for assistance when in doubt or when in difficult situations.

# Addendum C

## Roles and responsibilities of the service sector and/or community partner

Remember that the students do not only want to help meet community needs that were identified by the community, but also have to utilise their community experience as the basis for their understanding of the course material and receive academic credit for learning through their efforts. Help students think about what the experience means to them, and encourage them as they explore larger organisational and societal implications.

- Plan ahead and provide students with clear, well thought-out descriptions outlining tasks, responsibilities and skills needed for the success of the community project.
- Provide an orientation to your organisation which could include the following:
  - A tour of the facilities and an introduction to the staff.
  - A review of rules, safety regulations, policies, dress codes, time-keeping requirements and other pertinent information.
  - A discussion of the students' roles, including specific community expectations.
  - A description of the "larger picture": why you do what you do, and how the students' contributions fit in.
  - A review of skills needed to complete the community project.
  - An explanation of any jargon or site-specific language used by community partners.
- Keep the students' full schedules in mind and provide them with specific and reliable information about the expected number of working hours, times and days of the week they are expected to work, as well as advanced notice of schedule changes if possible.
- Stay involved and remember that you are truly a partner in the students' education and that students will benefit tremendously from your guidance throughout all phases of the community-based project. They will also appreciate regular feedback on their efforts, and acknowledgement of work well done.
- Keep the University informed of any concerns, successes, or other issues related to the community service learning activities. Concerns should be communicated immediately so that you and your University partner can resolve issues that might have a negative impact on the students or the project.
- Please make yourself available to assist the lecturer with student assessment (if required) and with evaluation of the community service learning activities for purposes of future improvement.

# Addendum D

## Roles and responsibilities of the lecturers

- Hold discussions with the community partner and find out about community needs and the number of students that could be accommodated. Discuss how the "balance" between service and learning could best be maintained and how the necessary preparations and logistics could be done.
- Work at balancing the needs of the community partner and the students and adjust their expectations as the implementation progresses.
- Develop clear objectives for the pre-field preparation phase (theoretical component of the module). If students need to demonstrate a certain level of "readiness" for participation in the community project plan how this will be assessed. If possible, involve the students in their own self-assessment based on solid criteria they have some control over.
- Pay special attention to the explanation of how the content goals or learning outcomes of the course and community service relate to each other. Then, ask students to respond by telling you exactly what they think they will be accomplishing during their involvement in the community service activities of the module.
- Determine the amount of time students will be expected to spend completing the service component of their course work. Give the students an estimate of total time the service component will take and assist them in developing realistic time frames.
- Allow enough time each week for students to participate in structured discussions about their experiences in the community, and to relate their experiences to the readings and other course material. Also create opportunities for them to reflect on their experiences in writing and apply problem-solving thinking with regard to challenges they encounter in the early stages of their community responsibilities.
- Find ways to involve students in setting their own learning outcomes (goals), and participating in the assessment of those outcomes. Requiring students to invest in this activity increases their sense of accountability to and ownership of the process and product of community service learning.
- Check in with the community partners often, otherwise they might assume that you are automatically aware of certain issues which should be brought to your attention.
- Allow the students to have regular and direct contact with you; do not assume that they would just form their teams and then go out and work independently on their community service learning project. They will need your guidance and support throughout.