

**CONCEPTUALISATION OF SERVICE-LEARNING  
AT TWO RURAL-BASED UNIVERSITIES  
IN SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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## DECLARATION

I, Mokwi Morgan Maphutha, declare that this thesis, "**Conceptualisation of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa**", hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the Doctoral degree in Education with specialisation in Community and Continuing Education, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my own work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

  
13.05.2016  
M M Maphutha

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## ABSTRACT

This study reports on an exploration of a conceptual framework for service-learning in order to provide a shared and common understanding necessary for guiding best practice of service-learning at the heart of two-rural-based universities in South Africa. The key research question answered in this study was: **How is service-learning conceptualised by directors of community engagement, project coordinators, academic staff members, and students at two rural-based universities in South Africa?**

The following sub-questions were developed on the basis of the key research question:

- What are the current community engagement projects that can be modified for future practice of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa?
- What are the views of directors of community engagement, project coordinators, academic staff members, and students regarding conceptualisation of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa?
- What are the possible strategies for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa?
- What framework will be relevant and appropriate for conceptualising and implementing service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa?

A qualitative research approach using grounded theory design was employed in this study. Convenience sampling was used to select the two rural-based universities in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Four similar schools from each university (Education, Law, Agriculture, and Health Sciences) were sampled purposively. Participants were also sampled purposively. These included the director of community engagement, one project coordinator, two academic staff members, and two final year undergraduate students who were taking part in community engagement or service-learning-related activity at each sampled school at both universities.

Data were captured through document analysis, semi-structured interviews with sampled participants, and silent observations. Content analysis was used to analyse data from documents. Data from semi-structured interviews and silent observations were analysed thematically. Findings from documents, semi-structured interviews and

silent observations were used to make recommendations for developing a framework for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at the two universities.

The study revealed that service-learning is an unfamiliar concept at these two rural-based universities. Advocacy of service-learning has never been done and no initiatives are made on the part of these universities to familiarise this concept. The study's findings also reflect that there is confusion among various role-players regarding the meaning of the concept service-learning. Participants showed that some prefer to use the concept community engagement rather than service-learning, while others view service-learning as synonymous to community engagement.

The SMART conceptual framework was developed on the basis of the findings and recommendations of this study. This conceptual framework is **SMART** because it is **S** - socially relevant, **M** - manageable, **A** - adaptable, **R** - rural-based, and **T** – transformative. The proposed SMART conceptual framework is intended to guide institutional leaders, directors of community engagement, deans of faculties, directors of schools, heads of departments, project coordinators, academic staff members, students, traditional leaders, and community partners in conceptualising, implementing and managing the quality of service-learning endeavours at the two rural-based South African universities.

## **KEY WORDS**

- Service-learning
- Work-Integrated Learning
- Community
- Community engagement
- Community service
- Community-engaged university
- Rural-based universities
- University-community partnership
- Higher education

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## ACRONYMS

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ABET	-	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACE	-	Advanced Certificate in Education
ACE LO	-	Advanced Certificate in Education in Life Orientation
ACE SML	-	Advanced Certificate in Education in School Management and Leadership
ACVSA	-	Amplifying Community Voices Student Association
ADE	-	Advanced Diploma in Education
AULAI	-	Association of Universities Law Clinic
B Cur	-	Bachelor Curationis
BEd	-	Bachelor of Education
BEd FET	-	Bachelor of Education: Further Education and Training
BSc	-	Bachelor of Science
CAMOSEVHEWA	-	Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhune, Vhembe, Waterberg
CBI	-	Centres/Bureaus/Institutes
CBSL	-	Community-Based Service-Learning
CBOs	-	Community-Based Organisations
CHESP	-	Community Higher Education Service Partnerships
CRDPA	-	Centre for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation
CWL	-	Common Wealth of Learning
EDST	-	Education Studies
ELOR	-	Life Orientation
ETQA	-	Education and Training Quality Assurers
FET	-	Further Education and Training
FUHDISA	-	Forum of Universities Heads of Departments in South Africa
GIS	-	Geographic Information System
GRET	-	Research and Technological Exchange Group
HEQC	-	Higher Education Quality Committee
HIV	-	Human Immune Virus
HODs	-	Heads of Departments
ICT	-	Information Communication Technology
IDC	-	Industrial Development Corporation
IFSW	-	International Federation of Social Workers
JET	-	Joint Education Trust
LATS	-	Limpopo Agro-Food Technology Station
LLB	-	Bachelor of Laws
MeCRU	-	Medunsa Clinical Research Unit
Medunsa	-	Medical University of South Africa
MOU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
MRTEQ	-	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications
NCAW	-	National Council of African Women
NDA	-	National Development Agency
NENDILLA	-	Newsletter of University of Venda
NGOs	-	Non-Governmental Organisations

NRF	-	National Research Fund
NSFAS	-	National Student Financial Assistance
UK	-	United Kingdom
UKZN	-	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UL	-	University of Limpopo
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIN	-	University of the North
Univen	-	University of Venda
US	-	United States
USA	-	United States of America
USB	-	Universal Serial Bus
UVA	-	University of Virginia
PA	-	Public Administrator
PGCE	-	Post-Graduate Certificate in Education
PhD	-	Doctor of Philosophy
POPUP	-	People Uplift Project
RPC	-	Research and Publication Committee
SAAHE	-	South African Association of Health Educationalists
SABS	-	South African Bureau of Standards
SADC	-	Southern African Developing Countries
SAHECEF	-	South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum
SASCO	-	South African Students Congress
SAQA	-	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	-	Sector Education and Training Authority
SGBs	-	School Governing Bodies
SLAP	-	Science Learner Assisted Programme
SMS	-	Short Message System
SMME	-	Small Medium Micro Enterprise
SMTs	-	School Management Teams
SRC	-	Students Representative Council
TB	-	Tuberculosis
TIA	-	Technology Innovation Agency
TREC	-	Turfloop Research Ethics Committee
VLIR	-	Vlaamse Inter Universitaire Raad
WIL	-	Work Integrated Learning

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND STUDY ORIENTATION

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#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION TO THE STUDY.

Social transformation and responsiveness of higher education to the public good and community development is part of a world-wide concern during this 21<sup>st</sup> century (Kraak, 2000:111). In an attempt to fit in with the global agenda of social transformation and responsiveness in higher education, South African higher education institutions are currently mandated to interact with surrounding communities (Republic of South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training (2013:264). The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013:viii) emphasises the need for higher education institutions

*“not only provide knowledge and skills required by the economy, but should also contribute to developing thinking citizens, who can function effectively, creatively and ethically as part of a democratic society. They should have an understanding of their society, and be able to participate fully in its political, social and cultural life”* (Republic of South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013:viii).

This reaffirms the position of the White Paper 3 on Higher Education (1997:10) in which it is contended that higher education institutions should consider engaging with communities with the goal to

*“promote and develop social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of higher education in socio and economic development through community service programmes”* (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education, 1997:10).

The above mandates leave South African higher education institutions without a choice when coming to issues related to engagement with communities (Erasmus, 2007:109; Erasmus, 2009:61). In conjunction with the above mandates, the curriculum offered at higher education institutions should be geared towards addressing the real needs of the communities as well as developing students with commitment to service in communities (Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:416; Erasmus, 2009:49). The rationale behind these is that South African higher education system regards community engagement

as a catalyst through which higher education institutions can achieve this social transformation while service-learning could be a vehicle for integrating community engagement into the curriculum (Erasmus, 2009:46).

Service-learning has been on the move in the United States of America (USA) where it is highly regarded as an umbrella through which universities can interact with their local communities. In South Africa participation in service-learning is viewed as one channel through which community service can be infused into the curriculum with the goal to place students in community sites, and increase the relevance and contextualisation of academic programmes (Erasmus, 2009: 49; Smith-Tolken, 2011:351; Mthembu & Mtshali, 2013:2; Erasmus, 2011:352; van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:58). The adoption and utilisation of service-learning is regarded as a mechanism for increasing societal demands as well as to provide a powerful tool for educating students and higher education institutions to become socially responsive to poor living conditions of the majority of South Africans (Hay, 2003:190).

Service-learning as a concept and practice is not yet understood by various stakeholders at higher education institutions around the world (Umpleby & Rakicevik, 2008:11). Service-learning has been defined broadly internationally because it is conceived and implemented in relation to the diverse local, political, historical, economical, and social contexts. The variety of institutional types, missions and approaches have special implications for the broad meanings and interpretations attached to this concept (Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:410; Thomson, Naidoo, Smith-Tolken, Bringle, 2008:3; Nduna, 2007:70). The varying definitions and interpretations of service-learning have created a lot of debate in terms of its adoption, support, practice and criteria for assessing its effects and impact. It is significant to conceptualise it within the context where it is located in order to avoid further misunderstanding and incorrect application at institutional level (Osman & Attwood, 2007:16).

The concept of service-learning has been defined differently by South African scholars in the field of community engagement. Fourie (2003:32) refers to service-learning as *“a programme-based, credit-bearing learning experience in which students participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs. Their structured*

*reflection on the service activity leads to further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility”.*

Bender (2005:1)'s definition of service-learning from the perspective of teacher education is twofold, that is service-learning as *“a philosophy of education and a teaching method. As a philosophy of education, service-learning reflects the belief education should develop social responsibility and prepare students to be involved citizens in democratic life. As a teaching method, service-learning involves blending of service-activities with the academic curriculum in order to address real community needs while students learn through active engagement”.*

Albertyn and Daniels (2009:413) places service-learning as *“an integrative strategy that has a theoretical base and methodology for applying community engagement”.* Van Schalkwyk and Erasmus (2011:58) added that service-learning is *“a balancing act between outcomes for both students and communities”.*

In a study conducted by Smith-Tolken (2011:351) service-learning is referred to as *“a form of community-based experiential and a curriculum-based, credit-bearing and carefully structured educational experience in which students participate in an organised community interaction activity that meets identified and agreed upon community goals; reflect on the service activity in order to gain deeper understanding of module and programme content; acquire a broader appreciation of the discipline and develop an enhanced sense of social responsibility towards society as a whole”.*

The University of Venda's Community Engagement Policy (2011:5) defines service-learning as *“a type of experiential education which forms the basis for the teaching and learning whereby students learn and develop*

- *in through active participation in thoughtfully organised service that is integrated into and enhances academic curricular learning;*
- *which is conducted to meet the needs of the community (as identified by the community by means of a needs assessment);*
- *which include structured time and guidelines for students to reflect in written and oral format on the service experience and gain a deeper understanding of the module content”.*

The University of Venda's Community Engagement Policy (2011:5) added that service-learning is "*a pedagogical model; it is first and foremost a teaching methodology, more than a values model. Second, there is an intentional effort made to utilise the community, the community-based learning on behalf of academic learning and to utilise academic learning to inform community service*".

Within the same breadth, the University of Limpopo (2011:8) defines service-learning as "*an educational approach involving curriculum-based, credit-bearing learning experiences in which students participate in contextualised, well-structured and organised service activities aimed at addressing identified service needs in a community, and reflect on the service experiences in order to gain deeper understanding of the linkage between curriculum content and community dynamics, as well as achieve personal growth and a sense of social responsibility*".

While Mthembu and Mtshali (2013:3) consider service-learning as "*an educational approach to teaching and learning in which students participate in organised service activities that meets identified community needs*". Osman and Petersen (2013:6) define service-learning as "*a form of community engagement that combines the academic curriculum of the discipline and the student with service to, or in, a community; a form of experiential learning that asks students to learn through and from their service experiences in working with community members*".

In the context of this study, service-learning is defined as a form of community engagement and an experiential learning pedagogy that bridges the gap between the academic curriculum and community service through well-contextualised, structured, credit-bearing, and reflective modules that enhance student learning and social transformation by addressing identified needs of the poorest of the poor and marginalised rural communities. The present study seeks to explore a relevant and appropriate framework for conceptualisation of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa in order to provide set of guidelines for its future implementation.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The quest for researching about conceptualisation of service-learning continues within the South African context (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:88). After 21 years of democracy in South Africa, higher education institutions are still grappling with concepts such as

community engagement, service-learning, and university-community partnerships (Republic of South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013:39). At some point, universities fail to distinguish between community engagement and service-learning by using the two concepts interchangeably (Bender, 2008:83; Hay, 2003:184). Therefore, the South African debates on community engagement, service-learning, and university-community partnerships related to conceptualisation, practice and funding remain unresolved (Republic of South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013:262).

The mission statements of most South African universities highlight the need to strike a balance by addressing the needs of surrounding communities through innovative ideas (Erasmus, 2009:52; Erasmus, 2011:355; Kraak, 2000:113). However, academic staff seems to be sceptical to make changes towards infusing service-learning into their academic programmes (Erasmus, 2009:52). Research shows that very few South African universities have achieved a critical mass of service-learning supporters because its agenda seems not fully supported since it is viewed with deep suspicion, criticism, scepticism and reluctance by many academics (O'Brien, 2012:197; Erasmus, 2009:45; Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:418). The confusion, reluctance, resistance to change, and less commitment expressed by academic staff regarding the adoption and utilisation of service-learning creates loopholes towards an institution-wide support for this pedagogy (Bender, 2008:83). Such resistance seems to be deeply rooted in the culture at universities where community service is given lower priority than research and teaching as well as the diverse personalities of academic staff with different political preferences (Erasmus, 2009:45; Hall, 2010:10). Erasmus (2007:110) argues that for service-learning to flourish at South African universities, there is a need to find appropriate channels in order to support and encourage academics to champion the entire process of infusing it within teaching, learning and research.

Despite service-learning being regarded as a criterion for accreditation and quality assurance at universities, its conceptualisation is lacking at most universities in South Africa (Erasmus, 2007:110; Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:414). Some South African institutions have chosen alternative concepts such as "community interaction" and "social responsiveness" to depict this aspect. In most instances the term "community engagement" is used (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:87). Bender (2008:82) contends that a critical conceptual analysis of the South African higher education context indicates

the lack of a structural, functional framework and models for the conceptualisation of community engagement, in particular service-learning. Over and above, community engagement and service-learning are still perceived as add-ons, nice-to-have, and philanthropic activities (Netshandama, 2010:73; Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:418; Bender, 2008:83).

The lack of conceptualisation of service-learning further appears to create a platform for application of diverse approaches to community engagement which revolves around voluntary initiatives. Such activities are not integrated with the core business of the university (teaching, research and community engagement), lacking proper coordination and specified formal learning objectives that can be assessed, and are not consistent with the missions of higher education institutions (Erasmus, 2009:45). Again, the lack of support for service-learning seem to be rooted from a shortage of institutional support in terms of provision of the necessary physical resources, staffing, funding and poor management of various security risks (Erasmus, 2009:53).

Considering the challenges still facing service-learning, the researcher found it relevant to explore a conceptual framework which might be appropriate towards addressing the confusion, resistance and scepticism which seem to exist among academic staff as well as providing a shared and common understanding necessary for guiding good practice of service-learning at the heart of two rural-based universities in South Africa.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The key research question that was addressed in this study was:

***How is service-learning conceptualised by directors of community engagement, project coordinators of community engagement, academic staff members, and students at two rural-based universities in South Africa?***

The following sub-questions served as a blueprint for answering the key research question:

- What are the current community engagement projects that can be modified for future practice of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa?

- What are the views of directors of community engagement, project coordinators of community engagement, academic staff members, and students regarding the concept service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa?
- What are the challenges and possible strategies for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa?
- What framework will be relevant and appropriate for conceptualising and implementing service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa?

#### **1.4 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study seeks to explore a possible framework for conceptualisation of service-learning in order to provide directors of community engagement, academic staff members, project coordinators of community engagement and students with a useful guide for future service-learning practice at two rural-based universities in South Africa. Based on the above sub-questions, this study seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- To identify the current community engagement projects that can be modified for future practice of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa.
- To provide the views of directors of community engagement, academic staff members, project coordinators of community engagement, and students regarding conceptualisation of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa.
- To examine the challenges and possible strategies for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa.
- To propose guidelines for the development of a relevant and appropriate framework for conceptualising and implementing service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa.

#### **1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Educational change theory was viewed as an appropriate framework within which to contextualise this study. Change in education is characterised by complex,

unpredictable and non-linear processes (Fullan, 2001:v). When people are called upon to do something new or are not clear about and do not understand the knowledge and value base, they usually feel anxious, fearful, confused, overwhelmed, deskilled, and cautious, and may resist implementing new ideas (Fullan, 2001:40). It is vital to respect resistance and understand educational change processes in order to develop the capacity and commitment to lead change better and make a positive difference in the society as a whole (Fullan, 2001:40).

Goodson (2001:45) indicates that educational change theory is composed of internal, external and personal processes. Internal change agents work within schools in order to initiate and promote change within an external framework of support and sponsorship. This implies that, university leaders and managers, academic staff, students and community members should be mobilised to work together in order to develop shared expertise (Fullan, 2001:63). External change embraces mandates that are established from the top to bottom which, in this regard, include national policies from the National Department of Education and audit reports from the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). Personal change encapsulates the personal beliefs and missions that academic staff bring to the change process, which should be a starting point for educational change to happen at the two targeted rural-based universities in South Africa (Goodson, 2001:45).

For educational change to occur there is a need to critically assess and incorporate new ideas and practices inside as well as outside the university (Fullan, 2001:44). By so doing, the three pillars in educational change theory (internal, external and personal) would be integrated and harmonised for the purpose of gathering force and momentum relevant for social transformation and responsiveness. At certain times these segments may be tightly interlinked and integrated; at other times, a greater degree of separation might be evident. During periods of separation these segments stand in close relationship to one another (Goodson, 2001:46).

In conceptualising service-learning at the two rural-based universities targeted for this study, the researcher sought to strike a balance between the segments of educational change theory, internal affairs, the external relations and the personal perspective, in processing educational change. The capacity of academic staff members to refract externally mandated change is substantial, coupled with the low morale and confusion

among academic staff in adopting and utilising service-learning (Goodson, 2001:54). In terms of this theory, negotiations between the personal, internal and external change agents are essential for change forces to move forward. Such negotiations are invaluable in sustaining and generalising a move in educational change from the realm of triumphalist symbolic action into the realm of substantive changes in practice and performance. The emergence of change forces, i.e social relevance and transformation at the two rural-based universities, will have dominance over forced changes, and thus result in new conditions which are powerful in engaging collaboratively with the existing contexts of university life (Goodson, 2001:55). New chains of change in education would emerge from the integration of internal, external and personal sectors (Goodson, 2001:58). The following areas should be integrated when developing and practising a model of educational change:

- *Mission: Institutionalise*

Successful educational change initiatives should begin with the definition of a mission. Diversity of races, interest groups, and power bases should be the key in developing a change mission (Fullan, 2001:25). The implication is that a mission of change should be defined and re-negotiated through interactive processes by internal and external interest groups with the purpose to mobilise many people in developing strategies for addressing tough challenges (Goodson, 2001:58; Fullan, 2001:20). Such a mission should be accepted in order to enhance the delivery of change that embraces internal agents and personal projects and concerns. Change can be adopted and fully supported if it is accepted within the internal and personal mission, and if it is characterised by passion, purpose, investment, and ownership (Goodson, 2001:58). In other words, educational change can be successful if reform efforts embrace personal commitment of academic staff and if such staff is provided with the necessary support so that they can make ownership of the reform (Goodson, 2001:60).

- *Micro-politics*

Each school within the target rural-based university has its own micro-politics. Micro-politics are central when negotiating educational change. The core of new chains of change is change missions which are embedded within new institutionalised practices. Educational change should begin by negotiating the micro-politics (resistance and confusion of academic staff members to adopt and use service-learning) of new professional practices (Goodson, 2001:58). The implication is that service-learning can be

adopted and utilised only if academic staff has a shared meaning and understanding about what it is and how it operates. This encapsulates the internal re-negotiation that must be handled in internal micro-politics (Goodson, 2001:58).

- *Memory work: Communitise*

Existing memories of universities and university practices reside within the internal minds and the broader community. Educational change initiatives should promote negotiations that confront such memories for they constitute the university, modules and teaching. Community awareness should form part of the new reforms. This implies that the community should be involved in conceptualising and negotiating reform initiatives about service-learning (Goodson, 2001:59).

- *Movement: Generalise*

This area of educational change is concerned with the development of a framework or model which may be invaluable in changing the context and creating new settings conducive to learning (Fullan, 2001:79). This includes definitions of new missions, initiation of best practices, mobilisation of supporters, and formation of coalitions (Goodson, 2001:59; Fullan, 2001:79). Acknowledgement of the social movement characterisation of changed forces should develop the capacity to sustain and generalise changed missions across the internal, external, and personal sectors (Goodson, 2001:59).

## **1.6 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

The following key concepts form the pillars of this study:

### **1.6.1 Community**

Much has been written about the concept “*community*” in different disciplines. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has limited the reference to definitions provided within the perspective of community engagement and service-learning.

HEQC (2006:16) defines communities as “*those specific, local, collective interest groups that participate in the service-learning activities of the institution. Such communities are regarded as partners (i.e no longer as ‘recipients’), who have a full say in the identification of service needs and development challenges. Such communities*

*also: participate in defining the service-learning and development outcomes; identify the relevant assets that they have in place; evaluate the impact; and contribute substantially to the mutual search for sustainable solutions to challenges. In the South African context the members of such 'communities' will generally be disadvantaged, materially poor, inhabitants of under-serviced urban, peri-urban or rural areas. In instances these communities may be accessed most efficiently through service sector organisations such as government or state departments, as well as non-governmental, community-based or faith-based organisations".*

Du Plessis and Van Dyk (2013:60) define a community as *"a group of people living in one geographic area, or to a group of women working in a development project, or even youths belonging to a particular cultural or religious group"*.

The Univen's (University of Venda) Community Engagement Policy (2011:4) refers to communities as *"rural, local, and regional communities; targeted and interest groups of people in the community"*.

The University of Limpopo's Community Engagement Policy (2011:8) added that a community is *"specific, collective interest groups, conjoined in their search for sustainable solutions to development challenges, who participate or could potentially participate as partners in the similarly inclined community engagement activities of the University of Limpopo"*.

In the context of this study, a community is defined as a group of people residing in the surrounding rural areas of the universities selected for this study; who play interactive roles as partners at these institutions with the goal to enhance student learning and address the social needs such as lack of resources, youth unemployment, crime, alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, illiteracy among adults, family violence, HIV AIDS, and poverty.

### **1.6.2 Community engagement**

Community engagement is defined as *"higher education interactions with external interest groups, aimed at building and exchanging knowledge, skills and resources required to develop and sustain society"* (Osman & Petersen, 2013:231).

Hall (2010:7) sees community engagement as *“a cluster of activities that includes service-learning, problem-based teaching and research that address specific wants and needs, the pursuit of alternative forms of knowledge and challenges to establish authorities that control and direct research systems and the allocation of qualifications”*.

Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna and Slammat (2008:63) refer to community engagement as *“an integral part of teaching and research – as a mechanism to infuse and enrich teaching and research with a deeper sense of context, locality and application. 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”*.

Community engagement is also referred to as *“continuously negotiated collaborations and partnerships between the University of Limpopo and the interest groups that it interacts with, aimed at building and exchanging knowledge, skills, expertise and resources required to develop and sustain society. It also implies employing the scholarly expertise and resources of the University of Limpopo to render mutual beneficial services to communities within a context of reciprocal engagement and collaborative partnerships”* (University of Limpopo, 2011:8).

In this study, community engagement is an umbrella concept that refers to all experiential learning activities undertaken by academic staff members and students in order to strengthen collaborations between the rural-based universities and their local communities with the goal to nurture students' learning with community service experiences required for the completion of their degrees. Such initiatives include service-learning, volunteerism, internship, community outreach projects, work-integrated learning, co-operative education and community-based research.

### **1.6.3 Community service**

Community service is referred to as *“the social accountability and responsiveness to development challenges through the core functions of teaching and research in close cooperation with communities and the service sector within the spirit of mutuality and reciprocity”* (University of Limpopo Community Engagement Policy, 2011:8).

Osman and Petersen (2013:231) note that the term community service previously referred to “*various forms of involvement of higher education staff and students in community-based settings*”.

In this research, community service simply means all formal and informal services provided to the communities by academic staff members and students with the intention to transform and build better communities, and improve the socio-economic conditions of the previously marginalised people.

#### **1.6.4 Rural-based universities**

The South African higher education policy framework has three institutional types:

- *Research universities*

These institutions offer basic formative degrees such as BA and BSc, and professional undergraduate degrees such as BSc Eng and MBChB; at postgraduate level they offer honours degrees, and a range of masters- and doctoral degrees (Bunting & Cloete, 2010:2).

- *Universities of technology*

These institutions offer mainly vocational or career-focused undergraduate diplomas, and BTech which serves as a capping qualification for diploma graduates. They also offer a limited number of masters- and doctoral programmes (Bunting & Cloete, 2010:2).

- *Comprehensive universities*

These institutions offer programmes typical of universities as well as programmes typical of universities of technology (Bunting & Cloete, 2010:2).

For the purpose of this study, rural-based universities refer to the two universities that are located in the rural communities of the Limpopo Province in South Africa, and which took part in this research. Guided by the categories of South African higher education institutions highlighted above, one is a research university and the other is a comprehensive university.

### **1.6.5 University-community partnership**

According to Netshandama (2010:84) a university-community partnership is “a reciprocal outcomes-based relationship between a higher education institution (HEI) and the community, which consists of initiation, execution, and sustenance phases and has three dimensions: interactive learning and education; community development; and project management. Stakeholders strive towards meaningful lifelong learning through a project management process. Furthermore, partnership is the interdependence of different people with different roles engaged in pursuit of a shared goal, implying that the desire for community development is inherent in the expected outcomes of the partnership process”.

For the purpose of this study, a university-community partnership refers to a democratic, inclusive, and joint bond in which the community and university are involved in a harmonious relationship where sustainable and collaborative efforts are made in order to ensure mutual benefits essential for understanding and addressing identified needs of the society.

### **1.6.6 Higher education**

Higher education refers to “higher learning that takes place at universities or universities of technology; studies that can last anything from six months to six years, or even longer, with students having the opportunity to accumulate a number of qualifications along the way; learning that is academic, with either a theoretical or a career-oriented slant; undergraduate or first level studies that can lead to a degree, diploma or higher certificate; specialization studies for postgraduate advanced diplomas, or Honours, Master’s and Doctoral degrees, and studies for equipping graduates with anything from science, engineering and medicine to law, business, teaching and acting” (Higher Education South Africa & Department of Education South Africa, 2006:19).

Higher education presents individuals with the opportunity to expand their minds and acquire skills for the workplace. It also drives the country’s economic and social growth and development. Higher education produces a sizable chunk of the research the country needs in order to produce the new products and technology that drive our economy and make it competitive (Higher Education South Africa & Department of Education Republic of South Africa, 2006:19).

In the context of this study, higher education means all formal academic programmes that are career-oriented and discipline-specific; offered through teaching and learning, research, and community engagement at undergraduate and post-graduate levels at the two rural-based universities in South Africa.

### **1.6.7 Work-Integrated Learning**

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is defined as *“an approach to career-focused education that includes classroom-based and workplace-based forms of learning that are appropriate for the professional qualification. It is an educational approach that aligns academic and workplace practices for the mutual benefit of students and workplaces”* (Council on Higher Education, 2011:4).

Univen’s Community Engagement Policy (2011:4) defines Work-Integrated Learning as *“the component of a learning programme that focuses on the application of theory in an authentic, work based context. It addresses specific competencies (theoretical, practical and reflexive), identified for the acquisition of a qualification, which relate to the development of the skills that will make the student employable and will assist in developing personal skills”*.

For the purpose of this study, Work-Integrated Learning refers to a pedagogy that prepares students to the world of work through integration of students’ learning with relevant experience from the workplace in order to equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to contribute fully to their world of work.

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The setting of this study is qualitative based on grounded theory research design. Qualitative research is interpretive in nature. Interpretivism is concerned with construction of reality by individuals who participate in it (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2010:343; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:14). Qualitative research shows concern for context and meaning, occurs in natural settings, introduces the concept of human as an instrument, deals with data that are in the form of words or pictures or other visuals rather than numbers and statistics, has an emergent design, and analyses data inductively through the process of coding and categorisation (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2014:451). In this study qualitative research provided the in-depth and de-

tailed understanding about the concept service-learning from the rich voices of participants, allowing for probing issues that lie beneath the surface of presenting behaviours and actions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:219).

Grounded theory is “*not a theory at all but a method, an approach, a strategy*” (Punch, 2009:130). It starts with data which are then analysed and reviewed to enable the theory to be generated from them. The theory is rooted in the data (Cohen *et al*, 2011: 599; Ary *et al*, 2014:493). By using grounded theory to explore a conceptual framework for service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa, the researcher endeavoured to “*catch the complexities and interconnectedness of everyday actions as well as to understand how people act, taking into account apparent inconsistencies, discontinuities and relatedness in actions*” (Cohen *et al*, 2011:598). Principles of grounded theory directed the entire process of literature review, data collection and analysis. Based on grounded theory, the gathering of data led to the building of a SMART conceptual framework for service-learning through the application of inductive processes that operate from the bottom up (Ary *et al*, 2014:493).

## **1.8 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The researcher resides in the Greater Sekhukhune District of the Limpopo Province and is employed as an academic staff member in the School of Education at the University of Limpopo. This research study was conducted at two rural-based universities, the University of Limpopo and the University of Venda, which are both located in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. As such, the two rural-based universities were sampled on the basis of convenience (Ary *et al*, 2014:459).

The University of Limpopo has two campuses in Polokwane and Turfloop, housing the following faculties: Health Sciences, Humanities, Management and Law, and Science and Agriculture. The vision of this university is “*The university of Limpopo for human and environmental wellness in a rural context – finding solutions for Africa*” (University of Limpopo, 2011:3).

The University of Venda (Univen) is one of the last universities to be established in South Africa. It started in 1982, operating in the buildings of Dimani Agricultural High School in the Tshivhase area in Thohoyandou (meaning “*head of an elephant*”). Univen comprises the following eight schools: Human and Social Sciences, Health

Sciences, Law, Environmental Sciences, Agriculture, and Education. The vision of Univen is *"To be at the centre of tertiary education for rural and regional development in Southern Africa"* (University of Venda, 2012:1).

Using a purposive sampling strategy, four similar schools (Education, Law, Agriculture, and Health Sciences) were included at each university. From each school, participants included project coordinators of community engagement activities, two academic staff members, and two final year undergraduate students (third or fourth year students depending on the duration of the degree) who were involved in community engagement activities. Directors of Community Engagement at the institutions were included as participants taking into consideration their roles, knowledge and experience in interacting with surrounding communities. In total, 42 participants were included in the study representing each university.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Data was captured according to the following phases:

- **Phase 1 – Collection and analysis of documents**

During this phase community engagement policies, strategic plans, campus magazines, and audit reports from the two targeted universities were collected and analysed. The purpose was to explore how service-learning is conceptualised and implemented at these institutions. Data obtained from these documents provided a basis for the future practice of service-learning at the two universities. Content analysis was applied to interpret and summarise the written data (Cohen et al, 2011:563).

- **Phase 2 - Semi-structured interviews with the Directors of Community Engagement**

The use of semi-structured interviews at this point was invaluable in the sense that valuable data were gathered regarding the understanding and meanings attached to the concept service-learning by the director at each of these universities.

- **Phase 3 - Semi-structured interviews with academic staff members and project coordinators of community**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one project coordinator and two academic staff members from each university who were involved in community engagement and/or service-learning-related activities. Through their involvement in this study, valuable data were obtained regarding their views about the concept service-learning and its implications for future practice.

- **Phase 4 – Semi-structured interviews with final year undergraduate students**

The initial intention was to interview two final year undergraduate students at each school within the university, the purpose being for these interviews to provide those students with the opportunities to freely elicit their views in relation to conceptualisation of service-learning on their campuses. These students were chosen on the basis of their experience, knowledge, skills and interests in community engagement and/or service-learning related initiatives. A digital voice recorder was used to store all interviews (from Phases 2, 3 and 4) for analysis and interpretation.

- **Phase 5 – Intensive observations at the selected universities**

The final stage of data collection was via intensive observations. The researcher opted for intensive observations in order to generate theory that would emerge from the data rather than testing a theory (Cohen et al, 2011:457). Non-verbal live data was recorded from naturally occurring social situations. This enabled the researcher to discover ideas/thoughts which the participants might have unconsciously missed or did not want to freely talk about during the interviews, or even to move beyond the data gathered from the perceptions of the interviewees (Cohen et al, 2011:456). The implication is that the use of intensive observations allowed the researcher to directly establish how service-learning is understood, adopted, practiced and managed at the two universities.

During this phase, the researcher played the role of a participant observer, where he revealed his role as an observer to the participants and the leadership of the schools sampled for this study. This enabled the researcher to build empathy and trust with the participants and further gain insider knowledge relevant for understanding the concept-

ualisation of service-learning at these institutions. The researcher took note of what was observed (Cohen et al, 2011:57; Gall et al, 2010:349).

## 1.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The following standards were met in order to ensure trustworthiness in this qualitative study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ary et al, 2014:531):

- *Credibility*: This element is concerned with the truthfulness of the research findings. In simpler words, it involves how well the researcher has established confidence in the participants, with the findings based on the research design, and context (Ary et al, 2014:531). This was warranted by building trust with the participants from the onset, which enabled the researcher to obtain detailed and honest responses (Ary et al, 2014:532). Furthermore, the use of various participants (directors of community engagement, academic staff members, project coordinators, and students) was vital in ensuring the credibility of the research findings (Ary et al, 2014:532). The use of a voice recorder during interviews warranted the accurate report of the findings based on the viewpoints of participants. Some direct quotations from the interviews were used to provide the experiences and voices of the participants. The findings of this study were discussed with the supervisor in order to avoid bias. The selected schools from each university provided a broader picture about the extent to which service-learning is conceptualised in this context. The conceptual framework developed in the last chapter also fits well with the data collected in this study (Ary et al, 2014:533).
- *Transferability*: This element refers to the degree to which the findings of this study can be applied or generalised to other contexts or to other groups (Ary et al, 2014:534). The results of this study cannot be generalised because only two rural-based universities were selected for this study. However, the conceptual framework developed in this study can be adapted to other rural-based universities in the country or globally (Ary et al, 2014:535).
- *Dependability*: This element is concerned with demonstrating that the methods used are reproducible and consistent, and that the approach and procedures used are appropriate for the context (Ary et al, 2014:536). The researcher promoted dependability by conducting data quality checks and consultations with his

supervisor. The supervisor was consulted to monitor the extent to which the data was aligned to the aim, problem statement and research questions (Ary *et al*, 2014:536). The researcher triangulated by employing a variety of data collection techniques in order to ensure that the findings are supporting each other.

- **Confirmability:** This component deals with the extent to which the research is free of bias in its procedures and its interpretation of results (Ary *et al*, 2014:537). The researcher promoted confirmability by recording and transcribing the interviews, which were sent to interviewees for verifying their trustworthiness (Ary *et al*, 2014:538).

### **1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The following ethical codes of conduct were adhered to for the smooth-running of this study (Ary *et al*, 2014:473; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 362; Punch, 2009:52).

- **Permission to conduct research**

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) and the University of Venda's Research and Innovation Office. Meetings with the directors from the sampled schools followed in order to obtain access to the relevant participants and documents. This ensued in face-to-face meetings with the engaged participants, establishing relationships and building trust, explaining the purpose of the research, and arranging suitable schedules and venues for data collection.

- **Informed consent**

Participants were informed that participation is of their own volition (i.e informed consent). Each participant was personally contacted to state their compliance. They were assured that they may withdraw at any time should they feel like doing so, and it was explained that they were in no way coerced into participation. After clarification, participants were requested to sign consent forms in which they indicated their willingness to participate.

- **Anonymity, confidentiality and privacy**

Participants were given the right to anonymity, confidentiality and privacy. This was done to ensure that the identity of participants was closely guarded during and after

data collection – the data is kept private and findings are provided in an anonymous manner.

- **Protection from harm**

Participants were not exposed to any harm, either physically or psychologically. During the execution of the study, the researcher strived to be honest, respectful and sympathetic to all participants.

- **Prevention of deception**

To ensure that the participants were not subjected to any form of deceit, they were informed about the information being collected and how it was going to be used.

## **1.12 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

The researcher's interest in rural education for social transformation emerged while studying for a Master of Education with specialisation in Education for Community Building in 2002. This is coupled with the researcher's 17 years' experience of teaching at various rural schools in the Limpopo Province, and four years of lecturing in the unit of Community and Continuing Education at the University of Limpopo. This experience has generated interest in infusing social transformation and responsiveness into his professional practice.

The researcher was introduced to the concept of service-learning while attending a Service-Learning Training Programme at the University of Pretoria in 2006. At present he serves as the Chairperson of Community Engagement in the School of Education and Faculty of Humanities at the University of Limpopo. He is a change agent who advocates the infusion of service-learning as a relevant and appropriate pedagogical tool for enhancing social transformation and responsiveness at this institution.

It is vitally important to conduct a scholarly research in this area since it may provide a conducive environment that promotes shared interpretations and meaning, as well as a common understanding about service-learning and how it operates. The study may lead to the development of a conceptual framework that will serve as a guide for implementation of service-learning relevant to addressing the social needs of the

surrounding rural communities. The study may also assist in addressing the confusion and diversity of attachment of meanings related to service-learning and the resistance for utilising service-learning by academics at the target institutions (Mthembu & Mtshali, 2013: 3; Bender, 2008:83).

Existing research shows that in the United States of America (USA) a common definition of service-learning is lacking, since individual universities apply it differently in order to match their diverse contexts and mission statements (Thomson *et al*, 2008). Since service-learning has spread rapidly from its country of origin, implementation of strategies conceived in the context from a well-developed country such as the USA is a challenge (Erasmus, 2009:50). In other words, implementation of a one-size-fits-all strategy of service-learning is no longer viable because it is more applicable in countries with well-established traditions of service-learning, and thus may not meet the diverse and unique nature of higher education institutions in South Africa. Such implementation may also be difficult, ineffective and not suitable to the South African context of higher education, in particular rural-based universities. As such, finding home grown solutions will be extremely valuable in this regard.

Few studies have paid attention to the conceptualisation of service-learning within the context of South African universities (Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:419; Bender, 2007:129). The lack of knowledge about service-learning may lead to negative attitudes, resistance, confusion and improper practice (Bender, 2009:130). The findings of this study may contribute to the existing body of knowledge about conceptualisation of service-learning and key strategies for implementing it at the rural-based universities in South Africa. The study may provide a shared meaning and common understanding necessary for guiding policy formulation, participation, implementation and sustenance of service-learning initiatives by various stakeholders at the two universities selected for this study.

This study may add value by helping to provide academic context for service-learning; attract and support the advocating of service-learning; enhance community engagement; expand service-learning networks at the two rural-based universities; provide a foundation for the development of service-learning offices/centres with staff to implement service-learning; promote inter-disciplinary teaching, learning and research and strengthen departmental collaboration; assist the target universities to be socially

relevant in teaching and research; as well as assist these target universities to find innovative and unique solutions relevant for the context of their local rural communities (Erasmus, 2009:52; Bender *et al*, 2006: 139).

Over and above, this research may have implications for policy-makers, directors of community engagement, project coordinators, academic staff members, students, and community members since results may be useful for implementing and managing the quality of service-learning in departments, schools and faculties at the target institutions.

Finally, this research may stimulate the debate within the targeted rural-based universities in South Africa about the meaning of service-learning and its relationship to teaching and learning, and research. It may contribute towards producing guidelines that may assist various stakeholders at target rural-based universities in developing university-wide approaches as well as sustaining the commitment to service-learning (Bender, 2008:82). The study will close the gap since it is known that research of this nature had not previously been conducted at the targeted universities.

### **1.13 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY**

This research study is structured according to the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1** serves as orientation of the study. This encompasses a theoretical framework underpinning this study, the problem statement, purpose and objectives, research questions, and definition of key concepts. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the research methodology, ethical considerations, and significance of the study.
- **Chapter 2** introduces the literature review which focuses on the concept service-learning, where it originated, and elements of good practice of service-learning at universities. This chapter also overlaps the possible strategies for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at universities; partnership development for service-learning; criteria, measures, and processes for quality partnerships relevant at rural-based universities; roles, expectations and responsibilities of service-learning partners; funding for service-learning; and the difference between traditional courses and service-learning courses.

- **Chapter 3** provides an overview of the research design and methodology utilised in this study. Coupled with this is the population and sampling, and how data was collected and analysed.
- **Chapter 4** provides the findings of the study gathered at the University of Limpopo.
- **Chapter 5** presents the findings of the study captured at the University of Venda.
- **Chapter 6** presents a detailed account regarding the major conclusions of this study. Finally, recommendations and suggestions for further research are discussed.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE-LEARNING**

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### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter contains a review of the body of literature underpinning this research study. The chapter begins by distinguishing service-learning from other forms of community engagement. For the sake of clarity, a tabular presentation will differentiate between traditional courses and service-learning courses. A historical review of the service-learning activities in the USA, Britain, Northern Ireland, Ireland, and South Africa is highlighted. In an attempt to contextualise this study, the literature review has mostly unpacked recent works that address conceptualisation of service-learning in South African higher education institutions. A brief overview provides the development of partnerships and funding for service-learning. The chapter also covers the criteria, measures and processes for quality partnerships relevant to the context of rural-based universities in South Africa. In conclusion, a discussion is provided regarding the roles, expectations and responsibilities of service-learning partners at higher education institutions.

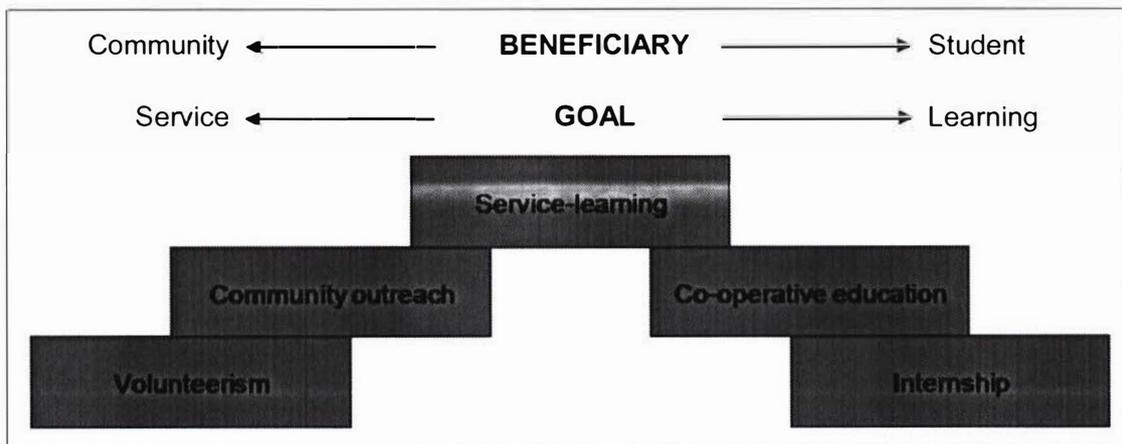
### **2.2 SERVICE-LEARNING AND OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement often occur in different ways, ranging from informal to formal and structured academic activities that are oriented towards addressing community needs (Smith-Tolken, 2011:350). At present a number of universities in South Africa as well as internationally, avert being ivory towers for they have started to function in partnerships with their surrounding communities. Universities have taken a stand to interact with communities in order to shift towards achieving social relevance and responsiveness. This created a platform for a variety of channels on how to interact with communities (Bender et al, 2006:21).

Figure 2.1 below presents a distinction between various forms of community engagement at higher education institutions, which are placed on a continuum and will

be explained later. The different forms of community engagement highlighted below are not discrete or mutually exclusive. There are boundaries between volunteerism and community out-reach; internship and co-operative education: co-operative education and service-learning are often blurred, and learning activities integrated in academic programmes may shift one way or the other on this continuum. A common characteristic of all the above forms of community engagement is that they embrace a measure of experiential learning (Bender et al, 2006:21).

Volunteerism and community outreach emphasise community service while internship and co-operative education emphasize student learning. Service-learning represents a balanced approach to, and integration of community service and student learning (Bender et al, 2006:21).



**Figure 2.1.** Distinction among various Community Engaged Learning forms. Adapted from Furco, 1996, cited in Bender et al, 2006:21; HEQC, 2006:14.

### 2.2.1 Volunteerism

Volunteerism refers to student engagement in activities where the primary beneficiary is the recipient community and the primary goal is to provide a service (Bender et al, 2006, 22; Malekane, 2009:24; Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), 2006:14; Lazarus, 2004:17). Volunteer programmes are generally altruistic and small-scale in nature and are not related to, or integrated into the student's field of study. They are extra-curricular activities taking place during holidays and outside tuition time. Students do not receive academic credit for participation in such programmes and they are generally funded by external donors and through student fundraising. Such

programmes are relatively small and have a loose relationship with higher education institutions (Bender et al, 2006:22; Malekane, 2009:24; HEQC, 2006:14; Lazarus, 2004:17).

Osman & Petersen (2013:238) defines volunteerism as “*the use of volunteers to do work in communities where the primary beneficiary is the community*”.

### **2.2.2 Community outreach**

Community outreach is student engagement in activities where the primary beneficiary is the recipient community with the primary goal to provide a service (Bender et al, 2006:22; Malekane, 2009:25; HEQC, 2006:14). These programmes involve more structure and commitment from students and are generally initiated from within the higher education institution by a department or a faculty or as an institution-wide initiative. Recognition is sometimes in the form of academic credit or research publications. Community outreach programmes differ from service-learning in the sense that the former tend to be a distinct activity and initiative of a higher education institution, whereas the latter are fully integrated into the curriculum (Bender et al, 2006:22; Malekane, 2009:25; HEQC, 2006:14).

### **2.2.3 Internship**

Internship engages students in activities where the primary beneficiary is the student, the primary goal being student learning (Bender et al, 2006:22; Malekane, 2009:25; HEQC, 2006:15; Lazarus, 2004:17). Internships are generally integrated with the curriculum to give students hands-on practical experience in professional programmes such as social work or medicine. Internships enhance students' understanding of their field of study, help them to achieve their learning outcomes and provide them with vocational experience (Bender et al, 2006:22; Malekane, 2009:25; HEQC, 2006:15; Lazarus, 2004:17).

### **2.2.4 Co-operative education**

Co-operative education is used extensively in universities of technology throughout South Africa (Bender et al, 2006:22; Malekane, 2009:25; HEQC, 2006:15; Lazarus, 2004:17). With co-operative education, the primary recipient is the student and the

primary goal is student learning (Bender *et al*, 2006:22; Malekane, 2009:25; HEQC, 2006:15; Lazarus, 2004:17). Co-operative education provides co-curricular opportunities related to the curriculum but is not part of it. The primary purpose of co-operative education is to enhance students' understanding of the field of study. An example of co-operative education is when students studying marketing management visit the marketing division of a large firm to obtain first-hand experience of how marketing projects are planned and implemented (Bender *et al*, 2006:22; HEQC, 2006:15; Malekane, 2009:25; Lazarus, 2004:17).

### **2.2.5 Service-learning**

Service-learning is sometimes known as 'academic community service' or 'community-based learning' (Lazarus, 2004:17). It represents a balanced approach to, and an integration of, community service and student learning (HEQC, 2006:16). Service-learning modules engage students in activities where both the community and students are primary beneficiaries and the primary goals are to provide a service to the community and, equally, to enhance student learning through rendering a service (Bender *et al*, 2006:23; Malekane, 2009:25; HEQC, 2006:16; Lazarus, 2004: 17). Reciprocity is the central characteristic of service-learning. The primary focus of service-learning programmes is on integrating community service with scholarly activity such as student learning, teaching, and research. This form of community engagement is underpinned by the assumption that service is enriched through scholarly activity and that scholarly activity, particularly student learning, is enriched through service to the community. Service-learning is entrenched in a discourse that proposes the development and transformation of higher education in relation to community needs. It is often referred to as academic service-learning, academic community service, and community-based learning (Bender *et al*, 2006:23; Malekane, 2009:25; HEQC, 2006:16; Lazarus, 2004:17).

According to the Council on Higher Education (2011:76), service-learning is "*a structured learning experience that combines community service with preparation and reflection. Students engaged in service-learning provide community service in response to community identified concerns and learn about the context in which it is provided, the connection between their service and their academic coursework, and their roles as citizens*".

## 2.3 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL COURSES AND SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES

Integration of service-learning into a curriculum may require many changes. It is important to provide academic staff members, who intend to use service-learning for the first time, with adequate and proper explanation on how service-learning courses or modules differ from traditional courses (Hay, 2003:186). Table 2.1 below shows that service-learning fosters higher levels of cognitive engagement and requires a variety of cognitive skills that embrace application of problem-based learning approaches (Hay, 2003:186). The table highlights the difference between traditional courses and service-learning courses (Hay, 2003:185).

**Table 2.1. Discernable differences involved in service-learning programmes (Hay, 2003:185).**

	<b>Traditional course</b>	<b>Service-learning course</b>
<b>Place</b>	Classroom	Classroom, community, and field-work-related experiences
<b>Lecturers</b>	Lecturers on different levels	Lecturers, supervisors, clients, peers, community leaders, and other knowledgeable people
<b>Preparation</b>	Readings, previous courses	Expanded readings, previous courses, personal characteristics, site visits
<b>Learning</b>	Writing, exams, cognitive, short term, theoretical, passiveness, sequential, linear, structured learning, convergent thinking, deductive learning, usually assessed at end of course	Writing exams, cognitive and affective development for short and long term, practical, active, perplexity, non-linear, expansive and integrative, divergent thinking, inductive learning from experience, learning continues beyond the course
<b>Assessment</b>	Lecturers on various levels	Lecturers, supervisors, self-assessment and even community leaders
<b>Architect</b>	Individuals	Teams comprising academics, and members of the triad and students

## **2.4 EVOLUTION OF SERVICE-LEARNING ACROSS FIVE COUNTRIES**

The discussion below presents the evolution of service-learning in the USA, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Britain and South Africa.

### **2.4.1 United States of America**

The history of the higher education system in the USA reflects maturity in terms of the adoption of service-learning by academics, students and local communities. This is in accordance with the USA's long history of democracy since service-learning is directed at educating citizens for democratic nation building (Osman & Attwood, 2007:16; Thomson *et al*, 2008:5; Butin, 2006:473). Service-learning was first practiced and defined by a highly motivated group of a few independent academics and activists in the USA in the 1960s (Stanton, 2008:2). It was defined as

*“the accomplishment of tasks which meet genuine human needs in combination with conscious educational growth”* (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:65).

The service-learning academics and activists started out on community-based work or secondary education. This group provided student learning opportunities that were integrally connected to workforce development needs in the communities surrounding the institute. The first concrete expression of practice that was called service-learning can be traced back to the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies in Tennessee in 1968 (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:64).

In the 1970s, there were very few service-learning programmes. Student moral development and community participation were left with student affairs professionals, residence hall staff, religious groups, and other non-academic administrators. As such, service-learning remained marginal at most higher education institutions (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:67).

In the 1980s, service-learning began to gain support and legitimacy from two movements: one for education reform and the other for public service. These movements were concerned with student development. National and institution-based initiatives emerged and brought about educators who advocated service-learning. This initiative extended the practice and research in service-learning. National education reports also stressed the need for higher education institutions to link their curricula with an

element of community service so that students could integrate their intellectual growth with moral, personal and career development (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:67; Kraak, 2000:113). Higher education institutions developed community service centres where students were involved as volunteers. Such centres allowed students to provide community service and developed awareness about community needs, as well as to cultivate leadership skills among students and a lifelong commitment to social responsibility (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:70).

In 1988, an initiative known as *Campus Compact* came into being. Its focus was to assist academic staff with the integration of service-learning into the curriculum. It organised three regional conferences with the goal to develop strategies for advancing service-learning. These conferences led to the establishment of the *Project on Integrating Service with Academic Study* in 1990. A national advisory board was established in order to link community service with the curriculum. A three year grant was obtained from the Ford Foundation to support the implementation of three summer institutes which brought teams of academic staff from Campus Compact member institutions for a week-long workshop on integrating service into the curriculum (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:70).

In the early 1990s, its practice has been manifested within the National and Community Service Acts of 1990. Since then a large number of higher education institutions have made the decision to adopt it (Stanton, 2008:2; Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:71; Sacavage, 2009:33). This immense spread of service-learning was the outcome of national educational criteria set for higher education, whereby universities were expected to address social needs of their communities and develop leaders with strong social values. It is also reflected in conference programmes, dissertation topics, institutional accreditation standards, integration into curricula, mission statements and surveys of faculty interests (Umpleby & Rakicevik, 2008:3). The growth of service-learning practice in the 1990s was diverse: at research universities, practitioners began to develop service-learning programmes in order to allow students to undertake public scholarship in cooperation with and community-based groups. Other efforts focused on service-learning in capstone as diversity training and civic learning (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:71).

Other national organisations have been developed to enhance awareness and growth of service-learning at higher education institutions. These organisations operate on the basis of the National Community Service Trust Act of 1993 which expect universities to be national leaders in the development of service-learning (Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008:1). Such organisations include the American Association for Higher Education, the Council of Independent Colleges, and the Council for Adult Experiential Learning, the National Society for Experiential Education, National Youth Leadership Council, and Partnership for Service-Learning (Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008:1).

Initiatives in support of service-learning at California State University already started in 1997, when representatives of departments from all campuses were convened for a meeting where a strategic plan for service-learning was developed. This ensued in the development of a service-learning office in 1998, which was meant to provide leadership and coordination of service-learning across all campuses. In 2000, more than 1000 service-learning courses were already offered at California State University. By the end of 2000, all departments across the entire university were encouraged to participate in Engaged Department Institutes which were meant to assist departments in the development of service-learning strategies as well as to develop a coordinated system that was to allow all departments to institutionalise service-learning. By 2006, California State University was offering service-learning modules at 23 campuses to 40000 students (Eckardt, Randall & Vogelgesang, 2006). By 2007, a number of colleges and universities have already adopted service-learning in order to render themselves distinctive and attractive (Zlotkowski, 2007:49). Service-learning became a criterion for accreditation of programmes at universities by the Higher Education Commission (accreditation body) and has proven to be an effective means for education and for community development (Thomson et al, 2008:6; Umpleby & Rakicevik, 2008:4).

The situation at Portland State University and California State University shows that these two institutions are among those popular universities in the USA that have a long history of supporting service-learning. At Portland State University efforts had been made to support service-learning in all departments since 2001. Service-learning is fully institutionalised and used as a key strategy for advancing community engagement. New academic staff members are oriented into the methodology so that they continue linking their work with departments. Some of the critical factors which made service-

learning a success were the establishment of a conceptual framework that underpins service-learning and the development of a Centre for Academic Excellence (Kecskes, 2006). That centre was basically structured to support ongoing transformation so that the entire institution could become a more engaged university. Not only did Portland State University consider a campus-wide initiative about service-learning, but also established an international network through a web interface. Currently this institution has gained more than 1000 service-learning partnerships worldwide (Kecskes, 2006).

#### **2.4.2 Republic of Ireland**

In comparison to the education system in the USA, service-learning is a new phenomenon across the United Kingdom (UK) (Roholt & Smyth, 2007:155). The Republic of Ireland's educational policy is centrally located within the context of economic development and the adoption of service-learning is seen as a major shift towards this vision (Murphy, 2007:128). By 2007, the Irish Higher Education system was undergoing transformation that was precipitated by the political discourse emphasised by Taoiseach (Prime Minister of Ireland) in his launch of the "*Taskforce on Active Citizenship*" (Murphy, 2007:122). However, such a shift towards adopting service-learning is very slow due to a lack of awareness by most academics. Other contributing factors to this low key impetus in Irish higher education institutions are the social, economic and cultural context of the post-Celtic Tiger Ireland. Such factors are influenced by the contrasting policy-led approaches of the political leaders which impact on the discourse of the higher education policy. However, the value of adopting, adapting and localising service-learning is emphasised at this point (Boland & McIlrath, 2007:83).

The Irish Higher Education system is composed of seven universities and an extra-university sector comprising thirteen institutes, an extra-university of technology, and a number of colleges of education and other specialist colleges. These universities are governed by the Universities Act of 1997 which indicates that universities must develop their mission statements and reshape their curricula around the scope of addressing social needs (Boland & McIlrath, 2007:87).

Boland and McIlrath (2007:91) cited that during the first "*Service-Learning Academy*" in 2006, most Irish academics were dissatisfied with the concept "*service*" since they found it inappropriate and unhelpful. As such, Irish academics felt it appropriate to

refer to this concept as "*Pedagogies for Civic Engagement*". By so doing Irish academics were satisfied that they have localized such principles and practices in the context of higher education.

Ireland has conducted multiple case studies within a number of higher education institutions in order to conceptualise service-learning. Findings suggested the possibility for the development and sustainability of "*Pedagogies for Civic Engagement*" within higher education. The new European Qualifications Framework also identified civic engagement in its theory and policy as a central core in higher education (Boland & McIlrath, 2007:95).

The debate on localising service-learning within the Irish higher education system took place at various levels based on the following.

- *National level*

Initially, "*Pedagogies of Civic Engagement*" was adopted by institutions or by individual academics for the purpose of enhancing academic learning, promoting institutional social responsibility and community capacity through service (Boland & McIlrath, 2007:90). The inclusion of "*Pedagogies for Civic Engagement*" in Irish higher education is deeply embedded in the policies governing the system. These policies greatly emphasise elements such as participation, promotion of lifelong learning, facilitation of transfer of knowledge, strengthening social partnerships and supporting democratic practice in order to address social needs (Boland & McIlrath, 2007:90). A number of national policy initiatives were created to promote social capital. An example of such initiatives is the "*Taskforce on Active Citizenship*" which is aimed at considering the extent to which people in Ireland play an active role as members of their communities and society, identifying factors affecting the level and nature of active citizenship in various ways in Irish life, and suggest ways in which people can be encouraged and supported to play an active role (Boland & McIlrath, 2007:91). The Irish Higher Education Authority made submissions to the "*Taskforce on Active Citizenship*" by affirming the role of higher education in advancing social goals and the support for a Service-Learning Academy. This academy comprises academics and policy makers who are to promote institutionalisation of "*Pedagogies for Civic Engagement*" at higher education institutions across the country (Boland & McIlrath, 2007:91).

- *Institutional level*

The conceptualisation of “*Pedagogies for Civic Engagement*” poses great challenges to most Irish higher education institutions due to the fact that senior management have diverse interests. Local key contextual factors also create barriers in this process, such as student learning, creating an engaged campus, countering the drift from the public to the private domain as well as getting the edge over competitors in the higher education market (Boland & McIlrath, 2007:92).

- *Academic practice*

According to Boland and McIlrath (2007:94) motivations for adopting “*Pedagogies for Civic Engagement*” in Irish higher education institutions include the following aspects: the opportunity to enhance student learning experience, the opportunity to develop social responsibility as well as ploughing back to the community, and the promotion of academics’ personal, professional and social growth. Academics in Irish higher education institutions also value the importance of using discipline-specific theoretical constructs when determining learning outcomes for “*Pedagogies for Civic Engagement*” projects, for this serves to justify it, especially at institutions with a low key impetus for its institutionalisation.

Boland and McIlrath (2007:94) further highlight strategies for the development of intra- and inter-institutional support networks for the Service-Learning Academy. These are initiated to provide academics with opportunities to gain support and endorsement from their colleagues on communities of practice model. Other strategies include the involvement of colleagues in the evaluation of projects and mounting exhibitions of student work in public spaces.

### **2.4.3 Northern Ireland**

Universities in Northern Ireland have long been isolated from their local communities. Recently, they have started to integrate service-learning into their curricula and build partnerships with their local communities. Service-learning is not conceptualised in most universities, since many university faculties and staff lack the understanding of service-learning and its benefits for both the university and the communities. As such, academic staff remains sceptical of the value of service-learning (Roholt & Smyth,

2007:165). Furthermore, university leaders and managers did not grant permission for academic staff to engage in service-learning projects. They claim that service-learning is too intense and time-consuming. Very few students showed interest in participating in service-learning activities; they wanted to know what compensation they would receive if they participated. In an attempt to address these challenges, partnerships were developed between multiple organisations and groups of people. Training for integrating service-learning was also conducted within the faculties (Roholt & Smyth, 2007:165).

#### **2.4.4 Britain**

The Roehampton University in London was one of the first universities in Britain to utilise service-learning, which has been adopted in undergraduate programmes since 1993. This adoption was effected due to a group of American students from various universities on an exchange programme run by the International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership based in New York (Iles, 2007:143).

All schools of Roehampton University structured the service-learning component to enhance social equality, freedom of the individual, communitarianism, and mutual aid (Iles, 2007:145). However, very little is documented about the challenges, strengths and strategies for conceptualisation of service-learning in this university. Existing literature is focused on the reflective practice which is at the heart of the service-learning component at Roehampton University (Iles, 2007:145).

#### **2.4.5 South Africa**

The democratic government in South Africa acknowledges service-learning as a means for universities to become knowledge-based instruments of social equity. In conjunction with the immense growth of service-learning in the USA, it was conceived in South Africa since 2000 (Thomson et al, 2008:11; Alperstein, 2007:60).

The White Paper on Higher Education (1997:13) stressed the need for transformation of higher education institutions in South Africa. That shift considered community engagement as an overarching strategy for transformation that should be integrated with teaching and learning, and research (Osman & Petersen, 2013:4). The main focus in this regard is that higher education institutions should promote and develop

social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through education (White Paper on Higher Education, 1997:10).

The White Paper on Higher Education (1997:10) also considers service-learning as one of the community engagement activities that forms the pillars of the South African higher education and a core function that is essential for building a literate South Africa within which all citizens can acquire basic education and training that enables effective participation in socio-economic and political processes in order to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation. Guided by the White Paper on Higher Education (1997:10), South African higher education institutions are currently expected to produce graduates with skills and competencies that build foundations for lifelong learning and nation-building (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education, 1997:10; Osman & Petersen, 2013:5; Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:418). South African universities, therefore, are entitled to respond to the social, political, economic and cultural needs of society through integration of service-learning into the academic programmes (Osman & Petersen, 2013:5; Albertyn & Daniels, 2009:412).

Service-learning has been growing at a faster rate due to the accreditation standards set to universities nationally and the efforts of the Joint Education Trust (JET) (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:60). JET is a non-governmental organisation and a national private sector project comprised of leading South African companies, through the Community-Higher Education Service Partnerships (CHESP). CHESP initiative was launched in 1999 in partnership with the Ford Foundation and the WK Kellogg Foundation (Lazarus *et al*, 2008:59; Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:76; Erasmus, 2011:348). The primary goal of CHESP is to promote the White Paper on Higher Education of 1997 as well as to assist higher education institutions in conceptualising and implementing service-learning as a form of community engagement into academic programmes and curricula (Lazarus *et al*, 2008:64; Osman & Petersen, 2013:5; Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:76; Erasmus, 2011:348; van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:60).

Through the CHESP initiative, teams of South Africans visited selected universities in the USA to learn about successful service-learning programmes. In turn, service-learning advocates from the USA travelled to South Africa with US donor funding which enabled the presentation of academic development workshops, campus consultations,

and advise on programme evaluation and research. These academic experts guided South African colleagues in exploring, investigating, and investing in service-learning (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:76; Erasmus, 2011: 348; Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008; Erasmus, 2009:50; Erasmus, 2007:109). Some of the contributions which the North American conceptualisation of service-learning has made to South African higher education include the following: an understanding of how the academic curriculum can be utilised to foster a sense of responsible citizenship in students; an appreciation of the value of thoughtfully structured critical reflection during service-learning experience; and renewed interest in and commitment to the cultivation of reciprocal relationships within partnership formations (Erasmus, 2011:354). However, the South African context did not allow for duplication of ideas, frameworks and models from the USA. As such, South African higher education institutions were obliged to look for possible alternatives that would fit their objectives, realities and limitations (Erasmus, 2007:112).

CHESP subsequently appealed to all higher education institutions to support service-learning instead of existing voluntary projects. In April 1999 JET approved a Planning Grant to eight South African higher education institutions to develop institution-wide policies and strategies for community engagement through mainstream programmes in the form of service-learning modules (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:77; Lazarus *et al*, 2008:64). CHESP advocated community engagement, and service-learning in particular, and recommended service-learning as a criterion for auditing higher education programmes (Thomson *et al*, 2008). During 1999 and 2000 CHESP offered its Capacity Building Programme to eight pilot universities. This programme outlined the following goals (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:81):

- Development and support: To support the development of CHESP pilot projects within participating historically disadvantaged communities, higher education institutions, and service provider organisations.
- Capacity Building: To equip CHESP initiative team members to facilitate the conceptualisation, planning, implementation, and management of the CHESP pilot project partnerships.
- Leadership development: To develop a cadre of leaders with the necessary knowledge, practical experience, skills, and attitudes to implement new policies that would cross community, university, and service sector boundaries.
- New knowledge: To create a “learning laboratory” to generate new knowledge about community-service-sector partnerships. This new knowledge would be

used to assist in the reconstruction and development of civil society and higher education institutions.

- Publications: To generate research publications, monographs, and learning materials on community-higher education-service partnerships.
- Advocacy: To use the knowledge and information generated through the programme to inform institutional and national policy development.

However, theoretical, conceptual frameworks and practice of service-learning in South Africa were based on theories and definitions in the field of service-learning in the USA where it originated (O'Brien, 2012:197; Erasmus, 2011:351). Such frameworks and practice in South African universities were deemed inappropriate and thus called for research of this nature that will add indigenous conceptualisations of service-learning which will reflect on the context of the target rural-based universities (Erasmus, 2011:351).

In 2004, the CHESP initiative of JET Education Services developed a set of indicators that would represent the good service-learning practices that higher education institutions in South Africa would aim to achieve (Erasmus, 2009:57). Again, 182 service-learning modules had been developed, offered, and evaluated. These modules represented 39 academic disciplines which involved 6930 students (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:83). JET also offered financial support to academic staff members who were engaged in service-learning-related research. The research was to focus on the role of community, academic staff, and service-agencies in community-higher education engagement; student development and assessment in service-learning; and organisational structures conducive to service-learning course offerings (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:83).

Between 2006 and 2008 the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council of Higher Education, in collaboration with JET Education Services and CHESP, published "*Service-Learning in the Curriculum: A resource for Higher Education Institutions (2006a)*"; *A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation instruments for managing the quality of Service-Learning (2006b)*; and a compilation of South African case studies from the CHESP era in *Service-Learning in the Disciplines: Lessons from the field (2008)* (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:83; Erasmus, 2009:57).

Since 2004, an increasing number of higher education institutions, which did not form part of the initial group, have joined the CHESP initiative. In 2006 CHESP and the Higher Education Qualifications Authority of the Council on Higher Education hosted the first national conference on community engagement in higher education. The conference, held in Cape Town, was attended by more than 200 delegates representing all 23 universities in the country, as well as external partners of these universities (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:83). In 2007, funding from CHESP came to an end, and the responsibility for driving community engagement was handed over to the Council of Higher Education. This scenario created problems in the implementation of service-learning activities (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:84).

After 2007, there were debates about the development of service-learning in South Africa. Some considered the CHESP grant guidelines for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of service-learning modules too prescriptive (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:84), while others had misgivings about importing an educational approach from the USA. Arguments were that it was difficult to adapt US-based models of service-learning to a South African context (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:84).

In South Africa, scholars in the field of service-learning are still battling with philosophical, paradigmatic, and epistemological issues due to the highly politicised environment within which higher education is operating (Erasmus, 2011:352). Such challenges have brought about the launching of the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum in 2009 (Osman & Petersen, 2013:5). This organisation is similar to the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA) (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:87). This forum played an advocacy and facilitative role in the South African Higher Education arena with respect to community engagement and service-learning for transformation and development. It also provided a national platform for debate to South African scholars, students and community members about practices, knowledge generation, monitoring and evaluation of community engagement initiatives. Within this period, a number of community engagement directors and managers were appointed at many universities in the country. Still, only two universities have appointed vice-rectors with “community engagement” or “community interaction” as part of their title (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:87). Currently all South African higher education institutions, public and private, have representation on the

South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (Osman & Petersen, 2013:5).

In 2011, the first community engagement conference which followed the era of CHESP was held. During this conference, service-learning proved to be growing speedily as a form of community engagement at South African universities. This was supported by the growing number of postgraduate studies and research publications in this field (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:88). At present, a number of South African universities are engaging with communities for experiential learning purposes through service-learning (Mthembu & Mtshali, 2013:2).

In light of this background, the researcher found it relevant to explore a framework for conceptualisation of service-learning in the context of two rural-based universities in South Africa. It is hoped that lessons learnt from this research will be useful for providing a shared meaning, clarity and guidelines to directors of community engagement, project coordinators, academic staff members, students and community partners at the target universities about what service-learning is and what it involves in order to inform and guide good practice in future.

## **2.5 POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR CONCEPTUALISING AND MANAGING THE QUALITY OF SERVICE-LEARNING AT UNIVERSITIES**

This section entails a review of possible strategies for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at universities. This literature was reviewed in order to obtain a dynamic framework about various practices and enhancing a better understanding of service-learning. Furthermore, these strategies were designed in the context of South African higher education institutions.

### **2.5.1 Curricular Community Engagement Model (Bender, CJG 2007)**

#### **2.5.1.1 *Essence***

The Curricular Community Engagement Model is an institutional model which addresses the internal affairs of change (what should change at the institution) to provide pathways or strategies for educational changes (Bender, 2007:131). Its focus is on the key strategies, challenges, enabling mechanisms and quality management

required to implement curricular community engagement at higher education institutions in South Africa (Bender, 2007:131).

### 2.5.1.2 The structure of the Curricular Community Engagement Model

The Curricular Community Engagement Model is presented in Figure 2.2 below.

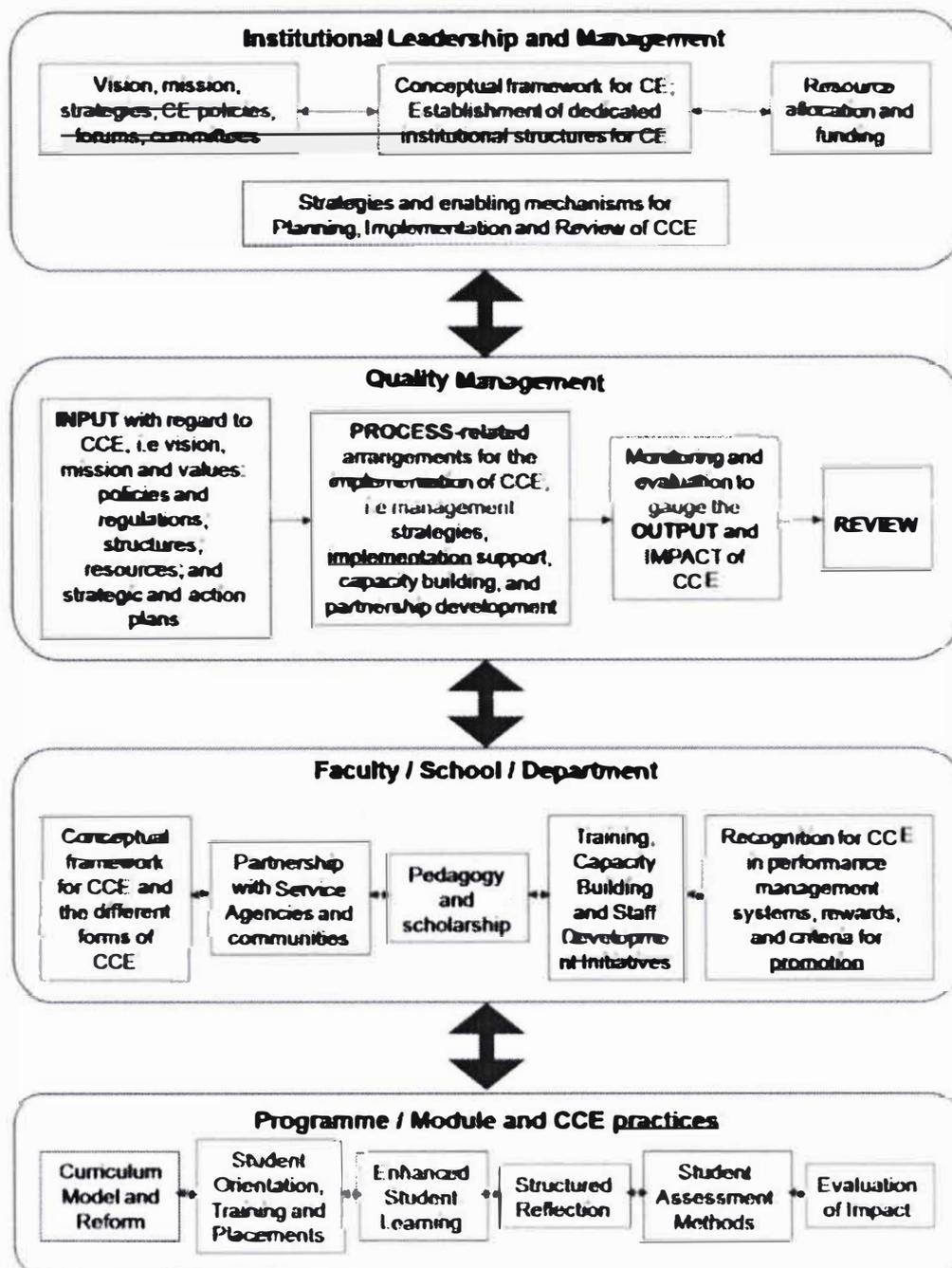


Figure 2.2. The Curricular Community Engagement Model (Bender, 2007:132).

The purpose of this model is to provide management support to establish the necessary conditions for exercising leadership and creating the internal educational change required to encourage academic staff members' involvement in curricular community engagement and specifically in community service-learning (Bender, 2007:131). The Curricular Community Engagement Model is divided into four areas, namely: institutional leadership and management, quality management, faculty/school/department and programme/module and Curricular Community Engagement practices, which are discussed below (Bender, 2007:131).

### **2.5.1.3 Institutional leadership and management**

Bender (2007:133) highlights that people responsible for leadership and management at higher education institutions need to persuade themselves and others of the values and benefits of community engagement and curricular community engagement, through engagement with all constituencies and provision of leadership and strategic direction. In this regard, Curricular Community Engagement is viewed as a catalyst for the on-going development and transformation of teaching and learning, and research programmes in relation to societal needs. Community engagement and development of priorities require reflection on the existing teaching and learning, and research programmes. The vision and mission statements of higher education institutions should include and acknowledge community engagement as a core function of the institution (Bender, 2007:133). Curricular Community Engagement has to be included in the policies and strategic plans of higher education institutions, which should be coupled with the inclusion of desired outcomes and strategic objectives for community engagement and Curricular Community Engagement. As such higher education institutions might express the community engagement component of their vision and mission and give the necessary direction for implementation (Bender, 2007:133).

The institutional leadership and management component is made up of the following elements:

- *Conceptual framework for community engagement - The Infusion (cross-cutting) model*

The Infusion (cross-cutting) model of community engagement has two fundamental roles, namely teaching and learning, and research. In terms of this model, community engagement is referred to as a fundamental idea and perspective infused in and

integrated with teaching and learning, and research (Bender, 2007:133). This model is informed by, and conversely informs teaching and learning, and research. Teaching and learning, and research, are enriched in the context of community engagement; and community engagement in turn is enriched through the knowledge base of teaching and learning, and research (Bender, 2009:133). The Infusion model views community engagement as the central overriding goal of higher education, arguing that it should be embedded in all teaching and learning, and research. The vision of community engagement requires complete infusion across all structures, policies and priorities (Bender, 2007:133).

- *Establishment of dedicated institutional structures*

A centre or an office dedicated to supporting the allocation of human and financial resources to such a structure is key to the promotion of Curricular Community Engagement (Bender, 2007:133). Such an office should be responsible for facilitating the implementation of the institution's community engagement and Curricular Community Engagement policy and strategy; act as an interface between the higher education institution and external partners (community, local authority, service agencies, and the private sector); to be a resource for academic staff and students; to encourage ethical engagement by students, academics and researchers; and to facilitate the cross-pollination of knowledge and transfer of skills between the higher education institution and its external partners (Bender, 2007:133). The community engagement office of a higher education institution should be strategically positioned to give ample effect to the scholarly contribution of community engagement to the teaching and learning, and research. The strategic positioning of an office of community engagement inside the higher education institution is critical to shaping the perceptions (of academic staff, students and external partners) of community engagement and to determining the nature of the community engagement programmes that are developed (Bender, 2007:133). This office should be accountable to an appropriate senior executive (e.g Deputy Vice-Chancellor or equivalent) and be allocated in a neutral space so that it is not perceived as being aligned with any particular faculty (Bender, 2007:133).

Higher education institutions should make available sufficient and sustainable resources (human, financial and infrastructure) for curricular community engagement, for Curricular Community Engagement is more resource intensive than other forms of teaching and learning (Bender, 2007:134). Such resources should be made available

not only at institutional level, but also at national level where the provision of earmarked funding for Curricular Community Engagement from the Department of Education would go a long way to promoting the establishment and development of Curricular Community Engagement, with emphasis on service-learning (Bender, 2007:134).

- *Training, capacity building and staff development initiatives*

Academic staff members' involvement and support are two of the strongest indicators for the successful institutionalisation of community-engaged strategies. Community-engaged teaching and learning strategies, such as community service-learning have only recently been given attention in staff development activities. Such strategies challenge academics to go beyond traditional practices – to incorporate new strategies of teaching and assessment. For most academics this goes beyond their prior experience (Bender, 2007:134). Appropriate capacity-building programmes should be developed and implemented for all community engagement partners, including the higher education institution (i.e management, academic staff members and students), the participating community leaders, representatives of government and non-governmental agencies and the private sector (Bender, 2007:134).

- *Recognition for curricular community engagement in performance management systems, rewards and criteria for promotion*

Community engagement must be among the institution's priorities in order to realign its reward systems and provide incentives for greater academic participation. This would ensure long-term involvement by academics in community engagement initiatives (Bender, 2007:143). Academics involved in Curricular Community Engagement and community-engaged teaching and learning dedicate considerable time and effort to these activities. If these activities do not form part of the performance management process for recognition and promotion, community engagement may not become part of the culture of the day-to-day functioning of a university. These measures will provide evidence of an institution's genuine commitment to community engagement (Bender, 2007:134).

#### **2.5.1.4 Programme/Module and curricular community engagement practices**

According to Bender (2007:134) higher education institutions should promote and support an integrated curriculum model for community-engaged teaching and learning. This is achievable when community engagement is embedded into the teaching/learning function of the institution. Integration requires a significant investment in planning, time and finances to reshape and restructure the existing and new modules or courses and to test and revise these new forms of teaching and learning. At both national and institutional levels there is a need for flexible and agile processes of programme approval. The ideas of higher education are put into action through curricula because these values, beliefs and principles relating to learning, understanding, knowledge, disciplines, the individual and society are realised through the curricula (Bender, 2007:134).

- *Enhancement of student learning*

Curricular Community Engagement should include a significant component of relevant and meaningful service and purposeful civic learning. It should be carefully planned and constructed in order to ensure deep learning by the students involved. Learning activities could be structured for different groups of students (e.g basic or introductory service-learning for first-year students or problem-based service-learning for senior students) in order to achieve these different forms of Curricular Community Engagement (Bender, 2007:135).

- *Student orientation, training and placements*

Higher education institutions must ensure that their students are well prepared for and oriented to community placements. This could be achieved through presenting orientation sessions and workshops for students, academic staff and communities. Proper orientation and training imply that staff and students are adequately prepared for the tasks they will perform. Student orientation may occur in lecture venues and/or on site by a lecturer or service and/or the community agency site supervisor. Students also require a manual on the form of Curricular Community Engagement in order to introduce the concept; orient them to general logistical considerations; introduce broader issues relating to the course/module and orient them to expectations and responsibilities. Ill-prepared students may find community engagement a negative

experience and do more harm than good in their community placements (Bender, 2007:135).

- *Structured reflection*

Opportunities for structured reflection by students are essential in Curricular Community Engagement. It includes a thoughtfully constructed process that challenges and guides students in examining the critical issues related to the community-engaged teaching and learning projects; connecting the service experience to module/course content; enhancing the development of social responsibility and ethical skills and values; and assisting students with finding personal relevance in the work (Bender, 2007:135).

Academic staff plays a key role in structuring the reflection process and to make design decisions about the following key aspects: learning outcomes; frequency and timing of reflection; the form of reflection; the reflection model and feedback/assessment. Reflection activities may involve reading, writing, doing and telling (Bender, 2007:135).

- *Assessment methods*

The assessment of Curricular Community Engagement and community-engaged teaching and learning should satisfy the criteria for effective formative and summative assessment with linkage between learning outcomes, structured reflection and assessment. Provision for assessing the outcomes of the service component of the teaching/learning activities is also important. The course/module design and its implementation should ensure that the module content, its teaching and learning, methods and materials, and support give students a fair chance of attaining the learning and service outcomes specified for the module (Bender, 2007:135).

### **2.5.1.5 Advantages of the Curricular Community Engagement Model**

- This model is essential for providing support to institutional managers in order to establish a conducive atmosphere for exercising and creating the internal educational change required to inspire academic staff members to participate in service-learning.

- It values the existence of a central office that will be accountable for advocacy of conceptualising and implementing service-learning at higher education institutions.
- It challenges academics to move towards integrating community engagement into the curriculum.
- Recognition and provision of incentives are given to academics who participate in Curricular Community Engagement.

#### **2.5.1.6 *Disadvantages of the Curricular Community Engagement Model***

Higher education institutions differ in terms of their culture, politics, and contexts. Therefore, it may be difficult to implement this model at some institutions since it provides generic guidelines for implementing Curricular Community Engagement at all South African institutions.

#### **2.5.1.7 *Summary***

The Curricular Community Engagement Model provides quality management strategies for guiding good practice of service-learning within the South African context of higher education institutions. Special attention is given for addressing institutional leaders and managers in conceptualising and implementing service-learning at faculty, school, department and modular level.

### **2.6 GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES: RECOMMENDED INDICATORS AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR MANAGING THE QUALITY OF SERVICE-LEARNING (HEQC, 2006)**

#### **2.6.1 *Essence***

This is a comprehensive guide which contains the quality following recommended indicators can serve as guidelines for good practice relevant to the different levels within the institution on which service-learning functions: institutional, faculty/school, programme/qualification, and module/course levels (HEQC, 2006:21).

## **2.6.2 Institutional Level Guidelines**

### **2.6.2.1 Institutional input**

#### Indicator 1

The institution's mission, purpose and goals with regard to service-learning are indicative of its responsiveness to the local, national and international context (HEQC, 2006:21).

- 1.1 Service-learning (and, if relevant, community engagement more generally) which is fully integrated with teaching, learning and research is part of the institution's mission, purpose and strategic goals.
- 1.2 The institutional commitment to service-learning, as expressed in its mission, purpose and strategic goals, is responsive to and aligned with local, national and international priorities.
- 1.3 The strategic priorities and transformation goals of the institution provide adequately for the development and implementation of service-learning.
- 1.4 The institution's philosophy and values include the notion of service-learning as a scholarly activity (e.g in terms of a scholarship of engagement), and service-learning is afforded due recognition (HEQC, 2006:21).

#### Indicator 2

The institution's commitment to service-learning is reflected in policies, procedures and strategic planning (HEQC, 2006:22).

- 2.1 The institution has an inclusive policy giving effect to its commitment to service-learning.
- 2.2 There is synergy between and integration of the various institutional policies with regard to service-learning.
- 2.3 The institution's commitment to service-learning is reflected in its strategic planning, with clearly defined procedures, time frames, responsibilities, reporting and communication arrangements.
- 2.4 Effective mechanisms for managing the quality of service-learning are implemented (HEQC, 2006:22).

#### Indicator 3

The institution's leadership, management structures and organisational apparatus reflect its commitment to service-learning (HEQC, 2006:22).

- 3.1 The institution has purposeful leadership and/or line management and dedicated structures to create an enabling environment for community engagement in general, and service-learning in particular.
- 3.2 There exist adequate management structures to facilitate the development of co-operative partnerships with external stakeholders in order to develop quality service-learning modules.
- 3.3 There are institution-wide structures that take responsibility for the planning, implementation and review of service-learning (HEQC, 2006:22).

#### Indicator 4

There is adequate resource allocation for delivering quality service-learning as part of the institution's core functions.

- 4.1 The institution has a clear policy and procedures to ensure that funding (financial resources) for service-learning is adequate and allocated appropriately.
- 4.2 The recruitment, appointment and performance management of staff are aligned with the institution's need for special expertise in the development, coordination and promotion of service-learning.
- 4.3 Provision for infrastructure and information resources is indicative of the institution's commitment to service-learning (HEQC: 2006:22).

#### Indicator 5

Engagement, collaboration and partnerships are cornerstones of the institution's service-learning objectives (HEQC, 2006:23).

- 5.1 The institution has effective structures and processes for the identification and formulation of regional engagement and collaboration.
- 5.2 The institution has clear guidelines on partnership agreements with communities and the service sector, which accommodate service-learning initiatives.
- 5.3 The institution collaborates and networks at regional, national and international levels with other higher education institutions engaged in service-learning (HEQC, 2006:23).

### **2.6.2.2 Institutional process**

#### Indicator 6

Service-learning is managed, facilitated and coordinated effectively at institutional level (HEQC, 2006:23).

- 6.1 There is reciprocity, continuous communication and effective coordination among internal and external service-learning stakeholders.
- 6.2 Service-learning is accommodated in the institution's management information system for effective integration as a core function.
- 6.3 Management of resource utilisation for service-learning is dealt with by the appropriate institution-wide structures (HEQC, 2006:23).

#### Indicator 7

There is adequate institutional support for the development and implementation of service-learning (HEQC, 2006:23).

- 7.1 There is adequate service-learning capacity building and development for staff.
- 7.2 The institution has clear guidelines for student development to ensure that students are adequately motivated and prepared to enter programmes that include service-learning courses.
- 7.3 The institution has specific opportunities or programmes for capacity building with regard to service-learning for partners and other external participants or stakeholders.
- 7.4 There is institutional recognition for excellence and innovation with regard to service-learning, for staff, students and external partners/participants (HEQC, 2006:23).

#### Indicator 8

The institution supports service-learning as a means to promote contextualised, relevant teaching and learning (HEQC, 2006:23).

- 8.1 The institution provides adequate, on-going support to promote good practice in teaching and learning through the pedagogy of service-learning.
- 8.2 Service-learning is supported as a vehicle for academic transformation in the direction of more contextualised curricula and learning materials, orientated towards South Africa and Africa.
- 8.3 The institution ensures that the assessment of students' service-learning is appropriate, contextualised and includes input from external partners (HEQC, 2006:24).

#### Indicator 9

There is institutional support for research on and through service-learning (HEQC, 2006:24).

- 9.1 Staff members and postgraduate students are encouraged and supported to conduct research on and through service-learning.
- 9.2 The institution encourages the sharing and dissemination of the findings of service-learning research to academic colleagues and external partners (communities and the service sector).
- 9.3 The institution actively supports and creates opportunities for participatory, interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and international research collaboration, specifically within the context of service-learning (HEQC, 2006:24).

#### **2.6.2.3 Institutional output and impact**

#### Indicator 10

Monitoring and evaluation of service-learning are conducted to gauge its output and impact (HEQC, 2006:24).

- 10.1 Quality arrangements for community engagement in general, and service-learning in particular, are formalised and integrated with those of teaching and learning.
- 10.2 The impact of service-learning on student recruitment, retention and throughput is monitored and evaluated annually.
- 10.3 The institution has clear and consistent procedures to evaluate the contribution of service-learning as a competitive advantage in responding to local, regional and national priorities (HEQC, 2006:24).

#### **2.6.2.4 Institutional review**

#### Indicator 11

Review of service-learning takes place for continuous improvement and innovation (HEQC, 2006:24).

- 11.1 The institution implements a formalised cycle of review and benchmarking of its status with regard to the delivery of quality service-learning.
- 11.2 The service-learning policy that exists is regularly reviewed and refined in a process that includes all relevant stakeholders.

11.3 The institution supports the dissemination of outcomes of its service-learning initiatives to external partners in order to promote reciprocity, accountability and transparency (HEQC, 2006:24).

## **2.6.3 Faculty/School Level Guidelines**

### **2.6.3.1 Faculty/School Input**

#### Indicator 1

Vision, mission, goals and objectives are responsive to context (HEQC, 2006:25).

- 1.1 The faculty's commitment to service-learning is expressed in its vision and mission.
- 1.2 The faculty's service-learning policy, strategic plan(s) and procedures are responsive to the institutional strategic priorities and transformation goals (HEQC, 2006:25).

#### Indicator 2

Strategic plan(s), procedures and criteria reflect commitment to service-learning (HEQC, 2006:25).

- 2.1 Service-learning is an integral part of the faculty's statement on teaching and learning, and research.
- 2.2 A strategic plan, with realistic targets, time frames and responsibilities, is in place for service-learning.
- 2.3 There is synergy between service-learning and various teaching, learning, research, assessment and quality assurance strategic plans, procedures and activities of the faculty (HEQC, 2006:25).

#### Indicator 3

Organisational and management structures provide for service-learning (HEQC, 2006:25).

- 3.1 Curriculum design and regulations clearly provide for service-learning.
- 3.2 There are clear instructions and criteria for the approval and implementation of new service-learning initiatives.
- 3.3 The faculty has a committee/system/structure in place for managing service-learning (HEQC, 2006:25).

#### Indicator 4

Resources: funding, staff and infrastructure (HEQC, 2006:25).

- 4.1 The responsibilities of the faculty for the planning and allocation of resources for service-learning are clearly stipulated and acted on.
- 4.2 Resource allocation for service-learning is adequate.
- 4.3 Resource implications of running a new module are considered prior to its approval.
- 4.4 The recruitment, appointment and performance management of staff are aligned with the faculty's need for special service-learning expertise.

#### Indicator 5

Regional collaboration and partnerships: communities, the service sector, and other higher education institutions (HEQC, 2006:26).

- 5.1 The faculty or appropriate structure has partnership arrangements in place with service providers and communities to support service-learning.
- 5.2 Partnership arrangements and collaboration are aligned with the faculty's broad community engagement initiative/plan.
- 5.3 Module planning and approval take into account the needs and requirements of communities and service providers (HEQC, 2006:26).

### **2.6.3.2 Faculty/School Process**

#### Indicator 6

Service-learning is managed, facilitated and coordinated (HEQC, 2006:26).

- 6.1 There are structures (e.g a committee) to oversee the planning and management of service-learning.
- 6.2 Service-learning activities are coordinated for maximum effectiveness and to encourage inter-disciplinary collaboration (HEQC, 2006:26).

#### Indicator 7

There is support (for staff, students and partners) for development, delivery and implementation (HEQC, 2006:26).

- 7.1 Staff is supported in the day-to-day administration and implementation of service-learning activities (e.g by a full-time official).
- 7.2 There are structures (expertise/office/staff) to assist with the design and development of service-learning activities.

- 7.3 Students are adequately motivated and prepared to enter service-learning activities.
- 7.4 Transport to and from the communities/service providers are available to students (HEQC, 2006:26).

Indicator 8

There is support for relevant teaching, learning and assessment (HEQC, 2006).

- 8.1 Appropriate training is available to staff responsible for facilitating and teaching service-learning modules.
- 8.2 There are regular discussion forums/sessions for staff involved in service-learning.
- 8.3 Existing assessment policies (instruments, criteria and methods) include requirements specific to service-learning (HEQC, 2006).

Indicator 9

There is support for service-learning research (HEQC, 2006:27).

- 9.1 The faculty actively works to ensure that service-learning research is adequately funded.
- 9.2 The faculty rewards accredited research outputs on and through service-learning.
- 9.3 The faculty encourages the dissemination of service-learning research findings (including conference papers, and both popular and scholarly articles) to academic colleagues and external partners (HEQC, 2006:27).

**2.6.3.3 Faculty/School Output and Impact**

Indicator 10

Monitoring and evaluation of service-learning are conducted to gauge its output and impact (HEQC, 2006:27).

- 10.1 The implementation of service-learning modules is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.
- 10.2 The impact of participating constituencies and the outcomes of service-learning modules are monitored.
- 10.3 All students are engaged in at least one service-learning module during their academic training (HEQC, 2006:27).

#### **2.6.3.4 Faculty/School Review**

##### Indicator 11

Review of service-learning takes place for continuous improvement and innovation (HEQC, 2006:27).

- 11.1 The service-learning strategic plan(s) and procedures are regularly reviewed and refined.
- 11.2 Funds are available for the development of new and improved service-learning initiatives.
- 11.3 Instruments / methods / management information systems are available to monitor, evaluate and review the faculty's service-learning activities (HEQC, 2006:27).

#### **2.6.4 Programme/Qualification Level Guidelines**

##### **2.6.4.1 Programme input**

##### Indicator 1

The programme is aligned with the aspects of the faculty's mission and purpose relating to service-learning (HEQC, 2006:28).

- 1.1 The programme has a defined service-learning component in the form of a separate module(s) or integrated service-learning units of existing modules.
- 1.2 There is a clear alignment of the programme's service-learning component with the faculty's statements on service-learning (e.g in the mission statement / teaching and/or learning policy or procedure / community engagement policy).

##### Indicator 2

The programme composition reflects the commitment of the faculty and relevant departments to service-learning (HEQC, 2006:28).

- 2.1 The programme's service-learning component was planned at the same time as the programme as a whole or, in cases where the service-learning component was added later, integration with the rest of the modules was successful (HEQC, 2006:28).

##### Indicator 3

The programme's organisational and management structure reflects its commitment to service-learning (HEQC, 2006:28).

- 3.1 The programme management team includes an expert on service-learning, on a consultative / co-option basis at the very least.
- 3.2 At least one other programme management team member keeps abreast of the latest developments in service-learning / community engagement (HEQC, 2006:28).

#### Indicator 4

The programme's resource allocation reflects its commitment to service-learning (HEQC, 2006:28).

- 4.1 Allocation of staff hours to the service-learning component of the programme is adequate and realistic.
- 4.2 Staff assigned to the service-learning component of the programme is capacitated to execute their tasks efficiently.
- 4.3 Funds allocated to the service-learning component are adequate to implement it effectively (HEQC, 2006:28).

#### **2.6.4.2 Programme Process**

#### Indicator 5

Teaching and learning in the service-learning components are indicative of innovation and appropriate educational design principles (HEQC, 2006:29).

- 5.1 High-quality learning material that is relevant to the African context is developed for the service-learning component of the programme.
- 5.2 Lecturers are empowered on a continuous basis to facilitate service-learning appropriately and effectively (HEQC, 2006:29).

#### Indicator 6

Research related to service-learning is actively promoted and facilitated in the programme (HEQC, 2006:29).

- 6.1 Research is viewed by staff as an integral part of effective teaching in service-learning
- 6.2 Evidence exists of research projects focused on service-learning within the programme (HEQC, 2006:29).

#### Indicator 7

Student participation in the service-learning component of the programme is assessed in an appropriate, fair and authentic way (HEQC, 2006:29).

- 7.1 The service-learning component of the programme includes varied and authentic continuous assessment structures.
- 7.2 Stakeholders other than the lecturers are involved in the assessment of students and such stakeholders are trained in fair assessment practices.
- 7.3 Assessment opportunities are aligned with the outcomes of the service-learning component.
- 7.4 Students receive feedback within reasonable time after assessment (HEQC, 2006:29).

#### Indicator 8

Service-learning is managed, facilitated and coordinated effectively within the programme as a whole (HEQC, 2006:29).

- 8.1 There exist good communication and coordination among all stakeholders involved in the service-learning component.
- 8.2 Students are informed regarding all arrangements pertaining to service-learning.
- 8.3 There is support for students in order to improve the success rate (HEQC, 2006:29).

#### Indicator 9

The infrastructure and library resources of the institution / faculty / programme are indicative of the importance placed on service-learning.

- 9.1 There are enough books / journals / documents related to service-learning and community engagement in the library.
- 9.2 Transport to and from the community / service provider is readily available to students (HEQC, 2006:30).

### **2.6.4.3 Programme Output and Impact**

#### Indicator 10

Student retention, throughput rates and programme impact receive adequate attention in the programme (HEQC, 2006:30).

- 10.1 Student retention and throughput numbers are monitored on an annual basis.

10.2 Impact studies are conducted to determine the service-learning component's impact on students, on the service providers and on the community involved (HEQC, 2006:30).

#### **2.6.4.4 Programme Review**

##### Indicator 11

The service-learning components of the programme are reviewed in an appropriate manner (HEQC, 2006:30).

11.1 A formalised cycle to review the service-learning aspects of the programme has been developed and implemented (HEQC, 2006:30).

#### **2.6.5 Module/Course Level Guidelines**

##### **2.6.5.1 Module Input**

##### Indicator 1

Partnership is designed to be collaborative (HEQC, 2006:30).

- 1.1 Care is taken to identify and select appropriate partners that fit the outcomes for student learning, while also meeting the outcomes, resources and needs of the partners.
- 1.2 Partners are recognised and validated, through the clarification of roles, expectations and benefits (HEQC, 2006: 30).

##### Indicator 2

Service-learning is integrated in the curriculum (HEQC, 2006:31).

- 2.1 The service-learning module conforms to institutional curriculum requirements and legislation.
- 2.2 Service-learning is conceptualised as pedagogy.
- 2.3 A curriculum model was adopted for designing the service-learning module (HEQC, 2006:31).

##### Indicator 3

Planning takes place for implementation of the designed module (HEQC, 2006:31).

- 3.1 Transportation arrangements for service-learning activities are planned.
- 3.2 Scheduling of contact sessions and placements is coordinated.
- 3.3 Student's attendance and involvement are monitored.

#### Indicator 9

Summative assessment of student learning is conducted (HEQC, 2006:32).

9.1 Student learning is assessed summatively.

9.2 Quality assurance is assessed (HEQC, 2006:32).

#### Indicator 10

The completion of the service-learning module is demonstrated and celebrated (HEQC, 2006:32).

10.1 Appreciation is expressed for all stakeholders, and recognition is given.

10.2 Valuable information is exchanged.

10.3 Service-learning achievements are demonstrated and celebrated (HEQC, 2006:32).

#### **2.6.5.4 Module review**

#### Indicator 11

Evaluation and review for improvement takes place (HEQC, 2006:32).

11.1 Formative module evaluation takes place.

11.2 Summative module evaluation takes place.

11.3 The service-learning module is revised where necessary (HEQC, 2006:32).

#### Indicator 12

The partnership is expended or terminated (HEQC, 2006:32).

12.1 The future of the partnership is determined (HEQC, 2006:32).

### **2.6.6 Advantages of the Good Practice Guide**

The following are the advantages of the Good Practice Guide:

- It was developed in line with the rich experience from South African higher education institutions with the goal to guide quality management of service-learning (Erasmus, 2009: 59)
- It emphasises the establishment of formal partnerships between the leaders of higher education institutions and the broader community (Erasmus, 2009:59).
- It emphasises local, regional, provincial, and national priorities related to service-learning (Erasmus, 2009:59).

- It gives staff members working in service-learning the responsibility to engage with external partners (Erasmus, 2009:59).
- It provides good practices guidelines relevant to the different levels at which service-learning functions within the institution: institutional; faculty and/or school; programme or qualification; and module or course, making provision for the various entities and qualification structures used by institutions (Erasmus, 2009:85).
- Each of the instruments contain a management information section, a full set of indicators, appropriate reflective questions, examples of evidence, with the explicit provision that all of these can be adapted by institutions for self-review purposes (Erasmus, 2009: 58)
- It serves as a guide for continuous self-improvement in service-learning (Erasmus, 2009:59).

### **2.6.7 Disadvantages of the Good Practice Guide**

It provides generic guidelines for conceptualising and implementing service-learning at all South African universities. As such, a one-size fits-all practice may not be viable at some institutions.

### **2.6.8 Summary of the Good Practice Guide**

This guide could be adapted in conceptualising and implementing service-learning at the two targeted universities for this study since it provides clear activities that should be carried out at various levels of the higher education institution.

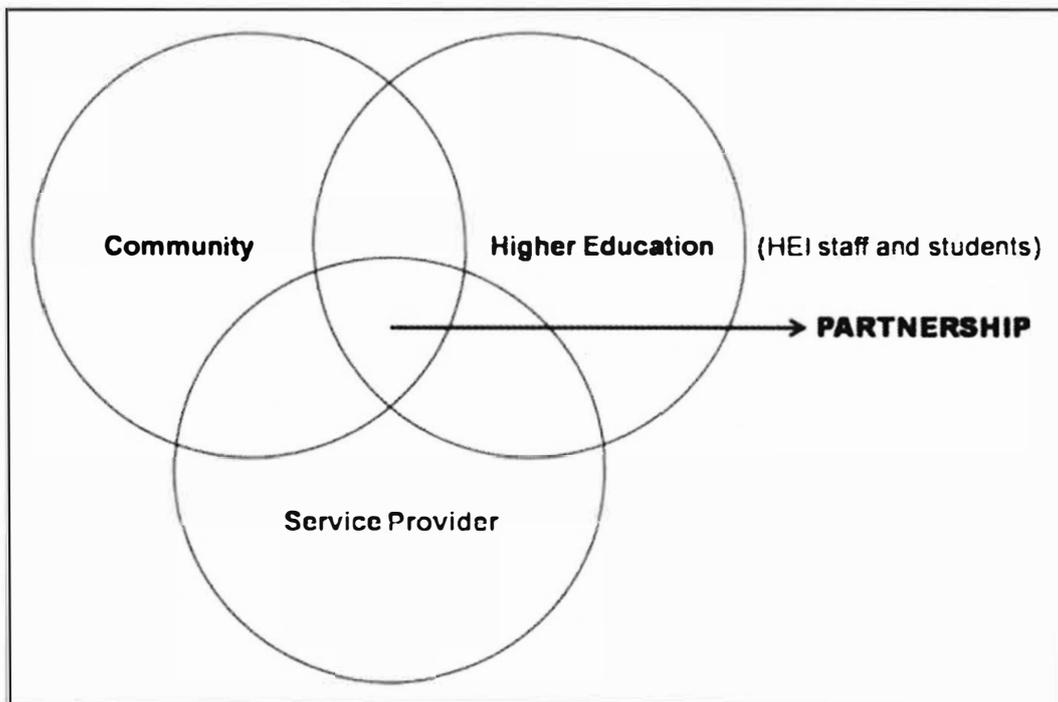
## **2.7 PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR SERVICE-LEARNING**

### **2.7.1 The Triad Partnership Model: The CHESP Model of 2006 (Bender CJ, Daniels P, Lazarus J, Naudé L and Sattar, K)**

#### **2.7.1.1 Essence**

South African service-learning advocates stress the use of a Triad Partnership Model in the building of partnerships between higher education institutions and their communities. This model includes the academic institution, service agencies, and community leaders as the three partner poles (Stanton, 2008:5). In terms of this model, higher education institutions in South Africa have to play a mediating role of the service sector which lacks well-established community-based organisations (Erasmus, 2009:51).

Through this model three partners are identified which form a triad: service providers, the community and a higher education institution. The goals of this model are to empower and develop the communities; transform higher education institutions in terms of community needs; and enhance service delivery to previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa (Bender et al, 2006:93; van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:68).



**Figure 2.3.** *Triad Partnership Model: The CHESP Model (Adapted from Bender et al, 2006:93).*

The CHESP Triad Partnership Model shows a deviation from the practice of service-learning in the sense that it relates to the importance of the voice of community members in service-learning, unlike in the USA where practitioners did not appreciate the importance of partnerships until late in the development of service-learning (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:78). Another difference with regard to this model is that in the USA practitioners tend to think of service-learning as bipolar with community represented by a service-provider. In South Africa, CHESP designers felt that service-providers and community members need to be at the table at all stages of service-learning partnerships and programme development (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:79). This model views clients as more than recipients of service, but also as active contributors to the service-learning enterprise (Stanton, 2008:5).

### **2.7.1.2 The building blocks of partnership development for service-learning**

Successful service-learning partnerships are related to realism, flexibility and trust. In other words, such partnerships should be designed realistically and openly in order to reflect the opportunities and challenges that course-based engagement provides (Stanton, 2008:5). Therefore, the establishment and maintenance of strong partnerships with surrounding communities should be regarded as a viable mechanism for making service-learning powerful and meaningful (Du Plessis & Van Dyk, 2013:62). Partnerships must fit the individual context of the course, department, university-based organiser, and community-based organisations (Stanton, 2008:6). Creation of favourable conditions for maximising community participation in service-learning is essential from the start. This encapsulates discovering the people involved in various community development activities, making meanings together with community members, appreciating their stories, getting the go-ahead from community members, building the partnership with community members, and exploring different environments in the community (Du Plessis & Van Dyk, 2013:69). The following components are considered as the building blocks for developing successful service-learning partnerships (Bender et al, 2006:98):

#### *o Communication*

Successful partnerships rely on clear, continuing communication among all participants at all stages of service-learning design, implementation, and assessment. All partners, and the partnership itself, require ongoing nurturing (Stanton, 2008:6). Information should be shared equally among various service-learning partners (Bender et al, 2006:98). The importance of communication in developing partnerships for service-learning is as follows:

- Partnerships are dependent on open and clear communication. As such, rules for communication should be established to ensure language usage that is acceptable to all partners. The implication is that the meaning of terminology must be clarified from the onset (Bender et al, 2006:98; Hay, 2003:189).
- Effective communication can follow two paths: formal and informal. Formal communication processes could include weekly telephone calls, faxed updates and emails or letters. A structure should be established to relay the messages to the broader community. There may also be informal communication channels with local community leaders, and such communication is essential to

establish and maintain in order to ensure sustainability of the partnership (Bender et al, 2006:98).

- Higher education institution staff and leaders must be sensitive to community concerns, have the capacity to respond in a timely manner, and provide an honest account of institutional and departmental resources that can contribute to building partnerships (Bender et al, 2006:98).
- Communication should be aided by face-to-face dialogue with community partners at community sites in order to demonstrate a commitment to the partnership (Bender et al, 2006:99).
- Communication should include marketing and showcasing, which involve actions and interactions that indicate how partners value the partnership (Bender et al, 2006:99).

o *Decision making*

Decision-making should be done in a collaborative and consultative manner. Members of the triad partnership should consider how decisions impact on their roles and responsibilities, and should commit to the expectations that arise from such decision-making (Bender et al, 2006:99). The implication is that in developing collaboration between universities and communities, there is a need for sensitivity to work carefully with issues of equality and capacity among all partners. Again, there is a need for a common ground and transparency in all partnership relations. There must be a sense of flexibility and trust among all the role-players (Stanton, 2008:6).

o *Institutional management of change*

Unpredicted changes can occur in the development of partnerships; therefore partnerships should incorporate plans that will enable partners to respond without delay to future unforeseen changes or obstacles. These include internal changes in the engaged institution and changes in the community or service agencies. The management of partnerships should be based on transparency, consultation, continuous feedback, monitoring and an evaluation process (Bender et al, 2006:99).

### ***2.7.1.3 People-centred approach in service-learning***

South African scholars in the field of community engagement and service-learning, in particular, highlights the significance of incorporating the community voice within the

practice (Du Plessis & Van Dyk, 2013:59; Francis, et al, 2010:357; Netshandama, 2010:70; Alperstein, 2007:60; Nduna, 2007:69; Fourie, 2003:32). This approach, which values the inclusion of indigenous knowledge by tapping the voices of community members, is referred to as a '*person-centred approach*' or '*people-centred approach*' (Du Plessis & Van Dyk, 2013:66; Francis et al, 2010: 357; Fourie, 2003:33). In terms of this approach, community members are put at the centre of development processes because they are viewed as '*experts of their unique contexts*' whose voices should not be marginalised or silenced, but rather be amplified in making a difference by engaging in partnerships with the universities (Du Plessis & Van Dyk, 2013:62). Fourie (2003:33) stresses that a people-centred approach involves the participation of the majority of the population, especially the previously excluded components such as women, youth, illiterates, etc. in the processes of developing communities.

A people or person-centred approach to service-learning is embedded within participatory methodologies and processes in order to create a joint venture and shared sense of strong commitment and responsibility in enhancing learning and social responsiveness (Du Plessis & Van Dyk, 2013:69; Francis et al, 2010:363; Fourie, 2003:33; Hay, 2003:189). Utilisation of such processes and methods may also create a better platform for community members to take ownership of their projects, knowing them (community members), understanding the way they think, what they believe, their values, what they regard as sacred, what they are proud of, how they sustain life and how they often survive against all odds in challenging circumstances (Du Plessis & Van Dyk, 2013:62). The community may also know about academic staff and students. Academic staff and students should play the role of learners whereby community members guide them by the knowledge and expertise they possess. This will allow for the sharing of knowledge and merging learning experience into a co-construction where a new understanding of the specific community and the services, that will make a difference and will benefit both the students and the community, is reached (Du Plessis & Van Dyk, 2013:62; Francis, Dube, Mokganyetji & Chitapa, 2010:363).

The development of responsive and quality partnerships for service-learning at this point is regarded as fundamental to the success of service-learning (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:67). Community participation is crucial to establishing quality partnerships for service-learning in the context of South African rural-based universities and communities that experience challenges such as illiteracy, inequity and underdevelop-

ment (Netshandama, 2010:70). Active participation of local community members in their own empowerment through transformative service-learning interactions with university students, academic staff and other participants, is viewed as an enabling mechanism that can promote community members to use their agency in determining and achieving the long-term outcomes of service-learning for themselves (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:77).

The following are guidelines regarding participation of community members during implementation of service-learning in the context of a developing country:

- Community members should be better informed of the purposes of service-learning and should be able to appreciate the important role they play as co-teachers of the students. Community members should also provide a unique service to the higher education institution and the students (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:77). In other words, community partners need preparation and orientation to service-learning, to their roles in the partnership, and to students. They also need opportunity for reflection on the partnership's progress and students' service outcomes (Stanton, 2008:6).
- More regular communication among the members of the partnership should take place to ensure that the voices of the community will be heard in setting goals for the development and ongoing improvement of the module (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:77).
- Clear communication should encourage all participants to allow for greater flexibility in module development. It should therefore lead to deeper levels of responsiveness to community challenges (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:77).
- Participatory approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of the achievement of the long-term outcomes for the community members should be followed in order to enhance community development outcomes (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:77).
- Community members should be given the opportunity to experience their participation as empowering and emancipatory through involvement in designing transformative and reflective learning experiences for service-learning students (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:77).
- All efforts should be made to extend the partnership network for the module on an ongoing basis (Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011:77).

#### **2.7.1.4 University-Rural Community Partnership Model for people-centred development of Francis J, Dube B, Mokganyetji, T and Chitapa, T (2010)**

The University Rural-Community Partnership Model was developed based on the experiences from the interaction between Makhado Local Municipality, the University of Venda and 47 rural communities in the Vhembe district of the Limpopo Province (Francis et al, 2010:365). This model is people-oriented since it places special emphasis on participation of grassroots communities at village level in crafting and implementing their own development plans. This model promotes the adoption and utilisation of viable community engagement approaches that provide community members with sufficient ventilation platforms that guarantee respect for their views (Francis et al, 2010:363). The overall purpose of this model is to adopt and implement structured dialogues that serve as community ventilation, discussion and all-stakeholder embracing communities and their organisations thereby precipitating collective action and nurturing self-driven community development (Francis et al, 2010:370). This model also strives to promote and assist local community institutions to develop viable organisations that believe in the involvement of people when dealing with issues that affect them (Francis et al, 2010:363). Using this model implies seeking to stimulate rethinking and delivery of social networks or leadership that promotes the ability of communities to manage and sustain social change (Francis et al, 2010: 364).

Figure 2.4 below shows the University-Rural Community partnership Model for people-centred development. This model for developing university-rural community partnership is composed of the following three steps:

##### **Step 1: Social preparation**

Social preparation refers to the various activities undertaken with the aim of mobilising a wide range of critical stakeholders so that they commit to support or participate in community engagement work. This phase involves creating awareness about the need for the partnership between the university, municipality, and community members (Francis et al, 2010:365). Debriefing meetings should be held with senior management such as the deans of the schools in order to secure support for implementing the project. Seminars can be conducted in order to popularise the initiative as well as orientating team members on the project's philosophy, principles and organisational issues. Academic staff members, students, and community members should be invited to such seminars. Special emphasis should be placed on developing and entrenching

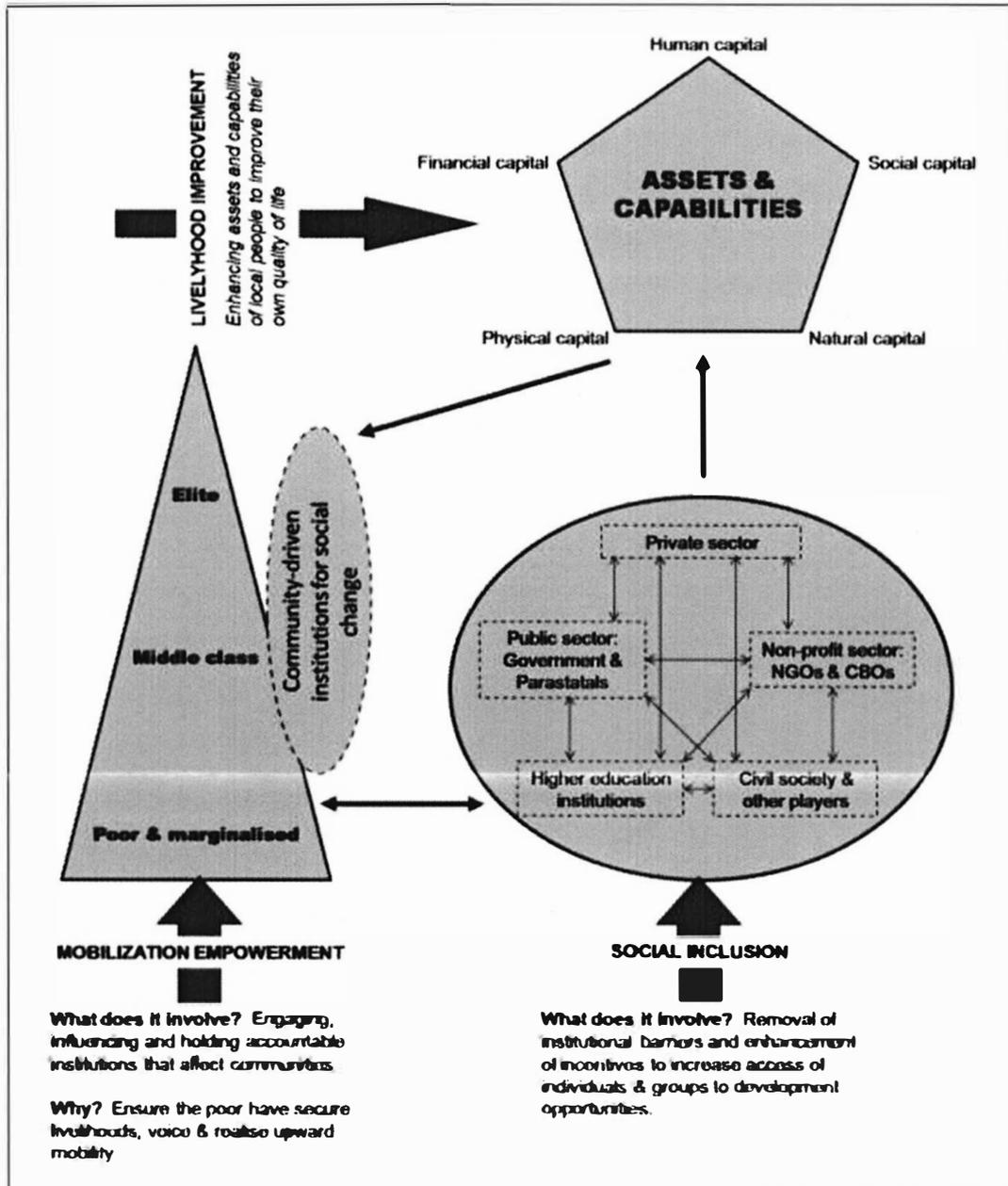


Figure 2.4. The University-Rural Community Partnership Model of Francis, Dube, Mokgnyetji and Chitapa (2010).

teamwork. All project members should be assigned to specific wards under the leadership of an academic. Students should serve as ordinary but critical members of the teams, and team leaders should report to the Project Director (Francis et al, 2010: 365).

Various activities should be carried out in order to secure the support and commitment of the municipality's political and administrative leadership for the project. The first activity should be a debriefing meeting with the municipal manager, followed by similar meetings with senior managers, the speaker, and mayoral committee of the municipality. Several other seminars should be conducted in order to orientate councillors, traditional leaders, ward committees, community development workers and other critical stakeholders on the project (Francis et al, 2010:366). Finally, ward leaders should facilitate the identification and recruitment of village-based change agents whose specific role would be to co-champion and drive the implementation of the local development agenda (Francis et al, 2010:366).

A pool of 3-4 change agents should be recruited by their respective village communities in the various wards of the local municipality. These change agents are known as the 'Foot Soldiers' of community development.

### ***Step 2: Situation analysis***

This phase begins with the training of the 'Foot Soldiers' and ward councillors in the local municipality in order to equip them with knowledge, facilitation and team building skills as well as tools used when engaging communities in participatory community development initiatives (Francis et al, 2010:366). Training should be followed by qualitative situation analysis which should be carried out by the 'Foot Soldiers' in their respective villages. They should capture data about the perceptions of the elderly, youth, women, men, and people with special abilities in each village (Francis et al, 2010:366). This involves community members in the process of self-examining and analysing their local realities, re-interrogating problems and issues, as well as identifying shared new options (Francis et al, 2010:367).

These 'Foot Soldiers' should conduct quantitative situation analysis in the form of village profiling where they should visit all the households in each village. Detailed information on individuals and whole families should be collected. The main aim should be to make available the information to chiefs, village headmen, civic associations in each village and ward committees and councillors (Francis et al, 2010:367). Sector specific workshops should then be held in each ward in order to prioritise the needs of their rural communities such as education, water and sanitation, safety and

security, energy, roads and transport, environment and disaster management, health and social development, housing, and sports, arts and culture (Francis et al, 2010:367).

### ***Step 3: Ward development planning***

The situational analyses carried out in all the villages can generate a great deal of insight about the daily lives of the people. At this point, there is need for the mobilisation of community members so that they can take active participation in formulating their village development plans. The development planning should be democratic and inclusive (Francis et al, 2010:368). This implies that children from seven years old, youth, women, men and people with special abilities should be involved in the 'Foot Soldier' workshops in their respective communities in developing specific social change plans. During these workshops, separate social group specific-focus groups should be constituted. Each group should define its vision and mission and should also identify its potential partners that could be useful when implementing their strategic plans. Village development plans should be consolidated into ward development plans, while strategic goals should be developed to guide the implementation of ward development plans (Francis et al, 2010:368).

### **2.7.2 Criteria, measures, and processes for quality partnerships relevant at rural-based universities**

Netshandama (2010:78) suggested the following criteria, measures, and processes necessary for building quality partnerships at rural-based-universities in South Africa:

- Education and training as well as empowerment should be central to building quality partnerships between the university and the communities. This will help in improving problems of poverty, ill health and unemployment.
- Focus should be on economic empowerment through job creation and sustainable projects. This can be achievable if the university is able to reach any member in the rural communities. The rural-based university should consider establishing an office or a university community liaison/resource centre within the community where anybody can go for help.
- Educators and researchers should respect the knowledge the community has and appreciate the circumstances of the community.
- Partnership activities should be coordinated in order to avoid duplication of services in one sector of the community and lack of services in others. This implies that

there should be a holistic, multi-disciplinary and comprehensive approach to teaching and learning, training and education in order to ensure a win-win partnership.

- Quality partnership should entail a guaranteed long-term relationship in which stakeholders should be responsible for honouring appointments and meetings in order to ensure its smooth running.
- Quality partnership requires institutional commitment in order to avoid serious delays and frustrations that may lead to unsustainability of initiatives.
- Inherent in quality partnership are principles of honesty, reciprocity and transparency, i.e the university should be able to indicate what they will be able to provide or assist the community with because it possesses the expertise.
- Stakeholders should feel accountable for its existence and its success. Each stakeholder should feel the need to do something about his/her situation (personal accountability).
- Respect should be generated by the partners' understanding of social, political and cultural structures.
- Academics should be empowered to learn about those areas in the community that they did not know about.
- Resources (knowledge, ideas, and material resources such as physical infrastructure, funds, equipment and supplies) should be shared for maximum mutual use and benefit.
- Quality partnership is one in which processes and outcomes are monitored and control mechanisms are in place to ensure that follow-up and feedback occur (Netshandama, 2010:78).

## **2.8 ROLES, EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SERVICE-LEARNING PARTNERS**

The discussion below provides the various positions, roles, expectations and responsibilities necessary for successful service-learning partnerships.

### **2.8.1 Service-learning specialist/coordinator at the service-learning or community engagement office on campus**

The availability of a centralised service-learning/community engagement office and staff on campus is a critical resource in the success of service-learning initiatives

(Stanton, 2008:6). A service-learning specialist or coordinator should help identify community partners, facilitate partnership development, and co-instruct the module (Stanton, 2008:6) and act as a primary liaison between academic staff, students, and community and service agencies. This specialist is expected to have a deep understanding of both the realities of the local community and service agencies and the world of academic study and teaching (Bender et al, 2006:100). Furthermore, a service-learning specialist needs to act as a translator, diplomat, matchmaker and liaison between academic staff, students, and community and service agencies. He/she should bring specific talents in order to facilitate reciprocal partnerships between the university and community, and also assist academic staff in designing their modules/programmes together with a service placement design. This person should serve as a 'bridge' between all service-learning partners (Bender et al, 2006:100).

### **2.8.2 Academic staff**

Under-staffing in academic departments should be addressed in order to address time constraints that often lead to failure of service-learning initiatives (Erasmus, 2009:53). Successful service-learning initiatives rely on academic staff members who occupy the role of leading educators. Their primary role is to design the module in which service-learning is integrated, which involves establishing learning outcomes, planning for evaluation of learning by clearly stating the reflection techniques that may enable students to draw meaning from their experiences and linking such experiences with the curriculum. They are also responsible for guiding students through the experiential aspect of the service-learning module, fostering partnerships with the community and service-agencies and involving staff from community centres as co-educators. Finally, they have to integrate the concepts of citizenship and social awareness in the academic content of the module (Bender et al, 2006:100).

### **2.8.3 Service and community agency staff**

Service and community agency staff provides relevant information on the service needs of the agency. They should collaboratively design service placements that address both the real community needs and meet the learning outcomes for the students. They should prepare students for their active involvement as well as supervise them during service placement. They have an invaluable role in evaluation of the

students' verified sense of responsibility throughout their service placements, and in any observed learning demonstrated by students. This role also and embraces collaborating with the academic staff as co-educators (Bender et al, 2006:101).

#### **2.8.4 Students**

Students involved in service-learning are both learner and service-provider; in other words, they should partake in activities that engage them in service delivery to the community while simultaneously learn from providing such services. Through reflection on their experiences of service delivery, they grow personally, academically and socially (Bender et al, 2006:101). Students must accept the responsibilities inherent in community engagement, including ethical assistance, responsible behaviour, and respectful relationship building. They should take appropriate responsibility for their own learning in order to create an environment that supports their education and development. They should also establish a context with increased capacity for their contributions to strengthen the community on a variety of levels (Bender et al, 2006:101).

### **2.9 FUNDING FOR SERVICE-LEARNING**

The whole process of conceptualising service-learning in higher education institutions requires considerable funding as a central factor that deserves appropriate attention (Stanton, 2008:6; Erasmus, 2009:54). The lack of funding and infrastructure contribute a lot towards frustration and poor support for service-learning (Kecskes, 2009). It is important to revise institutional policies in order to create opportunities for funding initiatives towards service-learning as well as rewarding academic staff members in the form of promotion and tenure for participation in service-learning. In addressing the lack of funding and infrastructure at Portland State University, a Centre for Academic Excellence was developed with the goal to coordinate service-learning and encourage departments to engage in an incentive strategy that will provide academic staff with funding for developing and sustaining service-learning programmes (Kecskes, 2006).

The development of service-learning initiatives in South Africa's higher education institutions lacks proper financial support. The National Department of Education's reluctance to adopt a Community Engagement Policy exacerbates this situation by not providing financial support for community engagement endeavours which are often

costly in terms of staff time, transport, and support for the development of agendas by external partners (Stanton, 2008:6; Erasmus, 2009:54). This scenario contributes a lot towards the failure of the higher education system to measure its potential and to fully realise its transformation agenda of the country (Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding of Universities, 2013:1).

South African universities utilise a wide range of approaches in engaging with communities. Some of those approaches are often not infused within teaching and learning, and research, and thus complicates funding of such endeavours (Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding of Universities, 2013:40). The Department of Higher Education and Training has developed a grant or new subsidy to support community engagement activities at universities. A recommendation is that only those kinds of community engagement programmes or activities that carry credit value as part of an accredited academic programme will receive funding from such a grant. The implication is that only those community engagement activities, such as service-learning, that are integral and structured as part of research and teaching functions of universities should be funded (Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of Funding of Universities, 2013:264).

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter distinguished service-learning from other forms of community engagement. Traditional courses are also differentiated from service-learning courses. The history of the evolution of service-learning courses at five countries is unpacked. The Curricular Community Engagement Model by Bender (2007) as well as the Good Practice Guide of service-learning by HEQC (2006) is described in detail. This chapter overlapped to cover the scope on partnership development for service-learning; criteria, measures, and processes for quality partnerships relevant for conceptualisation of service-learning at rural-based universities in South Africa.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains a discussion of the research methodology and design employed in this study. The population and sampling methods and the various research techniques applied to capture and analyse the data are clarified.

As stated in Chapter 1, this study is based on the key research question: **How is service-learning conceptualised by directors of community engagement, project coordinators of community engagement, academic staff members, and students at two rural-based universities in South Africa?**

The aim of this study is to explore a possible framework for conceptualisation of service-learning in order to provide directors and project coordinators of community engagement, academic staff members, and students with a useful guide for future service-learning practice at two rural-based universities in South Africa.

#### 3.2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The key aspects related to the research design employed in this study are clarified in the section below.

##### 3.2.1 Qualitative research

This study employed a qualitative research approach using grounded theory. Qualitative research is interpretive in the sense that reality is socially constructed, and meaning of reality is understood from the viewpoints of specific individuals based on their subjective consciousness of experience from time to time (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:14; Gall, Gall & Borg, 2010:343). The use of a qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to inductively construct knowledge from social interactions and understand the meanings participants ascribed to their experiences and their views about conceptualisation of service-learning in their own natural settings (Cohen et al, 2011:219; Springer, 2010:382; Johnson & Christensen, 2014:34; Punch,

2009:117; Gall, Gall & Borg, 2010:343; Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2014:451). Understanding the conceptualisation of service-learning required the description and analysis of participants' individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions. Such descriptive data resulted in better analysis and interpretation of the participants' contexts and the meanings participants attached to their own situations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:345).

### **3.2.2 Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory is an inductive approach to social science research. This approach extracts information systematically from the empirical data with the goal to build a theory (Johnson & Christensen, 2014:456; Newby, 2010:487). It was deemed an appropriate design for this study since focus was on exploring a new area where there is little or lack of grounded conceptualisation of service-learning. Preconceived ideas were set aside in order to allow the data to give rise to the conceptual framework (Cohen et al, 2011:599). The development of a conceptual framework (presented in Chapter 6 of this research) was derived inductively from the data through a bottom up process (Cohen et al, 2011:598; Punch, 2009:130), i.e the conceptual framework for service-learning that was generated is grounded in the real data and is used to explain the data (Punch, 2009:130; Cohen et al, 2011:598; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:372; Gall et al, 2010:350; Newby, 2010:487; Johnson & Christensen, 2014:457). Through grounded theory the researcher has answered the research problem that emanated from the transformation in the South African higher education system which requires universities to be socially responsive (Cohen et al, 2011:598). The researcher sought to generate a relevant and appropriate conceptual framework that may serve as a guide for good practice of service-learning at the two universities selected for this research.

### **3.2.3 Population and sampling**

The research was conducted at two rural-based universities in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, namely the University of Limpopo and University of Venda.

The University of Limpopo is the result of a merger between the former University of the North (UNIN) and the Medical University of Southern Africa (Medunsa) in 2005. It is a multi-campus institution, with the Medunsa, Turfloop and Polokwane campuses

housing the following faculties: Health Sciences, Humanities, Management and Law, and Science and Agriculture. While these campuses are located far from one another, they share the same vision, which is "*The University of Limpopo for human and environmental wellness in a rural context – finding solutions for Africa*" (University of Limpopo, 2011:3).

The history of the University of Venda (Univen) dates back to South Africa's apartheid past, which supported the establishment of homeland universities (Netshandama, 2010:71). As such Univen was established with the specific purpose to serve black people, in particular Venda-speaking people. It was intended to be a Venda homeland institution to train and upgrade teachers' academic qualifications, to provide educated elite with managerial skills necessary for the emergence of entrepreneurs who could provide in manpower needs to assist the development of the Venda homeland in agriculture and business (University of Venda, 2012:3). Venda was also a developing state which needed administrators and civil servants, who were recruited from the ranks of the teaching profession. It was felt that specialised training in Law and Public Administration was required for the orderly functioning of the state and society (University of Venda, 2012:3).

Univen was established as a branch of the University of the North (the current University of Limpopo) in 1981. It is one of the last universities that were established in South Africa. It opened its doors in 1982 in the buildings of the Dimani Agricultural High School in the Tshivhase area. The university is situated in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province in the fast growing town of Thohoyandou - meaning '*head of an elephant*' - on the southern side of the Soutpansberg Mountains. The vision of Univen is "*to be at the centre of tertiary education for rural and regional development in Southern Africa*" (University of Venda, 2012:5; Netshandama, 2010:71).

The majority of students attending Univen come from the rural communities in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces, as well as from the South African Development Community (SADC) region (Netshandama, 2010:72). The key challenges facing Univen - as well as many other rural-based universities in South Africa - are poverty and deprivation, unemployment, illiteracy, technological backwards and inadequate infrastructure, economical dependency, preventable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, violence and crime, and globalisation (Netshandama, 2010:72).

The two universities have different structural compositions in terms of their faculties. The University of Limpopo is composed of four faculties, namely, Humanities, Management and Law, Sciences and Agriculture, and Health Sciences. Each faculty comprises various schools. The Department of Community Engagement at the University of Limpopo is also part of the sample for this study.

The University of Venda comprises the following eight schools: Human and Social Sciences, Health Sciences, Mathematical and Natural Sciences, Management Sciences, Law, Environmental Sciences, Agriculture, and Education. The Department of Community Engagement at Univen also forms part of the sample for this research.

Participants were selected on the basis of purposive sampling; the samples are invaluable because they are experts from who a great deal can be learnt about achieving the central purpose of the study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011). The participants, as key informants, were selected for the explicit purpose of them being the most valuable sources of information to fully address the research problem and answer key questions that underpin this study (Maree, 2010; de Vos et al, 2011). Purposively selected participants were categorised on the basis of their ability to contribute to the development of a framework for conceptualisation of service-learning as well as their defining characteristics that made them the holders of the data needed for this study: thus the roles they play while involved in various community engagement initiatives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:373; Maree, 2010). Sampling on this basis also enhanced the opportunities for discovering, understanding and gaining insight on how service-learning is conceptualised by various role-players at the target universities (Ary et al, 2014:169).

Figure 3.1 represents the sampled schools from which data was collected.



*Figure 3.1. Sampled schools of this study.*

Using a purposive sampling strategy, four similar schools (Education, Law, Agriculture and Health Sciences) were targeted at each university. Within each school responses were sought from one project coordinator, two academic staff members and two final year students who were active in community engagement activities. Additionally, the director of Community Engagement at each institution were included as participants, taking into consideration their roles, knowledge, experience and availability. In total, 42 participants were included in the study representing each university. This enhanced the chances for triangulation and understanding how service-learning is conceptualised at both universities. Table 3.1 below provides a schematic representation of the sample of this study from both universities.

**Table 3.1. Schematic representation of the sample of the study.**

School/Directorate	Project coordinators	Academic staff	Students	Total
Education	1	2	2	5
Law	1	2	2	5
Agriculture	1	2	2	5
Health Sciences	1	2	2	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20</b>

**Directors of Community Engagement:** one from each university

**Total number of participants from each university:** 21

**Total number of participants from both universities:** 42

### 3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The researcher was flexible in the choice and combination of relevant techniques for data collection. For the purpose of triangulation, appropriate multiple techniques were employed in gathering data in order to resolve the discrepancies in the findings and ensure the trustworthiness of the findings (Gall et al, 2010:348). For this research, the following data collection tools were selected.

- **Phase 1 – Collection and analysis of documents**

The interpretation and analysis of documents was the first phase of data collection at the University of Limpopo, which started in May 2013 after being granted permission to conduct this study by the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC). It only commenced in mid-August 2013 at Univen, concurrently with other phases, due to time constraints. Community engagement policies, strategic plans, campus newspapers, and institutional audit reports of both universities were collected in order to study the texts and to explore how service-learning is conceptualised with the goal to develop a conceptual framework that may be useful for guiding future practice of service-learning at the target universities.

Content analysis was employed in reviewing and coding the texts. Meaning related to how service-learning is conceptualised at the two rural-based universities was drawn systematically from the word-based data. Written texts were reduced, cross-examined, and summarised so as to retrieve and construct key features related to the study at hand (Cohen et al, 2011:563). In simpler terms, codes and categories were developed and compared with the intention to examine the interconnectedness between them. The establishment of relationships between the codes and categories in the data ensured their depth and '*context-groundedness*' (Cohen et al, 2011:567). Five themes emerged from the documents collected from the University of Limpopo, while six themes emerged from the Univen documents. Conclusions drawn from the themes were utilised to generate a conceptual framework stated in Chapter 6.

- **Phase 2 - Semi-structured interviews with the Directors of Community Engagement**

Semi-structured interviews were suitable to elicit extensive and valuable data relating to how service-learning is conceptualised at the two universities under study. The directors of Community Engagement at these institutions were interviewed to obtain information about their thoughts and feelings about the concept service-learning in the context of their universities. Their involvement assisted a great deal in providing information pertaining to the history of the Offices of Community Engagement as well as the extent to which service-learning is known, adopted and utilised. They also provided policy documents on community engagement. The director of Community Engagement at Univen was able to present a list of community engagement projects per school that are registered with her office.

- **Phase 3 - Semi-structured interviews with academic staff and project coordinators of community engagement**

One project coordinator and two academic staff members taking part in community engagement from each school were involved since they may probably be responsible to conceptualise and promote the integration of service-learning in curriculum development.

Obtaining access to these groups was slightly problematic due to their many commitments. Interviews were arranged telephonically, and were conducted in their offices.

- **Phase 4 - Semi-structured interviews with final year students**

The initial intention was to interview two final year undergraduate students from each school who are active in community engagement, the purpose being for these interviews to provide students with opportunities to freely elicit their views in relation to conceptualisation of service-learning on their campuses. Those students were chosen on the basis of their experience, knowledge, and skills in community engagement which they acquired throughout their three or four years of undergraduate studies.

Obtaining access to some students was difficult. At the University of Limpopo, none of the undergraduate students in the School of Agriculture were involved in any form of community engagement activity. The Masters students attached to the Unit of Agricultural Extension was the only group that participated in such activities. In the Schools of Education from both institutions, all final year students who were enrolled for the Bachelor of Education (BEd) were at their home schools for teaching practice and would only return by the end of September. The next option was to interview third year BEd students since they had the opportunity to take part in some form of community engagement from their first year.

Another problem was to find venues for conducting the interviews. At the University of Limpopo the office of the present researcher could be used, but it was difficult to find and interview venue at Univen. With no office or other venue available, most of these interviews were conducted on a couch near the entrance of the Old Administration Building. However, the security officers would not allow the interviews to be conducted there at those late hours - most of the Univen students were only available for the interviews between 16:00 and 19:00 after their lectures concluded - resulting in some students being interviewed in the parking area.

- **Phase 5 - Intensive observations**

During this final phase, data was collected through the use of intensive observations. This technique was selected since it allowed the researcher to establish what was occurring naturally regarding conceptualisation and implementation of service-learning at the universities (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:376). In addition, the use of observations enabled the researcher to obtain the perceptions, feelings, thoughts and beliefs expressed by the stakeholders regarding the conceptualisation of service-learning (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:378).

The researcher played the role of participant observer where he was able to complete the observations as he interacted with participants in order to collect valuable information about the present study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:374; Gall et al, 2010:349; Springer, 2010:389). Field notes recorded what was seen and heard as well as the reflections on what was occurring with regard to the conceptualisation of service-learning at these campuses. The field notes were then used as data that was

ready for analysis and interpretation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:376; Springer, 2010:388).

### **3.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data analysis is an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:395). It is a systematic process of coding, categorising and interpreting data to provide explanations of a single phenomenon of interest. It thus entails bringing order, structure and interpretation of collected data (Cohen, et al. 2011:237). Analytic data induction was applied since it is central to qualitative data analysis. This implies that meaning was made from the data in the form of categories, cross-site themes and patterns (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:395).

Content analysis was used as an analytic approach when dealing with data from documents. Documents were examined and summarised, which involved interpreting the content of the text data, coding and identifying themes and patterns from the analysed documents (Ary et al, 2014:473; Cohen et al, 2011:588).

Data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were analysed as follows:

- *Data preparation*

This was a time-consuming and tedious process. The recorded interviews were manually transcribed by the researcher to interact with it intensively and intimately, and to connect with the data in a grounded manner which provided an opportunity to assess the trustworthiness of the findings. Most of the (recorded) interviews took approximately an hour; transcribing each took almost eight hours. All the data were transcribed by the researcher himself in order to ensure completeness and rigour (Mertens, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin & Lowden, 2011). The transcribed data were interpreted and converted as findings as provided in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study.

- *Sorting and coding the data*

Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and were then transferred to a laptop. This setup allows the recording to be easily paused and started; one can listen to a section and type it before continuing. Participants were kept anonymous in the transcriptions. After completion of the transcriptions, the data was read and coded to assign meaning to emerging themes (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Boudah, 2011), while notes were added in the margins and important sections underlined (Punch, 2009:175). The categories and themes that emerged from this data are provided in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study.

Recurring themes became evident in the transcripts, confirming each other (Mertens et al, 2011). Themes that emerged from the data were raised to a higher level of abstraction, and their interrelationships were traced out by systematic examination of the similarities and differences in the data (Punch, 2009:175; Ary et al, 2014:515).

The data was organised consistent with the research questions and the research techniques aimed at exploring the conceptualisation of service-learning at the two universities. Data was narrowed down into smaller segments that allowed for attachment of meaning. These sections of data were arranged into themes which led to the identification of patterns that were integrated to form meaningful units (Punch, 2009:185; Ary et al, 2014:518). Personal information of the participants was captured to become familiar with the roles of the various participants when coming to conceptualisation of service-learning at each campus.

The data which emerged from the various community engagement initiatives were examined. Different community engagement initiatives which could be modified for future practice of service-learning were identified. The study revealed the similarities and differences that cut across the two universities in terms of how service-learning is conceptualised at these campuses.

### **3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

The following standards were met in order to ensure trustworthiness in this qualitative study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Ary et al, 2014:531).

- *Credibility.* This element was ascertained by building trust with the participants from the onset, which enabled the researcher to obtain detailed and honest responses. The researcher triangulated by employing a variety of data collection techniques in order to ensure that the findings support each other (Ary et al, 2014:532). Further-more, the use of various participants (directors of community engagement, academic staff members, project coordinators of community engagement initiatives, and students) was vital in ensuring the credibility of the research findings (Ary et al, 2014:532). The use of the tape recorder during interviews assisted the researcher to report the findings accurately based on the viewpoints of participants. The re-searcher has at some point used direct quotations from the interviews in order to provide the experiences and voices of the participants. The findings of this study were discussed with the supervisor in order to avoid biasness. The selected schools at each university provided a broader picture about the extent to which service-learning is conceptualised in this context. The conceptual framework developed in the last chapter also fits well and explains the data collected in this study (Ary et al, 2014:533).
- *Transferability.* The results of this study cannot be generalised because only two rural-based universities were selected for this study. However, the conceptual model developed in this study can be adapted to other rural-based universities in the country or globally (Ary et al, 2014:535).
- *Dependability* was promoted by conducting data quality checks in consultation with the supervisor. The supervisor was consulted to monitor the extent to which the data was aligned to the aim, problem statement and research questions (Ary et al, 2014:536).
- *Confirmability* was promoted by recording and transcribing the interviews. Transcribed interviews were sent to interviewees for verification of its trustworthiness (Ary et al, 2014:538).

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter gave specific details of the qualitative research approach, grounded theory and data collection and data analysis. The data capturing process unfolded systematically through well-structured phases, which provided a blueprint for data analysis as the two processes always go together forming alternate sides of the same coin.

## CHAPTER 4

# CONCEPTUALISATION OF SERVICE-LEARNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter entails a presentation of the findings of the research which were captured at the University of Limpopo. The findings are presented according to the data collection techniques that were employed in the sampled schools.

### 4.2. FINDINGS FROM DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The following five themes emerged from the data that were captured from the interpretation and analysis of documents.

#### 4.2.1 Quality assurance for service-learning

The Framework for Programme Accreditation by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) (2004) sets national standards for assurance of quality educational programmes at higher education institutions in South Africa. It is composed of regulations for Education and Training Quality Assurers (ETQA) of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and contains criteria which form the blueprint for conducting institutional audits on policies, systems, strategies and resources for quality management of the core functions of teaching/learning, research and community engagement. With this framework as model, the HEQC (2004) encourages the building of *"institutional and programme capacity in developing new programmes, particularly at historically disadvantaged institutions and new institutions, as well as protecting students from poor quality programmes that run indefinitely once they are initially licensed to be offered"* (Higher Education Quality Committee's Framework for Programme Accreditation, 2004).

The 2010 audit report on the University of Limpopo reveals the absence of some critical elements, such as:

- a shared framework which conceptualises community engagement;

- the absence of institutional support structures and meaningful reward systems for advancing community engagement;
- a lack of coherence between community engagement, teaching/learning, and research;
- and a discrepancy in the practice of community engagement policy that was approved by the Senate in 2008 (HEQC, 2010:142; HEQC, 2011:34).

Another critical element is that, although the University of Limpopo has some pockets of excellent, impressive and interesting community engagement projects, it seems these are not used to their full potential or advantage to exercise community engagement in its context as "*a rural-based university*" and in line with its vision to "*address the needs of rural communities through innovative ideas*" (HEQC, 2010:143).

This audit report concluded that the deficiency in co-ordination and quality assurance of existing community engagement projects at the University of Limpopo is a major problem in the sense that these projects are initiated and driven by individual academics; they are donor funded, and depend on the donor's guidelines and memoranda of agreement between the donors and the university for quality assurance (HEQC, 2010:148).

The following criteria support and guide service-learning activities at the University of Limpopo:

- Relevant and meaningful service to the community;
- the enhancement of academic learning;
- structured opportunities for reflection; and
- purposeful civic learning - social responsibility (HEQC, 2010:142).

Recommendations were made regarding the following strategies to embed community engagement:

- the establishment of an Office for Community Engagement at the university;
- the appointment of senior and support staff for operational community engagement;
- the establishment of institution-wide and faculty-based committees responsible for community engagement;
- the inclusion of community engagement in staff promotion and reward systems;

The purpose of the Community Engagement policy is the following:

- to regulate the processes of exchange and transformation of knowledge, expertise and experience between the University of Limpopo and community development initiatives;
- to ensure that sustainable institutional support is available for the development and implementation of community engagement initiatives;
- to ensure that community engagement is managed, coordinated and facilitated effectively by all academic and support services of the University of Limpopo;
- to integrate community engagement with teaching, learning and research activities of the University of Limpopo;
- to provide a means to build relevant multi-stakeholder partnerships with civil society, government and business;
- to nurture existing - and to promote new - community engagement initiatives;
- to advance social transformation and development in higher education;
- to establish sustainable quality and cooperative partnerships with communities and the relevant service sectors;
- to enable the University of Limpopo to fulfil its mission as a responsive developmental university within the context of the requirements of higher education legislative and policy framework;
- and to ensure that all university staff and students interact with the broader community on behalf of the university within the context of the vision and mission of the University of Limpopo (University of Limpopo Community Engagement Policy, 2008: 4).

#### **4.2.3 Strategic Planning for service-learning**

Guided by its vision, mission and core values, the university has developed a strategic plan to achieve its social responsive role of addressing the needs of its surrounding rural communities. This plan embraces a continuing effort by the university so as to advance the frontiers of scholarship through teaching, research and community engagement. It shows the following elements of the university core business to be of high priority: formulation, delivery and management of academic, research and community engagement programmes (University of Limpopo, 2013) (University of Limpopo Strategic Plan (2010-2013)).

#### **4.2.4 Integration of service-learning with core functions**

The University of Limpopo's Annual Report (2012:77) highlights that there is a lot of challenges facing the sector of community engagement at the university. The report indicates that community engagement is not yet integrated into other core functions of the university such as teaching and learning, and research. The lack of interdisciplinary collaborations in finding solutions to problems in the rural communities was also found to be a challenge. This report is generic about the concept community engagement because it does not specifically talk to collaborations for service-learning initiatives (University of Limpopo's Annual Report, 2012: 77).

#### **4.2.5 Conceptualisation of service-learning**

Institutional dialogue about the concept service-learning has not yet been initiated. However, the university's Annual Report (2012:77) shows that processes to move the university towards an internal common understanding of Community Engagement have begun. Such an institutional discussion on understanding the concept community engagement has been initiated on 28 September 2012 during a conference which was held at Bolivia Lodge in Polokwane. This embraced debates around the inclusion of rural development modules into existing subjects in order to allow students to obtain credits for their community engagement (University of Limpopo's Annual Report, 2012:78).

### **4.3 FINDINGS FROM SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

#### **4.3.1 Director of Community Engagement**

##### ***4.3.1.1 Information of the participant***

The Director of Community Engagement at the Rural Development and Innovation Hub was appointed in this position in 2011. His duties and responsibilities encompass the coordination of all community engagement activities campus-wide in a well-structured fashion, as well as ensuring that such activities are aligned with the mission, priorities, and expertise of the university.

#### **4.3.1.2 Current community engagement projects**

Service-learning is not a familiar concept at the institution; however, all four faculties of the university are currently involved in community engagement activities. The number of existing community engagement projects is not known due to an unsuccessful audit which resulted in only forty people responding to the questionnaire, which data was not analysed.

The following community engagement projects were initiated:

- *The Nguni project*

This project was initiated in 2007. Its primary goal is to provide knowledge, skills, and expertise in animal production to members of the local rural communities.

- *Leadership and management programme*

This new project is offered by the Faculty of Management and Law. The post-graduate diploma provides skills to municipality managers who are mainly responsible for service-delivery. The programme is offered at the Edupark campus.

- *Water Quality Testing Laboratory*

This is also a new project which emerged from a partnership between the university and the Capricorn District Municipality. The municipality had problems in testing water, sending their samples to Pretoria, which was expensive. The university granted property while the municipality provided financing for the construction of a laboratory. This laboratory is used for water quality testing, research, and the practical training of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Water Sanitation.

- *Agricultural Learning Academy*

This project originated from the partnership between the university, the Limpopo Provincial Government and Waterberg FET College. Its primary goal is to provide leadership and capacity building to lecturers at the college. The programme is presented as a diploma course.

#### **4.3.1.3 Conceptualisation of service-learning**

Service-learning is not well known at the university and thus lacks a common definition. The Director of Community Engagement defines service-learning as a well-structured pedagogy which allows students to earn credits while they simultaneously provide service to the community. Both participants, i.e the students and community, benefit from this activity.

The director first learnt about service-learning in 1998 when the Department of Higher Education in South Africa intended to assist universities to begin infusing community engagement. Without being formally trained in it, his educational background from the USA provided experience relating to service-learning.

The director emphasised that academic staff members still lack an understanding about service-learning due to the absence of debates around this concept. Initiatives were made to aid academic staff members in the conceptualisation of service-learning. At a Community Engagement Conference held in 2012 in Polokwane, participants included people with expertise in service-learning and community engagement from a forum known as the South African Higher Education Community Engagement (SAHECEF).

The director also presented a paper at the South African Association Health Educationalists (SAAHE) annual conference in 2010 at the North-West University. Apart from the conference, a quarterly Community-Based Service-Learning interest group meeting was called to keep all stakeholders at the university aware of the developments within Community-Based Service Learning. Such a meeting was hosted by Medunsa in 2011 with more than 100 representatives from NGOs, schools, clinics, municipal departments, students and Community-Based Service-Learning staff. The attendees shared their learning and experience from Medunsa's community-based programme over the past year. The purpose of the annual meeting was to facilitate feedback from and to the community by the students. The meeting was considered an opportunity through which Medunsa could align its line of operation with the achievement of the mission and commitment to social justice. The importance of listening to and consulting with communities before implementing initiatives was emphasised as one way of shaping service-learning for the better. That initiative was reported at a national Community Engagement Conference held in East London in November 2011.

Academic staff members, students, and community leaders were encouraged to listen and talk to the community as partners and equals.

#### **4.3.1.4 Strategic planning for service-learning**

In considering the strategies which need to be in place for the conceptualisation of service-learning at the university, the director states that the Rural Development and Innovation Hub should become rapidly consolidated. Service-learning modules must be developed, international networks must be established and inter-faculty research projects must be launched. Students will earn degree credits while delivering community service through practical projects and research.

Director:

*“This university is perfectly positioned, geographically and intellectually, to make significant contributions in this direction. And to hold all this strategic thinking together, a structure has been developed in the form of the Rural Development and Innovation Hub. The primary function of the Rural Development and Innovation Hub will be to forge new directions for teaching, research and community engagement at the University of Limpopo. Service-learning modules should be developed. This will take students into the community for degree credits while at the same time delivering community service through practical projects and research”.*

He further emphasised the need to develop short courses to provide strategic skills directly into the community, and the development of a Master's programme in rural development which is problem oriented, practical and research focused.

#### **4.3.1.5 Institutional mission and policies of service-learning**

The Director of Community Engagement views the social mission of the university as being a leading African university which epitomises excellence and global competitiveness in addressing the needs of rural communities through innovative ideas. The university has committed itself to contribute to sustainable development in South Africa, the SADC region, and the African continent in general. This can be accomplished by producing graduates capable of contributing significantly to development, particularly in

rural communities. In support of this intention is commitment to teaching/learning, research and community engagement.

Currently there are policies informing and supporting conceptualisation of service-learning at this university. These embrace the Community Engagement Policy, the Policy on Teaching and Learning, and the Policy on Research.

#### ***4.3.1.6 Institutional leaders for service-learning***

On the question about available institutional leaders who support service-learning initiatives at the university, the director replied that most universities have similar core functions. Although most universities concentrate on teaching/learning and research and these functions are constantly monitored and evaluated, the third core function, namely community engagement, usually consists of unstructured and ad hoc activities.

The situation at the University of Limpopo was the same, although the university has aligned teaching and research more closely with its vision and mission. It is the task of the hub to focus on a more unified inter-faculty integration of effort and community engagement which is central to teaching and research.

The director stated that the departments and faculties have not yet started to engage in service-learning activities. An important initiative, which will make the hub's intentions obvious, will be to encourage departments and faculties to include rural development service-learning modules into existing subjects and programmes. Students will receive credits for working in and with communities, and although they will not be directly involved in research, their intimate involvement with the community will make its needs clear. Currently no student leaders are promoting the agenda of service-learning.

#### ***4.3.1.7 Teaching, learning, and research***

To become an expert in service-learning, it is necessary to balance teaching, research and community engagement. Community engagement cannot be left aside in higher education since it provides a platform for interaction with various stakeholders with the goal to provide knowledge, skills and expertise to the socially excluded and disadvantaged communities. Researchers find it relevant for they can base their research on the actual needs of the community.

At present service-learning is still considered an add-on to the core functions of the university and it will continue to be viewed as such until all stakeholders start discussing the hub. The director is of the opinion that at present the university does not value service-learning the same as teaching and research.

Since the hub is still in its infant stages of informing the university community about service-learning and other community engagement activities, the majority of students are not yet aware about service-learning. Once the hub is operational, students will have the opportunity to be introduced to rural needs and development. Students would benefit from such projects because they would convey their experiences from the community into the lecture halls and thus make learning more meaningful.

#### **4.3.1.8 Motivation for service-learning**

When the hub was created, academic staff members were concerned that the hub would annex their function. However, the director stated that the primary goal of the hub is to encourage faculties to include active rural development service-learning modules into existing subjects and programmes to allocate credits for working in and with communities.

At present there is no means of motivation or incentives and rewards for students and academic staff which will enable them to participate fully in service-learning and other community engagement initiatives. The director stressed the need for several motivational workshops with academic, administrative staff and students to create an intellectual foundation for the intended integration of university activities and their closer alignment with the institution's vision and mission.

Director:

*"There is a need to conduct motivational workshops for university academic and administrative staff, intended to create an intellectual foundation for the intended integration of university activities and their closer alignment with the institution's vision and mission".*

#### **4.3.1.9 University-community partnerships for service-learning**

According to the director, this institution is working in partnership with various stakeholders to advance community engagement. The Limpopo Nguni Cattle Development Programme is an initiative of the university in partnership with the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) through the re-introduction of the indigenous Nguni bloodlines. The indigenous Nguni Limpopo cattle have been recognised as being peculiarly well suited to the conditions prevalent in the larger areas of Limpopo because of their tolerance to tick-borne diseases and parasites as well as their traditional role in the local history and culture.

Director:

*“Existing community engagement projects illustrate the partnerships and teamwork necessary to render such projects useful and sustainable. They all have their nerve centres in the university’s recently Rural Development and Innovation Hub”.*

To put this initiative into effect, it is expected that a Memorandum of Understanding would be signed between the various role-players, including the university, the IDC, Angus Beef South Africa (Ltd), Pick 'n Pay, Beefcor and the Agricultural Research Council.

There is a need to conduct workshops with communities to identify the hiatuses where the university will be most helpful in applying its new rural development and innovation approach.

#### **4.3.1.10 Coordination of service-learning**

The director stated that co-ordination of service-learning activities and university-community partnerships still remains a problem at this institution. This is exacerbated by the shortage of staff at the hub. It is difficult to have formal structures that can link all relevant structures in an attempt to address the needs of both the students and the community.

An audit of all existing community engagement and research projects is recommended, in order to establish whether they are addressing the vision and mission; whether they

are relevant to the needs of the communities; whether they are closing the hiatuses at the university; as well as to bring all the projects under direct control of the hub.

Director:

*“One of the key initiatives that will provide real teeth to the hub’s intentions will be to encourage the various faculties to include active rural development service-learning modules into existing subjects and programmes. This means that students will be allocated credits for working in communities and with communities. They won’t be conducting re-search, but they will be finding out what communities feel needs to be researched”.*

#### **4.3.1.11 Staffing for service-learning**

The lack of staff at the hub is a serious problem for it is difficult for the director to perform his duties and responsibilities of coordinating all community engagement activities at the university without support. He said that the initial intention was to staff the hub with two facilitator analysts at professional level. The incumbents would have to be serious about exploring interdisciplinary approaches; they need problem-solving abilities; and they need to be committed to the community. Staffing requirements for the hub includes two researchers (post-doctoral level), four student assistants (preferably at Masters or Doctoral level), a principal administrative officer who will double as public administrator (PA) to the executive director, and several administrative officers, as well as an Advisory Board with representation from all four faculties and various university service departments.

#### **4.3.1.12 Funding for service-learning**

The lack of funding creates a barrier towards implementation of service-learning and other community engagement activities. At present funding is only directed to research and teaching.

#### **4.3.1.13 Evaluation and assessment for service-learning**

Due to the hub not yet being fully operational, there is no form of evaluation and assessment of service-learning activities, i.e there are no measures for ensuring quality assurance in the existing community engagement projects.

## 4.3.2 Findings: School of Education

### 4.3.2.1 Information of participants

- *Academic staff*

**Academic Staff Member 1:** One of the participants in the study, a member of the academic staff at the university, was previously involved in the Child-friendly Schools project as a facilitator, coordinator, liaison person, and spokesperson, and was responsible for linking the School of Education with surrounding communities.

The primary goal of the Child-friendly Schools was to create schools in the Limpopo Province that focus on the needs of children in the school environment. The project involved fourth year students who were specialising in Life Orientation. They worked as research assistants, conducting inventories about available toilets, classrooms, chalkboards, etc. UNICEF and the Irish government provided funding. The staff member mentioned that the project lacked a framework for coordination in the School of Education, which would have sustained the project by providing a platform for further engagement with schools.

He was also engaged in a small scale project that was funded by SETA (Sector Education and Training Authority) in 2009. The project allowed fourth year students, specialising in the Natural Sciences, to uplift communities where mathematics and physical sciences were problematic. The students remained at the schools for two weeks after Teaching Practice. Afterwards, when funding was withdrawn, the project could not be sustained any longer.

**Academic Staff Member 2:** Although he has not been involved in any service-learning projects before, he is participating in three community engagement projects. He joined the Advanced Certificate in Education with specialisation in School Management and Leadership (ACE SML) in 2011, and facilitates the module "Mentorship". A function of this module is to establish how principals can use resources, available in the communities where their schools are located, to build and strengthen their schools. The module also encourages principals to serve as mentors to the teachers, parents and learners and to be exemplary and determined in their work, committing their learners to study to produce better results for their schools.

His duties and responsibilities include calling on schools where the principals are students in this programme. Together with other mentors – retired principals of good reputation - he visits such schools once per semester to assess whether the principals implement what they have been taught at university and also to address teachers on the importance of cooperation with their principals.

He is also a co-founder and active participant in the Winter School Enrichment project. In 2012 he also joined the campus-wide project in which the university, together with Modimolle Municipality, has the goal to turn Modimolle Mountain into a heritage site. As geographer, he is responsible for drawing the maps of the area.

He is considering the development of a service-learning project where he, together with his students, will assist neighbouring secondary school teachers and learners with map work, which they seemingly find problematic. Additionally, he and his students wish to donate and plant trees at each local school on Arbour day as from 2014, establishing it as an ongoing annual event. Also starting in 2014, he wishes to engage with communities in honouring the birthday of the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, as part of the 67 minutes of community service.

**Academic Staff Member 3:** Joining the Winter School Enrichment programme in 2012, he is currently the deputy coordinator of it. He considers the combined experiences from both research and community engagement to benefit better and informed teaching. Accordingly, he feels that the School of Education, not having accomplished its highest level, needs to go an extra mile in driving the agenda of community engagement.

- **Students**

**Student 1:** This student joined the Winter School Enrichment project in 2012 and ACE SML in 2013. He serves as technical service provider in the ACE SML where he assists academic staff members in connecting laptops and projectors when teaching. Other responsibilities include photocopying, adding USBs to the system, and advancing slides during lecturers' presentations. He is also tasked to find other students who could serve as assistants during the Winter School, where he acts as mentor and orientate learners with the lecture halls, computer laboratories and library.

**Student 2:** This student was involved in Teaching Practice before joining the Computer Literacy project in 2012 as a computer assistant. He was recruited for teaching Computer Literacy to first year students in 2013. His duties include the facilitation of lessons, and assessing and marking the students' work. Together with 11 students from other schools, he teaches Computer Literacy campus-wide from the ICT department. Remuneration is from the Department of Education and Department of Health.

#### **4.3.2.2 Current community engagement projects**

Participants are not involved in service-learning activities, although they are involved in the following community engagement projects:

- *Teaching practice*

Students and the majority of lecturers from the School of Education annually engage with rural communities in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces through Teaching Practice in April and August. Student teachers are exposed to the problems inherent to teaching in rural communities. They acquire credits for taking part in Teaching Practice. They keep journals in which they diarise facets that might need intervention, which are submitted for assessment at a later stage. The information is used for research purposes which may lead towards the improvement of provisioning education at the target schools.

- *Computer literacy project*

The computer literacy project is an initiative of the ICT Department which was launched in 2011. Although it is not accommodated in the School of Education, and presented in the computer laboratories at the School of Mathematics, some participants from the School of Education are involved in it. Its primary goal is to empower and equip nurses, teachers and unemployed youth with computer skills. Classes are conducted during May, June and July. Most of the youth taking part in this project are volunteers in the Extended Public Works Programme. They attend the project to acquire certificates and to eventually find permanent employment at a later stage. Unemployed youth pay a small fee for tuition. Lecturers from the School of Education do not take part in the project.

- *Advanced Certificate in Education in School Management and Leadership*

The Advanced Certificate in Education in School Management and Leadership (ACE SML) was initiated in 2008 as a national initiative supported by the Minister of the Department of Education. The primary goal of the programme is to enhance academic performance at schools through the provision of training and mentorship to principals and HODs from dysfunctional schools, which emanates from lack of proper management and leadership skills by the principals. Such principals are identified throughout the province by the Department of Education. Before commencement, lecturers from the university call on schools to assess dysfunctional areas. At a later stage, after training, lecturers once again visit those schools to assess whether there is improvement. It has shown that schools, whose principals had undergone this programme, have improved greatly.

ACE SML is a two-year educational programme consisting of twelve modules, which are split into six modules per annum, three per semester. Classes are conducted on Saturdays and during school breaks from 09:00-16:00. In 2013 registration for the programme included 142 students.

Currently this programme is under re-curriculation. As from 2014, it is presented as the Advanced Diploma in Education (ADE) in School Management and Leadership. This programme is the source of the Winter School Enrichment programme.

Study material, in the form of files, is provided by the Department of Education. These files serve as guides for school management and leadership. The principals, as students, reflect and share their experiences and problems in managing their schools, learning from the experiences of their peers.

The main problem encountered in this project was the fact that principals and HODs, as students, were computer illiterate, which made it impossible for them to do research, type assignments or send emails. Another problem was that some principals played truant by not attending class on Saturdays. This required the institution of a criterion requiring 80% attendance of the contact sessions and a pass for the school-based assignments, which were examination equivalent, to obtain a pass. For the assignments, each principal used his/her school as reference or laboratory.

The consequences for student teachers involved in this project are that ACE SML classes are conducted on Saturdays and sometimes conflict with their schedules in terms of study group activities.

ACE SML is successful because the lecturers call on students (HODs and school principals) at their schools to monitor their application of theory in practice and also to monitor improvement in managing and leading the schools. An important factor in the success of the programme is that principals attending this programme are from the so called "*non-performing schools*". They do not want their schools to be labelled non-performing or dysfunctional and thus cooperate to improve their schools. The fact that the programme is offered by retired principals from first-rate schools also contributes significantly towards the success of this project.

- *Winter School Enrichment programme*

The Winter School Enrichment programme is an initiative of the School of Education and the Division of Marketing and Communication of the University of Limpopo. It was initiated in 2012 with 175 matriculates, and by 2013 the number of learners has escalated to 343. It is expected that by 2014 at least 1000 learners will be registered in this programme.

The purpose of this project is to supplement and add value to what the national and provincial Department of Education expects of Grade 12 learners. The programme prepares Grade 12 learners for their matriculation examinations and generally improves matric results in the Limpopo Province. Teachers who are examiners or who have a good reputation of teaching certain subjects are appointed as facilitators. 70% of the learners who were included in the project in 2012 qualified to register for bachelor's degrees at universities. The 2012 top student in South Africa attended this programme and was attached to a school where the principal was an ACE SML student.

Classes were conducted from Mondays to Saturdays for three weeks, with Fridays and Saturdays dedicated to tests. Classes started at 08:00 every day. Teachers and lecturers had briefing sessions at 07:30 wherein teachers' reports from the previous day were assessed. Problems identified in the reports were dealt with immediately. Subjects offered included Accounting, Economics, Business Studies,

Physical Science, Agricultural Science, Life Science, Mathematics, History, Geography, and English.

Student teachers who participated in this project gained a great deal of practical experience for they were introduced to different teaching styles from the best performing schools in the province. However, they did not obtain credits that contribute towards the completion of their degrees. Participants wished to see this project having developed by 2015 to reach out to schools in Mpumalanga and Gauteng. They also aspired to start with Saturday classes in 2014 which may cater for Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners. Saturday classes are viewed as a mechanism for preparing Grade 10 learners to concentrate on their studies. Strategies were in place to achieve this vision, which included the involvement of teachers who were teaching the Winter School Enrichment programme. It was recommended that the School of Education and the Division of Marketing and Communications should secure funding from private institutions for this purpose.

At the conclusion of the programme, learners who performed well in each subject were awarded prizes and certificates. All learners received admission forms for the University of Limpopo. Contact with the principals was maintained to monitor their progress.

The Winter School Enrichment programme proved to be a success due to the university environment providing physical and human resources and the teachers being selected on the basis of their proficiency in obtaining excellent matric results. Such teachers brought along their own teaching materials. They were remunerated at R250.00 per hour. Due to the large number of students, each teacher was responsible for teaching two groups, rounding up the amount of R500 per day. They also claimed for their daily transport according to university rates. Additionally, lecturers conducted class visits to assess the quality of teaching, another strategy to ensure the success of the project.

The biggest problem during the Winter School Enrichment project was that some Grade 12 learners bunked classes. While on campus, they did not wear their name tags and it was difficult to identify them. Another problem was that they were not

provided with accommodation. Some learners came from Tzaneen, Mmarobala, Zebediela, and Lebowakgomo.

- *Child-friendly schools*

The initiative of Child-friendly Schools was taken by UNICEF to create child-friendly schools in the Limpopo Province to address unbearable circumstances and traditions such as alcohol and drug abuse that hamper learning. During Phase 1 of the project, baseline data was collected as to what the status quo was, using the criteria of Child-friendly Schools. This was followed by selecting School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and School Management Teams (SMTs) in schools regarded as problematic. The former Minister of Education in the province, Dr Aaron Motswaledi, made the selection. The training was intended to turn those schools around to become child-friendly. It included 75 rural and urban secondary schools which were labelled as dysfunctional. When further funding was secured from the Irish government, 75 primary schools – feeder schools for the secondary schools - were included in the project, which brought the total up to 150 schools.

Unfortunately the project was terminated in 2011 when UNICEF withdrew funding.

It is the opinion of one of the academic staff members that Child-friendly School principles operate better at primary schools than at secondary schools. This is due to the fact that secondary schools have many other problems they are grappling with. Although this project was terminated, the principles of Child-friendly Schools are still imparted in academic programmes and modules such as ELOR and EDST, the Advanced Certificate in Education (with specialisation in Life Orientation), and the Bachelor of Education (with specialisation in Foundation Phase Teaching).

- *Educational Psychology project*

The Educational Psychology Project was an initiative of two trained educational psychologists who used to administer psychological tests. Its primary goal was to identify and assist kids with learning barriers or disabilities in the form of remedial classes. It benefited schools around Makanye and Mentz, for they are in easy reach of the university. Services were delivered free of charge.

The project, however, was terminated when the psychologists, who initiated it, left the institution.

- *Modimolle project*

This is a campus-wide project. The University of Limpopo has entered into an agreement with the Modimolle Municipality to turn Modimolle Mountain into a heritage site. A Memorandum of Agreement was signed on April 2012 and the project was launched in June of that year. The rationale for the project is that Modimolle Mountain is a mysterious place with a long history. People still perform rituals at the site. The municipality wishes to turn it into a centre that might bring in revenue and create jobs. One of the academic staff members, a participant of the current study, is involved in the Modimolle project as geographer. He feels that the mountain should be declared a heritage site to protect not only its history, but also the many indigenous plant species. Being a heritage site would also protect the mountain from possible invasion by people.

#### **4.3.2.3 Conceptualisation of service-learning**

Participants pointed out that advocacy for service-learning has never been done in the School of Education. They were unfamiliar with the concept of service-learning and preferred to rather use the concept "community engagement". One student mentioned that he first heard the term used in an ACE SML class in 2013, but never heard it again on campus. Another student who first heard the term in 2013 when asked to participate in the present study, searched for it on internet to contextualise it. One of the academic staff members heard the term already in 1992, and understood that it meant working in the community, e.g teaching mathematics, as part of the training without any remuneration. He compared it to medical doctors' internship.

Academic staff member 1:

*"Service-learning is when we are a university, for example, the School of Education. Yes, we go there and do work there. Let's say, fourth year students go into that community and stay there, maybe teach Mathematics. You do that service as part of your training. But you do not get payment in any way. You are providing service to that community. That is part of your learning. You see what doctors do. They are doing intern-ship.*

*They are there doing service to that community, but that is going to contribute to their studies. That is my understanding of service-learning. But I don't know the difference between service-learning and community engagement. What is the line there?"*

Another staff member thought it to be the practical part of theory learnt in class. One member, also unfamiliar with the term, understood it as deployment in a community to lend assistance in a particular field. While learning about the community itself, the community reciprocates in terms of their knowledge and skills.

From the interviews, it became clear that there is no common definition on campus, which explains why it is difficult to differentiate service-learning from the various forms of community engagement.

Academic staff member 3:

*"I wouldn't say there is a common definition of service-learning on campus. To me what matters is everybody must attempt to understand what it means and try as much as possible to make sense of it. But not only that, even try to live that because what matters is we live in an era where there is absolute need that we interact in an environment and broader society".*

Academic staff member 1:

*"There is no common definition of service-learning. When you think you understand it, someone say it is not, it is like this. There is only one person who seems to know this."*

One academic staff member believes that internships and volunteerism in a community combine to form service-learning.

Academic staff member 3:

*"I have already revealed that I don't possess much knowledge about what service-learning is. But the meaning I attach is that internships and volunteerism in the community, when they come together, they form part and parcel of service-learning. But I guess in future if ever you can interview me, I will be able to deliberate broadly on this".*

Another believes that service-learning is a method of achieving a pastoral role, as stipulated in the Norms and Standards of Educators, and that service-learning fits in well with the EDST Educational Psychology module which is focused on developing communities.

Deducted from these responses, it is clear that no initiative is made on the part of the School of Education or the university in support of familiarising this concept.

Participants noted that if service-learning can be adopted at the university, a number of problems may be addressed in the surrounding rural communities. They also felt that the lack of knowledge and understanding of service-learning may worsen the situation because social problems would remain unaddressed, and the mission of the institution may not be achieved.

Academic staff member 2:

*"This university will just remain as it is. It will just be these buildings that don't have any positive impact on communities around here".*

When asked about the advantages of having a clear understanding of service-learning, participants indicated that such knowledge will turn the university into a support of the community by responding directly to the social needs of the local people. Conversely, the lack of a clear understanding of service-learning could be a barrier to achieve the university's mission, which is *"Finding solutions for Africa"*. Students would learn theory but would not be able to put it into practice. Being unfamiliar with the concept, could lead to it being disregarded.

#### **4.3.2.4 Strategic planning for service-learning**

Participants said the Faculty of Humanities, which houses the School of Education, has a strategic plan that supports community engagement on a broader scale. They indicated the lack of strategic plans for implementing service-learning.

Academic staff member 3:

*"I don't know what service-learning is. I think I would like to know it. The Faculty Committee on Community Engagement may help in this regard. I don't know what their plans are regarding service-learning".*

One academic staff member said that he is aware of an attempt by a certain professor to spearhead community engagement by drawing the staff's attention to it. He suggested a module at Honours or ACE level which would specifically define community engagement, service-learning, and volunteerism.

Participants also mentioned the availability of the Teaching Practice module, which sets the tone for academic staff members and students to go out to communities. This module could be a solid foundation into which service-learning is integrated.

One staff member wished to revive the Child-friendly Schools project with the goal to integrate service-learning. Some of the primary and high schools have already turned around since they were introduced to the Child-friendly project, one of which is Makgofo in Moletjie. Still other schools need support, e.g KwaMhlanga (in the old KwaNdebele), and Pulamadibogo in Mankweng. The criterion for the selection of the above schools is that they have begun to apply the Child-friendly Schools principles, and would need the project's full support to succeed.

#### **4.3.2.5 *Institutional mission and policies of service-learning***

Participants indicated that the social mission of this university is embedded within transforming and empowering surrounding rural communities. This encompasses developing and equipping rural communities with knowledge and skills, and conducting research that may bring about improvement of people's lives. The School of Education is well positioned to address the educational needs of the surrounding rural communities such as safety and security in schools, computer illiteracy, assisting teachers to adapt and use the new CAPS curriculum, illiteracy among adults, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, poverty and other challenges associated with rural life.

Some schools are not fenced, exposing learners to vandalism. One of the staff members feel that they should also address poverty in communities, for some children have to go without proper meals.

According to a staff member, the Child-friendly Schools project was tailored towards achieving the social mission of the university, because the project supported the schools that were excluded from the main stream of quality education. It would be an investment to start such a project again.

The Winter School Enrichment project is also structured towards achieving the social mission of the institution. Participants are in agreement that the university is striving towards supplementing the low quality of teaching and learning at local rural schools where there is lack of resources. Learners, who attend the project hosted by the university, have access to those sources, e.g test tubes, microscopes, etc, and armed with such knowledge, will improve in the respective subjects. Another staff member stated that the School of Education shows interest in the community by helping the schools in the area, but feels that more should be done.

Academic staff member 1:

*“Most schools are located in the rural communities where there are no equipment and laboratories. Here on campus those things are there. Now if you bring those learners here, they start to know what a test tube is, what a microscope is, etc. When they go back to their schools, it can help them to do well in their respective subjects”.*

The Computer Literacy project is also directed towards achieving the social mission of the university in the sense that, although computers are available at some rural schools, clinics and hospitals, the personnel is incapable to use of the equipment. The Computer Literacy project is thus a channel for building capacity through provision of relevant computer literacy skills, which will benefit the learners at schools and the patients at clinics and hospitals.

The Modimolle project involved local people in the research about the history of the mountain.

In the ACE SML project, lecturers and mentors called on principals at their schools to identify the real problems that contribute towards their schools being dysfunctional.

The availability of a Policy on Community Engagement at institutional level was considered an indication for support of faculties to engage with communities. A Policy on Teaching Practice was a blueprint for supporting community engagement in the School of Education. One staff member said that their engagement in the Child-friendly School project was not guided by any institutional policy.

#### **4.3.2.6 Institutional leaders for service-learning**

Participants mentioned the lack of institutional leaders who could conceptualise, support and implement service-learning. There are no measures in place to familiarise service-learning or to make it compulsory. Again, it is not known and supported in the School of Education.

Academic staff member 1:

*“There is lack of advocacy of service-learning. No advocacy. There is lack of champions for it. There is no preaching about service-learning. There are no prophets”.*

Academic staff member 3:

*“I wouldn’t love to articulate much on service-learning having said to you that I am not that familiar to the concept. Service-learning is not a common word within the School of Education and Faculty of Humanities up to the level where everyone is aware of it”.*

Academic staff member 1:

*“There is no one who takes the initiative to let us know and lead it, and of course put some few incentives it it. That is the only way to attract people”.*

According to the participants, the School of Education is unfamiliar with service-learning and therefore not supported by the departments. The term is never used in any of the departmental, senate, faculty board or school board meetings.

Academic staff member 1:

*“Go to the senate meetings, it is not there. Go to the Faculty Board meetings, you will not hear about it. Go to School Board meetings, you will not hear about it. Go to departmental meetings, the departments do not talk about it. So I can’t say it is not supported, I would say it is unknown”.*

Participants indicated that academic staff members are not informed about service-learning. They feel there is a lack of advocacy, no one to champion for it. Some of the academic staff is even unfamiliar with the term. Service-learning will bring about

transformation at surrounding rural communities, and it will assist the underperforming Department of Education to overcome the problems in schools.

Only fifteen students from the School of Education were appointed as student assistants in the Winter School Enrichment project. They assisted in orientating Grade 12 learners to lecture halls, rest rooms, distribution of study materials to learners, carrying and connecting laptops and projectors for teachers, and checking absentees in the lecture halls.

Advertising the Winter School Enrichment project by the Division of Marketing and Communications and Radio Turf was regarded as signs of enhanced awareness for engaging with communities.

No students are taking the initiative for conceptualising service-learning on campus. However, in the ACE SML project, secondary school leaders and managers have a module on Educational Law which provides them with awareness in terms of what is expected of them according to the law. Students (school leaders and managers) are provided with many of case studies which expose them to the practicality of the theory in their schools, which includes aspects such as development of school policies.

#### **4.3.2.7 Teaching, learning, and research**

Participants realised that their engaging with communities is one way in which the university is becoming socially relevant. One staff member remarked that theorising without practical knowledge will only lead to speculation; but once you have experienced the "real sources", valuable insight can lead to successful projects in the advancement of the communities.

According to the participants academic staff members in the School of Education are not involved in service-learning because they do not know about it.

Academic staff member 2:

*"Little is known. Service-learning is not supported. I think what is known is teaching and research".*

Only one staff member from the School of Education is involved in the Modimolle project as geographer. Other university staff involved is an anthropologist, an archaeologist, a historian, and a heritage officer.

Five lecturers from the School of Education were involved in the Winter School Enrichment project. They themselves did not teach, for they were unfamiliar with recent developments in the subjects, but focussed on management and coordination of the project. This included advertising and recruiting competent teachers from various provinces of South Africa, and ensuring that teaching and learning proceeded as planned.

Attempts have been made to integrate teaching and learning, research and community engagement in the Advanced Certificate in Education with specialisation in Life Orientation (ACE LO). Funding was secured from the Commonwealth of Learning (CWL) from Canada with the goal to infuse Child-friendly Schools' principles. The funding covered aspects such as training, writing and duplication of materials. Currently all the modules in ACE LO have been changed to meet those principles. In terms of research, money was set aside for academic staff to conduct research. Academic staff is assisted in collecting data by networking with NGOs.

Participants indicated that very few students are involved in the existing community engagement projects. Only five students from the School of Education take part in the Winter School Enrichment project. The criterion for selection of these students was based on their lack of sponsorship or any bursaries. Verification for a lack of sponsorship was made in the Financial Aid Division. Such students are paid for their community work: 75% of the imbursement is channelled directly into the university account to settle study, while 25% is deposited into the student's account. Student teachers engaged in this project benefited because they had access to the discussions and experiences of HODs and principals in the lecture halls and even accessed all the notes presented regarding School Leadership and Management.

#### **4.3.2.8 Motivation for service-learning**

Academic staff mentioned the only support they receive when calling on student teachers during Teaching Practice at the various schools is when they are allocated vehicles. Hotels are booked for them when calling on students who are very far, like in

Mpumalanga Province. In the Child-friendly Schools project, most of the lecturers were motivated to participate for they expected remuneration.

Staff members said that some of their colleagues, even in the School of Education, are not motivated to use service-learning or even community engagement, for their teaching revolve around marking assignments, their own research and publication. They ascribe it to service-learning not being recognised and propagated or rewarded; there are no incentives that encourage lecturers to participate in it. It is thought that should the university award participation, e.g promotion of staff members, the situation would improve. However, promotion is only based on the progress made in teaching and research.

Academic staff member 2:

*"They are not motivated because they are focused on marking the scripts. Where are the marks? Every time when lectures meet, they talk about their publications, their research. Everything is around research. Every-thing is around teaching. It is very rare if you can have engagement here regarding service-learning or community engagement. This kind of an interview I have never had it for the past 20 years. Service-learning is not recognised and it is never rewarded. If you do it, it is for your own good".*

Academic staff members said that the only incentive they get from community engagement is the experience in interacting with people and the opportunity to access data from the community, which can be used when they write research articles.

Academic staff member 1:

*"There are no rewards for engaging with communities. Instead I was criticised for moving up and down not knowing what to do. I was rebuked".*

Academic staff member 2:

*"There are no incentives that can encourage lecturers to participate in service-learning. Maybe if this university can look into that, to say if you do this, this is what you will get. I think in that case there will be an improvement".*

The Faculty of Humanities has issued an email in which schools and departments were invited to submit information about excellent performance by their academic staff members. It is noticeable that service-learning is excluded from the list; an indication that it is not recognised for awards as compared to teaching and research. It reads as follows:

**INVITATION FOR APPLICATIONS**

**Awards for Excellence in Research, Teaching and Commitment**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AWARDS**  
**2013**

**A. Research Excellence Awards**  
**B. Teaching Excellence Awards**  
**C. The Most Resourceful Staff Members in Schools Awards**

**The period for evaluation will be 2011 to 2012**

The following awards will be made per School and Faculty:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Position</b>
Best Established Researcher in the School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First prize</li> <li>• Second prize</li> </ul>
Best Upcoming Researcher in the School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First prize</li> <li>• Second prize</li> </ul>
Best Overall Established Researcher in the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First prize</li> <li>• Second prize</li> </ul>
Best Overall Upcoming Researcher in the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First prize</li> <li>• Second prize</li> </ul>
Best Overall Female Researcher in the Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First prize</li> <li>• Second prize</li> </ul>

Student teachers indicated the lack of opportunities for students to know about service-learning. The only opportunities they cited was that while they are on Teaching Practice, Winter School Enrichment project, and Child-friendly schools, they inspire and give secondary schools learners tips on how to get admission to higher education institutions, and in particular the University of Limpopo. They cited that existing

projects in the School of Education serve as a base for recruiting new students to the university.

Student teachers mentioned that they enjoyed working with their lecturers during Teaching Practice, because they supported the students.

At the Winter School and ACE SML, student teachers were reimbursed for their participation in such activities. However, students did not gain credits towards completion of their degrees. Fifteen students from the School of Education were appointed, the criterion being that they could not afford university fees or do not have bursaries.

#### **4.3.2.9 University-community partnerships for service-learning**

The School of Education is partnering with secondary school learners, teachers, parents, SGBs, SMTs, circuit managers, educational specialists, government departments, UNICEF, the Irish government, and Common Wealth of Learning. Other partnerships are with clinics, hospitals, and unemployed youth from different rural communities.

Participants felt that more partnerships could be established in order to address the needs of the surrounding rural communities. Very few members from the surrounding villages, like Mamotintane or Ga-Makanye know what transpires at the university, being concerned with basic needs, such as clean drinking water.

Academic staff member 2:

*“It is very painful to find an ordinary person here at Mamotintane or Ga-Makanye or the surrounding villages who does not even know what is happening in this university. For example, if they don’t have water, maybe this university can take over so that people can drink water in the name of the university. They can see how this university really attaches itself to them”.*

Participants agreed that relationships during Teaching Practice are mutual in nature. The School of Education and its partners adheres to the policies which strengthen such

bonds. Such policies are provided to community partners for them to know exactly what is expected of the students, and to promote a sense of professionalism among students and the lines of demarcation between the communities and the School of Education. Continuous communication, training and monitoring, delivery of relevant service, and meeting time-tables with community partners were viewed as significant components towards strengthening the partnerships.

In the ACE SML project, existing partnerships were nurtured by continuously communicating with school principals and circuit managers. In the Child-friendly Schools, the primary school at Makgofe in Moletje is still maintains contact with the facilitators in the School of Education. The primary school has received donations from UNICEF to build a sporting complex.

In the Child-friendly School project, a number of problems were experienced with community partners who needed the attention of academic staff members and students. Teachers complain about not having question papers, or text books. Often the role of the student teacher is just to listen and to encourage.

Again, participants noted that they lack the support of community leaders in their existing projects. In the Child-friendly School project the greatest problem was the lack of support of the district and circuit offices when preparing for visiting SGBs and SMTs. One staff member remarked that, without support from the district, one cannot achieve much. The teachers report directly to their districts rather than to the project participants.

#### ***4.3.2.10 Coordination of service-learning***

The lack of a formal coordinating structure was found to be a major stumbling block towards conceptualisation of service-learning at this institution. Participants felt the increase of familiarity with service-learning campus-wide to be minimal. The problem seems to be a lack of guidelines of good practice for service-learning. There is no coordinating structure, which often leads to duplication of activities while others contradict each other. However, some departments, like Health Sciences, are starting to take notice. A certain professor is coordinating different schools, and faculties are starting to draw up programmes related to community engagement.

Academic staff member 1:

*“People are not working from a coordinated structure. People are going into all directions. Some are duplicating, some are contradicting, some are doing wrong things because there is no organising structure. Prof A is coordinating different schools, faculties to begin to draw programmes related to community engagement. So far in our school, no. He has never been here. I have never seen him here. He never came here to tell us about service-learning. The School of Education and Prof A’s office don’t know each other. They heard about each other. They desire to meet”.*

#### **4.3.2.11 Staffing for service-learning**

There is a shortage of academic staff members whose responsibility is to conceptualise and implement service-learning. A staff member said that people have skills, such as teaching Mathematics, and they know how to develop educational programmes and how to write, but they lack the knowledge and skills to interact with communities who need assistance.

In the ACE SML project, only twelve lecturers from the School of Education were involved, each lecturing one module. One staff member said that support from the School of Education, the director, and academic staff members as well as some funding is needed to revive the Child-friendly Schools project, excluding private donors, for when they withdraw, the project will collapse.

#### **4.3.2.12 Funding for service-learning**

The lack of funding contributed towards the failure of existing community engagement projects in the School of Education. In the ACE SML project, the Department of Education in Limpopo Province was under administration due to funds being misused. This has impeded the admission of new students in 2013.

In terms of the Winter Enrichment programme, participating Grade 12 learners contributed an amount of R700.00, which was used for payment of teachers and student assistants. The programme was funded by the Division of Marketing and Communications at the university and the Department of Languages, Social Sciences,

Economics and Management Sciences in the School of Education where ACE SML is located.

Participants recommended the need for funding in order to ensure success in the whole process of conceptualising service-learning. One academic staff member said:

*“There should be funding in order to succeed with service-learning regardless of outside donors because when they pull out, it will collapse”.*

#### **4.3.2.13 Evaluation and assessment for service-learning**

Participants pointed out the lack of evaluation and assessment concerned with service-learning. Evaluation and assessment is only related to participation in the community engagement projects. In the Child-friendly School project, evaluation and assessment helped a great deal towards consistency in participation. The results reflected that some schools were transformed after partnering with the university, while others retained the status quo. Committees were then created in the schools which showed no improvement, allowing various stakeholders to procure leadership roles. Mathomomayo Primary School at Lebowakgomo was mentioned as an example of a school where a committee, consisting of teachers, learners and parents, had to steer the Child-friendly School project.

### **4.3.3 Findings: School of Agricultural Sciences**

#### **4.3.3.1 Information of participants**

**Student 1** joined the Agricultural Extension in 2010 and is currently studying towards a Master's degree in Agricultural Extension. His area of interest is dairy goat farming. As part of his Masters studies, he engages with the surrounding rural communities and coordinates the dairy goat project at Mafefe, arranges meetings with community members at the university, interprets written documents to those who are illiterate, assists them in developing funding proposals and to formulate policies, and also to register the project with CAMOSEVHEWA (Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhune, Vhembe, Waterberg). CAMOSEVHEWA is a provincial organisation which was initiated to assist rural farmers operating without the necessary knowledge and skills. This organisation is under control of the Provincial Department of Agriculture.

**Student 2** joined the Agricultural Extension in 2012 and is also studying towards her Masters degree in Agricultural Extension. She wants to attract the youth to pursue agricultural careers and facilitates and presents motivational talks at high schools.

**Academic staff member 1** joined the Centre for Rural Community Empowerment in 2005 when he was a Masters student. As project coordinator he is interested in rural development from an agricultural perspective, and engages in community development projects at Ga-Mothiba and Ga-Mampa, in the Mafefe area.

**Project coordinator 2** joined the Limpopo Agro-Food Technology Station (LATS) in 2009. LATS is a community engagement project in the School of Agricultural Sciences. The coordinator's area of interest is in agro-food processing, where he deals with more than 300 Small Medium Micro Enterprises (SMME) countrywide. He captures and assigns SMMEs to food technologists, interacting with the stakeholders and relevant government entities.

#### ***4.3.3.2 Current community engagement projects***

Very little is known about service-learning. However, participants showed that they are involved in the following community engagement projects.

- *Dairy goat project*

This agricultural project started in 2004. It is stationed at Ga-Mampa in Mafefe, a rural community located approximately 160 km south-east of the Turfloop campus of the University of Limpopo. The primary goal of this project is to train dairy goat farmers to realise that goats can provide them with milk. Training also embraces improving their indigenous knowledge in relation to the health of their goats and best ways of rearing them. This project also aims at empowering those farmers to become commercial dairy goat keepers. The majority of farmers at Mafefe are illiterate, as such university students assist them in explaining documents, writing funding proposals, and registering farmer's projects with CAMOSEVHEWA.

- *Wetland project*

This project is a direct result of complaints from community members that water was not shared profitably. The nearby wetland was neglected but could be of great

value to the community in terms of water provisioning. A student was tasked to conduct research on the wetland.

- *Community Development Forum*

This project is centred on the rural community of Ga-Mampa in Mafefe. The headman was the only person who addressed issues pertaining to community development. The aim of the project is to train councillors to create a functional coordinating structure that deals with community development on a broader scale. Within this forum councillors represent the rural community in addressing real local needs. The project has connected with various government departments for support.

- *Youth development project*

The project is based at Ga-Mothiba, a rural community located approximately 15 km west of the Turfloop campus of the university. It was developed in 2006 as a result of collaboration between the university and the Provincial Department of Agriculture. This project collaborates with the Department of Health, which teaches the youth about aspects related to HIV/AIDS.

The primary goal of the project is to teach the youth about agriculture and the advantages of pursuing agricultural studies. University students interact with the learners through regular visits to the youth centre and local secondary schools such as Mothimako High School (located between Mothiba and Makotopong) and Ngwanalaka Secondary School at Ga-Mothiba.

- *Drop-in centre*

The centre is located at Ga-Mothiba. It addresses poverty in the area and provides assistance for the needy. Food and clothing items are dropped there by community members and local business owners in order to provide for the needy.

- *Limpopo Agro-Food Technology Station (LATS)*

Limpopo Agro-Food Technology Station (LATS), an initiative by the Department of Science and Technology, is a component of the School of Agriculture which was established in 2007 and officially launched in 2008. Its primary goal is to provide

agricultural food processing services to reduce poverty among people living in rural communities of the Limpopo Province.

The mission of LATS is *“to improve agro processing services rendered by SMMEs mainly in Limpopo Province and other parts of South Africa through modern technology and partnerships”*.

LATS has developed the following objectives towards fulfilment of its mission:

- To analyse and test the nutritional composition of food products from SMMEs and commercial farming sector;
- To help SMMEs turn primary agricultural products into commodities that meet market requirements;
- To improve SMMEs product processes and development;
- To research indigenous primary agricultural products.

The following technical services are offered by LATS:

- Testing and analysis of processed and unprocessed foods;
- Training of new SMMEs on the processing of products of their choice based on SABS standards;
- Improvement of low standards or processes of SMME;
- Training of SMMEs based on client’s specifications;
- Conducting SMME technology audits.

#### **4.3.3.3 Conceptualisation of service-learning**

Participants were asked about their understanding of service-learning. One student answered that it concerns research in either the rural communities or at university, and implementing these newly acquired skills in the rural communities by sharing this knowledge with them. A staff member, although being unfamiliar with the term, explained his understanding of the term as guiding postgraduate students in teaching farmers about modern agricultural practices, concurrently with acquiring practical experience while being encouraged to address the community’s needs.

Academic staff member 1:

*“Service-learning is when you post graduate students to communities in order to teach farmers about their discipline and also to gain the practical of their knowledge and to encourage them to address the needs of the community”.*

The participants understand service-learning and community engagement as being parallel to each other, for students learn by applying theory into practice while interacting with members of the community. One student mentioned that service-learning was included in a BSc (Agricultural Economics) module, while another was introduced to it in her Masters studies when she had to conduct participatory action research. Another interviewee heard the term only in passing while he was a Masters student in the Agricultural Extension course, but he did not pay much attention to it.

The project coordinator stated that they do not use the term “service-learning” at LATS, although he heard it used by an official from the Limpopo Economic Development Forum. He relates service-learning to students becoming involved in the communities, not the lecturers. At LATS it is the academic staff - not the students - that tends to the communities since they have limited time (three months) to complete their projects. He was not sure whether LATS’ methods of community interaction is applicable to the term, but stated that they train farmers; the term therefore might be applicable to their projects.

Apparently there is no common definition of service-learning on campus, since participants said that the majority of students are not familiar with it. In general, it seemed that service-learning is equated to community outreach through students performing their practical work in the communities.

Project coordinator:

*“For me service-learning is like community outreach. You go there with students. Then students are supposed to do practicals. That is my little understanding. That is why I prefer to use community engagement”.*

The lack of a clear definition of service-learning on campus creates ambiguity, because people think that they are involved in service-learning, only to find that they are not.

The misconceptions about service-learning have a negative impact on the development of surrounding rural communities. Apparently some students view rural areas as being disadvantaged with no luxuries, and therefore prefer to live in urban areas. Due to this misinterpretation, students are not active participants in service-learning, for it brings them in contact with the remote “disadvantaged” rural areas. Should these areas continue to be negated by students and researchers, they will never change.

Student 1:

*“Rural areas are disadvantaged. Students of my age think there is no luxury there and that they cannot go there. They prefer life in the urban areas. So this gives a challenge because students do not want to be in the rural areas. That is why they are not active in those initiatives because they misunderstand service-learning. They still have the wrong ideology that I won’t be in the less developed area. I won’t be in a remote rural area. If we are not involved in developing rural communities, rural communities will just remain as they are”.*

#### **4.3.3.4 Strategic planning for service-learning**

When questioned about official strategic plans to conceptualise service-learning on campus, participants responded that they did not know of any. They thought the lack of such strategies to be serious and emphasised the significance of such awareness campaigns which would encourage academic staff members and students to participate in service-learning initiatives. For service-learning to become a familiar concept on campus, all faculties need to become involved: university–community partnerships must be strengthened, benefitting a large number of rural communities by assisting them in sustaining their projects and improve production, develop service-learning modules for students to become involved in participatory activities, and improve research publications about service-learning.

Academic staff member 1:

*“We need to be in partnership. Our mission is to make this department to engage in rural development. Our students need to be engaged in participatory activities, do research and go out to communities in order to address concrete issues”.*

The Centre for Rural Development and Empowerment was considered a vital asset towards conceptualisation of service-learning in the School of Agriculture. Participants further recommended long term strategies that would enhance the support from university leaders as well as promote training of communities about service-learning. Documentation of projects should impart information to other students and encourage them to become involved in rural communities. At present such strategies are not in place at the centre.

#### **4.3.3.5 Institutional mission and policies of service-learning**

When asked about their understanding of the social mission of the University of Limpopo, participants concurred that the institution is directed towards serving and nurturing African communities, in particular those in the rural areas. Lecturers are encouraged to engage with communities, and as core of community engagement, have to submit reports. This is executed under the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), an agency which provided the vision and mission of the university.

Project coordinator:

*"I never came across any document that explains service-learning. But what I know is that lecturers are encouraged to engage with communities. We do submit our reports there because we serve as the core in terms of community engagement".*

Participants believe that the practice of serving the rural community is tailored towards achieving the social mission of the university. Being engaged does not denote the mere completion of questionnaires or collecting data, but it means to be actively involved with the youth by encouraging and motivating them to pursue careers.

Participants indicated that their community engagement initiatives are locally contextualised. This implies that local rural people are not forced to pursue projects they have no interest in. Community members are involved in situation analysis already in the initial stages of project development where vital social problems are identified and prioritised. An example is the goats owned by the rural community at Mafefe. They had difficulties in rearing them properly. A needs assessment was conducted to gather relevant and meaningful data. Project members then compared the information with the indigenous knowledge of the community, which benefited them

Students in the School of Agriculture spend more time concentrating on academic work than engaging with communities. Undergraduate students enrolled for Agricultural Economics are often taken to communities to provide service. Such students are exposed to real life situations and are also given the opportunity for hands-on experience. However, the time students spend in providing community service is limited for they are taken to the communities only a week prior to the exams. The participants feel that this practice deprives the students of opportunities to apply theory in practice, and emphasised the need for students to be allowed more time to engage with communities.

None of the participants know about support for service-learning among students. It is never discussed among students except for the two doing the Agricultural Extension course. One student became aware of the shortcomings of exclusive academic learning after he engaged with farmers from Mafefe. He came to appreciate the considerable knowledge these farmers possess although they cannot even write their own names, and therefore that knowledge is undocumented. If students could spend time there to learn from the people, to participate in the communities, that information will be unlocked and become available to everybody in the country.

Student 2:

*"To be honest, I never mentioned service-learning to other students. We only talk about it among Agricultural Extension students, the two of us. I never went out there to preach about it".*

Student 1:

*"At Mafefe, I found that people have a lot of information although such information is not documented. As students we need to take our time and go there and do what is necessary because that information is very useful. It is owned by people who cannot even write their names. There is a need for participation in those communities. Students should focus on that area so that they can have a lot of information that will be useful to many people in this country".*

Participants mentioned that attempts are made to integrate the three silos in higher education in such a way that community engagement, teaching/ learning, and research

are equally valued. They recommended a module in rural development which could be modified to cater for service-learning in the future. Such a module would become a platform for students to share their knowledge about rural communities.

#### **4.3.3.7 Institutional leaders for service-learning**

There are no institutional leaders in the School of Agriculture who spearhead service-learning. This is due to the fact that participation in service-learning is not compulsory. Participants indicated that those who are involved are doing it out of their concern for community development.

The Centre for Rural Development is well known for its engagement with communities; however, service-learning is a new experience to them. One student said that the centre supports community engagement activities, although the school does not. The centre has even provided a vehicle to be used for community engagement purposes.

No student leaders are in charge of conceptualising service-learning on campus. There is thus a need for a team of students who can conduct awareness campaigns about students' benefits about service-learning in departments. The suggestion that opportunities and time should be created for students to visit communities was viewed as a proper channel to create easy flow of information pertaining to conceptualisation of service-learning on campus as well as to recruit students to take part in the projects. At present only the postgraduate students are involved.

#### **4.3.3.8 Motivation for service-learning**

Participants agreed on the lack of incentives and rewards for service-learning and other forms of community engagement. Universities like Rhodes and Pretoria have endorsed the agenda.

Academic staff member 1:

*"Other universities, like Rhodes and Pretoria have pushed this agenda. I wish there could be a difference in our university so that it will entertain community engagement issues. There should be incentives for community engagement so that people can participate in it. We need such so that we can grow".*

Students do not have the opportunity to learn about service-learning for it is not a compulsory module. Should such a module become available, all undergraduate students might engage in community service. At present the university provides little support to conceptualise service-learning, for only postgraduate students obtain bursaries for conducting research which is more inclined to addressing real problems in the local rural communities.

Regarding the motivation of students to conceptualise service-learning, one student remarked that students are not motivated by the school, except for the lecturer presenting the Agricultural Extension course.

Student 1:

*“Actually there is no motivation for the students made from the school. It is just from the lecturer of this course, Agricultural Extension. If you become closer to that person, it is then that you can find motivation. All in all, there is no sort of formal motivation that you will get”.*

Students do not gain any credits by participating in the existing community engagement projects, although they benefit from these projects in the sense that they write better research proposals and have access to valuable data, which allows them to complete their studies and publish.

#### **4.3.3.9 University-community partnerships for service-learning**

The School of Agriculture is partnering with surrounding rural communities via various forms of engagement. It is a case of reciprocity with both parties benefiting from the contact: while doing research in the community, the students receive allowances; they acquire knowledge – which will be documented - applicable to their studies, while assisting the community with information which is generally inaccessible to them due to illiteracy. Students also benefit from the existing university-community partnerships in the sense that they become confident in themselves which enhance their academic and social growth.

Participants indicated that in many cases they experience problems in the community during the early stages of project development due to university researchers who had

previously made empty promises when conducting research for their projects. Often they are not made to feel welcome, and they are accused of not keeping their promises, or of instructing the people what to do but then never return to monitor the progress.

Student 2:

*“Sometimes they don’t give you that welcoming that you expect. Sometimes they go like “You university people, you come here, you make promises and you do not stick to those. Or you come here, you tell us to do this but you never come back and check on the progress”.*

With regard to measures taken to create a mutual understanding between the university and community for the success of service-learning initiatives, participants mentioned that community members are involved from the onset when conducting the needs assessment, which is meant to build trust. The sound relations they have with members of the community is reflected in the prearranged venues for the community meetings, and that project members are prepared to interact with them. Such engagement with communities is seen as a way of removing the youth from the streets. Communication and regular visits to communities are key aspects for enhancing mutual benefits by both partners. One student added that they have committed themselves to go out to the community on a regular basis, e.g every Tuesday and Thursday, even though they do not need to do something specific. This is just to ensure the community that they are still available for them. It is also a way to monitor progress and to stay in communication with the community.

Student 2:

*“We made a commitment that every Tuesday and Thursday we go there, even if we don’t have anything serious to do. We just go there and check the progress and say ‘We are still available. We just want to see how you are doing. What are your challenges? How did you address this and that as from our last meeting?’”*

Participants further indicated that community members benefit from participating in the projects. The farmers always get something from these projects: they can earn a

livelyhood by selling their produce and then share the money or agree to use it towards improving the project.

The project coordinator at LATS mentioned that they sometimes have problems working with adults in the SMME projects, for they prefer to do things the traditional way and thus compromise high quality production, not meeting the requirements of the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS).

Participants reported that task teams are available in the community projects, which could be significant towards conceptualising service-learning. Currently such teams play a vital role in maintaining the smooth-running of the projects by building capacity and empowering all members.

#### **4.3.3.10 Coordination of service-learning**

Neither the School of Agriculture nor the university coordinates the spread of service-learning, while the newly established Rural Development and Innovation Hub, which could have been relevant for advancing service-learning on campus, is dysfunctional. The schools in the university are involved in various community projects, but due to the lack of a coordinating structure, these are isolated and do not work in close association. This inadvertently leads to duplication and conflicting schedules. An example of this is that the School of Agriculture has access to transport while another does not. A coordinating entity could have prevented this problem, arranging a time schedule which would fit both parties. If both were involved in the same community, the transportation problem would not only be sorted out, but the impact on the school or community would be much greater: different aspects of the school or community would be served, approximating a holistic approach.

Academic staff member 1:

*“They wanted to collaborate with us. But the challenge was on the transportation issues because their section was not covering transport and they could not use ours. The time they are free, you find we are not free. So we are still working on how we can schedule the times. I think if we are involved in the schools we are dealing with, we will be able to make a better*

*contribution because right now other learners feel left out. We are only concentrating on agriculture”.*

#### **4.3.3.11 Staffing for service-learning**

There are no academic staff members who are employed to conceptualise service-learning. None of the academic staff are remunerated to conceptualise service-learning, being paid only to teach and research.

Academic staff member 1:

*“They are not informed about service-learning. So I think this can be addressed. Nothing is impossible”.*

#### **4.3.3.12 Funding for service-learning**

Funding is another barrier towards conceptualisation of service-learning. Previously, international funding became available via students from France who did their research at Mafefe, and the centre could use it in the community projects. The French students returned home in 2011, and since then their projects have been funded by the university. Funding provided by the Provincial Department of Agriculture is insufficient: regular monitoring of projects, previously twice a month, is no longer possible. At the time of the interviews for this study, only one monitoring visit in five months to each of two projects was possible. Lack of funding even impacts the availability of stationery.

According to one student, the university currently endeavours to obtain funding from external donors with the goal of introducing service-learning campus-wide. Staff members criticised the university’s lack of support for community projects, for the School of Agricultural Sciences receive the same funding as other departments who are only involved in teaching and research. The school itself has to campaign for financial support of its projects.

Academic staff member 1:

*“We are helping the rural communities to address their needs. We are engaging with communities but the university never supports us in terms of money for the projects. They give us the same money like other departments which focus only on teaching and research. About commu-*

*nity engagement, nothing is given. We have to find our own way of dealing with that. The university is not supporting us. I think the university is supporting us in terms of transport. There is no funding from the university. No funding”.*

The project coordinator stated that LATS operates under the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) and receive funding from the Department of Science and Technology. In this sense the university is supportive of the projects, for LATS have offices, their salaries are paid, they have access to transport and internet, and visitors to the centre can use amenities like the university restaurant and accommodation. LATS also receive funding from the Department of Economic Development, which is used to aid farmers and SMMEs in sustaining their projects.

#### **4.3.3.13 Evaluation and assessment for service-learning**

For quality assurance purposes, the students submit monthly reflection reports about their work in the rural communities, which includes reports in the form of research proposals, information sharing, and training and skills development among the rural people. Such reports are then used for evaluating participation of students in the projects, on the basis of which the lecturers guide students and identify areas that need further support and improvement.

#### **4.3.4 Findings: School of Law**

##### **4.3.4.1 Information of participants**

The **attorney** is involved in a project entitled Limpopo Access to Justice Cluster which operates under the Legal Aid Clinic of the School of Law. He joined the project in 2012. His duties and responsibilities include meeting local communities to provide them with legal advice and services including representation in court.

The **Project coordinator** is also an attorney who joined the project in 2007. He teaches law students and provides legal services in the Limpopo Access to Justice Cluster and oversees the projects' smooth running by training various paralegal offices as regards new acts.

Neither of the two **student** participants are involved in service-learning or community engagement projects, there being no such projects involving students. According to them the school is only interested in teaching and learning. Both joined the University of Limpopo Debating Society, an initiative of the Student Representative Council (SRC).

#### **4.3.4.2 Current community engagement projects**

Although the school is not involved in service-learning, there are some community engagement initiatives:

- *The Legal Aid Clinic*

The Legal Aid Clinic maintains a project entitled Limpopo Access to Justice Cluster, which was initiated in 1995. Its paralegal offices are in Mankweng, Mahwelereng, Lebowakgomo, and Senwabarwana at Ga-Manthata, Ga-Matlala, Ditenteng, and Blood River in Moletjie. The primary goal of this project is to provide legal advice and service to local communities, especially those from a financially deprived background.

- *Law Week*

“Law Week” annually invites successful people from the legal fraternity to present motivational speeches to law students. Participants include law students, lecturers, and other stakeholders in the legal fraternity.

- *Street Law*

Funded by the Ford Foundation, the project failed when the donors pulled out. Its primary function was to instruct community members in the law, the main target being the youth in secondary schools.

- *Community radio presentations*

The use of community radio presentations is viewed by the Legal Aid Clinic as an invaluable strategy through which the local communities can be updated about local, regional, provincial, national and international legal matters. It is considered the most advantageous strategy since most people in the rural communities utilise radios rather than television.

The community in Mankweng is served by Radio Turf, a university radio station; those around Ga-Matlala and Blood River are served by the Moletjie Radio Station; Senwabarwana is served by the Mogodi Radio Station; while communities in Lebowakgomo are served by the Greater Lebowakgomo Radio Station.

Amongst others, attorneys present legal advice and discuss relevant topics related to new acts on a weekly basis at a set time. Listeners from the surrounding rural communities can phone in with questions and/or stating particular problems. In cases where sensitive issues cannot be presented on air, listeners are advised to consult the Legal Aid Clinic.

- *University of Limpopo Debating Society*

This community engagement project is an initiative of the SRC of the University of Limpopo. It started in 2013, comprising of students from different faculties of the university. Only five students from the School of Law participate in this project. The primary goal of the project is to provide students with opportunities to debate about current affairs. Students volunteer and visit local high schools to teach learners debating, life, interviews and English skills which would better them in their curriculum. Besides this, students even go an extra mile by organising debating tournaments for local high schools. Hwiti High School in Mankweng and Capricorn High School in Polokwane, are benefiting from this debating society.

#### **4.3.4.3 Conceptualisation of service-learning**

When asked what they comprehended about the concept “service-learning”, participants said that they are unfamiliar with it and that they may not be able to respond to questions related to it. They were familiar with the concept “community engagement”, one of the emerging debates on campus, and read about it in university newsletters and magazines. That left service-learning without an institution-wide definition.

Student 2:

*“This is for first time that I hear about service-learning. If you can see, I have trouble in answering you. It is for the first time that I hear about this concept as you are talking to me. There is nothing I heard before about this. I can’t even elaborate about this”.*

The consequences of not being involved in service learning, with no common definition on campus, is seen by the participants that the community will not develop and the university will become separated from it. Graduates, irrespective of their achievements, will not be able to apply their knowledge in real life situations.

The attorney interpreted service-learning as learning while providing certain services. In the Legal Aid Clinic students are introduced to a community where they then consult with clients, identify problems and provide assistance.

Another interpretation is that it is a two-directional process where one learns from the other; where theoretical and practical knowledge combine. One student is of the opinion that it is concerned with educating students on serving the community.

#### **4.3.4.4 Strategic planning for service-learning**

According to the participants, the deficiency in strategies to conceptualise service-learning on campus prevents them from attaining provincial, national, African and world standards. But for that to happen, the university leaders will have to provide support and input, producing professionals who can interact with the community.

Student 1:

*“As we are speaking, we are not competing at any level because this university is not informing us about issues such as service-learning. I wish to see ourselves going greater heights. I want to stand with a child from Gauteng and be able to speak with much confidence. It is not easy. It is hard. But we have a vision. We are not there, but we are getting there. We feel that this is no longer a previously disadvantaged university”.*

#### **4.3.4.5 Institutional mission and policies of service-learning**

The mission of the university is to cultivate the surrounding communities. Participants feel that this mission should be utilised for establishing service-learning on campus. The university is geographically well-positioned to benefit surrounding communities through outreach programmes. Local communities and traditional leaders, e.g from Mamabolo, Mothapo, Dikgale, Makgoba and Mothiba are within easy reach of the

university. In dialogue with the chiefs, the university has been addressing eviction issues, thereby creating good relationships with the communities.

The university also wants to address the issue of migrant workers from Zimbabwe, which leads to unemployment of local people while the migrant workers are being exploited. It is the opinion of the project coordinator that if university involvement in this project can be extended to Musina and Bushbuckridge, its mission will be accomplished. Depending on funding, communities as far as Sekhukhune, Tzaneen and Nebo can profit by the university's services. In the process the students, being important members of the community, also profits from the experience.

Project coordinator:

*"We also want to deal with issues of migrant workers. We are next to two problematic borders, one in Mozambique and another in Zimbabwe. So most of us employ these guys and you find that our people are complaining that they are not employed. The migrant workers are exploited. So if we can expand as far as Musina and Bushbuckridge, I think our mission will be accomplished".*

Attorney:

*"A lot of communities have benefited from this project and students as well. Students are also important members of this community. I would to see our project expanding to assist many communities. I believe there are many communities that do not get our services, like those in Sekhukhune, Tzaneen, and Nebo. I was made to believe that even the Legal Aid Board cannot reach them. However, that will solely depend on funding".*

The Legal Aid Clinic is structured to suit the local rural context by providing legal advice and service to the underprivileged who cannot afford to pay for private legal service. The office is administrated by paralegals. Issues they address are e.g divorce, maintenance, criminal cases and wills. In difficult cases, the attorneys themselves consult with the clients.

According to one student, the debating society is in line with the university mission since it diverge the attention of secondary school learners, staving off issues such as

teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse. Even though it is a hobby, it necessitates a lot of research. Becoming involved in it, the learners are now reading, watching the news and developing other interests.

Participants denied any knowledge of any university policy related to service-learning.

#### **4.3.4.6 Institutional leaders for service-learning**

When asked about the availability of institutional leaders to conceptualise service-learning, attorneys said that they are only assisted with transport and office space and office equipment, telephones, administration and stationary. This is only support on a small scale.

The various departments and faculties are unfamiliar with service-learning. A student remarked that either they are not involved in service-learning projects, or they do not communicate it to the university community. Alternatively they are not involved in it at all.

Student 1:

*"I think faculties and departments don't do service-learning or maybe they do such but they do not communicate such to the university community or they don't do it at all".*

Workshops are seen a possible mechanism for raising awareness about service-learning; it could train academic staff about service-learning and what it entails since they are responsible to initiate it in the departments; it would also encourage them to actively participate in it in their departments.

A student remarked that, although the university has been in existence for about 50 years, the development of the surrounding communities are minimal, reflecting on the lack of the university's involvement in the community. Apparently the university is more concerned with internal than external affairs.

No student leaders who advocates service-learning. Participation of students in service-learning and other forms of community engagement is not compulsory,

although in the past, when funding was available, students were obliged to engage with communities.

#### **4.3.4.7 Teaching, learning, and research**

Academic staff members are not aware of any advocacy to encourage them to partake in service-learning. According to them it is no longer sufficient only to study; it is important to aid one's community.

Attorney:

*"We lack knowledge. Many academics are not aware of the importance of service-learning. I think we should be aware because many people have the mentality of the past that one should just study, pass and go to work. That is not how things should be. We should open up and know the importance of helping the community".*

Three attorneys are involved in the Legal Aid Clinic. The director is involved in teaching the Practical Legal course; one is project coordinator and also teaches but often calls on the communities; while the third is primarily involved in providing legal services to local communities. Reports about community engagement activities are forwarded to the Association of Universities Law Clinic (AULAI) Trust.

Participants mentioned that there are no service-learning initiatives in the School of Law. However, they mentioned the Practical Legal module which can be adapted to accommodate service-learning. Taught at fourth year level, the goal of the module is to provide the students with some practice in the Legal Aid Clinic. They observe Legal Aid Clinic procedures such as opening new files. Participants suggested the expansion of the curriculum with a compulsory community-based credit-bearing module into which service-learning can be integrated.

Both attorneys agreed that their engagement with communities contribute a lot to the research conducted in the Legal Aid Clinic in the sense that they are able to identify relevant research topics.

In emphasising the lack of alignment of teaching, learning and research with service-learning, one attorney stated that all students cannot engage with communities due to lack of funding, with only the candidate attorneys being engaged in community work. The debating society's engagement with communities, however, is not aligned to teaching, learning and research, for activities are not integrated with these goals, being something totally different.

There is no advocacy for service-learning among students in the School of Law. It was suggested that encouragement in the form of campaigns could be successful. People should be informed about service-learning, what it comprises, and how a university can approach it. The participants concurred that both university and community could reap benefits from such a relationship.

Student 2:

*"Things are not going well, like there is no advocacy of service-learning. The university should encourage campaigns in which students will be informed about service-learning".*

#### **4.3.4.8 Motivation for service-learning**

Academic staff members are not involved in service-learning or community engagement, there being no incentive or motivation to encourage participation in service-learning. Those academic staff members who are involved in the communities are employed as temporary staff on a contractual basis, while community engagement is not seen as a foundation for promotion. Not receiving any kind of acknowledgement for such engagement is demoralising for those who are involved.

Project coordinator:

*"There are no rewards for engaging with communities. Those of us who are engaging are not employed as permanent staff members. We are employed as temporary staff members on contract".*

Students do not have opportunities to conceptualise service-learning. Participants blame the lack of funding as the main source of this problem. The university could engage with the communities via its students: as students, they could reach out to the

communities, organise campaigns and educate people. Instead, the university is seen as being isolated from its local communities.

Student 1:

*"This university is not engaging more with communities. As students we are supposed to be going out in the community to run campaigns and educate people. We should have projects to help communities to develop. So the university is not giving us that opportunity. This university is isolated from its local communities. That is why we are enemies to these communities. There are lots of thugs in the local communities. We can't even walk there at night".*

The surrounding community is in a good location for the placement of students. Students are good resources that can be utilised to conceptualise service-learning. The attorneys mentioned that, often during visits to communities, students are recruited. When people become familiar with them, as ambassadors of the university, they want them to encourage the youth to join the legal fraternity. However, contact is usually with senior members from the community. Community members often ask questions relating to admission requirements of the university and are then referred to the relevant department, for the attorneys are unfamiliar with other courses' requirements.

Since service-learning is unknown, there are no incentives and rewards. Students do not have opportunities to reach out to relevant agencies in the community to provide service. Only final year students are motivated to do their practical work in the Legal Aid Clinic.

#### **4.3.4.9 University-community partnerships for service-learning**

The School of Law, via the Legal Aid Clinic, is partnering with the underprivileged through satellite offices in Mankweng, Lebowakgomo, Mahwelereng, Senwabarwana, Ga-Matlala, Ditenteng, and Blood River. Cases include divorce, maintenance, criminal matters, and signing of lease contracts, especially for the Somalians who lease their business premises. But some community members are still unaware of the services which the Legal Aid Clinic can provide.

The project coordinator wishes to establish relations with the School of Accounting to assist community members on issues such as social investment clubs known as “*stokvels*”. The Legal Aid Clinic coaches such clubs on the drafting of constitutions and how to direct their meetings; however, they need guidance about better investment opportunities, which is outside the scope of the Legal Aid Clinic.

It would also be advantageous for the Legal Aid Clinic to work in partnership with the Department of Nursing in the School of Health Sciences. Usually when engaging with communities, the Nursing Department is also invited to deal e.g with issues on HIV/AIDS when the Legal Aid Clinic discusses HIV/AIDS and the law.

Students from the Debating Society partner with local secondary schools, extending their partnership to parents, teachers, and principals.

The attorney explained that they build trust and strengthen relations with community members to sustain the partnership for better provision of services. Unlike private attorneys, they go an extra mile in assisting their clients because they do not have anything to lose or benefit. Increasingly people use the services of the Legal Aid Clinic, thereby strengthening the partnership. The university provides the transport to visit the communities, thereby playing an important role in community outreach.

Community members are pleased about the services provided by the Legal Aid Clinic, which compares favourably with those from private attorneys.

Attorney:

*“Unlike private attorneys, we go an extra mile in assisting our clients because we don’t have anything to lose or benefit. Our clients feel that we are assisting them because we are personally involved. The reason why we continue with this partnership is that more and more people are coming to the Legal Aid Clinic. Again, it is because the university is providing us with transport to visit those communities”.*

Conversely, the paralegals are unimpressed with the modest funding for rental and stipends which they receive from the Legal Aid Clinic. They also do not receive any official recognition for their participation in the project. The paralegals are unemployed

and provide legal services on voluntary basis. The Legal Aid Clinic uses its resources to train them, only to find the paralegals leaving the project before they can impart their knowledge to the community.

#### **4.3.4.10 Coordination of service-learning**

With regard to the availability of a coordinating structure responsible for conceptualising service-learning activities on campus, participants noted that there is no such structure.

Project coordinator:

*“Unfortunately there is no structure for coordinating service-learning at this university. I have been here since 2007. We have never been approached by a person from such a structure”.*

Student 1:

*“I do not know of a structure which coordinates service-learning on campus. I don't think there is any. If they are, they are not doing enough to inform the university community about what they are supposed to do”.*

#### **4.3.4.11 Staffing for service-learning**

Shortage of staff is a major problem in the Legal Aid Clinic. The attorney responsible for the daily functioning of the clinic is also responsible for the administration of the outreach programme. With sufficient funding, another person could manage the outreach programme. Previously there were ten candidate attorneys, but presently there are only two, which is indicative of losing skilled people: aiding the many communities, especially the underprivileged, requires many people with skills and knowledge.

The attorneys conduct workshops twice a month at the paralegal centres, training the paralegals, who then in turn train the community on several aspects of the law.

Attorney:

*“Helping these many communities, especially the poor, requires a lot of people, skills and knowledge. Getting those skilled people is not easy. We*

*don't have enough staff. I believe if we can have enough staff we will be able to do better and provide quality service".*

#### **4.3.4.12 Funding for service-learning**

The Legal Aid Clinic is funded by the University of Limpopo, Department of Justice, and AULAI. However, funding is still insufficient to cover the costs in the Legal Aid Clinic. The paralegal offices are far away from each other, which results in travelling expenses for long distances, resulting in irregular visits by the attorneys. Each satellite can be visited only twice a month, there being 18 Legal Advice Offices in the province, but, due to the shortage in funding, services are only provided to seven offices.

The Debating Society receives little funding from the SRC. Sometimes they contribute money from their own pockets.

#### **4.3.4.13 Evaluation and assessment for service-learning**

Service-learning is a new concept to both staff and students and they have not been evaluated on issues around it. No evaluation and assessment is conducted to check the quality of existing community engagement projects in which the students are involved. They do not receive any credits for participating in the Debating Society, yet they provide feedback to the Director of the School of Languages and Communication about their activities in the Debating Society.

### **4.3.5 Findings: School of Health Sciences**

#### **4.3.5.1 Information of participants**

**Academic staff member 1** is a Community Psychiatric nurse and co-founder of the Moletjie Centre for Mentally Handicapped Children. She initiated this centre together with a team of nurses from hospitals in Moletjie with the goal to invest in their communities. Professor M at the university was very interested in the mentally disabled children. He sent the staff member to Holland to learn about centres for mentally handicapped children ranging from 0-3 years, and for adolescents and the aged. When she started the centre for the mentally handicapped people in Moletjie,

most academic staff members were not engaged in community work. Since 2001 fourth-year students became involved in the project.

Her master's research was focused on the experiences of parents of mentally handicapped children with regard to support services in the Moletjie area. In her doctoral study, she developed an empowerment model for families of mentally handicapped children.

**Academic staff member 2** teaches Community Development in a nursing context and has been engaged in communities since 2003. Her teaching starts by providing students with a comprehensive tool for assessing communities. They are handed case studies to assess various communities. Later they visit projects in the surrounding rural communities with the goal to conduct needs assessment in a real life context. In the past they were able to cover a wider scope of community development projects, like at Hlatlolanang in Jane Furse, and other community development projects in Apel in the Sekhukhune District of the Limpopo Province. She is currently in partnership with local projects like those at Phuti clinic at Ga-Mothapo and Evelyn Lekganyane clinic at Boyne. These projects are focused on gardening and sewing, as well as Love Life projects which deal with sex education and teenage pregnancy.

Besides her engagement with communities, she is the chairperson of the Research Committee in the Department of Nursing. This research programme occupies most of her time since the department has a total of 42 postgraduate students who are involved in their research projects. The situation is exacerbated by fourth year undergraduate students who also have a capping module in which they do some research.

**Student 1** started his nursing practical work in 2009 while being a first year nursing student. This allowed interaction with people of different races and cultures. He benefits from community service because it is an opportunity to provide health education service to local people. His greatest problem during practical work is the negative attitude he and his peers experience from senior nurses at hospitals and clinics, who have a tendency to ignore them while they are supposed to learn from them.

**Student 2** has been engaged in communities throughout her four years of being a student nurse, which taught her to respect people as individuals. She benefits from

midwifery and psychiatry among the courses she is studying and hope for change in the society with regard to accepting the mentally handicapped.

#### **4.3.5.2 Current community engagement projects**

Although none of the participants are involved in service-learning, they are included in the following community engagement projects:

- *Moletjie Centre for Mentally Handicapped Children*

This is an initiative of the University of Limpopo and a team of nurses from Moletjie hospitals which was established in 1997. Its primary goal is to train the mentally handicapped socially and occupationally, and to assist them in managing themselves.

- *Nursing practical work*

An undergraduate nursing degree is a four year programme. Students attend theory classes two weeks in a month and the other two weeks providing service in the community in the form of practical work. The primary goal of the practical work is for the nurses to gain experience and skills in their areas of specialisation on completion of their degrees. Community service is provided at hospitals, clinics, schools, and crèches. One module integrates community service.

#### **4.3.5.3 Conceptualisation of service-learning**

Service-learning lacks a common definition in the School of Health Sciences. Participants were asked to think about their understanding of this concept. Although some of them were unfamiliar with the term, one of the staff members thought it to be the service initiated by the university to train students and the community for the benefit of both. To another staff member service-learning is the integration of theory and practical work, for they render a service. The student participants thought it referred to learning in terms of training, i.e applying theory into practice when you provide service to the people. Although one of the students learnt about service-learning for the first time in 2011 while visiting clinics, she never heard about it on campus.

Academic staff member 2:

*"I don't know. I think what we are doing is service-learning because we give them theory and then from there they go to the clinical area for practice. What I am trying to show is that we integrate theory into practice because they go and render a service. We don't call it service-learning. Service for me is for someone who is already qualified. For me it is like in-service training. It is for people who are already working".*

Student 1:

*"I think it is for the first time that I hear about this concept. I think it is learning in terms of training. Lets' say the service is provided at the hospital. So the student is applying theory into practice".*

Student 2:

*"Nobody is preaching about service-learning unless if they are using another term. I never heard of it".*

It is clear that participants find it difficult to differentiate between service-learning and community engagement. One participant described community engagement as becoming involved in the community with the community, while service-learning the students are involved in the sense that they learn by following the process. This interpretation is from a staff member who learnt about service-learning via the internet.

Academic staff member 1:

*"I have a problem in differentiating between service-learning and community engagement. I think the line is very thin because in community engagement you are engaged, you are doing something in the community with the community. In service-learning the students learn from what we are doing in the community and service. You are doing something for the community and the students are learning at the same time. I find difficulty in differentiating because I think there is a thin line".*

Academic staff member 1 is a member of a forum known as FUHDISA (Forum for University Heads of Departments in South Africa). She learned about service-learning for the first time through this forum.

#### **4.3.5.4 Strategic planning for service-learning**

According to participants there are no official strategic plans for the conceptualisation of service-learning activities. Focussing on teaching and learning and research, even community engagement is a novel idea.

Academic staff member 2:

*"It is only now that we have this community engagement, that we will be looking into teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. We had only two meetings this month of July. We agreed that in our next meeting we need to get policies so that we can understand what the university is saying about teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. We are focusing on teaching and research. Community engagement is still lacking. Hence, I don't know about service-learning".*

#### **4.3.5.5 Institutional mission and policies for service-learning**

Participants said that the mission of the university is "Finding solutions for Africa" and to educate disadvantaged local rural communities to meet the demanding social problems. The placement of student nurses at rural clinics and hospitals during practical work is one way of achieving this mission.

Currently the centre is developing a programme on HIV/AIDS aimed at the mentally handicapped. They were invited by schools in the Moletjie area to address Grade 7 learners about HIV/AIDS. Other issues such as mental retardation, hypertension, diabetes, cancer, epilepsy, diarrhoea, poverty, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, rape, smoking, and alcohol and drug abuse are also addressed in the communities.

Participants noted that their lack of knowledge about service-learning contradicts the social mission of the University of Limpopo. One staff member remarked that when academic staff members are appointed at the university, they are informed that their duties are threefold, namely teaching, research, and community engagement. The lack of knowledge about service-learning, however, contributes a great deal to the situation where graduates complete their degrees by accumulating theory without the relevant practical experience of the work environment.

Participants noted the lack of a policy for service-learning. The School of Health Sciences' engagement with communities is not guided by any institutional policies. One member mentioned a Policy on Community Engagement. They are, however, not responsible for funding any projects.

Academic staff member 1:

*"I don't know of any policy about service-learning. When we started this project, we were without a policy. But last year in September we were called to Bolivia Lodge for a conference. I was very happy to know that this university has a policy that the different faculties should use when involved with communities. But what disappointed me is that they say they are not responsible for funding because funding is a thorny issue about community engagement. I learnt from last year when I was at the conference that there is something about this. There is a Policy on Community Engagement".*

Although the staff is aware of some existing policies, apparently nobody pays attention to it. The staff member stated that, while doing researching on community engagement, he discovered that universities in other countries, as well as in South Africa have offices dedicated to community engagement. At the time of the participant interviews, the Rural Development and Innovation Hub was not yet functional, but it was anticipated that it would become a central office coordinating community engagement in all faculties.

Academic staff member 1:

*"Most of us know that policies are there. But to be honest, nobody cares. Another thing that impressed me was that when I went through the internet, I realised that in other countries they even have an office for community engagement. Even at other South African universities because there was a person from Western Cape who presented at the conference. But what I have realised is that there is a man, Dr B who works with Prof A towards the establishment of the Rural Development and Innovation Hub which is going to be a central office which coordinates community engagement on campus in all the faculties. He once came to Moletjie centre. We are doing research with him. I don't see him anymore".*

#### **4.3.5.6 Institutional leadership for service-learning**

No institutional leaders are primarily employed to conceptualise and implement service-learning, the majority which dislike engaging with communities, preferring teaching and research. Psychiatric nurses work with mentally ill people who arrive at the clinics unwashed and hungry. It is thus expected that the service providers, i.e the nurses, will get soiled, and unless one do not have a passion for these people, direct involvement will not ensue.

Academic staff member 1:

*“What I have realised is that there are few people who want to go to the dust and do community work. Community work makes you dirty, especially in psychiatric nursing, you meet mentally ill people who will make you dirty and it is not something that people would love to do. People come there not clean, having not eaten. I think people do not have passion for the community because they don’t want to go to the community. They want to be in the classroom. They concentrate more on teaching and research than community engagement”.*

All departments (Department of Nutrition, Pharmacy, Optometry, Nursing, and Medical Sciences) in the School of Health Sciences consider participation in community engagement as an integral core of their undergraduate programmes. A pharmacy lecturer approached the one participant requesting assistance in placing their students at the clinics and suggested that the groups (nurses and pharmacy students) be combined.

The Department of Nursing is of the opinion that student nurses become socially and academically mature through community engagement, for they can apply theory with practical work.

Participants said that no student leaders are responsible for conceptualising service-learning in their department and school. However, students work in groups when preparing for the Health Education Day at the Moletjie Centre for the Mentally Handicapped. Such groups include the catering, funding and plenary committees, from which students select the leaders.

#### **4.3.5.7 Teaching, learning, and research**

The participants' engagement with communities is integrated with teaching and research. In Community Psychiatry, students start by learning about how to identify the needs of the communities, which forms a blueprint for providing service and conducting research. The curriculum is community-oriented, and thus allows students to apply theory into practice.

Teaching about mental retardation and community service commences in March each year. This entails how to provide community service, and how to establish relationships with communities. In July the fourth year students visit the centre with their lecturer.

After one of the staff members had completed a course in community-based approach in the Eastern Cape, she and her students started to provide community service at Ga-Dikgale and Makanye. She also taught Community-Based Education at a Nursing College. In terms of this approach to nursing, students provide community service in the local communities from their first year until their final year on aspects related to general nursing, midwifery, and psychiatry. At present, the staff member, together with her students are involved at the Solly Dikgale clinic where they assist members of the community to trace lost people. Sometimes they also provide community service at the Tshebela clinic in the Molepo area to expose students to various clinics and centres in the surrounding rural communities.

Although academic staff members in the School of Health Sciences are involved in various community engagement projects, none are involved in service-learning for they do not know about it. Academic staff 2 mentioned that large classes and lack of time contribute towards the failure of their engagement with communities. One staff member stated that, on the first day of the students' allocation at five clinics (at Makotopong, Segopye, Ga-Dikgale, and Solomondale and the Mankweng hospital), she has to call on them, leaving the other students at the university unattended.

Academic staff member 2:

*"I have a big class. Today I left in the morning and remember there are many students. They are placed at five clinics and I have to go to all those clinics today because it is their first day. I couldn't go yesterday because*

*they were writing a test. They only started today. It is very difficult I must say. Right now I am very tired. I went to Makotopong, Segopye, Ga-Dikgale, and Solomondale. Some are here at Mankweng Hospital. So you can imagine. Since we have community engagement and teaching, it is very difficult. Despite the fact that we are there, we still have other commitments here. Sometimes we begin with meetings, like tomorrow there is a school meeting. So it means rushing there and coming back”.*

Although time and large classes were cited as problems, staff stressed the need for continuous visits to communities. As Community Health nurse, her concern is less with the regular patients attending the clinics, but rather the people who do not attend the clinics, due to personal reasons: they are the ones who do not receive treatment. It would be ideal to visit the clinics twice weekly to assist the registered nurses in calling at the homes of patients, because they do not have transport.

Academic staff member 2:

*“I always tell my students that as a Community Health nurse, the ideal thing is not to be at the clinic every day. You know people who come to the clinic are fine. People who do not come to the clinic are the ones whom we should be more worried about because they have more complications. Maybe they don't have money to come to the clinic or they are embarrassed about what they are suffering from. So in fact, as a Community Health nurse, the ideal thing is that we go there at least twice a week. We need to help registered nurses at the clinics to visit the homes of the patients because they complain about the lack of transport. With us transport is not such a big problem”.*

One staff member indicated that she has been providing service at the Moletjie Centre for the Handicapped together with her fourth year students since 2001. Community service is provided each year in October, the month dedicated to the mentally handicapped. Community service takes the form of a celebration for Health Education Day; each year this day is approached and celebrated differently.

Although service-learning is not known among the students, all the students are involved in some form of community engagement. In their first three academic years

students are stationed at the Mankweng hospital, local clinics and crèches with the goal to acquire basic practical nursing skills and provide patient care, the third year focussing on midwifery. The fourth year is specifically dedicated to psychiatric nursing, and student nurses are stationed at the Moletjie Centre for Mentally Handicapped Children. Student nurses organise an annual event to show love and appreciation for the mentally handicapped children. Students also conduct needs analysis at the homes of the mentally handicapped children.

Participants felt that students benefit from the community service because this practical component reinforces the theory and prepares them for the challenges in the real work environment. They learn to address the needs in the surrounding communities.

Student nurses discuss health issues with patients at the clinics and hospitals such as sexually transmitted diseases, cancer, smoking, and others. The underlying philosophy is that all diseases are preventable.

At crèches students conduct needs assessment to provide relevant health education discussions to services providers. The students also work with the educators to ensure that all children are immunised and receive proper nutrition within a clean environment. These are followed by home visits if learners were found dirty, the purpose being to obtain the background against which these children are brought up at home.

The greatest risk about practical work is that students can accidentally prick themselves with syringe needles while providing health care to patients. This is a serious problem since students can contract diseases such as HIV. However, students have been warned that, should it happen, they need to immediately report the incident to their seniors to receive urgent and proper care.

#### **4.3.5.8 Motivation for service-learning**

There are no rewards for academic staff members for engaging with communities. Academic staff members showed that the university is in the move to start recognising participation in various community engagements for promotional purposes.

Academic staff member 1:

*"I don't know of any rewards for service-learning. We are just working. I feel it is part of my work. It is my responsibility".*

Academic staff member 2:

*"It is only now that we are starting with community engagement. I have never heard about any rewards for service-learning".*

Participants noted that the Rural Development and Innovation Hub does not provide any motivation to students and academic staff in terms of adopting and using service-learning or addressing the social needs in the local communities. Despite promises of measures being instated to motivate academics to become involved in community engagement, nothing has come of it, and staff continues to operate within the limits of the department.

One staff member said that the students are her intrinsic motivation to engage with communities, for she wants to produce graduates who will see the importance of engaging with communities, not only attending to the patients at the clinic.

The students gain credits for their participation in community engagement activities. They keep journals in which they record their experiences while working in the community. Upon their return they are expected to submit reports about what they have learnt and make recommendations pertaining to areas which need improvement. The reports are presented on Saturdays in a lecture hall.

#### **4.3.5.9 University-community partnerships for service-learning**

The Department of Nursing in the School of Health Sciences is partnering with various community stakeholders such as Chief Moloto III, taxi associations, schools, crèches, old age centres, the National Development Agency (NDA), chief, churches, clinics, hospitals, and different government departments. The intention of these partnerships is to address health needs and prevent lifestyle diseases in the local communities. Social issues such as poverty, youth development and employment through projects such as sewing, gardening and Love Life projects are also included.

According to one staff member it was difficult to build relationships with community members at the Moletjie Centre for the Mentally Handicapped because they did not accept the service provided by the student nurses. One secondary school principal wanted to know why they have an interest in such children, and whether they expected to gain anything from their service. However, the support of that particular principal was eventually gained, and he is currently one of the committee members at the centre.

Awareness campaigns are usually conducted at the Moletjie Centre for the Mentally Handicapped to inform community members about the causes and problems of mental retardation and train them to recognise such patients, and how parents and neighbours can become involved in addressing such problems.

For Health Education celebrations, students perform dramas, demonstrations and dances to provide fun. Sometimes the special days are celebrated in the form of home visits. Home visits are significant when educating parents and guardians about personal hygiene, the recognition of mentally handicapped children, and how they should take care of them.

The Moletjie Centre for Mentally Handicapped Children is becoming a success because of its collaboration with the local community. Women from inter-denominational organisations provide support through donations in preparation for the Health Education Day, the women from the Anglican Church in Polokwane being the greatest sponsors of this project. Donations are in the form of cash and food parcels. Recently partnerships have been established with a group of women from the Dutch Reformed Church in Westenburg, who donated gas stoves and food for the Health Education Day. The National Council of African Women (NCAW) in the Limpopo region has also donated money to the centre. As part of the 67 minutes in honour of Nelson Mandela's birthday, these women have cleaned the yard at the centre, and even brought food parcels for the mentally handicapped children in 2013.

To enhance these partnerships and build trust, the students keep their appointments, and if they are delayed, they inform them as such.

Conversely, theft is the greatest problem at the Moletjie centre. The water pump was stolen three times, even broken out of the cement which anchored it; the electrical wires of the pump was cut; burglar proofing of the windows and door is cut to gain entrance when groceries, utensils and even a gas stove was stolen. Once all the books were cut up, an act of pure vandalism.

Human relations at the centre are also sometimes strained with the volunteers not being on friendly terms with the committee. Holland made a donation towards the employment of a social worker, but the volunteers reported to the chief that the committee had misused it. Volunteers approached parents to open a new bank account and then deposited it in their own accounts.

The rural setting at Moletjie, where student nurses provide community service, is also subjected to crime. Students are advised to travel in groups when they visit homes. Their safekeeping is the fact that the chief and indunas are aware of their presence and look out for them.

Chief Moloto III appeals to the community to work in harmony with the student nurses, which contributes towards the success of the Moletjie project. Often people from the Anglican Church in Polokwane deliver food parcels for the centre at the chief's place if the centre is locked.

#### **4.3.5.10 Coordination of service-learning**

Participants said they do not know of a coordinating structure for service-learning on campus, except for the Rural Development and Innovation Hub. They do not know, however, how it functions.

Academic staff member 1:

*"I don't know how the hub is supporting me because I don't know big things that they have made. They just mentioned that they have an office. I knew about the hub at the conference in September 2012. From the conference, I got an email that they want to interview us, but they never did it".*

The majority of schools at the university are not involved in service-learning; a few schools take part in other forms of community engagement.

#### **4.3.5.11 Staffing for service-learning**

All academic staff members of the School of Health Sciences are involved in community engagement activities. They support each other in terms of their individual community engagement activities, in the form of donating money, offering presents and old clothing to community members, and even brainstorming to find relevant donors for the individual projects.

#### **4.3.5.12 Funding for service-learning**

One staff member is concerned about the lack of funding for the existing community engagement projects. The Department of Nursing in the School of Health Sciences has established relationships with external donors such as Chief Moloto III, the Department of Social Welfare, the National Development Agency (NDA), and a mining company, African Minerals, for funding. Chief Moloto III has secured an amount of R250 000 from African Minerals for the centre which was used for building two large classrooms at Moletjie Centre for the Mentally Handicapped Children. The Polokwane Municipality has also recently donated R300 000 to the centre.

Since 1997, on the last Thursday of every month, members of the Moletjie community gather at the chief's kraal for a general meeting known as "*Kgothekgothe*" ("Come one, come all"). During such meetings, community members present community development from various angles. At the end of such meetings, "*Mokolokotwane*" (fundraising) is conducted to boost the centre, which buys food for the children.

However, funding received from those donors is still insufficient. When hosting the Health Education Day at Moletjie Centre for Mentally Handicapped Children, students often contribute a certain amount in order to make the occasion a success and also ask donations from the lecturers, nurses and doctors at clinics and hospitals. Some donations derive from the business sector in Polokwane, which is usually in the form of food or clothing and books which are handed to the children as presents.

#### **4.3.5.13 Evaluation and assessment for service-learning**

Lecturers involved in community engagement activities in the School of Health Sciences work as a team in ensuring quality service although their involvement is never evaluated.

Academic staff member 2:

*“I was never evaluated in community engagement. There is no evaluation in community engagement. There is no evaluation of what we are doing except to evaluate the students. Nobody assesses whether our teaching is good or not or whether we need to change whatever”.*

While students conduct community-based research, they keep diaries related to the functioning of the hospitals and keep record of patients' personal and medical history. These diaries are seen as mini-research which forms part of their assessment. Community partners have to complete evaluation forms about the quality of community service provided by the students and academic staff members.

### **4.4 FINDINGS FROM OBSERVATIONS**

The following findings were captured through silent observations regarding challenges and possible strategies for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at the University of Limpopo:

#### **4.4.1 Challenges of conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning**

- Lack of academics as champions for service-learning;
- Lack of workshops to provide better understanding of the concept service-learning;
- Lack of awareness campaigns of service-learning to the university community;
- Lack of a time slot for service-learning;
- Schools are understaffed to implement service-learning;
- Lack of coordination of service-learning and other community engagement projects in the schools by the Rural Development and Innovation Hub;
- Current engagements are not well structured or formalised;
- Lack of synergy between community engagement, research and teaching;

- Lack of commitment to community engagement and service-learning in particular;
- Lack of collaboration between faculties and schools with regard to conceptualise service-learning;
- Poor publicity of existing community engagement programmes in all four faculties and their schools except in the School of Agriculture, which is connected to the hub;
- Emphasis on teaching, learning and research is skewed, with very little commitment to community engagement and service-learning;
- There are no clear community engagement, service-learning, or policy guidelines available at school and faculty levels;
- Lack of funding for community engagement, unlike teaching/learning, and research;
- Sponsors for community engagement who abandon the projects before it has reached a level where they can sustain themselves;
- A lack of niches that will allow for visibility within and from the university to communities;
- Lack of innovation with regard to conceptualising service-learning, which leaves opportunities for other universities to conduct research in the Limpopo Province, for example the University of Pretoria's research at the Mapungubwe Heritage Centre and the University of Witwatersrand's research in the Kruger National Park;
- Traditional and political tension often obstruct the university's access to communities;
- Lack of good roads which renders schools inaccessible, most of the districts in Limpopo Province;
- Community engagement activities lack an aspect of restoration to communities. The greatest problem is the visibility of benefits and improvement in communities, e.g the over-researched community of Ga-Dikgale, where there is no improvement regarding issues such as migration, health equity and chronic illnesses.

#### **4.4.2 Possibilities of conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning**

- There are pockets of community engagement programmes which are in operation. These programmes can be modified to accommodate the practice of service-learning;
- Task teams are available for community engagement projects, which could be convinced to adopt service-learning;

- 3.4 Documentation and record-keeping are planned.
- 3.5 Available resources (physical space, human resources and operating costs) are identified and planned (HEQC, 2006:31).

#### **2.6.5.2 Module Process**

##### Indicator 4

Student orientation and training are conducted (HEQC, 2006:31).

- 4.1 Students are introduced to the concept of service-learning.
- 4.2 Students are orientated to general logistical considerations and risks.
- 4.3 Students are introduced to the broader issues relating to the module.
- 4.4 Students are orientated to their responsibilities and what is expected of them (HEQC, 2006:31).

##### Indicator 5

Sustainable service-learning partnerships are maintained (HEQC, 2006:31).

- 5.1 Communication mechanisms in the partnership are maintained.
- 5.2 Representatives of partners acquire skills and are provided with support to fulfil their commitment to the partnership outcomes (HEQC, 2006:31).

##### Indicator 6

Formative assessment of student learning is conducted (HEQC, 2006:31).

- 6.1 Students are engaged in reflection.
- 6.2 Student learning is assessed formatively (HEQC, 2006:31).

##### Indicator 7

The process is managed (HEQC, 2006:32).

- 7.1 All plans related to the module are coordinated.

#### **2.6.5.3 Module output and impact**

##### Indicator 8

The impact is monitored and evaluated (HEQC, 2006:32).

- 8.1 The impact on students, academic staff, department, profession, community, and service provider is assessed.
- 8.2 Partners' outcomes are assessed (HEQC, 2006:32).

- Some of the academic staff have their hearts in communities;
- Some students go out to communities to give presentations and create awareness about pertinent social issues such as reduction of teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, poverty, crime, drop-out, illiteracy, substance abuse, and provision of psychological services;
- Positive commitment of some members from the local community, for example, the farmers at Mafefe;
- There are partnerships between the university and local communities;
- Local communities are often invited by the university to attend various occasions, such as Heritage Day, Open Weeks and the use of facilities of the Science Laboratory by local secondary schools;
- The university is reaching out to the local communities via its Community Radio Station;
- The university addresses illiteracy by printing and distributing books in African languages to learners at local schools;
- Teachers are trained to write and publish books in order to address illiteracy;
- The university's rural setting presents a unique opportunity for culturally relevant cases in, with and for the surrounding communities, e.g the proposed Rural Development and Innovation Hub;
- The growing ICTs, especially mobile technology available in the communities, provides a good foundation for conceptualisation of service-learning;
- Via its large base of local and rural learners, the university provides a positive contribution to the community;
- University transport is available;
- Computer laboratories campus-wide are up to standard and fully equipped with computers and projectors;
- Funding from external donors can be used as an advantage to conceptualise service-learning;
- Support from government departments is invaluable and can be utilised to conceptualise service-learning.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

Findings reflected in this chapter show that little is known about service-learning at the University of Limpopo. Coupled with the lack of knowledge about service-learning, is

lack of funding, lack of motivation for both students and academic staff, lack of knowledge about institutional policies that guide the conceptualisation and implementation of service-learning. Findings also show that service-learning modules are lacking; existing community engagement initiatives are not integrated into the curriculum; teaching and learning, research, and community engagement lack an element of integration; there is lack of a functional coordinating structure to conceptualise service-learning, and there is poor nurturing of existing university-community partnerships for service-learning.

## CHAPTER 5

# CONCEPTUALISATION OF SERVICE-LEARNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter entails a presentation of the findings of the research collected at the University of Venda (Univen). Data was obtained from documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and observations.

### 5.2 FINDINGS FROM DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The following six themes emerged from the data that were gathered from the analysis of documents at the University of Venda:

#### 5.2.1 Service-learning and other forms of community engagement

The Univen Community Engagement Programme's focus is goal-oriented reciprocal interaction, negotiated collaborations and partnerships between the university and targeted rural communities, experiential and service-learning sites. Its goal is to ensure sustainable rural development and poverty alleviation through teaching and learning, research and community work (Nendila, March, 2010:4). The programme entails various levels of engagement, like community engaged research, teaching and learning, as well as community outreach and volunteerism.

**Community engaged teaching and learning** programmes engage students in activities where both the community and students are primary beneficiaries, providing a service to the community (Nendila, March 2010: 4).

**Experiential learning** entails integrated work or practical learning (Nendila, March 2010:4).

**Community outreach** is engagement in activities where the community benefits from specific services. These programmes involve structure and commitment and are

normally initiated by a department or school, or as an institution-wide initiative (Nendila, March 2010:4).

In **volunteerism** students engage in activities for their own benefit. Volunteer programmes are essentially altruistic by nature and although students may learn from these programmes, they are normally not related to, or integrated into, curricular activities. Students normally do not receive academic credit for participation in volunteer programmes. Mostly funded by external donors and through student fundraising, volunteer programmes are relatively small and have a free relationship with the institute where the student is registered (Nendila, March 2010:5).

**Internships** engage students in activities where the student is the beneficiary with the goal of learning. Internships provide students with hands-on practical experience that enhances their understanding of their area of study, helps them to achieve their learning outcomes and provides them with vocational experience. Internships are fully integrated with the student's curriculum and are used extensively in many professional programmes such as social work, medicine, education, and psychology (Nendila, March 2010:5).

In Nendila (March 2010:7) the Directorate of Community Engagement highlights the need for further interaction and workshops and the development of a policy framework and guidelines in order to achieve Univen's core function of becoming a quality driven, financially sustainable, rural-based university. The Directorate of Community Engagement also planned to audit existing community engagement initiatives in order to develop criteria for quality related arrangements (Nendila, March 2010: 7).

### **5.2.2 Amplifying community voices for service-learning**

This programme is implemented at Makhado Municipality in the Vhembe district. It won third place in the MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship with prize money of £1 000. The MacJannet Foundation is committed to building a community of global citizens and promotion of civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education. The Director of the Centre for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation at Univen reported that the MacJannet prize recognised exceptional student community engagement initiatives based in Talloires Network member universities around the world and thus contributes financially towards their ongoing public service efforts. The

MacJannet prize recognises the winning programmes as models for universities worldwide and will continue to encourage community engagement within higher education (Nendila, March/April 2011:6).

*"Amplifying grassroots community voices"* is a programme launched in response to the detachment between local governments and the communities they are supposed to represent, i.e many local community members felt that their voices were not heard by their local government. To overcome this detachment, "Amplifying grassroots community voices" created an inclusive community platform where people of at least seven years old could express their views on local development issues (Francis et al, 2010:362; Nendila, March/April 2011:6).

The Univen team of academic staff and students works closely and co-learns with community based organisations, community leaders, and local government. In such reflection circles, discussions and decisions are made in a democratic manner on issues around local development. The programme engages different partners within the community – children, teenagers, men, women, and the elderly – to bring these voices together. Rather than giving resources to the community, the programme empowers them to use its own resources to achieve development aims (Francis et al, 2010:362; Nendila, March/April 2011:6).

### **5.2.3 University-community partnerships for service-learning**

#### **- *Partnership with Warwick University***

The "Warwick in Africa" programme of the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom had visited Univen to explore the possibility of a pilot project in rural schools in the Venda region. Focus was to be on mathematics education in secondary schools. The delegation called on the Vuwani Science Resource Centre which was to be integrated in the implementation of the "Warwick in Africa" pilot project, the purpose being to observe their practical teaching. They also visited the Edson Nesengani and Ratshikwekwete secondary schools which are in close proximity to the centre and could thus become beneficiaries of the pilot project. The Warwick team was joined by the Univen team which comprised of the Directorate of Community Engagement, International Relations, and School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences (Nendila, March/April 2011:5). The partnership also focused on academic collaboration in

horticulture and public health, and possible co-supervision of doctoral students as well as the support from the University of Warwick for the strategic development of Univen's Directorate of International Relations (Nendila, September/October 2011:4).

- *Partnership with University of Virginia*

Univen and the UVA are collaborating in the Mukondeni Pottery project, which was initiated in 2010. The collaboration included other community stakeholders such as the Vhembe District and Makhado municipalities, the ward councillors, and the local traditional leadership (Nendila, August 2012: 3).

The collaboration promotes rural industrialisation through partnerships and multi-stakeholder involvement, creating a sustainable business for the women cooperative and educates communities about the importance of household water quality and point of use of filtration techniques. This would be achieved via the creation and sale of ceramic water filters (Nendila, August 2012: 3).

Twenty six students and academic staff members of UVA would be working together with 16 students and various academic staff members from Univen on water, education, and health projects in Thohoyandou. The delegation was part of the Water and Health in Limpopo international community engagement project. The participants were to provide education, research and service opportunities for students from both institutions, focusing on community-based action to acquire sustained access to adequate water and sanitation services. It also aimed at reducing the incidence of water and sanitation related diseases (Nendila, July 2011: 26).

- *Partnership with Sinthumule Royal Council*

The Sinthumule Royal Council has established partnerships with Univen's Centre for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation to enhance community development. Areas of mutual cooperation included revitalising the Agrivet poultry project where 20 shelters and an abattoir have been established and a vegetable garden with United Nations contracts. Another project is the production of three-legged pots, made by elderly women, which are sold in Botswana and Malawi (Nendila, September/October 2011:4).

- *Mandela Day*

In 2012 Univen, in partnership with Voluntary Services Overseas, the Regional AIDS Initiative of Southern Africa, and the Matangari Home of Relief Centre, celebrated Mandela Day by assisting at the Matangari Home of Relief Centre. The team filled a donga with stones at Matangari, cleaned the house of a disabled adult at Makonde, cleaned and prepared food for orphaned and vulnerable children at the Matangari Drop-in centre, and explained some maths principles and presented a motivational talk to Grade 12 learners at the Mphalaleni High School. They also cleaned and coached some maths at Ndidivhani Primary School, the Luvhaivhai Community Crèche, and irrigated the Tshiombo vegetable garden which supports a sustainable livelihood and generate income (Nendila, June/July 2012:4).

In 2013 Univen joined the masses around the globe to offer 67 minutes of service in honour of Nelson Mandela's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday. Service to humanity was provided on campus, in and around Rammbuda rural schools as well as at Siloam and Nthume Hospitals on 18 July 2013 (Univen, 2013).

Univen students from the Department of Advanced Nursing Science, together with the students from UVA spent 67 minutes counselling on teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, personal hygiene and sexually transmitted diseases at Robert Mbulungeni, Hanyani, Mukondeni and Tshikundamalema secondary schools. Grade 12 learners at Robert Mbulungeni Secondary School were also familiarised with a variety of careers and instructed how to apply for admission to Univen (Univen, 2013).

One of the academic staff members in the Department of Advanced Nursing Science joined a screening campaign at Siloam hospital in which Oncology nurses were screening the community members for cancer. The team on campus participated in a variety of activities such as lawn mowing, cleaning up litter, and sweeping and washing floors. The campaign had a vital role in discouraging members of the university community to litter and to ensure that the campus is kept clean. They were also encouraged to dedicate 67 minutes of service once every month and make a difference to the lives of others (Univen, 2013).

## **5.2.4 Quality assurance for service-learning**

The Vice Chancellor and Principal of Univen noted that the Higher Education Quality Committee has been commended for the good practice of Univen's engagement at Vuwani Science Resource Centre in making science accessible to learners in schools that do not have science laboratories (Nendila, May/June 2011:3).

### **- HEQC's Audit report of the University of Venda**

This report focuses on the conceptualisation and management of quality of community engagement at Univen. The report highlights that Univen's community engagement was conducted without a formal structure or a policy framework that outlines its role in the realisation of the institution's role. However, the Directorate of Community Engagement was established in 2009, and policies were developed (HEQC, 2011:51).

There is a clear definition of community engagement that involved community-engaged teaching and learning; community engaged research; community outreach and volunteerism; and community benefits. Many students engage in these activities. Schools and their departments have initiated engagement with communities, a clear example which can be seen in the Schools of Agriculture, Health Sciences, and Law (HEQC, 2011:51).

The panel encouraged Univen to develop mechanisms and strategies to integrate and monitor community engagement initiatives in order to enhance their impact on the core functions of the institution. The panel acknowledged how Univen has been able to integrate its community engagement into its other core functions in an admirable way within a resource-constrained environment (HEQC, 2011:51).

The panel further reported about community partnerships with Univen, which include the Masia Development Trust, Rammuda Community projects - focussing on water purification-, and the Correctional Services partnership. Since these partnerships were initiated by individuals in departments, the panel recommended an underpinning and supportive university-wide integrated strategy to guide and monitor those partnerships. In conclusion, the HEQC commended Univen for the good practice of the Vuwani Science Resource Centre in making science accessible to learners in schools that do not have science laboratories (HEQC, 2011:51).

### **5.2.5 Capacity building for service-learning**

Univen presented a five day training workshop, focussing on cooperative principles, management, finance and legislation to the leadership of 75 cooperatives of four local municipalities in the Vhembe district. This initiative brought about a memorandum of understanding between Univen and the Vhembe District Municipality on cooperative training (Nendila, August 2012:3).

### **5.2.6 Community Engagement Annual Report (2011)**

As member of the SAHECEF board, the Director of Community Engagement has convened a sub-group, with the research question "*How to integrate community engagement and research?*" A report was submitted to SAHECEF on behalf of the group (Univen, 2011:47).

The Directorate of Community Engagement has established partnerships with the Vhembe District Municipality. These included multi-stakeholder planning sessions to respond to community needs in the field of farming, simple rural technologies, arts and rural innovation. The director further noted that she coordinated the activities of the 67 minutes of community service to commemorate international Mandela Day and to instil a culture of selflessness to students, staff and the community (Univen, 2011:47).

### **5.2.7 Coordination**

The following are projects from various schools at Univen which are registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement:

#### **5.2.7.1 School of Agriculture**

##### **- Amplifying Community Voices**

The project was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2009. It was an initiative of the Institute of Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation and structured and coordinated to cater for service-learning, industrial learning and work integrated learning. The project is in operation in the Makhado Municipality in Wards 1, 17, 29, and 37 (Univen, 2013).

- *Capacity Building of Small Traders*

The project was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2011 as an initiative of the Unit of Agricultural Economic and Extension. It is a kind of volunteerism in which students train small traders in the Capricorn District Municipality in financial management, business development and general management (Univen, 2013).

### **5.2.7.2 School of Education**

- *School Practice*

An initiative of the Department of Professional Studies and Early Childhood Development, the project was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2010. It is coordinated in such a way that student teachers engage in practical work, providing assistance and scarce teaching resources without payment at schools in Limpopo and Mpumalanga (Univen, 2013).

- *Saturday and Winter School*

Registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2011, this project is an initiative of the Department of Curriculum Studies. It is a type of volunteerism and community outreach whereby Grade 12 learners in the Vhembe District are assisted in the natural sciences and management sciences (Univen, 2013).

### **5.2.7.3 School of Health Sciences**

- *Health related projects*

These projects were registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2010. Students in the Department of Nutrition are based at health centres where they work with communities in the area. Such health centres include those at the Vhembe and Mopani offices, Bungeni, Tiyani, Mphambo, Tshilwavhusiku, Makhado, Shiluvane, Donald Fraser Hospital, University Day Care, Nazareen Day Care, and Makhuvha Multi-Purpose Centre in Giyani. During their community nutrition practical work, students call on households with chronically ill patients such as HIV/AIDS, diabetes, and elderly people. They also visit preparatory, primary and secondary schools to assess nutritional status and provide nutrition education. Students develop their research proposals in their third year and con-

duct research during their fourth year in different communities, while post-graduate students conduct research projects in different communities. In this particular case, students compile a profile of the community and identify its nutrition related problems. They also encourage different stakeholders such as government departments. These projects are structured in the form of service-learning, industrial learning, work integrated learning, community outreach, and volunteerism (Univen, 2013).

- *Other health related projects*

These projects were registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2010. Students in the Department of Advanced Nursing Science were allocated to the following areas for clinical placement: Donald Fraser, Elim, Siloam, Malamulele, Letaba, Hayani, Evuxakeni, Tintswalo, Mankweng, Weskoppies, Polokwane and Tshilidzini hospitals and clinics. During community-based learning students assist families with household chores and home-based care for bed-ridden patients. They also organise and participate in awareness campaigns. In their fourth year students conduct research in different villages where they do community-based learning, while post-graduate students undertake research projects in different communities and health centres (Univen, 2013).

- *Community Health*

These projects were registered for the first time with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2010, an initiative of the Department of Public Health. Students undergoing training in the Advanced Diploma in Community Health are also allocated to Thohoyandou Health Centre and Tshilidzini Hospitals for clinical practice (Univen, 2013).

Students assist needy families by referring them to relevant stakeholders such as clinics and community leaders for prompt assistance and monitoring. They also assist in establishing income-generating projects such as small gardens. Students studying for their Master in Public Health degree conduct specialist research in various areas within communities and establishments. They visit areas such as water purification plants, sewage plants, landfill sites, and food production factories to assess its environmental and occupational impact on health (Univen, 2013).

- *Mental Health Awareness Campaign*

This is an initiative of the Department of Psychology and was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2010. For clinical placement students are allocated to different communities in the Vhembe, Mopani and Capricorn District Municipalities. Through internship they assist in offering professional services to community members seeking those services in hospitals and clinics and NGOs. They also assist in organising and conducting psycho-education to patients and families. They organise and participate in awareness campaigns and conduct research during their fourth year in different villages (Univen, 2013).

- *Save the children*

This is an initiative of the Department of Psychology and was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2012. Students undertake research projects in different communities, but they also conduct awareness on campus on the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence (Univen, 2013).

- *Sports projects*

These are initiatives of the Centre for Bio-kinetics, Recreation and Sport Science, where students coach and rehabilitate communities. Through these areas they offer a variety of sporting codes namely: KPM 3541, KAM 2844, KAM 3641, KPA 1641 and KML 2648. On Saturdays the students work with the Makwarela community in developing rugby and during the week they visit other schools in the area with the same purpose. They also conduct research in Physical Education in both primary and secondary schools (Univen, 2013).

#### **5.2.7.4 School of Human and Social Sciences**

##### *Indigenous Music and Oral History*

This project was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2010. It is an initiative of the Department of Music, with the objective to have resident artists teaching the youth indigenous dance and performance, poetry, storytelling, bead work, indigenous musical instruments, and preparation of dishes. Seven academic staff members do research, each with two students as assistant researchers. Most of the artists and performing groups are illiterate. As such, academic staff members and

undergraduate students educate them in concerning copyright issues and intellectual property rights. In turn, the artists teach them to dance (Univen, 2013).

#### **5.2.7.5 School of Law**

##### **- Human Rights Education**

The project was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2009 as an initiative of the Ismail Mohamed Centre for Human and People's Rights. Its goal is to provide human rights education to local rural communities. Undergraduate students are engaged through voluntary service while postgraduate students are occasionally involved at the centre (Univen, 2013).

##### **- Parliamentary Democracy**

This project was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2009. It involves all LLB students in providing voluntary community education in issues pertaining to jurisprudence to local rural communities (Univen, 2013).

##### **- Street Law Project**

This project was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2009. It focussed on matters related to Criminal and Procedural Law. LLB students provided voluntary service by offering free legal advice at schools, prisons and villages in the Vhembe District Municipality (Univen, 2013).

#### **5.2.7.6 School of Management**

##### **- Business Skills**

The project was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2009 as an initiative of the Department of Business Management. Its goal is to equip prospective entrepreneurs with business skills to enable them to start their own businesses and to improve existing businesses to become more profitable. The project also contributes towards job creation and economic growth. Undergraduate students and academic staff members offer an intensive two-week training programme,

developed by the International Labour Organisation in business planning, marketing, buying, costing, stock-control and recordkeeping (Univen, 2013).

- *Financial Literacy Education*

Registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2013, an initiative of the the Department of Accounting, this project forms part of the students' formative assessment in some of their modules. Its goal is to assist local rural communities in the Vhembe District Municipality in acquiring financial literacy skills essential for the management of businesses and cooperatives. It creates awareness about, e.g opening savings accounts, basic book keeping and optimisation of resources. Undergraduate students offer special training and learning activities in the form of field trips (Univen, 2013).

- *Educating offenders to apply ergonomic aspects and principles*

The project was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2013, initiated by the Department of Human Resources Management and Labour Relations. Its goal is to engage undergraduate students in publishing in accredited journals, and for offenders at Matashe Correctional Services to learn to use and design equipment used at their workstations. The articles are written from observation of students, offenders and prison employees. The project contributes to students' learning as part of their semester marks (Univen, 2013).

**5.2.7.7 School of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics**

- *Basic Computer Literacy*

This project was registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2010. It is an initiative of the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, with the goal to offer basic computer literacy skills to Univen students and rural communities in the Vhembe District Municipality (Univen, 2013).

### **5.2.7.8 Department of Student Affairs**

#### **- Community Awareness Project**

Registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement in 2010, the project is an initiative of the Unit of Campus Health: HIV/AIDS, in the Department of Student Affairs. Its goal is to create an awareness of HIV/AIDS among teachers and learners in the surrounding rural communities in the Vhembe District Municipality to prevent it from spreading. Undergraduate students volunteer their assistance in these campaigns as peer educators. Academic staff members also have opportunity to contribute papers for national and international conferences and articles for journal publication (Univen, 2013).

#### **- Schools Outreach Programme**

This project ties in with the above Community Awareness Project and was simultaneously registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement. The Unit of Campus Health: HIV/AIDS, in this case, provides voluntary counselling and testing for HIV/AIDS to teachers and learners.

Univen students volunteer their assistance in the campaigns as peer educators. With community outreach forming the basis of research, papers are presented at national and international conferences and articles are published in accredited journals (Univen, 2013).

## **5.3 FINDINGS OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

### **5.3.1 Director of Community Engagement**

#### **5.3.1.1 Information of participant**

The Director of Community Engagement found this department in 2009. According to her, Univen is not static in its development of the local rural communities, always changing and improving. Due to their close involvement with the community, staff members integrate career guidance and recruitment, e.g providing information to post-matriculantes who intend to register at a university or FET college. "Mandela month"

was especially dedicated to this purpose, when administrators from the career guidance and counselling unit also became involved.

### **5.3.1.2 *Current community engagement projects***

Refer to the list of registered projects under 5.2.7 in the documentary analysis. Registration of a project with the Directorate of Community Engagement follows a certain process. However, since the process is not always properly followed, some existing projects are not yet registered, while some academics still only concentrate on teaching, learning and research, neglecting community engagement. Apparently only a few projects are registered with the Univen directorate. The number of registered projects depends on the size of the school and the extent of their participation in community engagement, while existing projects were initiated at different times.

### **5.3.1.3 *Conceptualisation of service-learning***

According to the Director of Community Engagement, academics have different notions of what community engagement constitutes and are uncertain about the various role players. For this purpose a discussion document that has been developed, which identified and categorised community engagement activities. The director is familiar with some literature on service-learning, but since the concept is still vague, service-learning is not used as an umbrella for community engagement. According to her, the definition for community engagement encompasses service-learning, which is described only in different terminology. It is understood that teaching and learning actually refers to service-learning. Some disciplines lend themselves easier to service-learning, seen as an important educational approach, than others. However, if applied incorrectly or inappropriately, learning outcomes, service and learning is elevated to the detriment of service outcome, which is not mentioned in the report. A deliberate effort should be made to integrate service-learning into teaching, learning and research, setting an example for students to deliver a service, and the community to be heard. Service-learning must be a negotiated service. The stigma of service-learning, seen as an aid to helpless communities, also needs to be changed.

Being a health professional and teacher, service-learning has always been part of the director's understanding of what learning and education is about. This concept was, however, only clarified later when she entered into the work sphere, being unfamiliar

with the term during her training as nurse and not popularly known up to the late 1990s, and would be used together with concepts such as community service, industrial attachment, cooperative education, and experiential learning. She stated that, for learning to happen, there should be an experience component; interactive learning should go beyond classroom didactics.

According to the director there is not a universal institutional concept of service-learning on campus, although the term "community engagement" is understood. Other disciplines may refer to it in different terms; e.g the School of Environmental Sciences uses the term "industrial attachment", while the School of Agriculture refers to "agricultural extension" as a way of teaching and learning, where agriculturalists work with farmers while they are learning.

Director:

*"Service-learning is not a popular concept here but you would find that a person has basic understanding of community engagement. Those who are more advanced than others would know that service-learning is part of community engagement for teaching and learning. I don't think it is common. In the School of Health Sciences, yes. But if you were to go the School of Environmental Sciences, for example, they would talk about industrial attachment. Their concepts are different. If you go to the School of Agriculture, it is something different because they will talk of agricultural extension as a way of teaching and learning. But it also means attaching agriculturalists with farmers to do work there while they are learning. So service-learning is not a universal institutional concept. It is still very much discipline bound".*

She said that they had already surpassed the stage of conceptualising service-learning and other community engagement activities at the university in 2008-2009 when other institutions were still coming to terms with the concept. The lack of a clear definition is used as an excuse not to implement it. The university tried to define service-learning, among other concepts, but realised that it might be understood differently by various disciplines. The point is that, the generic principles should be embraced within the concept of community engagement; no matter what terminology is used, the community voice should be represented in it. On this basis, it should be implemented.

The department of Community Engagement can assist departments, units or an individual interested in community projects or service-learning, for it is their aim to promote interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary initiatives – which is the department's understanding of service-learning.

However, the director agreed that a common understanding of service-learning is necessary for the institution to be functional in that aspect. People will always have varying views of it, but the university community should clarify concepts through institutional guidelines, and go beyond the concept and start implementing it in context when conducting research on, or becoming involved in rural areas, poverty, marginalisation, under-resourced, etc.

A common understanding of what service-learning is will be advantageous to the university community because it will be easier to implement. The department is lenient towards the concept of service-learning, as long as it is used within the basic premises: the community should not be abused, they must be approached sensitively, their viewpoints should be respected, and they must receive feedback, i.e their voices must be incorporated in the final product.

Director:

*"In our meetings we say if you have a different view from what we have, go ahead and use your paradigm as long as it is within these basic premises. Don't abuse the community. Be sensitive. Don't fatigue them. Listen to them. Give them feedback. Their voices must find a way in your final product".*

#### **5.3.1.4 Strategic planning for service-learning**

The director said that her office shares its strategic plan with other schools in the university with the intention to impel them to engage with communities. This strategic plan is informed by the voices of the communities. Planning is directed towards addressing real social issues by focusing on key intervention areas as well as the kind of support needed, which includes issues such as the participants, what they are doing, marketing, planning, finance, and training. The schools are basically the major role players in this planning process for they must clearly indicate their contributions

towards the rural community and submit their planning for the next five years. In order to sustain the development process, annual reports are required.

For 2014, the Directorate of Community Engagement has secured one day per week for community engagement for each programme. In 2013 the university has celebrated Nelson Mandela's birthday on the 18<sup>th</sup> July. In this regard, the entire university community adheres to the 67 minutes of providing community service to relevant social organisations. July thus became dedicated to "community service month", expecting all staff members to allot time for community service.

Univen is well positioned as a rural-based university to provide leadership, nationally and internationally, in terms of enhancing its contribution to communities covering different facets. Univen is to become a symbol of excellence when broaching the subject of benefits to all stakeholders, namely the university, students, academics, and communities. Certain indicators are needed to record the progress of transformation and development.

Director:

*"By stakeholders I mean university, students, academics, professors, but most important, communities. We have to be able to say 'Since we started engaging with community Y, how has it changed over the years'. We need to have indicators, pointing to that transformation, that development, we need to say 'How did we do it?'"*

#### **5.3.1.5 Institutional mission and policies of service-learning**

The social mission of Univen is to focus on rural and regional development. Previously, universities were viewed as ivory towers, and their location did not matter. This caused a division between them and the communities – a 'us and them' relationship. The director stated that Univen should be central to rural and regional development; which translates into decisive links and/or bias towards rural development, excluding industries or cosmopolitan areas. This focus, being Univen's niche, would differentiate it from other universities.

Director:

*“As a Directorate of Community Engagement we are excited about the vision and mission of this university because they are all about engaging for rural development. You have to understand the background that universities were ivory towers. They didn’t matter where they were situated. So their relationship between communities was that of ‘us and them’. My understanding is that we must be the centre of rural and regional development, which means our engagement should be decisively linked or biased towards rural. We do not want to engage the industries or cosmopolitan areas. We are here and we have to address rural needs. This should be our niche. This must differentiate us from other universities”.*

The Directorate of Community Engagement ensures that its practice is tailored to achieve the vision and mission of Univen. As such, Univen has targeted the most rural, poverty-stricken and marginalised communities for its engagement since most people do not want to travel there due to costs, inconvenience and time allocated for such engagement.

All academic and non-academic staff members are aware that community engagement is the core in the higher education agenda. They know that it forms part of the university’s responsibility and that, as employees of the university, they have a role to play in it.

An example of a school partnership in a remote and marginalised community is Masisi, close to the Zimbabwean border. Although it is far and difficult to reach it, the university views it as part of the communities it is to serve.

Although there are numerous social issues to be addressed in the surrounding rural communities, the School of Health Sciences, together with other schools in the university, has decided to limit and prioritise in providing intervention relating to core issues: all community engagement projects within the university are aimed at addressing problems pertaining to the provision of quality water, health and education.

The Directorate of Community Engagement has, together with other university leaders, developed a policy on community engagement in 2009. The policy clearly defines

service-learning and is considered one of the activities through which Univen can engage with the surrounding rural communities. The policy shows that service-learning may be understood and applied differently according to the various disciplines and its purpose.

#### **5.3.1.6 *Institutional leadership for service-learning***

The directorate receives a great deal of support from the Univen leaders, which is reflected in the vice-chancellor's establishment and strengthening of relationships with traditional leaders, sharing with them the vision of Univen and also taking notice of the needs of their communities. The various schools and departments also support issues concerned with community engagement projects. The director noted that academic staff members should come to a point where they have created space and time for community service within their schedules.

Schools and departments receive support because they have access to resources that can be used to conceptualise and implement service-learning. Transport is always available. Logistical arrangements should be made judiciously, e.g. arranging for overnight accommodation or stipends for lunch. Although resources are limited, it is shared equally. Although academic staff members are overburdened with work, they need to create time for community service, for it is expected of them to report about it in their performance evaluation.

Some students are serious about community work, for which they will need the support of the directorate, who will introduce them to various forms of community engagement, including service-learning. It is also important that such students need to be taught on how to engage with traditional leaders.

#### **5.3.1.7 *Teaching, learning, and research***

Univen has managed to integrate community engagement within the core business, which made community engagement compulsory, levelling with teaching, learning, and research. Currently community engagement embraces job descriptions and performance criteria for every academic staff member. Initially the concept of community engagement was unclear, relating it to board meetings and participation in radio talks. Now it is defined and categorised, involvement in community engagement, e.g. teaching

and research, is supplemented by performance reports. As citizens of the country, all academic staff is seen to have a public responsibility to improve conditions in underprivileged communities.

Director:

*"We used to have debates about what is community engagement. The academics would say 'Oh, I have been doing radio shows. We went to this board meeting, which is community engagement'. Then we would say 'No'. Then we categorised. We said 'Engagement has to interface. You have to show how you engage in teaching. If you are a lecturer or a professor, show us how you engage in teaching. If you are a lecturer or a professor, show us how you teach students. Show us how you engage with communities. If you are a lecturer or professor, you are also expected to research. Show us how you engage in your research. If you are a lecturer or a professor, you have a public responsibility. You are a citizen of this country. You are socially responsible to make less privileged communities. Show us how you do that. So in your performance report you are supposed to show. So that is how the Council on Higher Education was impressed about how we integrate it".*

The director already initiated the utilisation and support of service-learning when she was still teaching student nurses, although without referring to it as service-learning. Most of the classes she presented were in the community, clinic or orphanage, etc, which included practical work, such as bathing an HIV/AIDS patient at home.

Director:

*"In my classroom, I remember sometimes I was misunderstood. I started with a problem in mind. I did a lot of work, problem-based learning. That drove me to where the problem was without calling it service-learning. Most of my classes would happen in the community, in the clinic, the orphanage, etc. I am an experiential Kolb person. I would start with an experience and then draw theories back. So most of my classes were about going out there where I say I was misunderstood. It was like 'oh, this one likes going out. When does she teach? It was as if going out and making students bath a patient with HIV/AIDS in her home was not*

*learning. But I guess that came better understood. You see why I ended up in this directorate; it was an outcome of me behaving in that way”.*

In her efforts to support service-learning, she unpacked issues relating to the concept of community-based education and university-community partnerships. While she was a lecturer in the Department of Advance Nursing, she was asked to share her problem-based model with other schools and became coordinator for e.g Health Sciences as well as Human and Social Sciences. The problem-based model lends itself well to the provision of service to the community, for it is an important component of nursing.

Although not labelled “service-learning” by the various disciplines, students, as part of the university community, are aware of the significance of participating in service-learning activities. An example is the adherence to the 67 minutes of celebrating Nelson Mandela’s birthday by all university stakeholders, including the students. This is incorporated in the 2014 university calendar for everyone to take notice of it.

Part of the director’s role as coordinator is to promote sound relations with students in various schools within the university. As an example she mentioned the project “*Amplifying Community Voices*”, managed by the Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation in the School of Agriculture. This project involves students from various schools with the goal to promote team spirit in providing service to surrounding rural communities. Students need institutional support for some of their projects, and it is the duty of the directorate to evaluate these applications and provide support.

#### **5.3.1.8 Motivation for service-learning**

In 2013 the first recognition and rewards were awarded for the academic staff’s participation in service-learning and other community engagement activities in the form of Excellence Awards in Community Engagement. These awards value community engagement as important as teaching, learning and research. Categories such as service-learning, community-based research and action research were recognised at schools. Recognition for a humanitarian programme, for example, receives a financial award which can be applied for conferences, etc. At present only academic staff receives recognition, but it is contemplated to recognise students as well.

Director:

*"We recognise schools and individuals in all categories. If you are good in service-learning, we give you award. If you are good in community-based research or action research, it is another category. Maybe we must recognise students as well. For now it is only for academic staff. If you are good in your public responsibility and you have a humanitarian programme, we recognise that and give you cash that stays in your kitty, the same as you do research. So you would be given R50 000,00 which means you now have that you can use for your conferences and other stuff".*

Participation in community engagement impacts the promotion of academic staff members at Univen, for members are aware that community engagement is compulsory and they have to submit regular performance reports for departmental evaluation and quarterly reports.

As stated above, students do not yet receive incentives or rewards for their participation in service-learning and other community engagement activities.

### **5.3.1.9 University-community partnerships for service-learning**

The director emphasised the significance of partnering with local rural schools for provision of quality education should be a collaborative initiative. Funding is needed for improving the quality of education, especially for Grades 11 and 12 learners. Parents, school governors and various community stakeholders are significant in the education of a child. The directorate's research component is involved in establishing the reasons for some schools' underperformance, and given the same context, environment and resources, the good performance of other schools.

The directorate works with various stakeholders in the community, e.g traditional leaders, municipalities, women, youth, and others. The neighbouring communities should know that the directorate is open to communication.

Director:

*"We have always wanted our neighbouring communities to feel like they can walk in and get somebody to listen to them. So this office must listen to them".*

The programmes offered at Univen, however, need some sort of international support in one way or another. Univen has established strong partnerships with the University of Virginia in the USA. This partnership is dealing with a major provincial crisis, namely the provision and access to water. Univen became involved in issues of water quality and its impact on health, and reached a point where local resources is used to create technology in improving the quality of drinking water. Local potters are employed in this project, whereby they apply new technology to make the ceramic filters and to market it. Although it is still uncertain exactly how to achieve national and international status for this project, the beginning is already marked by orders from the Dominican Republic.

This project is a good example where theoretical and indigenous knowledge are successfully integrated, for traditional pottery methods and materials are used while applying nanotechnology.

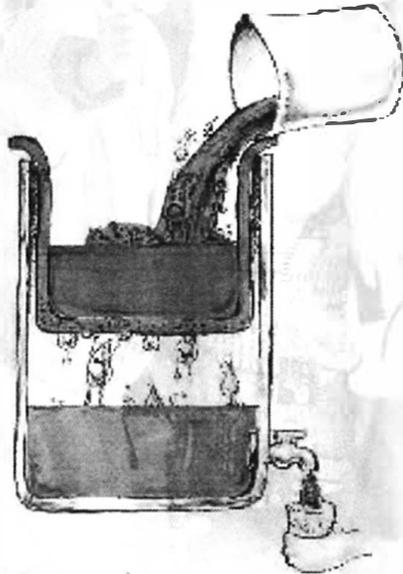
Director:

*“These women can demonstrate to you how to make a filter starting from the soil mixture, sawdust, and nanotech. They do it themselves and there is science in it but we use their indigenous knowledge. We integrate it with science and then we work together”.*

The School of Education at Univen is also in partnership with the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom. Academic staff members and students from both institutions work together with teachers and Grade 12 learners at selected underperforming rural schools with the goal to improve Maths, Science and English. This partnership programme greatly benefited teachers and school governors for it provided them with training.

CERAMIC WATER FILTER

Water is purified by filtration through a porous ceramic pot. Silver nanoparticles line the ceramic surface, killing harmful waterborne pathogens. The treated water is then collected in the lower reservoir and is safe to drink.



University of Venda



These filters are made by the Mukondeni Pottery Cooperative in Mashamba, Limpopo, South Africa. This collaboration is facilitated by The University of Venda, in Thohoyandou, South Africa and The University of Virginia in Charlottesville, VA, USA.

As coordinator of community engagement on campus, the director constitutes a team which provides service to surrounding rural communities. Being academics, it is important to consider ethics, respect and transparency. The directorate also facilitates the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) where necessary. An example of their intervention is the decision to work together with the Red Cross when there is an outbreak of cholera in Musina. But they also intervene in cases of domestic violence and abuse. After evaluation of the case, a collaborative team of experts is composed who then implements the decision.

Univen sustains its partnership with surrounding rural communities with regard to community engagement initiatives by integrating sustenance already with the inception of the projects. The directorate only provides training and acts as facilitator, while the community has to engage, e.g by organising everything themselves, chairing the meetings, and teaming up, for they have to be able to cope on their own. These are their own projects and should be managed by the community itself.

The chairpersons of community engagement projects in the communities are empowered to be in charge of their projects. The director only becomes involved when they experience serious problems. With all communication channels open to them, community members have access to the vice-chancellor to express their social concerns.

Consistency in participation in the community engagement projects has been problematic. The directorate strives for transparency and openness to minimise macro management of the projects. The dynamics of each project is different, for political or family issues can interfere. In one instance traditional leaders were in conflict for leadership positions. Although the university provided support by obtaining an international mediator, it made its neutrality clear by discontinuing all activities for a year to allow them to first resolve the issue.

The Director of Community Engagement has started working together with traditional leaders in surrounding rural communities. Traditional leaders receive training concerned with community development, and how to become effective development facilitators and leaders as well as servant leaders. The directorate also facilitates appreciation for programmes offered by the government in such a way that traditional

leaders become contributors for success in developing their communities. It is also important to document the processes involved, the successes as well as failures, and the lessons learnt. Publication will acquaint the international community with the university's efforts and draw people from their ranks to get involved. To achieve even better results, communities are asked to disclose whether they feel the university was successful in its mission or whether it was a failure.

In recognition of efforts by community partners, they are awarded with certificates. These are useful when candidates apply for jobs, for it shows them to be responsible citizens. The director, however, indicated that she is contemplating a strategy to better recognise the value of the community partners' efforts, beyond handing out certificates and celebrations.

#### **5.3.1.10 Coordination of service-learning**

The director's duty is to ensure the university's engagement with communities by providing support, coordination and management on behalf of the university. Striving for teamwork and transparency, as coordinator she is always up-to-date about the various schools' involvement in community engagement. This assists her in organising schools to cooperate in collaboration to maximise their intervention, presenting a concerted effort that would have a major impact. This implies solidarity on various levels, even sharing transport or consulting specialists from other fields and forming interdisciplinary teams.

Director:

*"If we don't do that, School A or Environmental Science can go to community Y today for their environmental science issues. School of Agriculture goes tomorrow. So coordination has helped us to say 'Ok, what are we doing? Where are we going? Can we go together? It also helped like if I come back with a problem from a health perspective, I can come and talk to a social worker or a psychologist. I would say 'there is a project which we are doing and requires your service. So we then form teams that way. If we don't do that, we will fatigue the community'".*

Another way of ensuring coordination between schools is the regular reports submitted to the directorate. These reports state the attempts made in providing community service. They are then compiled into an institutional report before being forwarded to the Department of Higher Education and Training for quality assurance.

#### **5.3.1.11 Staffing for service-learning**

The lack of human resources is a problem in the office of Community Engagement at Univen. Currently the office is operated by two staff members only, with no administrative officer. Both are overloaded with work.

Director:

*“Sometimes I talk on the radio and phones will be ringing. I receive a lot of enquiries and I wish I could have a dedicated person whose job is to answer calls and advise the community. It will be very much appropriate. That capacity I don’t have it right now in terms of manpower and I need it so badly.”*

#### **5.3.1.12 Funding for service-learning**

Funding is a problem towards conceptualisation of service-learning at Univen; however, it should not be considered a barrier for lack of implementation, since budgetary constraints will always be there. It is a national and international problem and those who are pro-community engagement should always strive to do more regardless of the lack of funds. In addressing this matter, relevant community partners should become involved in fundraising initiatives to sustain provision of services to surrounding rural communities. The Directorate of Community Engagement has managed to secure R26 million from the Department of Higher Education and Training in 2012. It is necessary to partner with municipalities to raise funds for engaging with communities. The directorate is in good standing with the district municipality, for they have worked together on needs analysis; a master plan for development. The steering committee consists of academics, municipal officials, community representatives and traditional leaders. By setting an example of community outreach, the vice-chancellor has visited all prominent traditional leaders, thereby securing funding from the Minister of Education and Training. Although current funding is insufficient, the directorate will still move forward.

Director:

*"We have a good name with the district municipality. We worked together on needs analysis. Together we worked on a master plan for development. We have a steering committee that consists of academics, municipal officials, community representatives and traditional leaders. I am sure you have checked our website. You would have seen that our vice-chancellor is in a period of visiting all prominent traditional leaders. So out of that we are able to convince the Minister of Higher Education and Training of this funding. I would say we are doing great and funding challenges would always be with us but we keep on knocking doors. Funding is not sufficient but it is enough to get us going. So we are on the right track".*

### **5.3.1.13 Evaluation and assessment for service-learning**

Evaluation and assessment on issues relating to service-learning and other community engagement activities is annually conducted. Community engagement is currently recognised for promotion. This is based on the premise that even senior staff, e.g professors, have to be involved in community engagement; it is their responsibility to propagate the impact the university can have in a community. Based on the various levels, a professor will have to show more engagement than junior lecturers.

Director:

*"Service-learning is a component of promotion. You cannot be a professor without community engagement work because the argument is that you cannot be a senior person and the work that you do has no impact in the community. It is just for your sake. You have to show how your expertise impacts the community. It goes according to levels. For a junior lecturer it will be less. But for a professor you have to show more of the engagement".*

## **5.3.2 Findings: School of Education**

### **5.3.2.1 Information of participants**

#### *- Academic staff member 1*

Academic staff member 1 is not involved in any service-learning or community engagement projects at the university. However, in his private capacity, he has been coaching and sponsoring (providing finance and transport) a soccer team for underprivileged teenage boys from Thohoyandou and Manini since 2009. His primary goal is to coach them on soccer rules and technical skills, but he also wants to develop them into responsible adults.

#### *- Academic staff member 2*

Academic staff member 2 has been involved in Teaching Practice since she joined Univen in 1991. She was coordinator of the project but as from 2013, she became an additional member in the Teaching Practice Committee. She sees teaching as her mission in life.

#### *- Project coordinator*

The project coordinator is the representative of the School of Education in the Directorate of Community Engagement. He is also a member of the Research Committee in the School of Education. He is personally involved in the Univen Winter School project, Saturday classes and NRF-funded Community Engagement project. After he joined the Winter School project in 2011, he acted as coordinator on various levels of the BEd FET programme. Besides teaching Physical Science, he is also responsible for the accommodation arrangements for the learners at university student residences.

He joined Teaching Practice in 2006 when he was appointed at Univen. He is currently a member of the Teaching Practice Committee where he assists in placing students at their home schools in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces. He then calls on them to assess their lesson preparations and presentations.

- *Student 1*

Student 1 joined the Winter School Enrichment project in June 2013 as a facilitator and is involved in Teaching Practice. He taught Mathematics and Physical Science during the Winter School.

**5.3.2.2 Current community engagement projects**

- *Winter School Enrichment Project*

The Winter School project was initiated in 1993 with its primary goal the improvement in academic performance of Grade 12 learners and matric results in the Limpopo Province. It is open to all Grade 12 learners from the province. This annual project is run in June and July during winter school breaks. Enrolment in the school costs R500 per learner. The basic aim of this project is to assist Grade 12 learners in subjects like Mathematics, Natural Science, Commercial studies, and Agricultural Science. The project coordinator, however, feels that History as a subject is not given the attention it deserves in secondary schools and during the Winter School. The history of a country is an important facet, and learners should be aware of this importance. In 2013, at least 1000 learners attended the Winter School for this purpose, but except for a student teacher who taught it without remuneration, no provision was made to accommodate the subject in the enrichment programme.

Over the past few years learner numbers decreased due to other Winter Schools and Saturday classes being made available. However, in 2012 and 2013, their numbers increased. Enrolment for the Winter School in 2012 counted 790 learners, and in 2013 their numbers has risen to 1800.

The larger enrolment of 150 schools in 2013 created additional problems: lecture halls were overcrowded and placement in hostels were just as problematic; 15 attendance registers had to be kept; it was difficult to find enough teachers. Fortunately 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students training for teaching, became involved.

- *Saturday School Project*

Grades 10, 11 and 12 learners attend Saturday classes at Univen. Enrolment costs R550 per learner. Focus is on all school subjects except Afrikaans. Secon-

dary school teachers with a record of excellent performance at their schools, together with 4<sup>th</sup> year student teachers are utilised for this purpose.

Similar to the Winter School project, the numbers of schools increased: 70 schools attended in 2012, and in 2013 numbers increased to include 150 schools.

- *Teaching Practice*

This long running project is considered to be part of work integrated learning, where students are posted at schools where they can experience authentic classroom situations rather than the micro-teaching sessions at the university. Students are placed at their home schools in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces. BEd FET fourth year students spend six months in the field while PGCE students spend three months. During this field work, academic staff members call on the students for assessment purposes.

- *Visiting students from Belgium*

In an exchange programme between Univen and Belgium, two student teachers from Belgium are sent every semester to Univen. With the focus on Teaching Practice, the main focus is on Foundation Phase Teaching.

- *Partnership programme with the University of Warwick, UK*

The School of Education at Univen is in partnership with the University of Warwick in the UK, who sends student teachers specialising in Mathematics, Science and English to Univen. They assist at the Maths and Science Centre at Vuwani, which caters for the community in these subjects. Secondary school learners have the opportunity to perform demonstrations.

- *NRF-funded project for seven schools*

This multi-project was started in January 2013 and involves all the schools at Univen. Its primary goal is to improve Mathematics, Physical Science, Life Skills and English among learners at surrounding secondary schools. Circuit managers, principals, teachers and students are consulted to establish guidelines for working with the communities in this aspect.

### 5.3.2.3 *Conceptualisation of service-learning*

On the question of how participants in this study comprehend service-learning, it became clear that some are unfamiliar with the concept, while others stated that service-learning comprises providing a service whilst learning at the same time. Another staff member believes it comprises work-based learning. To him concepts like service-learning and community engagement are more-or-less synonymous. Service-learning not only emphasises the cognitive, but it also involves the milieu. It implies working in a community where there is a lack of skills. Students obtain practical experience while working with the teachers. The School of Education's general view is that Teaching Practice is service-learning.

Academic staff member 2:

*"I don't know. I think it is work-based learning. Service-learning? Community Engagement? To me they are more or less synonymous. But I am not sure".*

Project coordinator:

*"Service-learning to me, I feel it is where we do not just emphasise the cognitive, the learning, but where the students are involved in the environment setup. It should be taken through with community engagement. Now in service-learning you go to a community where the skills are lacking. Many times the principals want to grab university students so that they continue with them. We take our students for service-learning to do it practically and work out with teachers who have been in the profession for a long time. We are taking a general view that our Teaching Practice is service-learning".*

While some of the participants only heard references to the term "service-learning" for the first time during the interviews, others were familiar with it for at least a year, when it was mentioned during a discussion on Work-Integrated Learning; another read about it in a Government Gazette. The project coordinator says it is included in the community engagement policy, but he already heard about it in 1986 in Uganda at the college where he was then employed.

Student 1:

*"I don't understand it but I will try. I guess it means you provide service while you are learning".*

Academic staff member 1:

*"It is more than a year that I was informed about service-learning. I just got it as we were discussing Work-Integrated Learning".*

Another staff member conceptualises service-learning as addressing social problems related to poverty, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, etc in their engagement in Teaching Practice, the Winter School as well as the Saturday classes. An example she provided are the Belgian students' conduct in handling problems: except for teaching, they stayed after hours and restored broken desks, doors and light fixtures, painted the classrooms and cleaned up the playgrounds. This set an example to a grateful community.

A definition for service-learning is not commonly known on campus, although it is mentioned in Senate or School Board meetings. Even the Directorate of Community Engagement does not contribute to spreading, supporting and utilising service-learning, while it is seen to be its responsibility to ensure that service-learning is better conceptualised.

Academic staff member 1:

*"The Directorate of Community Engagement doesn't go around talking about service-learning. It is only when we are being evaluated that they start talking about it indirectly without telling us beforehand what service-learning is."*

Academic staff member 2:

*"I don't know of any common definition of service-learning on campus. I only know of a situation where all the people who are engaged in community projects come together but we don't talk about service-learning at all".*

According to one interviewee, the various university schools have divergent definitions of service-learning, depending on their individual assessments. Only once it is properly

defined, and furnished with information, examples and guidelines, implementation would become possible and would yield better academic, professional and social results. The University of Johannesburg has integrated service-learning in their curriculum, a different module from Teaching Practice.

Project coordinator:

*"Schools at this institution define service-learning according to what it means for them. You find that how it is defined in the School of Education is different from how it is defined in the School of Environmental Sciences. We define it differently. Each school has its own way of dealing with service-learning. I think once we have a common understanding of service-learning, we will diverge because now each school has its own interpretations. You may find that what works well in the School of Education does not work well in Environmental Sciences or Agriculture. It will have a divergent view which encompasses all of us".*

Academic staff member 1:

*"As a university we need to be able to define concepts in order to have a proper meaning".*

Academic staff member 2:

*"I think we need more information and more examples. When we benchmarked with University of Johannesburg, we realised that they have integrated service-learning into their curriculum. It was a different module from Teaching Practice. But I don't think it will be easy for us to manage it because our students go as far as Punda Maria, down that side of Nwanwedi, some in Musina and Mpumalanga. We really need some kind of guidelines".*

One staff member believes that, once students become involved in service-learning, they would be able to effect great changes in their communities, for he is convinced that more skills are needed than what Teaching Practice alone can deliver. Before the implementation of service-learning, students will have to be thoroughly prepared for they will be rendering services on certain issues. It might, however, be difficult to prepare portfolios for both Teaching Practice and service-learning simultaneously.

#### **5.3.2.4 Strategic planning for service-learning**

The university started a five year strategic plan for the conceptualisation of community engagement in 2010. Although progress is made in this regard, implementation is not yet possible. Efforts are also being made to include Work Integrated Learning (WIL) within the module of Teaching Practice.

Academic staff member 2:

*“We discussed about the strategy but we haven’t started with implementation. Today at the departmental meeting we agreed to relook at the Teaching Practice project in order to start planning for 2014 and try to integrate the improvements that we have in mind”.*

#### **5.3.2.5 Institutional mission and policies of service-learning**

The social mission of Univen embraces being a comprehensive institution of higher education which aims towards offering professionally-based programmes to surrounding rural communities. The social mission of Univen is achieved when students are sent to their home schools in the rural areas of Mpumalanga and the Limpopo Province during Teaching Practice, not confining them to teaching in urban areas.

Academic staff member 2:

*“Our students are free to go to their home schools. We do not confine them to teach in urban areas. They do the home teaching in the rural areas of Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces”.*

Before projects are implemented, needs assessment analysis determines the real needs of the local communities, which can range from improving matric results, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and drug abuse, to presenting motivational talks. One example worth mentioning is a classroom case, where no science experiments were conducted: the chemicals stored in a broken cabinet were 20 years old! Good mathematics and science teachers are scarce, and there usually being one of each allocated to a school, they are usually overworked, and classes are overcrowded:

some classes have as many as 99 learners. This makes it difficult for a single teacher to mark class- and homework and to provide feedback.

Although being aware of a policy-making entity - the Directorate of Community Engagement - for service-learning, one staff member never bothered to read the policy. He stated that he knows to first obtain the parents' consent; and civic leaders must also be informed about planned activities. Another staff member stated that such an institutional policy has just been issued. It is the responsibility of the School of Education to develop guidelines in line with it, which first encompasses the reading of it, for it is to be implemented during Teaching Practice.

Academic staff member 1:

*"There is a section on community engagement. I have never bothered to go through the Community Engagement Policy because the first thing you do with community engagement project is that you need to get the concerned of the parents. Civic leaders must also be aware of what you are doing. The policy is there because we have a Directorate of Community Engagement".*

### **5.3.2.6 Institutional leaders for service-learning**

Institutional leaders, like the director of Community Engagement, promote the agenda of community engagement activities. Meetings are arranged with representatives in community engagement from each school board, the deans support it, the vice-chancellor encourages it, community projects are audited, and projects are published in Nendila, a Univen publication.

The Dean is very supportive of community engagement, and is meticulous on tasks being done well and on time. He has to approve the transport needed during Teaching Practice, and is responsible for meetings and workshops.

The academic staff is accountable at school and department level as well as the school board. The school board is responsible to critically review the department's approach to community engagement and make recommendations.

None of the student leaders conceptualise service-learning while some are inept in promoting the quality of the service they provide in schools during Teaching Practice. This mediocre attitude is observed in the preparation and presentation of their lessons, which is deficient in planning.

### **5.3.2.7 Teaching, learning, and research**

Community engagement activities are linked to teaching and research in the sense that academic staff teaches the students who then in turn teach at schools. Students are thus equipped with the necessary skills to conduct community-based research. Conversely, it is the opinion of another staff member that the Winter School and Saturday classes are aligned to teaching and research. The department is working towards meeting the national standards of the MRTEQ (Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications) document in developing educational programmes in the School of Education towards ensuring that service-learning is incorporated in the curriculum.

There is no advocacy for service-learning among academic staff members, although Work Integrated Learning is a familiar concept and thus integrated with the curriculum. Community Engagement is recognised as a criterion for promotion of academic staff members. Academic staff is made aware of this fact from the moment of their appointment, resulting in everyone in the School of Education being involved in Teaching Practice or Work Integrated Learning. With effect from 2013, all lecturers are engaged in communities, for which purpose performance packages have been implemented. All academic staff members are fully supported to engage with communities for it is an essential part of their work package together with teaching, learning and research.

Project coordinator:

*"It is something that you must do. If you are involved in Community Engagement, you cannot be promoted. The emphasis currently is 'Please, if you don't have it, have it. It is a must. It must be part and parcel of teaching and learning, and research. On operational level, as academic staff members we know that we have to contribute to teaching, research and community engagement. In the School of Education everybody is involved in Teaching Practice which is Work-Integrated Learning".*

Apparently there is close to none advocacy for service-learning among students. They feel that encouragement should come from university management, i.e the deans, heads of departments, and academic staff. Students should be informed about such programmes and how it will benefit them.

Student 1:

*"We do lack such information. For us to know what service-learning is, it must come from the university management, down to deans, heads of departments, academic staff, and students. They should start those programmes and make it clear as to how we are going to benefit as students. If they want us to engage with communities, they need to setup a programme which will cater for us".*

At present very few students take part in community engagement activities, e.g only five student teachers are involved in the Saturday School project; the NRF-funded project includes only four academic staff members while only ten students from the School of Education are involved; and fewer than twenty students participated in the Winter School project in 2013. Currently participation in community engagement projects is optional.

#### **5.3.2.8 Motivation for service-learning**

Although one staff member stated that there are no incentives and rewards for academic staff members taking part in community engagement activities, the project coordinator mentioned that the university has recently embarked on initiatives towards encouraging academic staff members to engage with communities. In 2013 the best candidate in Teaching and Learning, Research and Community Engagement was awarded R15 000 for personal use and a further R35 000 which can be used for research.

Project coordinator:

*"This year they have started recognising the best Teaching and Learning, Research, and Community Engagement. I was a runner-up. They give R15 000,00 which you can use for anything. Then they give you R35 000,00 which you can use for research. This is given to the best candidate in the school. The research and teaching awards have always*

*been there. So it is one way of encouraging academic staff members to engage with communities”.*

One student interviewee reckons that the university radio station is an excellent opportunity for reaching out to the students on community engagement. Interviewees also viewed participation in Teaching Practice as an opportunity to promote service-learning. During Teaching Practice learners from surrounding schools become familiar with student teachers and what they learn and want to follow suit. Grade 12 learners are encouraged to obtain good pass marks which will enable them to register at the university and/or other tertiary institutions.

Teaching Practice is of great benefit to the student teachers, for it allows for easy absorption into the teaching system. By the end of their final year, most have been approached by school principals to apply for teaching posts. Being involved in Teaching Practice, the students not only serve the community, but also act as ambassadors for Univen. Many schools experience a shortage of teachers; while being there, the students divide their workload. Some schools do not have subject teachers, in which case the students are used to temporarily fill that position. This implies that students are exposed to actual work related situations which is advantageous for future employment opportunities, adding it to their curriculum vitae.

A problem which, however, develops from schools' dependence on student assistance, is that some teachers take advantage of them, not attending classes and thus relinquishing the workload to the student.

Although students receive no credits for their involvement in the Winter School and Saturday classes, they are remunerated.

#### ***5.3.2.9 University-community partnerships for service-learning***

Interviewees indicated that they partner with surrounding rural communities in addressing educational challenges in schools. Community residents often favourably remark about the Winter School project.

Sound relations are established with principals of schools where students are to be placed for Teaching Practice. In addition to general communication, staff calls on those schools in preparation for Teaching Practice. Before they leave, students are briefed on ambassadorship for the school and university, being representatives for future Univen students. They are expected to adhere to strict rules, which they receive in the form of a tutorial letter, of which a copy is also handed to the principal.

Academic staff member 2:

*"We communicate with our partners. We even go there and check to normalise the situation. We even brief our students before they go to schools that they need to set a good example in the name of the school and university. They are our voices. They are representing the future students of Univen. We want them to go there and leave an indelible mark so that others can also have space to go to the same school next time. So they must not spoil the situation for us. The discipline is very strict. We give them rules before they go. We even have a tutorial letter which is handed to them before they go. The principals are also given those letters".*

With regard to community engagement activities, the School of Education maintains mutual understanding via letters sent to community partners such as schools, circuit offices, traditional leaders and other government departments. Before sending students to a particular school for Teaching Practice, its needs are first established. Students are not merely posted at schools close to their homes, but the school must indicate whether it offers the student's specialised subject and whether there is a need for student teachers.

The project coordinator uses Facebook to furnish learners with information about the Winter School and Saturday classes. Being such a strong social network, it is the ideal place for reaching the youth and it simultaneously sustains relationship with the university.

Often community members take the lead in community engagement. Planning depends on the type of community engagement. The School of Education is serious about the maintenance of good relationships with its surrounding schools.

Regular contact is maintained between the School of Education and school principals. They are asked to report on the students' behaviour, their cooperation within the school and other teachers, and to inform the university on how best to assist them. Principals can contact the lecturers, the dean or deputy dean should they wish to report on a student's behaviour, which is immediately investigated by the School of Education.

Contact is maintained with community partners to obtain their views about the service provided by academic staff and students. Parents are even commenting positively about the Winter School on Facebook, a good indication of the type of engagement the School of Education has with the community, where they are free to remark and/or criticise.

Due to the parents' involvement, the numbers of learners attending the Winter School has risen to a 1 000 in 2013. The university could barely handle so many learners, who even came from Makotopong and Seshego, communities usually served by the University of Limpopo.

Learners who took part in the Winter School and Saturday classes are satisfied with the service provided by Univen. They had an opportunity to experience the atmosphere of tertiary education and enjoyed the independence it afforded them. They attended classes in lecture halls, while projectors were used during teaching sessions, technology most are unfamiliar with.

#### ***5.3.2.10 Coordination of service-learning***

A special team is responsible for ensuring proper coordination of Teaching Practice activities for first to fourth year levels of the Bachelor of Education with specialisation in Further Education and Training (BEd FET) as well as for the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Through this concerted effort, the coordinated team ensures the smooth running of Teaching Practice sessions.

#### ***5.3.2.11 Staffing for service-learning***

Since community service projects involve a great deal of work, the current staff shortage necessitates consideration of more staff being employed in 2015. This lack of human resources in the School of Education impacts on the conceptualisation and

implementation of service-learning. Students also need to be accompanied by lecturers during their Teaching Practice.

Academic staff member 2:

*“We have huge shortage of lecturers. Our students need more lecturers who can accompany them when they provide service in schools. There is no school here without broken chairs, desks, windows and lights. Some schools need painting. That is where we can start”.*

#### **5.3.2.12 Funding for service-learning**

Community engagement projects are funded by the Directorate of Community Engagement. The NRF is funding Teaching Practice, which is an essential part of the university's community engagement.

The School of Education is very supportive of Teaching Practice, for it has access to enough funding for study material, transport (enabling lecturers to even call on their students in Mpumalanga), meetings and workshops.

Academic staff member 2:

*“The School of Education is very supportive because funding is always available. The budget is there for everything that we need for Teaching Practice. We haven't have hick-ups with financial support. So we can arrange transport, meetings and workshops. We can even go as far as Mpumalanga to visit our students in schools”.*

Although learners attending the Winter School is funded by the university, they have to pay a small enrolment fee of R500.00; if a learner attends both the Winter School and the Saturday School, an amount of R550.00 is payable.

#### **5.3.2.13 Evaluation and assessment of service-learning**

One interviewee stated that, based on a performance contract, academic staff members' engagement with communities is annually assessed.

Academic staff member 2:

*“Now there is a performance contract. They would like to know what you did for your community. Every year we are assessed on that basis”.*

Some participants, however, stressed the lack of evaluation and assessment of academic staff members for participating in service-learning; even students are not evaluated for engaging with communities.

Although there are fewer than ten students involved, their participation is not evaluated. Marks are allocated to students' exceptional performance in class and micro-teaching. Evaluation for Teaching Practice includes their portfolios - which include lesson planning - and the observations of their lecturer during their teaching classes at their home schools. A standard form is used for this assessment.

Students are also evaluated by mentor teachers at schools. They also evaluate each other, and through this process, are able to review their experiences during Teaching Practice.

### **5.3.3 Findings: School of Agriculture**

#### ***5.3.3.1 Information of participants***

- *Academic staff member 1*

In 2007 Academic staff member 1 became involved in a number of community engagement projects at sixty villages within seven wards in the Makhado Municipality. She is the coordinator of issues related to Rural Development Planning and represents the community in the development agenda. She does research in the communities and train people to sustain the projects. The government and Vhembe District Municipality accepted the methodology used by the School of Agriculture and also want to employ it in other local municipalities for their Integrated Rural Development Plans.

- *Academic staff member 2*

Academic staff member 2 is involved in food processing projects in the surrounding communities, providing the technical skills in those projects towards improving the

processing of the products and mediates in establishing relationships with the relevant government departments and community-based organisations. He joined these projects in 2001.

- *Student 1*

Student 1 joined “Amplifying Community Voices” in 2012. As student her duties and responsibilities include facilitation of group discussions, consolidating and writing reports, conducting Participatory Action Research and publishing articles. Working with the rural community, she comes in contact with people across the spectrum of various ages, and also works with students from the University of Virginia, USA. These international students want to assist in the development of rural communities in Africa.

- *Student 2*

Student 2 derives from the School of Human and Social Sciences and has joined the “Amplifying Community Voices” voices in 2011. She facilitates discussions with members of the community; conduct needs assessments, and develops strategic plans.

### **5.3.3.2 Current community engagement projects**

- *Amplifying Community Voices*

Amplifying Community Voices is a project conceived and implemented in 2006 by the Institute of Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation in the School of Agriculture. The primary goal of the project is to create community ventilation platforms on grassroots level which incorporate the decisions of children, youth, women, and community leaders in rural community development in the Makhado Local Municipality. In 2010 it was adopted as a flagship university programme for showcasing community-engaged scholarship. The project corresponds with Integrated Development Planning which expects local municipalities to include the entire community’s say in development plans. Three wards have already completed their own Integrated Rural Development Plans, and moving to the next step in finding ways, means and resources necessary for the implementation of their community-based development projects.

This project caters for both undergraduate and postgraduate students from various departments and centres of Univen, which assists in them acquiring and sharpening their skills in championing participatory rural development. It is based on the principles of Participatory Action Research, where needs assessments are conducted to empower communities to take the lead in addressing their own social problems through the use of local resources.

- *University Income Generation Centre*

The primary goal of this project is the empowerment of small business enterprises to join in the development of their own communities. The project involves people who do not have access to a university qualification, with the aim to assist them in acquiring knowledge and skills which could render them employable in the future.

- *Food processing projects*

The primary goal of these projects, initiated in 2000, is to provide technical skills in the surrounding communities to improve their products.

### **5.3.3.3 Conceptualisation of service-learning**

At present the concept of service-learning is not well understood, although one interviewee, being familiar with the concept from previous experience in government departments, NGOs and international organisations, remarked that they intend to implement it as soon as their projects are implemented. Another staff member supposes it to relate to students' practical experience in the field. He said it is a component of the department's programme and participation is compulsory for students towards completion of their degrees. The student interviewees imagined it to be learning through delivering service to the needy and to provide them with resources.

Academic staff member 1:

*"Service-learning? I think I have a bit of understanding around it. As it is right now, I can't say we have some students who are involved in this as an institute. But that is where we are going. We are intending to have it as soon as we have our projects being implemented. But right now we don't have it. Already I know what service-learning is from private practice to*

*public practice. I have done it. I know how it is done unless there is a different way it is looked at in academic institutions. When I was in school, I did it myself”.*

Student 1:

*“I know I have heard about service-learning. This is a word that I hear about every now and then. Things that you hear from time to time you take them for granted and you think that you understand them”.*

One academic staff member remarked that the Office of Community Engagement should have a common definition for service-learning. None of the other interviewees were aware of an existing definition but thought its interpretation and understanding depended on its implementation in the various schools of the university.

Academic staff member 2:

*“I don’t want to lie. I don’t know of any common definition of service-learning but we are expected to understand it”.*

Student 1:

*“There is no common definition of service-learning. I think its interpretation and understanding lies more on how it is implemented at various schools in the university. It depends on who you are”.*

Measures to better conceptualise service-learning at the university is part of the strategic planning. Interviewees agreed that a common definition would be advantageous.

#### **5.3.3.4 Strategic planning for service-learning**

In the Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation a community engagement strategy informs the implementation of their activities, which would aid, for example, in developing the Masia community to address their social problems. Empowering the youth to become involved as ambassadors for their community, instead of them depending on the university for solutions, would be a great achievement.

To realise the strategic plan, it would be necessary to work in partnership with various government departments, the private sector, and external donors. Community engagement should be integrated into the curriculum; this would allow many students to have a positive impact on the surrounding rural communities.

A strategic plan is also in place for the food processing projects, which aims at the department becoming socially more relevant to the surrounding communities through the involvement of more small scale entities in the food processing projects. The intention is to create an enabling environment that would allow for establishing networks that may allow the provision of technical skills, economic growth of small scale entities, and access to funding from government departments.

#### **5.3.3.5 Institutional mission and policies for service-learning**

The “Amplifying Community Voices” projects, along with other existing community engagement projects in the School of Agriculture, are seen as a means for achieving the social mission of Univen. This initiative is based on the fact that Univen is a rural-based university where all stakeholders are expected to work together in enhancing local and regional development.

The social mission of Univen and the alignment of its projects in achieving its mission are to first reach out to the local communities, expanding into the region and eventually run programmes in the rest of South Africa, including other countries such as Lesotho and Zambia. The university is at the centre of rural development, empowering the surrounding communities, concentrating on the three pillars, namely research, community engagement and teaching. Explaining to the rural residents what higher education comprises via career exhibitions, providing information about bursaries and motivating the youth to enrol for further studies, the university is focussed in producing future leaders.

Academic staff member 2:

*“This university wants to be at the centre of rural development which I think most of the departments are striving for. We are trying to concentrate on the three pillars: research, community engagement, and teaching and learning”.*

Student 1:

*“Univen is a comprehensive university that is focused on empowering communities around here. Our slogan is about producing future leaders. So all these programmes are directed towards bringing future leaders. This is where we start”.*

In their community engagement projects, the department strives towards ensuring that their activities are locally contextualised by working with municipalities in securing funding for community engagement projects. Primary and secondary school learners also benefit from these projects for they receive career guidance. Projects focus, e.g on indigenous fruits that are locally produced.

None of the participants in the study knew of existing policies conceptualising service-learning, but says the university-wide Policy on Community Engagement regulates the various schools' individual policies. The Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation also has a policy.

#### **5.3.3.6 Institutional leaders for service-learning**

Institutional leaders must support the conceptualising of service-learning and obtain funding from the university and external donors.

All departments in the School of Agriculture are engaged in community service, each concerned with projects related to their research or interest. Each department assigns a staff member to advocate community engagement – not specifically service-learning – and assignment is replicated on school level. The dean, via the community engagement coordinator, is responsible for the functionality of this system before it reaches the Directorate of Community Engagement.

Academic staff member 2:

*“Each and every department has its own community engagement projects. Like Plant Production Department have its own community engagement projects. Home Economics. Family Ecology. They have their own projects which are related to what they are doing. So all in all, each and every department has its own projects. In each department there a member who*

*is assigned to advocate community engagement, not service-learning specifically. So it goes on to the school level. The dean through the community engagement coordinator will be responsible for that, then to the Directorate of Community Engagement”.*

The Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation plays a major role in providing support to students during their community service activities. Before going out to the communities, usually on Saturdays, meetings are held on Fridays briefing and orientating the students on facilitation during engagement and how to provide service to the communities.

Initiative among students to take leadership in the conceptualisation of service-learning does not yet exist. The student body, Amplifying Community Voices Student Association (ACVSA), registered with the SRC, is funded by the university and very active on campus in addition to being involved in community work.

#### **5.3.3.7 Teaching, learning, and research**

The interviewees were confident in their answers related to community engagement but were unsure about service-learning. One interviewee stated that community engagement – referring to it rather than service-learning - is part of the university core activities, but it does not yet enjoy the same status as research, teaching and learning. The community activities the various departments are involved in should inform their particular manner of teaching: an initial programme, which comprised of practical teaching methods, was revised. Information obtained from the communities is included in the theoretical studies at university, which are then put into practice when engaging with the communities. Presentation skills acquired from lectures are used in community service. Reports include everything that has transpired between the partners, upon which recommendations towards improvement can be made, relating to action research.

There is no advocacy for service-learning among academics in the School of Agriculture: only two staff members are involved in the “Amplifying Community Voices” project, while six are engaged in the food processing project. Measures have been

taken to make participation in community engagement compulsory; however, it seems to be a long and slow process for no results have been forthcoming.

Few academic staff members are informed about service-learning. The reason for this could be due to the fact that universities are not yet oriented towards community engagement. As academics they are more concerned with research and publication, not thinking in terms of research to bring about relief and positive change in communities. Should if they focus on this "action" research, assessments and reports will become available to the particular community, they will be included in the decision making process, both partners building trust based on transparency. Academic institutions should thus engage in proper transformation with regard to community engagement.

Academic staff member 1:

*"You are back with service-learning again. The reason why I am not talking about it is because we have not yet started with it. I won't talk about it until we have something. We know there is talk about service-learning but I can't pinpoint and say this is service-learning. Personally I should not be judged for saying this. I think universities have not yet being orientated into community engagement. As academics we think research publications. We think research for presenting a paper, but we don't think research for action, or research for making a difference in the community. That I think is a major problem. If academic staff would begin to look at research as a way to bring change in a given community, it will make a whole lot of difference because then we will find us more looking at action research and looking at the outcome of what we will be doing. We are always accused of parachuting into some assessments and reports. We don't even tell them what we got. Then you disappear. Then communities become very uncomfortable with you. So they don't care whether you come or not because after all you just go. Sometimes they don't even tell you the truth. At the end you find your research is misreporting the situation because you didn't create enough time to be comfortable with them. So I think this is high time that there is proper transformation of academic institutions with regard to community engagement".*

Students from various schools take part in community engagement activities in the Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation, which is attached to the School of Agriculture. The institute focuses more on research than teaching, while their students are part-time and employed elsewhere. Still, out of the 110 students, only six are involved in the food processing projects.

None of the students are aware of any advocacy on campus to the conceptualisation of service-learning. They are, however, involved in community engagement projects, e.g. the 10 students from the School of Agriculture who are involved in the "Amplifying Community Voices" project.

Opportunities for students to adopt and use service-learning exist when they are in the field, providing community service, advertising the department, school and university. Since rural communities came to recognise the relevance of the university and its possibilities, in many cases it became their university of choice: students, even from Pretoria, register for their Masters and PhD degrees at Univen due to its involvement with the rural communities.

Participation in service-learning may be invaluable to students in the sense that it may open doors for them in the future when applying for jobs, for it shows that they have already invested in a community while still being students. Students will not only be credited for the completion of their degrees but will also achieve recognition in the workplace, while the community will benefit from the service provided.

Student 1:

*"I can't neglect taking part in community engagement. I come from the community. In one way or another, I have to contribute to the community. Sometimes as students we become narrow-minded that we concentrate on the academic component of our degrees. But life is not just about that. We need to ensure that we engage with communities through campaigns that will also help in recruiting new students to the university".*

Participation in service-learning may be advantageous for the students, being exposed to the practical application of theoretical knowledge and the job market. At present it is difficult to find employable graduates, for they are unable to apply theory into practice.

This is a great disadvantage, a problem which can be solved by service-learning, which will assist in developing rural communities.

The Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation does not have its own transport which can be used for visits to communities, often having to rely on transport provided by a staff member. This means that only a limited number of students can accompany him/her.

Communities are consulted on their needs; the university does not declare that they have a certain problem, e.g no access to clean water. Students involved in the "Amplifying Community Voices" programme are trained in the correct research methods to discover the problems in the surrounding communities. Most people trust the university, which makes it easier for them to be frank.

#### **5.3.3.8 Motivation for service-learning**

Although the one interviewee denied being familiar with service-learning, she said that no incentives or rewards are available for academic staff members to take part in this initiative. Community work is carried out on weekends, which discourage most academics to engage with communities, despite the fact that many publications originate from community work which brings acknowledgement in the form of awards.

However, since 2013 community engagement came to be recognised as part of promotion and staff members are being awarded prizes for their engagement. The Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation succeeded in securing three Community Engagement Awards, each to the value of R50 000.00. This is used to attend international conferences and build capacity to engage with communities.

Academic staff member 2:

*"Now community engagement is recognised as part of promotion. They also give prizes to academic staff members who are doing good in community engagement. That started since this year".*

Student 2:

*"Last year the Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation won three Community Engagement Awards of R50 000,00 each. Now we can attend conferences around the world and build more capacity on how to engage with communities".*

Students are awarded certificates as reward for taking part in community engagement. Community members receive certificates in recognition of their participation in Amplifying Community Voices. In celebration of Youth -, Women's -, or Mandela Day, community members have to write essays. This not only improves their writing and presentation skills, but they are also awarded with certificates.

### **5.3.3.9 University-community partnerships for service-learning**

Participants noted that they work in partnership with various community stakeholders in addressing the social challenges. Issues that are addressed via their knowledge and skills include the empowerment of women to become leaders in the community; towards poverty alleviation people are taught how they can develop themselves; while some participants are involved in farming projects.

Student 2:

*"We deal with issues on women empowerment. In the past women were not allowed to be leaders. So we are empowering them so that they can occupy leadership positions. We also deal with poverty alleviation in such a way that we help community members to understand the ways in which they can develop themselves. Others are involved in farming projects. So we help them with knowledge and skills so that they can improve their farming".*

The university's engagement with communities minimise the migration of students to urban areas after they had completed their degrees. If students start on these projects while still at university, they may adopt them after finishing their studies. The majority of rural people around Univen live on government social grants. It is the university's mission to assist the communities in the different projects with which they are struggling to make it more profitable.

The School of Agriculture developed a Memorandum of Understanding, a binding contract between two partners, where each stipulates its expectations. The school has various partnerships with, e.g communities, municipalities, and politicians. If both partners are assured that their interests and needs are addressed, such a partnership stands a better chance to meet with success.

Often municipal counsellors do not turn up for pre-arranged meetings. Ward committees, however, proved more willing to work together with the school. There is a hiatus in terms of the implementation of strategies; and it is difficult to implement something you do not understand. Engaging partners come to understand and appreciate each other's expertise.

Before a project is initiated, the school acquires permission from the municipal councillors and state their mission. In most cases they are suspicious of the request, imagining the school impinging on their duties or that the project will overlap with their work.

Before embarking on the planning of a community project, social issues are first addressed. In the process the partner becomes aware of its limitations and assets and addresses it themselves, without interference from the school. They are properly prepared and their role in the development process is made clear. Once an understanding has been reached, they are ready to accept the process and willing to go ahead, being assisted all the way by the school, until they reach a stage of independency.

Academic staff member 1:

*"We don't start development from the project. We start it from dealing with social issues and bring them to a point where they can get involved themselves. It is not just about telling them what to do. We let them discover themselves and they actually know where their shortcomings and strengths are. Our process begins from social preparation before we can even get into planning. We ensure that they are fully prepared and that they understand their roles in the whole process of development. Once they have understood that, they are ready that they have accepted the whole process and they are ready to go ahead. We go together step by*

*step. We assist them all the way until they come with their development plans as it is right now".*

Community members appreciate the service provided by university partners in their communities. The chief and members of the Masia community admitted that at first they were sceptical about the university's role and did not know what to expect from the partnership, but were impressed with what it has accomplished. They are now convinced about the role the university has to play in the support of their community.

At Chakhuma permission for research at schools was first obtained from the community leader. Some female counsellors previously had contact with the Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation. The focus was on identifying the barriers in teaching and learning.

Upon entering into a partnership with a community, groups are divided into manageable teams, where each individual's opinion is of value, whether it is a child, young person, woman or man. Each group thus have a say in the development of the community.

Student 1:

*"We hear from communities what they need. We don't just go there and tell them that they have a water problem. We want to hear what they need. Right now we empower students in Amplifying Community Voices to get used to research methods so that they can find out the challenges in surrounding communities. Most people from surrounding communities like engaging with people from the university. They appreciate us being there. So we give them chance to speak up their minds".*

#### **5.3.3.10 Coordination of service-learning**

Some of the interviewees do not know of an existing coordinating entity on campus responsible for the conceptualising of service-learning. However, each school has a committee on community engagement. A coordinator represents it in the Directorate of Community Engagement which views all reports and takes quality measures.

Academic staff member 2:

*"Each school has a committee on community engagement. There is a coordinator. That coordinator sits in the university-wide committee where all these things are reported and quality measures are taken".*

According to one of the interviewees, their engagement in the "Amplifying Community Voices" programme is one way of supporting the distribution of service-learning. The Community Engagement Office supports the students to volunteer in communities.

The Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation coordinates the projects; and each project has a committee which organises the activities. Together they act as a coordinating body.

#### **5.3.3.11 Staffing for service-learning**

Very few staff members advance community engagement activities. Often founded on a volunteer basis, work in the rural communities is not an attractive option to the academics, while some others do not have an idea what is done by the university in the communities.

Academic staff member 1:

*"Not so many academic staff members are interested in working in rural communities. Sometimes we are not working for money and this is a challenge to many academic staff members. Often you are doing it on your own because you like doing it and without money. Sometimes academic staff members do not understand what you are doing in the communities. So there are all these kinds of problems. I don't know how one can deal with these kinds of challenges. I think these kinds of challenges will just continue. Challenges of not finding the staff to work with. The challenge of not creating that big desire within the communities and being unable to implement due to lack of funds".*

One interviewee expressed concern about expectations being created in communities, which then cannot be satisfied due to lack of funding.

It became clear from the interviews that the lack of human resources put constrain on the “Amplifying Community Voices” programme, for they need enough people who can assist in the empowerment of the communities.

#### **5.3.3.12 Funding for service-learning**

Funding for projects engaging in communities is a problem. Organisations do not realise that funding of university projects are important. Local communities find it difficult to obtain funding for their projects, for even their municipalities do not provide funding. This leads to failure in implementing any development plans.

Academic staff member 1:

*“For now they have not yet started funding our community engagement projects, but that is something that is possible because that is what this university is now encouraging all the staff members to do. When it comes to funding, organisations don’t see funding a university as a priority. All things will remain the same if there is no funding”.*

Univen provide students with opportunities to develop their own community engagement projects. These projects are then registered with the SRC, who is in charge of funding projects. However, currently funding is insufficient. In 2013, the SRC had not funded any projects, apparently because it did not understand the mission of the projects.

Funding for the food processing projects is also insufficient. Projects are mostly funded by external donors such as government departments. Communities could have been assisted better if funding was sufficient. Often, while communities expect the university to fund their projects, the university’s goal is to provide technical skills.

#### **5.3.3.13 Evaluation and assessment for service-learning**

Apparently academic staff is not evaluated on their performance during participation in community work. It is also not yet established how to evaluate academics who are involved.

Community workers are expected to evaluate themselves in terms of the delivery of quality service. For this purpose a diary is kept, documenting daily activities. Students are evaluated on the reports and presentations they submit at the end of each project. While they are in the field, they are monitored by an accompanying mentor.

Academic staff member 1:

*"There is nobody who checks the quality of what we are doing except ourselves. We are actually the best quality assessors. Whatever we do, we have to show documentation so that if anybody comes, we will be able to say, I was engaging on such and such a day and this is what I did".*

Students' are evaluated but do not earn marks for their participation in a project and it does not count towards a degree. Certificates for participation in community service are awarded at the end of the year. Students have to submit reports and publish their findings, which exercises in the presentation of their reports.

Student 2:

*"We don't get marks for providing community service. But at the end of the year we get certificates that are valuable because they show how we were participating throughout the year. We usually write articles and reports during our engagement. I think upon completion of my degree, writing reports will be what I do in the workplace. I am a science student so this is part of my academic growth. We also learn how to present our reports. We are learning a lot from this programme".*

### **5.3.4 Findings: School of Law**

#### **5.3.4.1 Information of participants**

- *Academic staff member 1*

Academic staff member 1 has been involved in the Moot Courts since 2012. He is responsible for the training of students who take part in these courts and is also involved in community work in the Chikonde Traditional Council. He assisted communities in reclaiming the land from which they were forcefully removed during the apartheid era.

Being the representative of the School of Law in the Directorate of Community Engagements, he liaises with academics on community engagement matters and collates the reports from different participants. He also encourages community engagement to become an integral part of the School of Law. He previously acted as Head of the Legal Aid Clinic, which is Univen's endeavour in terms of providing legal service to the rural communities, and presently assist it should there develop a need.

- *Academic staff member 2*

Academic staff member 2 is a commissioner at the Small Claims Court at Waterval, in which he has been involved for the past ten years. He is one of the first commissioners who were appointed to the Small Claims Court by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development in 2003. He has been practicing as advocate for the past 20 years, and believes it is due to his experience in practice that he was appointed. As researcher, he authored three books and published in both national and international journals.

- *Head of Department: Legal Aid Clinic*

The current Head of Department in the Legal Aid Clinic was appointed in 2011. His duties include the supervision of the management of the Law Clinic, being accountable to the Law Society, stakeholders and university. He has to ensure that the work done by the Law Clinic is executed professionally and according to the rules applicable to law firms.

- *Student 1*

Student 1 assists the Head of the Legal Aid Clinic in various community engagement projects. He promotes tertiary education at Univen and other tertiary institutions in South Africa at secondary schools, provides assistance in the completion of application forms for tertiary education, orientates other students in tertiary life, and explicates the roles and responsibilities of students at institutions of higher learning.

- *Student 2*

Student 2 also takes part in community engagement projects run by the Legal Aid Clinic. He is responsible for educating and motivating secondary school learners in

terms of obtaining access to tertiary institutions and preventing crime in their communities.

#### **5.3.4.2 Current community engagement projects**

- *Moot Courts (Simulations)*

The primary goal of the Moot Court, an annual event, is to prepare students for participation in society as lawyers and politicians. For this purpose, students are trained in oral advocacy and case presentation skills. Arranged by the School of Law, academic staff members, local magistrates, senior prosecutors and judges preside over a series of moot court trials, utilising on-campus venues as well as local courts.

- *Street Law*

As part of the curriculum and practical work, students are taken into the field to deliver service to the community. Their assessments are marked. Academics and students have the opportunity to communicate with the public, informing them about the development of new issues in law and their rights.

- *Small Claims Court*

This government project was initiated by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development in 2000. Its primary goal is to provide access to justice to every community member, enabling them to resolve their issues affordably. The Small Claims Court adjudicates matters of tribal nature.

This project does not involve students in going out to communities to provide service but involves only professional academics who are trained in the administration of the Small Claims Court.

- *Legal Aid Clinic*

This clinic was initiated in 1995. Its primary goal is twofold: to promote the notion of access to justice by representing indigenous communities around the university; and to aid the School of Law in introducing the practical component of law studies to the final-year LLB students, i.e the project involves lawyers doing community

service, defending unprivileged people for free in the court as well as giving legal advice to community members regarding their rights.

### **5.3.4.3 Conceptualisation of service-learning**

The concept “service-learning” is understood to refer to the practical application of theoretical knowledge: handling real court cases, learning to consult with clients, and etiquette, except that service-learning is an institutional arrangement and an elaboration of Work Integrated Learning. Other interviewees thought it might mean that while learning, you serve the community and even co-learners.

Academic staff member 1:

*“I think it is Work-Integrated Learning. Learning doing the real thing. In other words, live cases where you go to court. They learn to consult with clients. They also see the significance of being polite to clients and being able to say to clients ‘I am going to find out. I am not sure about that’ while still students. Service-learning may be if you elaborate, I will tell. But I thought it is just institutional arrangement which helps learning on the job. That is what I thought it could be”.*

Head of the Legal Aid Clinic:

*“I don’t know”.*

One of the participant interviewees heard references to the term “service-learning” during various meetings, but none of the others were familiar with it.

Student 1:

*“I have never heard anyone at this university talking about service-learning”*

Academic staff member 1:

*“I heard about it in different meetings that I have attended within the school. I heard about it but I have this emphasis on Work-Integrated Learning, particularly in the field of teaching. I have not specialised in education”.*

Academic staff member 2:

*"I heard it from you for the first time and I just figure out what it means".*

The School of Law does not have a common definition of service-learning. One of the courses, Practical Legal Training, has a practical component which allows students to engage in legal projects. It is compulsory for them to volunteer their services for a year in a law clinic as part of community service, for which they do not earn credits.

Academic staff member 1:

*"Service-learning in our school does not apply because we are not giving credits to students when they give legal advice in the communities. Within the legal field we have a Practical Legal Training as a subject. This course has a practical component which gives students the opportunity to engage in the legal projects, but students do not get marks. Our students have to spend a year in the law clinic volunteering. Lawyers as part of qualifying to be professionals have to do community service. This has been discussed at a national level already. But as for us here service-learning does not apply directly. I understand community engagement in which the community benefits and our students as well benefit while they are engaging because they are getting skills. I think they get exposed and when they teach high school learners, they are developing their academic literacy and reading skills. Some of us have been exposed to institutions where the Practical Legal Training necessarily requires that you have handled ten cases in a year, that you are in a school, then you have a mark for doing that. If you haven't then you do not qualify to get a course. This is a Practical Legal Training course which does not involve dealing with real live cases. Other institutions are doing it".*

Interviewees thought that a common definition of service-learning on campus may be advantageous to the university, for it will allow the university more access to communities with more representatives. Service-learning, with its many possibilities, and the fact that both the community and university can benefit from it, would make it invaluable in the contact between the two partners. Lack of a common definition might create doubt about its merits.

#### **5.3.4.4 Strategic planning for service-learning**

At present no strategies are in place for conceptualising service-learning. It is foreseen that by 2015 more communities would benefit from the expertise of the lawyers, academics and Univen. If lecturing classes could be reduced, one staff member wishes to sit for the Small Claims Court twice a week, his personal contribution towards making justice more accessible to people who cannot afford private lawyers. A project from the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, introduced by the minister, is the appointment of volunteers from higher education institutions to carry out this mission.

Univen engages with the rural communities, but if all institutions of higher learning would follow suit, a broader range of communities would be reached.

The crime prevention programme is focussed on addressing Grade 12 learners in the communities. However, within a year they leave home, attending tertiary institutions, which results in the problem still remaining in the community. It would thus be more sensible to adopt a strategy where all high school learners, including their parents, are engaged, for then results would be achieved by and within the community.

#### **5.3.4.5 Institutional mission and policies for service-learning**

The social mission of Univen, in its rural location, is to educate not only the rural people of South Africa, but the entire Southern Africa. The university's goal is to become a comprehensive university, attracting good students from all over the country as well as internationally. This can only be achieved through educating the communities. Catering specifically for historically disadvantaged communities, academics should work in accordance with the university's mission, becoming involved in the various communities. At present, lecturers do not assist students during their community service.

Student 2:

*"This university is aimed to cater for historically disadvantaged communities. The way we are operating, they are pulling us back. They should make sure that academics are working in accordance with the mission"*

*whereby they would be in a position to visit communities. Lecturers don't give time to assist students during community service".*

The Small Claims Court is aligned to the social mission of Univen since it is directed towards helping indigent people in certain disputes. The court is locally contextualised by addressing problems in rural communities, e.g litigation on issues related to cattle.

The Legal Aid Clinic's involvement in the Street Law Project allows them to visit prisoners and provide assistance regarding issues such as prisoners' rights. However, it is felt that more can be done in terms of crime prevention if secondary school learners could be provided with knowledge relating to the prevention of crime and its effects on individuals, families and the community in general.

The surrounding rural communities are faced with many problems, due to lack of information, which need to be addressed. Without the university's involvement regarding knowledge and skills, the status quo would remain.

Although the Legal Aid Clinic is only involved in a few community projects, the communities reap rewards from this engagement. This clinic and its involvement in communities is one way of achieving the university's mission.

At present there are no institutional policies that inform the conceptualisation of service-learning, although the Department of Justice provides parameters regarding community engagement via the general Policy on Community Engagement. The Law Society, the governing body for attorneys, guides the academics when they provide legal advice in communities.

#### ***5.3.4.6 Institutional leaders for service-learning***

One staff member serves as representative of the School of Law in the Directorate of Community Engagement. As liaison officer, he assists in ensuring that academics and students actively participate in community engagement activities. The school do not have a person dedicated to the management of community engagement, and service-learning in particular, but is guided by the directorate.

Support for conceptualising service-learning in the departments is non-existent. A staff member, who attends all community engagement meetings hosted by the Directorate of Community Engagement, provides feedback regarding other departments' community engagement projects to the school board meetings.

Departments coordinate their activities through the Directorate of Community Engagement on international, national and local level. But due to the costs involved in community engagement, the available university resources limit an increase of community involvement.

Although the university leadership does not support the conceptualisation of service-learning, it seriously encourages community engagement, which includes the salary of the head of the Legal Aid Clinic. The School of Law has experienced staff members supporting the Law Clinic and who are involved in community engagement.

It is felt that the university leaders can further provide support in recruiting academics to do community work. Someone should also be responsible to inform schools about the school's intention to visit, for often they are unprepared.

Student 2:

*"We need the support of university leaders. They need to recruit academics to do community work. They must join us. There is a need to make proper arrangements with local high schools because sometimes when we arrive there, we find that they are not informed that we are coming".*

The Directorate of Community Engagement must provide guidance. The institution's support towards community projects is in the form of providing free transport, and when learners visit the university, food and accommodation.

In the past, transport provided by the university was insufficient to accommodate the students. Although buses were then organised, no drivers were provided. Apparently this is still a problem, which is temporarily solved by the head of the Legal Aid Clinic, who obtained a heavy vehicle license for this purpose.

The support of community members, especially traditional tribal authorities, is also necessary. When visiting schools, problems are encountered when, e.g the chief does not understand the purpose of the visit.

Support from the Directorate of Community Engagement is in the form of reviewing reports and providing input on improvement. Some schools within the university are not involved in community engagement, while approach varies between those who are involved.

No student leaders are responsible for conceptualising service-learning. According to one student, not even the university leaders motivate them to engage with communities.

Student 1:

*"They do not motivate us to take the lead in engaging with communities. I have never seen the dean or anyone calling us and saying 'Guys, lets engage in community service'. There is no advocacy of service-learning from the side of the university leaders".*

The Head of the Legal Aid Clinic has established a team of students who assist him in his community projects

#### **5.3.4.7 Teaching, learning, and research**

There is no advocacy for service-learning among academic staff members. However, the majority of academics are aware of, and encouraged to take part, in community engagement, which is an integral part of the School of Law. Some academics support the students who engage with communities.

According to one interviewee, quite a number of academic staff members are active in community engagement, while one of the staff members stated that he is the only academic involved in the Small Claims Court. He also encourages other academic staff members to get involved, in particular targeting the new staff.

Academic staff member 1:

*"It is quite a good number. I cannot give you a figure because I didn't take a count. As I remember it is Advocate F, Mr G, Mr H, Advocate I, Mrs J, Advocate K, Professor L, Mr M, myself, and Mrs N. It is difficult to quantify them".*

Since most lecturers are not interested in community service projects but instead only concentrate on teaching and research, students do not feel obliged to take part. One student is of the opinion that, should the lecturers set the example of community involvement, students would follow suit.

Student 1:

*"I know of three lecturers who are involved in community service projects. Most of the lecturers do not want to engage in this. So if it was a thing where all the lecturers want to be involved in, we as students would be participating much better than we do".*

Even the students involved in the Legal Aid Clinic do not receive assistance from the lecturers in the form of community service.

Students also do not receive credit for their involvement in community service. At the same time lessons continue; and service-learning is not introduced to the students. The community is left out of the equation and therefore do not have access to information.

Student 1:

*"When we do community work, we don't get credits. Again when we go for community service, lessons continue as normal. The lecturers don't introduce service-learning to the students. They don't talk about giving back to the community. So the community lacks information".*

According to one of the academic staff members, time constraints prohibit them from engaging with communities. However, the concept of community engagement is inculcated during school board meetings; and should the number of academics' involvement and time allocated to it, increase, results would improve. At present,

communities are visited three times per semester, depending on the availability of students.

Academic staff member 1:

*"In our School Board Meetings, we inculcate the culture of giving back to communities by us as academics. If we increase the number of academics and the number of hours that we spend with communities, we will improve a lot".*

Head of the Legal Aid Clinic:

*"We depend on whether students are available from tests. So immediately when students are not busy, we go to communities. On average we go three times per semester".*

The academic staff member acting as commissioner in the Small Claims Court also teaches Law Contract to the Civil Procedure students. This forms a direct link between what is being taught and the services provided. The LLB degree qualifies students to practice law. The Law of Evidence and the Law of Civil Procedure, taught to students, are applicable in the Small Claims Court. This allows them to follow certain procedures during adjudication.

The Legal Aid Clinic assists LLB final year students to obtain practical experience. They are grouped into small "firms" which deal with litigation issues. Some students are taken on board to assist in, e.g opening new files. By the time they leave, they are well versed in the operation of law firms.

One student felt that there is no link between teaching and community engagement, for while being in the field, classes still continue, and students who are not involved in community service, have the benefit of attendance. Obviously, this is to the disadvantage of the students who are willing to commit their time to the community, and results in fewer students becoming involved, not wanting to miss out on classes. The lawyers and lecturers should synchronise their various activities to accommodate classes and community involvement.

Another student feels that his involvement in a project does not relate to what he is learning, for he only explains to Grade 12 learners the necessary procedures to be taken to obtain access to tertiary institutions.

With regard to the link between community engagement activities and research conducted in the School of Law, one staff member stated that many cases which had been conducted were resolved due to the involvement of the school, and in general, the university.

#### **5.3.4.8 Motivation for service-learning**

No rewards are available to academic staff members for participating in service-learning, although quality community engagement is rewarded. Academic staff members are not promoted on the basis of their participation in service-learning, but on community engagement and improvement of one's qualifications. Academic staff members first received awards for community engagement in 2013.

Academic staff member 1:

*"It has just happened earlier this month where the university gave awards to quality community engagement. Our Mr T has won an award. As a school we were voted the best in community engagement".*

The School of Law has some rewards for students as part of their engagement with communities. Students with Medical Jurisprudence as a module, attend certain procedures in the hospital, for which they receive certificates of acknowledgement for their attendance of the programme. These certificates are issued by the school and signed by the coordinator and the dean. The programme is seen as Work-Integrated Learning. Students who do not have this module, however, do not receive any form of motivation or awards for their participation in community engagement.

Some students engage with communities through Work-Integrated Learning. They work together with the Head of Department of the Legal Aid Clinic in providing service to the community. In 2013 there were 180 final year LLB students who took part in community engagement projects initiated by the clinic.

One student disagreed with the statistics, stating that students are reluctant to engage in community activities, for they do not gain anything (in terms of money or credits) from it. It is felt that the communities benefit from this service at the expense of the students.

Participation in community service is compulsory only to the students who study Street Law as a module, for which they are allocated marks. The rest of the students do not participate in community service, although participation in the final year is expected. These final year students were recruited by the Legal Aid Clinic with the purpose to assist the head during visits, although they do not earn credits from this engagement. The only motivation for some of the students is the fact that, in the future, they might need to prove their involvement the Court of Justice, requires evidence that students voluntarily became involved in community work.

Student 2:

*"There are few students who are taking part in community engagement projects. As final year students, we are expected to go out and provide community service. But some of us are not interested. They end up not going out. Participation in community engagement is not compulsory".*

There is no opportunity for students to conceptualise service-learning, despite the fact that students play important roles in community engagement. When providing legal advice at secondary schools, the study of law is presented attractively in an effort to recruit students.

Often both parents and secondary school learners attend the Small Claims Court, who then afterwards wants information about becoming a commissioner. This is an opportunity to propagate the School of Law. When visiting secondary schools, students supply learners with School of Law calendars and the curriculum, and answer general questions about, inter alia, studies in law and student life at Univen, etc.

While in the field, involved in a project, students from the Legal Aid Clinic use the opportunity to provide information about university admission, and supply admission forms to interested learners. Most are from poor family backgrounds, which are then

provided with information on how to obtain financial assistance, e.g from NSFAS and other bursaries.

#### **5.3.4.9 University-community partnerships for service-learning**

It is a problem to convince the residents of rural communities that the academics from the Legal Aid Clinic, as lawyers, have a service to offer the communities. Due to the illiteracy of a majority of the rural people, they lack an interest on matters pertaining to legal advice.

Community members are informed that it is the task of the Legal Aid Clinic, which is government funded, to represent the indigent people who cannot afford to hire commercial lawyers.

Community partners in the Small Claims Court include the clerk of court, the magistrate and rural residents who cannot pay for the court. The Legal Aid Clinic works in partnership with chiefs in addressing issues such as crime, and also provide legal advice to municipalities, protecting the rights of community members and providing legal representation.

Although no measures are taken to enhance mutual understanding specifically for service-learning purposes, the Memorandum of Understanding fulfils that purpose for community engagement. The memorandum includes other institutions, including international universities. Academics from the Schools of Agriculture, Law and others are involved in a project at Mashapan, driven by an international university.

Academic staff member 1:

*"We have a Memorandum of Understanding with other institutions including universities overseas. We have a project in Mashapan where the schools of Agriculture, Law and others go there and be part of community engagement. It is a science centre. A lot of us as academics are part of that".*

The Legal Aid Clinic's services are freely available to the communities on request. Consistency of participation by community partners derives from the respect and reliability the clinic offers, for they are trusted for their excellent service.

Communities are visited as often as possible. Interaction between the university representatives and the community members allows the community to address their own problems, guided by the academics and students.

Few community members are involved in community engagement agendas. They receive free legal advice, e.g on issues of life and death, property and divorce. The laws, institutionalised by government, are explained to them. Resulting from the satisfactory solutions provided, community members willingly cooperate with the clinic. Legal advice is also provided to the inmates at Correctional Services. For the purposes of quality control - as part of the research - feedback should be procured from those who previously received assistance, ensuring their clients' satisfaction.

Academic staff member 1:

*"Communities are receiving free legal advice. Now law, which is not a public domain, is explained to the community. People feel happy when they know their rights, when they know what to do and not what to do. The advantage is that law deals with very serious issues of life and death, loosing property and divorces. We are able to give professional legal advice which is institutionalised by government".*

The Legal Aid Clinic used to occasionally conduct surveys with clients to get feedback about the service they received. The clinic's intervention is important to explain law concepts to all parties concerned.

#### **5.3.4.10 Coordination of service-learning**

Apparently the Director of Community Engagement is coordinating for community engagement in the School of Law and on campus.

Academic staff member 1:

*"In our school we don't have someone who manages community engagement. We are guided by the Directorate of Community Engagement".*

Academic staff member 2:

*"The Directorate of Community Engagement is responsible for coordinating all community engagement activities on campus".*

#### **5.3.4.11 Staffing for service-learning**

None of the staff members are currently involved in service-learning. The Legal Aid Clinic even experiences a shortage of staff to advance community engagement, which makes it difficult for the academic staff to attend e.g the Small Claims Court, which is part of their community engagement, and simultaneously prepare and teach their classes, and marking the assignments and tests of classes containing up to 300 students. Marking is often done at home, after hours, for the time consuming court attendance occupies most of the day.

Academic staff member 1:

*"We have shortage of staff in the Legal Aid Clinic. We are supposed to have two professional assistants, head, and ten candidate attorneys. We have a problem of human resource".*

Head of the Legal Aid Clinic:

*"Our main challenge is capacity. You know as a law firm you want to cover as much as possible when it comes to legal services. So we are few and our hands are fully stretched. The area of Venda is wide. We must cover the whole of the former Venda area. We have promises that we will be capacitated soon".*

The Legal Aid Clinic has to serve the entire former Venda area, a large area to be covered. At present it is difficult to provide proper legal service to all the communities, due to the insufficient staff. In some courts candidate attorneys are not allowed to appear, which reverts back to the Head of the Legal Aid Clinic. If more lecturers could be employed, staff members currently involved could be relieved from some of their duties, allowing more opportunities to provide better service to the communities.

From the above it is clear that staff members are overloaded with work, which makes it difficult to engage with communities. If sufficient staff were available, the lecturers'

involvement with students could be advanced to another level and schedules could be adapted to accommodate all role players.

#### **5.3.4.12 Funding for service-learning**

Service-learning is not yet funded in the School of Law, however, other community engagement projects in the School of Law are funded by the Department of Justice together with the Attorneys Fidelity Fund of the Law Society of South Africa. The university provides the salary for the Head of the Law Clinic as well as the vehicles for community visits.

In the past the Department of Justice provided financial assistance, but this was terminated in 2012. This funding allowed the appointment of more staff, especially candidate attorneys, and paid their salaries. The Legal Aid Clinic was allowed ten candidate attorneys, but since the funding was discontinued, so was their employment. The Legal Aid Board supplies the clinic with funding, which is, however, insufficient for staff employment.

The Small Claims Court receives no funding from the university. University leaders often inform the school that there is no funding for their projects. The students have to provide their own meals when visiting communities, which makes them reluctant to participate in community projects.

Student 1:

*“Funding is a problem. In most cases the university leaders do tell us that there is no money for our projects. When we visit communities we buy food for ourselves using our own money. Most of the students don’t want to go there because we stay hungry the whole day”.*

Academic staff member 2:

*“There is no funding from the university”.*

#### **5.3.4.13 Evaluation and assessment for service-learning**

There is no form of evaluation and assessment for service-learning or community engagement activities; even students are not assessed for their community

engagement activities or obtain credits for it, although they are awarded certificates for participation.

On their return from community service, students are expected to submit reports to the Head of the Legal Aid Clinic, who sends it to higher authorities. No marks are allocated for these reports.

Academic staff member 1:

*"There is no assessment of what we do".*

Student 1:

*"When we come back from university service, we write reports to the Head of the Legal Aid Clinic. He takes such reports to the higher authority. We don't get marks for the reports that we are writing".*

Student 2:

*"We are not evaluated. We don't even get the marks for participating in community engagement".*

### **5.3.5 Findings: School of Health Sciences**

#### **5.3.5.1 Information of participants**

- *Academic staff member 1*

Academic staff member 1 teaches Community-Based Education in the BCur programme. She became involved in community engagement in 1999 and is currently involved in two projects, namely "Water in Limpopo" and a teenage pregnancy project in the Mutale Municipality.

- *Academic staff member 2*

Academic staff member 2 has been working in communities since her appointment as lecturer in the School of Health Sciences in 2000. She is currently involved in a number of projects together with some nursing students, whom she assists in the assessments of communities, and also assist communities to prioritise their needs.

- *Project coordinator*

The project coordinator is engaged in various community service projects in the Department of Advanced Nursing. She started working with students in community engagement projects in 2003 when she joined forces with the Department of Advanced Nursing. She is currently involved in a project, which includes various schools from the university, in collaborating with the University of Virginia, in addressing the needs of surrounding rural communities.

- *Student 1*

Student 1 is involved in a community engagement project which operates at Malonga village in the Thulamela Municipality. The primary goal of this project is to educate the villagers on health-related matters. The village has no access to health education or a health clinic which requires the villagers to travel a long distance to a health clinic at a neighbouring community. Health services are provided via a mobile clinic once a month.

- *Student 2*

Student 2 is also involved in the project at Malonga village. Her choice of becoming involved in this specific community was founded on its lack of basic services such as water, a health clinic and transport. Clean water is delivered by government trucks; the people do not know how to clean water. The monthly mobile clinic is unable to address chronic diseases such as hypertension or HIV/AIDS. No transport is provided for patients who have to travel to the neighbouring village's clinic.

### **5.3.5.2 Current community engagement projects**

No service-learning projects are lodged with the School of Health Sciences. However, participants showed that they are involved in a number of community engagement activities concentrating on various public health issues, including tuberculosis, cancer, menopause, and violence against women and children.

Other projects include the following:

- *Water in Limpopo*

This project operates in the villages of Tshapasha, Tshivhomo and Tshandama, with the primary goal to provide access to clean water. The project was initially funded by the Limpopo Province Department of Health, therefore the title "Water in Limpopo", but it has succeeded in securing international funding.

- *Teenage pregnancy project*

This project operates in the Mutale Municipality where the School of Health Sciences at Univen is collaborating with eleven secondary schools. Its primary goal is to empower the youth on prevention of pregnancy.

- *Health Education project in Malonga village*

This project was initiated by Univen's nursing students in 2011, and operates in the Malonga village under the Nchinkofi Tribal Authority in the Thulamela Municipality. Its primary goal is to educate the rural community on issues related to a health clinic and the importance of the use of clean water.

- *Multi-faceted project with the University of Virginia, USA*

In this project various schools within Univen work together to address the needs of the rural communities.

### **5.3.5.3 Conceptualisation of service-learning**

The School of Health Sciences defines service-learning as a student's exposure to a particular community in order to benefit from that exposure: they apply the theoretical knowledge obtained in the classroom.

Upon registration, students have to sign a community engagement agreement. Already in their first year, after their first theoretical block, they are allocated to particular rural communities. In collaboration with hospitals, clinics and the broader community, the school coordinates their activities.

Academic staff member 2:

*"Service-learning is when a student is exposed to a particular community in order to benefit from that exposure. The students are as early from first*

*year allocated to a particular rural community. In that community they are learning to practice what they are going to practice at the end when they are working”.*

Project coordinator:

*“Service-learning means that the students put theory into practice. What we taught them in class they take it out for practice”.*

Student 1:

*“I never heard about this concept, so I don’t know what it means”.*

Service-learning has been introduced at student level already in 1986 at the Kalafong College of Nursing (now Lebone College of Nursing). The South African Nursing Council requires students to spend a certain amount of hours doing service-learning, for which they are allocated points. The Giyani Nursing College implemented it by alternating classes and service at hospitals and clinics on a monthly basis.

Awareness and comprehending what service-learning entails could be advantageous to the university and its community. It will not only be simple to find suitable placement for students, but it would be easier to motivate them to participate in service-learning, which would profit them in both theory and practical application, and will assist in further research. Another staff member described service-learning as a two-way process through which the students learn from the community and reciprocates in turn to teach the community.

Some interviewees were not aware of a common definition of service-learning on campus, although it could possibly be identified under another term, such as e.g experiential learning. Competent graduates would result from a better understanding of the concept, and how it is supposed to be implemented. More people will join the projects, and consequently delivery more and better service to the communities.

The lack of familiarity with service-learning is a disadvantage to both the university and surrounding communities. The university is not a separate entity from its surrounding communities, and thus should serve it where and how its assistance is needed; bridging the gap between the two entities. Conversely, the university not being aware

of the potential of service-learning, no changes will be effected in the communities and they will always stay poor and without help.

Apparently academics view service-learning as wasting time, for not enough time is allocated to properly employ service-learning in the communities. This fact creates a barrier for conceptualising service-learning at Univen.

#### **5.3.5.4 Strategic planning for service-learning**

There is no strategic plan for conceptualising service-learning, however, there an official strategic plan for advancing community engagement is being finalised. The proposal makes provision for the next five years. Collaboration is between four universities and three colleges, namely Univen, the British University of Columbia, Harvard University and the University of Virginia, and three colleges associated with the American universities. A workshop presented in Canada assisted participants in drafting a proposal, which was then finalised by the Canadians. A pilot project has already been launched in an area known as Dona Fraser. Further plans include the extension of the project to include the Mutale Municipality, however not the same area where the "Water in Limpopo" project is run.

Academic staff member 1:

*"Our dream is huge. We are busy finalising a proposal that will work for five years. We wish to see ourselves having multi-million projects. Already we are collaborating with relevant partners. This project is between four universities and three colleges that side. It is the University of Venda, British University of Columbia, Harvard University, University of Virginia, and three colleges associated with the US universities. The project has taken off the ground. We are piloting at an area called Dona Fraser. We are also going to extend this project in Mutale Municipality but not in an area where 'Water in Limpopo' is been conducted. We went to Canada for a workshop on how to develop a proposal. The Canadians were here. They left two weeks ago. They were here to finalise our proposal".*

Another staff member replied that the School of Health Sciences follows the university's strategic plan on community engagement.

Only strategic planning of projects will have a positive effect on struggling communities, such as Malonga. The first priority would be to supply clean and accessible water to them; secondly a functional health clinic is of the utmost importance. Other problems such as high pregnancy rates among school girls, with the additional implication of contracting HIV/AIDS, are just two of the many factors that need to be addressed in communities. Illiteracy also needs to be dealt with. Without proper planning, none of these issues will be clarified or alleviated.

#### **5.3.5.5 Institutional mission and policies for service-learning**

Univen's social mission is central to the development of rural communities, providing education which aids in their development, and specifically caters for the rural communities. Residents are taught various skills and they are provided with health education, in short: they are being empowered to help themselves.

Academic staff member 1:

*"The mission is rightfully placed because it is at the centre of rural education. We are at the centre for rural areas where we develop and cater for the rural communities. We are trying to serve the rural of the rural people. We teach them skills. We also give them Health Education. We are empowering them so that they must be able to do things for themselves and also to prevent them doing things that will get them diseases".*

A policy on service-learning is not yet in existence. The Policy on Community Engagement aligns with the social mission of Univen. It states that the university should benefit the surrounding communities through its provision of service.

In an attempt to achieve Univen's mission, interviewees indicated that they strive towards ensuring that their projects are locally contextualised. Before embarking on a project, a particular community has to express its needs. Once research has been completed, the data is presented to the community members for them to have a say in the decisions.

Academic staff member 2:

*"We don't do needs assessments alone. We do that together with the community. We don't impose. After data collection we have to go down to the community to present what we found. So whatever comes out will be locally contextualised".*

The school applies various policies, such as a research policy; some on teaching and learning; and the institutional Policy on Community Engagement. Before going out to communities, the Policy on Community Engagement is explained to the students. There are certain risks in community engagement, and thus students have to be aware of safety measures.

### **5.3.5.6 Institutional leaders for service-learning**

The Vice-Chancellor, the Research Office and the Director of Community Engagement are seen as some of the institutional leaders whose focus is to conceptualise service-learning, while the Dean of Health Sciences leads by example in publishing her research and projects, from which she obtains funding for her projects. The institutional leaders also supply the students with transport at no cost for their visits to communities.

Academic staff member 1:

*"Our Vice-Chancellor is up to it. Our Research Office, the Director of Community Engagement, is really supporting us. They even go to an extent to outsource so that we can have workshops on how to write funding proposals. So they are really behind us. The Dean of Health Sciences is also leading by example because we also see her producing and publishing a lot, and also getting her own funds for her projects".*

Service-learning is not yet adopted and supported by the departments in the School of Health Sciences. However, students start with community engagement in their first year. Some staff members in the Department of Advanced Nursing are well informed about service-learning. The department also has buses and mini-buses at its disposal which transports the students to and from hospitals and other community engagement sites.

The support of the Head of the Department of Advanced Nursing and the dean contribute much towards the success of the projects, for they are lenient towards absenteeism from the office if a staff member has to visit a community. A report has to be submitted on the staff member's return, which is then reviewed. Without their support, community engagement will not be possible.

Groups of 10 students each are allocated to particular communities, each group with its chosen leader. These student leaders play a major role in strengthening partnerships with tribal authorities, for they report about the progress made in the specific project once or twice a year. They are also responsible for the cohesion in their particular groups.

#### **5.3.5.7 Teaching, learning, and research**

All academics on campus are aware of their role in providing service to the communities. Two examples are the Schools of Law and Education. The School of Law does it for their practice, while the School of Education adopts some disadvantaged secondary schools where they teach certain subjects. According to one staff member, various schools, deans and HODs are aware of the significance of community engagement, although service-learning remains an unfamiliar concept.

Community engagement projects are linked with teaching and learning. Theoretical knowledge, acquired in the classroom is applied in the communities. Even the identification of communities is based on theory. An example is the choice of villages which do not have access to a health clinic and have to rely on the mobile clinic. The curriculum is structured in such a way around Community-Based Education, which all first year students have to adopt a community, where they will then work for the next four years until completion of their studies.

Community engagement in the School of Health Sciences is compulsory. With the policy that community engagement is the core of teaching and learning, every academic and student (for the duration of his/her studies) is involved in community projects. During the first semester, visits take place on a weekly basis, but from the second semester onwards, it occurs on a monthly basis.

The Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation uses a different approach, for they work with a few post-graduate students and volunteers from all schools on campus to visit sampled communities. They are also funded.

Academic staff member 2:

*“Everybody in the School of Health Sciences is engaging with communities, both academic staff members and students. Whether we like or not, we are compelled to engage with communities. We are compelled to take out students for community service. During the first semester, they go on a weekly basis but in the second semester they go once a month. In the Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation, they are using a different approach from us because they are working with postgraduate students and they are very few. It is also better with them because they have funding. They are also using volunteers from all schools on campus who will go to communities that are sampled”.*

The research done by the academics and students for the “Community” module is strongly linked to community engagement. Students submit reports about their commitments in their particular communities. Applying the knowledge acquired through their university studies and research, the students improve the lives of community members through education. There is a strong link between community engagement projects and research conducted in the School of Health Sciences. All completed projects have to be published. A recently introduced Research Methodology module introduces students to applicable methodology

#### **5.3.5.8 Motivation for service-learning**

Regarding rewards for academic staff members involved in service-learning, interviewees stated that, in order to be promoted, they have to adhere to the core functions of the school, namely teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. Evidence of community engagement must be apparent. The recently introduced Vice Chancellor awards include community engagement.

Academic staff member 2:

*“If you want to be promoted, you have to have evidence on how you are engaging with communities. The other thing is that recently they have introduced the VC awards to lecturers. With the awards, they also included community engagement. If you are found to be more active in community engagement, you are awarded like teaching and research”.*

It is important to be recognised for one's achievements and to have the support of university leaders. In the School of Health Sciences, community engagement is recognised for promotion: evidence of involvement is submitted in the form of a portfolio. Lecturers encourage students to take part in community engagement projects, for it provides them with opportunities to apply the theory they acquired in the lecture halls. However, they are not awarded for participation in projects.

All students are aware of the fact that they have to engage with communities, for which marks are allocated. Every student in the School of Health Sciences takes part in community engagement. Every level has its own project, which is allocated to the students on admittance to the school.

Student 1:

*“Every level has its own project. Once you are admitted in this school, you are allocated to a community engagement project”.*

When visiting secondary schools, and in particular Grade 12 learners, students provide information about courses offered by the School of Health Sciences and what school subjects are compulsory for admittance to the course. Learners are motivated to consider further education at universities or colleges and are even assisted with their applications to institutions of higher learning.

Through their involvement in community engagement projects, students have opportunities to deal with real life problems in the surrounding rural communities. An example was given by one of the students involved at Malonga village. She mentioned the oppressive heat and lack of water; clean drinking water is scarce. Residents cannot grow vegetables and many do not even wash or bath due to the scarcity of water. The only water source is the river, which was dry at the time of the visit. Most

villagers are illiterate and uneducated, which makes it difficult for them to gain access to basic resources. It is also risky to go out to villages, for one does not know what kind of people the community constitutes. Female students are scared that they might be raped and therefore only visit the communities in day time.

#### **5.3.5.9 University-community partnerships for service-learning**

The School of Health Sciences is collaborating with various stakeholders in other Univen departments and in the community in addressing various social issues. The School of Health Sciences focuses on health issues and therefore addresses aspects such as the lack of access to purified water supplies. If they encounter a problem beyond their expertise, it is referred to the relevant department.

Academic staff member 2:

*“Our focus is on health issues. We address aspects such as the lack of purified water supply. The communities around us use water which is not clean. So this is a challenge. If there is something which we cannot assist the community with, then we refer the problem to relevant departments”.*

The project coordinator expressed his concern for the safety of international students. South Africa is often disrespectful and brutal to especially unsuspecting international visitors, who often become targets of theft. They are warned to keep their belongings safe during their visits to communities.

Project coordinator:

*“A possibility is that there may be risks for our international students. Our people when they see a white person, they may take their belongings, cell phones, cameras and monies. But we warned them to say that they need to keep their belongings safe when they go to communities. South Africa sometimes is very rude and rough to international visitors. We have international students from University of Virginia”.*

Relating to the mutual understanding between the School of Health Sciences and its community partners, an interviewee provided an example of cooperation. A particular group of students will identify a disadvantaged village. They will conduct a community

assessment, map the households and then identify their needs with the stakeholders. Both participant groups benefit from this, for each group learns from the other.

Community engagement is formalised. A general application form supplied by the Directorate of Community Engagement, has to be completed. The first phase of contact with a community is meeting with its representatives, the chiefs and political leaders, who have to understand the mission of the project. Once they have granted permission for the university's engagement in community matters, the students, from various cultural backgrounds, are first orientated on protocol in the Venda culture: what is considered correct behaviour and good manners. Their various roles and responsibilities are then explained. They are also given direction on whom to contact relating to various important matters.

Adhering to strict protocol, the *vhamusanda* (chief) is first approached. Often, after many deliberations, and with the support of the chief, the project can kick off. The school participants advise the community members, for instance, what vegetables to plant or how to improve their sanitation by digging pit toilets or to boil the water before drinking it. But they do not impinge or dictate the community's actions, which makes their own decisions.

Academic staff member 1:

*"A particular group of students identifies a village which is more disadvantaged. Then the students will conduct a needs assessment, map the households, and then sit with stakeholders in order to identify their needs. We learn from them and they learn from us. We benefit and they also benefit. But we let them run the show. We try to show them what they can do, like for instance, vegetable gardens or control of their sanitation by making use of pit toilets and boiling water before drinking in order to prevent water-borne diseases. We do not dictate. We don't just go there and impose. We go there and negotiate. We follow the process of entering the community until we reach the 'vhamusanda' (chief). We have lot of meetings before we can start with our engagement. We show them how we would to work with them. We also listen to them so that we can understand how they would like to work with us. So from there we will engage them."*

Partnership is sustained through communication from both sides: the community will inform the School of Health Sciences about problems or matters of importance, while the school in turn reciprocates when they perceive problems or need to discuss certain issues. Cordial behaviour often results in keeping in touch with the communities even long after the project's conclusion. Often the university is approached to give presentations during important events.

Meetings are called with the *vhamusanda* as well as other civic leaders and community members to verify whether the needs that were identified, are valid. The response of community members contributes a lot towards the success of the community engagement projects. Their acceptance and availability is of the utmost importance. Often, not understanding the procedures and stages involved, members become disappointed or impatient, for they expect immediate solutions to their problems. Being questioned on their needs, without seeing immediate results, they often refuse further interviews, which make further assistance difficult. Often villagers feel threatened, especially when the Univen researchers are accompanied by their European international colleagues, imagining them to want to seize their land. Once they withdraw, relationships need to be strengthened again, a time-consuming process.

#### **5.3.5.10 Coordination of service-learning**

All projects are registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement, who coordinates aspects related to service-learning and other community engagement projects. When two projects are similar, the various departments and/or schools have to coordinate and collaborate, assisted by a committee dedicated to community engagement.

Academic staff member 1:

*"We have Community Engagement Office here. So each project even if it is for the department is registered with the Directorate of Community Engagement. So the Office of Community Engagement is there to coordinate all these programmes. If they realise that a particular project is done at Muyexe, and is similar to another one within the university, then we collaborate. Like that one on teenage pregnancy, those from the School of Law are looking at the legal part of it. So within our group, a legal person is*

*there, a teacher educator is there, a person from Environmental Sciences is also in. A person from Agriculture is also in. So schools within the University of Venda collaborate”.*

Coordination of community engagement projects differ from other schools, for all students, from first to fourth year, are involved in these projects. In the School of Law, participation is also compulsory. In other schools, such as the School of Education, community engagement is not compulsory, resulting in only a few lecturers being involved and drafting students who might be interested.

Project coordinator:

*“Coordination of our community engagement projects is different in the sense that in the School of Health Sciences all students from first year to fourth year, they must be part of community engagement. Other schools are not doing that. You may find that it is lecturer so and so. Then he may select few students whom he thinks they are active for the project to go on. So in other schools community engagement is not compulsory. In the School of Law it is compulsory. In the School of Education community engagement is not compulsory”.*

#### **5.3.5.11 Staffing for service-learning**

Staffing specifically for service-learning is not available. However, academic staff members take part in various community engagement projects. Students are divided into smaller, manageable groups before going out for community service, and each group has an academic staff member in charge, who always accompanies them to the community.

Student 2:

*“We are being assisted by two lecturers. That is one who is facilitating the Community module and the other one is just assisting her”.*

### **5.3.5.12 Funding for service-learning**

Funding is a problem towards conceptualising service-learning in the School of Health Sciences. Although applications are made for funding, it is still insufficient. From these funds, students receive stipends for collecting data.

Projects are funded by the university via the Research and Publication Committee (RPC). The school and committee work together in procuring funding from the National Research Foundation (NRF). An HIV project is funded by the Medical Research Council. The school's collaboration with the University of Virginia secured good funding for the "Water in Limpopo" project. Initial funding for it came from the Limpopo Department of Health. International projects supply their own funding. Funding for community engagement projects is not readily available unless the application goes through the research office to the NRF.

Project coordinator:

*"International projects that I am involved in come with their money. One project that I am in is funded by university research office. In this institution if you apply for NRF funds, you will get them. For community engagement you won't get funds and you will be frustrated. So if you want to do community engagement, you need to apply through the research office through NRF. The project in the Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation is funded by international collaborators".*

The School of Health Sciences do not have its own funding, and most of its students come from poor backgrounds. It is good for them to be exposed to communities, for through their engagement they learn from the community and give something back in return. Often there are insufficient funds to embark on a project. There is often not money for campaigns or catering of events. It is thus of the utmost importance that students should learn to develop a fundable proposal for their projects.

Academic staff member 2:

*"We don't have funding. Our students are coming from poor background. It will be much better if our students are exposed to communities. In that way, they will engage and get more from the community. They will also leave the community with something".*

### **5.3.5.13 Evaluation and assessment for service-learning**

The Directorate of Community Engagement liaise with the departments in the School of Health Sciences. Reports about community engagement activities are submitted to the directorate on a quarterly basis. These reports contain information about the village where the staff member was involved, what his/her obligations were, workshops attended, etc.

Academic staff member 1:

*“The Directorate of Community Engagement is always liaising with the departments in our school. We always submit reports to them on a quarterly basis. We report on what we have been doing within these three months. In the report, you need to indicate what Maphutha was doing in community engagement within these three months. You need to tell us that you went to Vhudi and this is what you were doing. Maybe there was a workshop for women at Vhudi or whatsoever. Your activities with the community should be seen”.*

The reports written by students are presented in class. These are assessed on the presentation and information it contains. The marks are counted into the students' semester marks. Throughout their four years of study, students remain with the project they identified in their first year. They are expected to develop a proposal for the project, which is co-examined and moderated by another university: if the proposal is not returned, the student is not allowed to graduate.

When students submit their reports, their lecturers verify the gaps in the communities. Such a gap would e.g be an old woman in charge of children under the age of five years. There might be no safety for these young children. Students are asked what they would do in such a case, for they cannot ignore it. By monitoring their reports, the academics empower the students to be aware of various problems and to facilitate solutions. The monitoring of the reports further demonstrates to the students that they are supported by the School of Health Sciences which provides advice towards their own improvement.

Project coordinator:

*“Our students submit reports wherein we check the gaps in the communities. For example, you find that in a particular community there are children of under five years who are left with an old woman. You find that there is no safety for these young children. Then I will say there is a gap. What do you do about it? You need to do something about it. Through checking their reports, we are empowering them. Next time when they go back, they make follow-ups. Community engagement is nice when you do not sing a solo. When you arrive in a particular community, you need to find out how things are done. Where is the clinic, police station, social worker, community policing forum? We are not there to solve problems. We are there to facilitate. So in that way that is how I can see my students growing”.*

## **5.4 FINDINGS FROM OBSERVATIONS**

The following findings were captured through the use of silent observations regarding the challenges and possible strategies for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at the University of Venda.

### **5.4.1 Challenges of conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning**

- Insufficient time to balance teaching and learning, research and community engagement;
- Academic staff members are overloaded with work and responsibilities;
- The lack of interest and commitment by some members of the university community to provide community service;
- Failure to meet deadlines by both students and academic staff members;
- Lack of team spirit among academic staff members in terms of providing service to the local communities;
- Lack of advocacy for service-learning in many schools on campus;
- Few individuals are driven to become involved in community engagement activities;
- Lack of funding;
- Poor conceptualisation of service-learning which confuses it with community engagement, Work Integrated Learning and volunteerism;

- The lack of a common definition of service-learning on campus creates a loophole for various schools to engage with communities in different ways;
- Service-learning is not considered compulsory to graduate;
- Students volunteer when providing community service;
- Service-learning is not integrated into the curriculum;
- Some students are remunerated for providing community service, e.g the Winter School and Saturday classes;
- A lack of clarity between service-learning and practical work;
- Community engagement projects are not credit bearing;
- No awards and incentives for students who participate in community engagement initiatives;
- Poor arrangements by project coordinators and community leaders which often lead to university students not allowed enough time to engage with community members.

#### **5.4.2 Possible strategies of conceptualising and managing the conceptualisation of service-learning**

- Awareness, the understanding and the buy-in of service-learning by university management;
- The vision and mission of Univen provides opportunity for the conceptualisation of service-learning;
- Prevailing social problems in the surrounding rural communities support the need for service-learning;
- Schools are considering the integration of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement;
- Various teams are responsible for community engagement projects at school level;
- Some members of the university community is committed and dedicated to providing community engagement;
- There are university-community partnerships which create opportunities for addressing the needs of the community and obtaining access to donors;
- Motivation in the form of awards to staff members involved in projects;
- The university has structures in place to support community engagement;
- University policies and strategic plans that promote conceptualisation of community engagement are available;

- The university is willing to provide transport to and from communities;
- Community-oriented modules into which service-learning can be integrated are available;
- Community engagement is considered a requirement for graduation in the School of Health Sciences;
- Facilities such as halls, science laboratories are accessible for utilisation by high school learners and other members of surrounding rural communities;
- Partnerships with municipalities, government departments, NGOs, the business sector, faith-based organisations, and external donors can be nurtured for service-learning;
- Existing community engagement projects on campus can be modified to accommodate service-learning;
- The Legal Aid Clinic in the School of Law and the Institute for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation in the School of Agriculture provide opportunities for students and academic staff members to engage with communities;
- The Higher Education Quality Committee, which conducts regular audits for service-learning and other community engagement projects, as well as its integration into teaching and learning and research;
- The rural context is a good basis for the provision of service-learning;
- The geographical location of Univen, surrounded by many small-holdings where fruit, vegetables and livestock are farmed;
- Some schools on campus collaborate when common social problems in communities are addressed.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

Findings in this chapter show that the concept of service-learning is not yet commonly known at Univen, but the concept of community engagement is familiar. There is confusion between service-learning, community engagement and Work Integrated Learning. These misconceptions contribute towards the lack of uniformity regarding community engagement practice. At present each school is involved in community engagement initiatives which can relatively easily be modified to accommodate service-learning. The majority of these projects are registered and centrally coordinated by the Directorate of Community Engagement. In most schools community engagement is not compulsory, except in the School of Health Sciences. These projects experience similar challenges such as lack of funding and staffing.

## CHAPTER 6

### TOWARDS A BEST PRACTICE OF SERVICE-LEARNING

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#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was to explore how service-learning is conceptualised at two rural-based universities in South Africa. The purpose of this study was to explore a possible framework for conceptualisation of service-learning in order to provide directors of community engagement, academic staff members, project coordinators, and students with a useful guide for future service-learning practice at two rural-based universities in South Africa.

Based on the focus and purpose of this study, the following sub-questions were formulated:

- What are the current community engagement projects that can be modified for future practice of service-learning at the two rural-based universities in South Africa?
- What are the views of directors of community engagement, project coordinators, academic staff members and students regarding conceptualisation of service-learning at these two universities?
- What are the challenges and possible strategies for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at these universities?
- What framework will be relevant and appropriate for conceptualising service-learning at these universities?

In line with the above sub-questions, the following objectives were formulated:

- To investigate the current community engagement projects that can be modified for future practice of service-learning at these two rural-based universities in South Africa.
- To provide the views of directors of community engagement, project coordinators, academic staff members, and students regarding conceptualisation of service-learning at these universities.

- To examine the challenges and possible strategies for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at these universities.
- To develop a relevant and appropriate framework for conceptualising and implementing service-learning at these two universities.

## **6.2 MAJOR CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE STUDY**

The discussion below provides a summary of the major conclusions drawn from this study. Recommendations are presented and suggestions for further research are proposed.

### **6.2.1 Conclusions related to Research Objective One**

*The first research objective was to investigate current community engagement projects that can be modified for future practice of service-learning at the selected two rural-based universities in South Africa.*

Service-learning is an unfamiliar concept at these two universities. Advocacy of service-learning has never been done and no initiatives are made on the part of these universities to familiarise themselves with this concept. However, this study revealed the existence of a number of community engagement projects, with a common goal of promoting rural development and transformation for both the university and surrounding communities. These initiatives could be modified to accommodate the practice of service-learning in future.

Participants highlighted that all the faculties/schools/departments at both universities are involved in some form of community engagement. Few of such existing community engagement projects are registered with the offices of community engagement at each university. At the University of Limpopo it was found that an audit of such projects was unsuccessful due to only a small number of people who responded to the questionnaire. The data from the questionnaire was also not analysed. At Univen, it was found that registration of community engagement projects follow a particular protocol, and such a protocol was not fully observed.

The study revealed that current community engagement projects involve students in experiential learning. However, such initiatives are not integrated into the curriculum. Each faculty/school/department has its own way of engaging with communities. Therefore, existing projects range from volunteering, community outreach, internships, practicum, Work-Integrated Learning and other forms of community engagement. Current projects are not formally coordinated. Participation in such initiatives is not compulsory. All the above findings create a loophole resulting in a small number of academic staff members and students interacting with the surrounding rural communities.

In conclusion, the lack of knowledge about service-learning at these universities promotes the practice of initiatives that are less structured, which subsequently lack uniformity, and are not infused into the curriculum.

### **6.2.2 Conclusions related to Research Objective Two**

*The second research objective was to provide the views regarding the concept service-learning by the directors of community engagement, academic staff members, project coordinators, and students at the two universities.*

The findings of this study revealed that service-learning is unknown and left without a common definition at these two universities. Participants pointed out that no advocacy of service-learning has ever been conducted. The findings further show that various role players are confused regarding the concept service-learning. It showed that some prefer to use the term community engagement rather than service-learning, while others view service-learning as synonymous with community engagement. Participants also noted that they understand service-learning as a concept which is used together with concepts like community service, industrial attachment, internship, agricultural extension, cooperative education, work-based learning and experiential learning. Some participants refer to service-learning as the practical application of theoretical knowledge. Participants from the Schools of Education at both universities shared the general view that Teaching Practice is service-learning.

Although service-learning is still a vague concept at these institutions, it is interpreted differently according to the various disciplines. The implication is that some disciplines

lend themselves easier to service-learning than others. Various disciplines refer to it in different terms, which clearly show that various schools have divergent definitions of service-learning. Some of the participants indicated that they never heard about service-learning on campus, while others indicated that they became familiar with it at school board meetings.

It can be concluded from the findings that the lack of a clear understanding of service-learning could be a barrier to achieve the missions of these two universities. As such conceptualisation of service-learning is necessary in order to generate a common understanding and implementation of service-learning at these institutions.

### **6.2.3 Conclusions related to Research Objective Three**

*The third research objective was to examine the key strategies for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at the two universities.*

The study revealed that no strategies are in place for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at the two universities. Participants indicated that focus is on teaching, learning, and research. Little attention is given to service-learning and other community engagement activities. Participants highlighted that the deficiency of such strategies prevents them from attaining provincial, national, African and world standards. They recommended that support and input should be provided in order to produce professionals who can interact with communities.

It can thus be concluded that the lack of strategic plans for conceptualising and managing service-learning is serious and should receive special attention in order to enhance social transformation at these universities as well as the development of surrounding rural communities.

### **6.2.4 Conclusions related to Research Objective Four**

*The fourth research objective was to develop a relevant and appropriate framework for conceptualising and implementing service-learning at the two universities.*

The development of the proposed conceptual framework is grounded on the findings and conclusions drawn from this study. The proposed conceptual framework is developed to serve as a useful resource for implementing and managing the quality of future service-learning endeavours at these two universities. The present community engagement and service-learning related practices at these universities were used as pillars for making recommendations for implementing service-learning in the context of these selected institutions.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this research:

- There is a need to review and strengthen the social missions of the two rural-based universities in order to promote the adoption and use of service-learning.
- Existing Community Engagement Policies should be amended with the goal to inject a service-learning element which currently receives little attention. Academic staff members, students and community members should be informed about the new mission and Community Engagement Policy with a service-learning component.
- Since service-learning is not yet known at these institutions, efforts should be made for its advocacy. This will provide the various role-players with knowledge about what service-learning entails, its benefits, and how it can be adopted and utilised. Advocacy for service-learning in this context can be invaluable towards addressing the confusion among various role-players since some participants view service-learning as synonymous to community engagement, while others just prefer to use the term community engagement.
- Turnaround strategies should be developed in order to conceptualise service-learning and provide guidelines for its implementation.
- It is necessary to conduct an audit of all existing community engagement projects at these two universities. Such projects should be registered with the Community Engagement office. Efforts should be made to modify the existing community engagement projects in order to accommodate service-learning.
- Existing university-community partnerships should be modified to cater for reciprocity and rural development and transformation of service-learning initiatives.

- Service-learning should be given equal importance as teaching, learning, and research. This may be of benefit towards producing graduates who are socially responsible by interacting with surrounding rural communities.
- Initiatives should be made to infuse service-learning into the curriculum. This will provide a basis for students to learn from the rich experience while interacting with communities.
- Participation in service-learning should be compulsory for both students and academic staff members.
- There is a need to create a common ground that will enhance uniformity and coordination of service-learning initiatives at faculty, school, department and module level. This would be possible if Community Engagement offices would receive backup to consider service-learning as high priority.
- Academic staff members should be promoted on the basis of their involvement in service-learning.
- Students should obtain credits for their participation in service-learning. Such credits should contribute towards the completion of their degrees.
- Community partners should be rewarded for their participation in service-learning endeavours.
- Human and financial resources, as well as infrastructure should be provided in order to encourage role-players to adopt and implement service-learning.
- A conceptual framework for service-learning is necessary to guide the implementation and management of the quality of future service-learning endeavours at the two universities.

## **6.4 THE SMART CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SERVICE-LEARNING**

The discussion below presents the proposed SMART framework for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at the two rural-based universities in South Africa. This framework emanates from the conclusions drawn from this study which are related to the fourth objective stated above.

### **6.4.1 Essence of the SMART conceptual framework**

The SMART conceptual framework serves as an invaluable guide for conceptualising, implementing and managing the quality of service-learning at the two universities. Rural development and transformation is regarded as the cornerstone of this frame-

work. Such transformation should start from the inside-out through effecting changes on institutional policies and structures with the goal to establish service-learning initiatives and achieve the mission of the institution. In terms of this conceptual framework, the university and its surrounding rural communities are equal partners in the transformation agenda. In partnership, the university and its partners can conceptualise service-learning and be in a position to implement it within the context of rural communities in the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

This framework is tailored specifically to provide possible strategies for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at the two universities by institutional leaders, directors of Community Engagement, deans of faculties, directors of schools, heads of departments, project coordinators, academic staff members, students, traditional leaders, and community partners.

The SMART conceptual framework should be read and used together with HEQC's institutional audit reports on Community Engagement, national, institutional, faculty, school, and departmental policies on Community Engagement, as well as course outlines. This will provide a solid foundation to inject and promote the spirit of service learning at these institutions.

#### **6.4.2 Features of the SMART conceptual framework**

The proposed conceptual framework must be SMART because it should be:

- **Socially relevant.** This framework should be socially relevant, simple and easy to use by various role-players within and outside the rural-based universities.
- **Manageable.** It should clearly spell out key strategic plans that should be in place to ensure quality management during implementation of service-learning initiatives.
- **Adaptable.** It should be flexible enough to be adapted and applied to the unique contexts of each university in accordance with the institutional mission, policies, strategic plans, structures, disciplines, programmes, logistics and the social needs of the partners.
- **Rural-based.** It should be locally contextualised by enhancing students' learning through addressing the needs of the marginalised and impoverished rural communities served by the two universities.

- **Transformative.** It should be embedded within the democratic principle of enhancing social transformation at rural-based universities. Within the university, it should enhance change in practice by instilling a culture of valuing provision of serving the needs of surrounding rural communities the same as teaching, learning and research. Outside the university, it should enable community partners to realise that their voices are of high priority in the conceptualisation and implementation of service-learning activities.

### **6.4.3 The structure of the SMART conceptual framework for conceptualising and managing service-learning**

Figure 6.1 below represents the proposed SMART framework which serves as a blueprint for conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa.

### **6.4.4 Components of the SMART conceptual framework**

The SMART conceptual framework comprises five major components which are interconnected. Users can multitask by engaging in various components at the same time central to conceptualising and managing the quality of service-learning at the two universities. The discussion below presents five major components of the SMART framework.

#### **6.4.4.1 Component 1: Conceptual framework for service-learning**

##### *- Institutional mission and policies*

The two universities are geographically positioned to address the needs of surrounding rural communities. This aspect is captured within the missions of these institutions. The lack of knowledge about service-learning contradicts the missions of these two rural-based universities. Participation in service-learning initiatives may be one way of achieving the missions of these two rural-based universities. Various role-players at these institutions need to begin with conceptualisation of service-learning in order to obtain a broader picture of what it entails. Academic staff members need to start aligning their teaching with institutional missions and the needs of surrounding rural communities. Once the missions of these institutions are realised, relationships between these universities and rural communities may be of mutual benefit. The

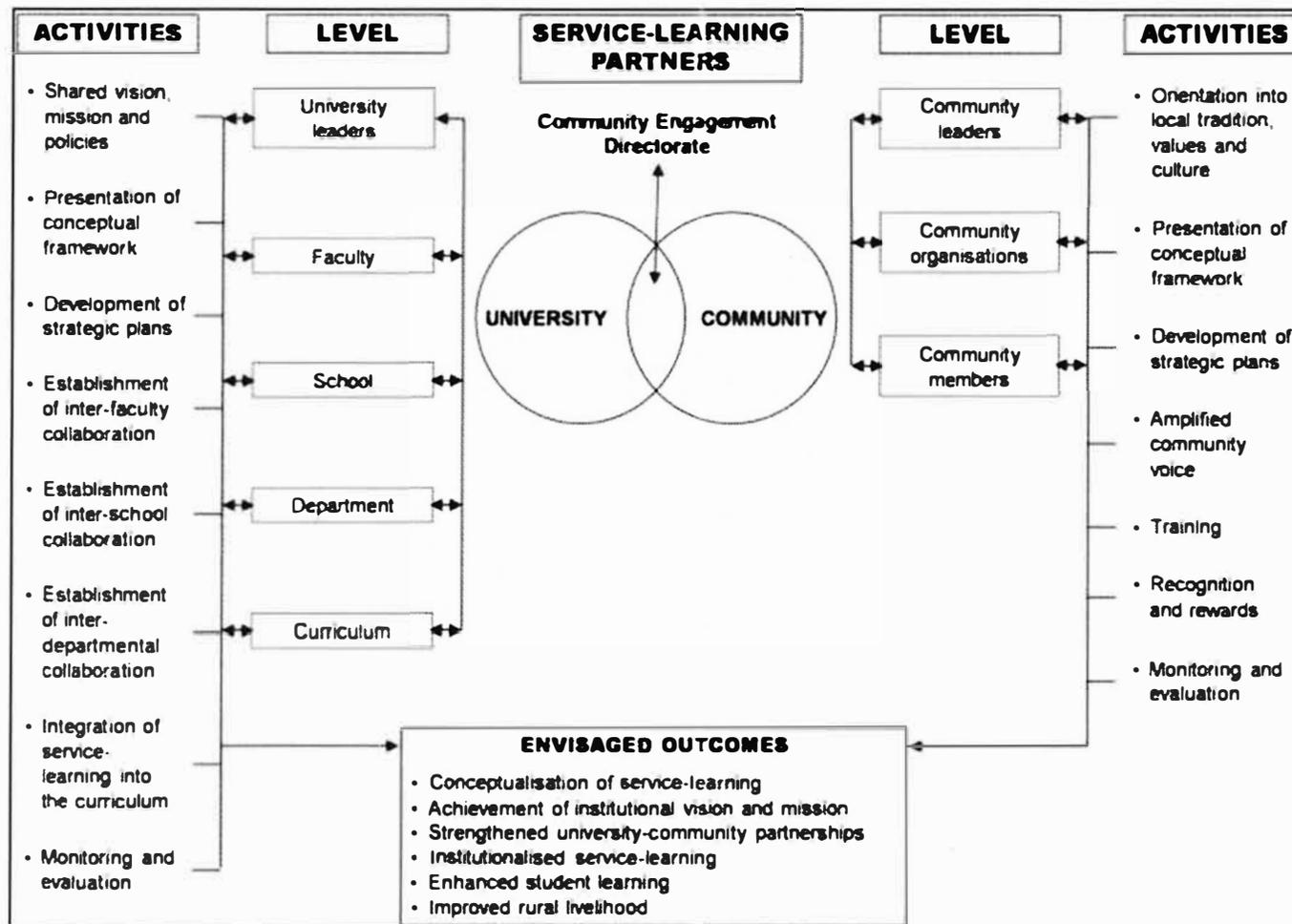


Figure 6.1. The structure of the SMART conceptual framework for conceptualising and managing service-learning.

implication is that students' learning may be enhanced through serving the needs of the rural people.

For social transformation to occur at these rural universities, it may be proper to review the current community engagement policies with the goal to infuse service-learning into the academic programmes. The current community engagement policies need to be altered in order to promote the adoption and use of service-learning at these campuses. In addition, academic staff members, students, and community members need to be informed and understand the changes in those policies so that they can actively participate in the service-learning initiatives.

- *Conceptualisation of service-learning*

The concept service-learning is still vague, not well known and thus lacks a common definition at the two universities. Service-learning is not well-understood by the majority of role players within these universities. Most of them are unfamiliar with it and thus define it differently.

The two universities are not separate entities from their surrounding rural communities. The lack of a clear understanding of service-learning could be a barrier to achieve the missions of these universities and could lead to it being disregarded. Again, these misconceptions may create ambiguity because people might think they are involved in service-learning, only to find they are not. The misconceptions may also create doubts about its merits and impact negatively on the development and transformation of rural communities. The majority of stakeholders understand service learning as being parallel with community engagement, and thus prefer to use the concept "community engagement". Such different notions about service-learning constitute uncertainty about the various role players. It would be important if various stakeholders can be taught about the forms of community engagement and the distinction between service-learning and community engagement.

The Directorate of Community Engagement should conduct workshops for advocacy of service-learning and provision of knowledge about what service-learning is and how to use it. Through advocacy various role players may be able to differentiate between service-learning from other forms of community engagement such as internships, work-integrated learning, industrial attachment, cooperative education, experiential learning,

and community outreach. Conceptualisation of service-learning may provide a common definition, clarify these misconceptions, and enhance better understanding necessary for its practice by various role players. The poor conceptualisation of service-learning may create a platform for it to be viewed as less important as compared to teaching and research, and may create loopholes for its implementation.

Understanding of service-learning at rural-based universities may provide knowledge which may turn these institutions into support structures for the community that respond directly to the social needs of the local rural people. These might change the mind-sets of young people so that they would prefer to live in rural areas rather than migrate to urban areas.

- *Contextualisation of service-learning*

The social missions of the universities selected for this study are at the centre of rural development and empowerment. This shift towards serving the rural communities brings about change whereby these institutions are no longer viewed as ivory towers despite their geographical location. Their social missions differentiate them from other urban universities by focusing on the development of rural communities, and provision of education which aids in their development, not only to the rural people of South Africa, but the entire rural communities on the African continent.

Conceptualisation of service-learning, in this regard, should be locally contextualised by ensuring that the transformation agenda is tailored towards targeting the most rural, poverty-stricken and marginalised communities, with the exclusion of industries or cosmopolitan areas. The only way to achieve rural development and transformation is through educating the communities.

Surrounding rural communities are faced with numerous social issues which need to be addressed. The universities should intervene and equip surrounding rural communities with the knowledge and skills they have, and bring about improvement in people's lives. In the initial stages, academic staff members and students should conduct in-depth needs assessment analysis in order to determine the real local challenges. Before embarking on a particular service-learning initiative, a particular rural community has to express its needs. Once the research is completed, the data should be presented to the community members so that they can amplify their voices in the trans-

formation agenda. This will curb a situation where rural people are forced to engage in projects they have no interest in. Research, in this context, may be of utmost importance towards enhancing the adoption and use of service-learning by both the university community and local rural people. Such research may also be meaningful for setting the ground and learning about the traditions, culture, and values of the people living in the surrounding rural communities.

#### **6.4.4.2 Component 2: *Partnerships for service-learning***

Building strong partnerships is crucial for successful conceptualisation and implementation of service-learning at rural-based universities. It is important to consider ethics, respect and transparency when working in these partnerships. The building of relations should start at the level of traditional leaders and municipal managers in surrounding rural communities, who should be trained to become effective facilitators and leaders towards rural development and transformation. Reciprocal relations should be developed for the benefit of both partners (university and rural communities) so that students can acquire knowledge when doing research in the rural communities while at the same time assisting rural people with information previously inaccessible to them. Partnerships should also benefit the students so that they can become confident in enhancing their academic and social growth.

A Memorandum of Understanding should be signed between the various role-players who will be involved in service-learning initiatives. This can serve as a binding contract between the two partners, where each should stipulate its own expectations. If both partners are assured that their interests and needs are addressed, such partnerships may stand a better chance of success. Continuous communication, training and monitoring, delivery of relevant service, and meeting timetables with community partners is invaluable towards strengthening these university-community collaborations.

Upon entering into a partnership, groups within the community should be divided into manageable teams, where each individual's opinion is of value, whether it is a child, young person, woman or man. Each group should have a say in the development of their own community; this would amplify their voices regarding their needs. This will strengthen the bond between the university and the rural residents. The building of partnerships with rural communities may serve as a strategy for minimising the

migration of students to urban areas after they had completed their degrees. Students may adopt these projects after finishing their studies.

Workshops should be conducted with the purpose to inform community partners about the features of service-learning, and reasons for its adoption and use towards rural development and transformation. Chairpersons for service-learning should be elected in the communities so as to empower community members to be in charge of their projects. Academic staff members should only intervene when serious problems arise. The projects are for community members and they should take active participation in managing them. Communication channels should be opened to community members so that they can have access up to the level of the vice-chancellor to express their social concerns.

- *Community leadership and voice*

Involvement of community leaders in surrounding rural communities is the cornerstone in conceptualising and applying new rural development service-learning initiatives. The implication is that the voices of community members should be incorporated in conceptualising service-learning. Operating without the support of community leaders could lead to poor participation of community members in service-learning. Permission should be granted by community leaders before the start of the project. Engagement of rural-based universities with their surrounding communities may minimise the migration of students to urban areas after completion of their degrees. If students start on service-learning initiatives while still at university, they may adopt them after completion of their studies.

Community leaders should be trained to become effective development facilitators and servant leaders, i.e community leaders should learn to be contributors for the success in developing rural communities. Community leaders may enhance the building of partnerships with relevant community members. The voices of community members should be heard in order to achieve better results. They should call meetings where reflections would be made regarding the service provided by academic staff and students, as well as their feelings about whether the university is successful in achieving its mission or not. Community members' participation in service-learning activities deserves recognition because it will show that they are responsible citizens.

### **6.4.4.3 Component 3: Teaching, learning and research**

#### **- Teaching and learning**

All academic staff members, as citizens of South Africa, have a public responsibility to improve conditions in underprivileged communities. Once service-learning is understood at the selected rural-based universities, it should enjoy the same status as teaching, learning, and research. Students and academic staff members should use their presentation skills, acquired through lectures, in community service. On the other hand, the community activities in which the various departments are involved should inform their particular manner of teaching. All academic staff members should complete a course in service-learning in order to acquire knowledge and skills in community-based approach to teaching.

Existing curricula should be expanded and modified to accommodate service-learning for rural community development and transformation. Ample time should be shelved to expose students to real life situations and hands-on experience. The implication is that the curricula should be community-oriented, allowing students to apply theory into practice. This practical component will reinforce the theory and prepare students to address the challenges in their real work environment. This will be an advantage for future employment opportunities because students will be credited for the completion of their degrees and recognised in the workplace that they have already invested in a community while still studying.

Compulsory service-learning modules should be introduced to students from their first year through to their final year. At first year level, students should conduct needs assessment in order to gain a better understanding of rural development and transformation. This will deepen their understanding for developing relevant and appropriate projects that address real social needs of the surrounding rural communities. Students may have opportunities to identify relevant research topics while providing service in the rural communities.

#### **- Research**

Students should submit monthly reflection reports in the form of research proposals, information sharing, and training and skills development among the rural people.

Based on the reports, academic staff members should guide students and identify areas that need further support and improvement. Findings of such research reports should be published in relevant service-learning journals.

- *Logistical issues for service-learning*

Using the SMART conceptual framework goes towards establishing rural development and transformation service-learning modules which require students and academic staff to frequently visit surrounding communities. Service-learning practitioners should, therefore, consider arranging the following logistical issues:

- *Placement sites*

The two rural-based universities are geographically well positioned to benefit surrounding rural communities through service-learning programmes. Such programmes should be structured to suit the local rural context by serving the underprivileged in the Limpopo Province. Students should be placed at various areas in the rural, poverty-stricken and marginalised communities in order to address a number of challenges such as safety and security in schools, computer literacy, poor matric results, assisting teachers with the new CAPS curriculum, illiteracy among adults, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, poverty and other challenges associated with rural life. Before students are placed at certain institutions in communities, the needs of such an institution should be established first in order to verify whether the service of the students is needed. By so doing students will be playing a vital role in achieving the social missions of their universities.

- *Time*

The study has revealed that time constraints prohibit academic staff members and students to visit communities. A lot of time is spent concentrating on academic work and research. Lectures should be reduced in order to create time for conceptualising and implementing service-learning. Institutional leaders and academics should allot more time and space within their schedules to expose students to real life situations as well as giving them opportunities for hands-on experience. Academic staff members and students should at least visit communities twice a week. Coordinators of service-learning at school and departmental levels need to ensure that proper arrangements of time scheduling are made in order to fit both parties. Academic staff members should also ensure that there is a link between teaching

and service-learning. This simply implies that service-learning should be compulsory and that academics should synchronise their various activities in order to avoid a situation where classes are continuing while some students are away providing service in the communities. Students should receive credit for their involvement in service-learning.

- *Safety measures*

Existing research revealed that South African students taking part in service-learning regularly report on feeling insecure in historically disadvantaged communities, that their safety is not guaranteed, as well as the fears of contracting AIDS (Hay, 2003:190). In this study participants explicitly agreed that the greatest risk for students is the possibility of being involved in accidents, being attacked by criminals, or pricking themselves with syringe needles while providing health care to patients.

Upon registration in their first year, academic staff members should explain the Service-Learning Policy to students. This should inform them about certain risks in service-learning, and that students have to be aware of safety measures. The students should then sign a service-learning agreement. Such a document will provide the students with understanding about their service-learning initiative, their involvement as well as the possible risks such as being attacked by criminals, pricking themselves with syringe needles while providing health care to patients, etc. The agreement should warn the students that should it happen, they need to immediately report the incident to their seniors to receive urgent and proper care. Students should be advised to travel in groups.

Furthermore, the chiefs and political leaders should be made aware of the presence of the students in their communities and be informed about the concept service-learning, what it entails, and the mission of the project. Once the chiefs and political leaders have granted permission for the university's engagement in community matters, the students, from various cultural backgrounds, should be orientated on the protocol and the culture of the Venda/Tsonga/Pedi people residing in the surrounding rural communities. Their roles should also be explained. They should be given clarity about who to contact relating to various issues in the community.

- *Transport*

Sufficient transport should always be made available to accommodate all students so that they can play an important role in reaching out to communities with ease. Students from various departments can establish interdisciplinary teams and share transport equally when visiting communities.

#### **6.4.4.4 Component 4: *Managing service-learning***

- *Strategic plans for service-learning*

Measures to conceptualise service-learning should be part of the strategic plans at rural-based universities. A common understanding of service-learning is necessary for these universities to achieve social transformation. A five year strategic plan needs to be in place to better conceptualise service-learning. Availability of institutional guidelines for implementation of service-learning will be of utmost importance. There should be awareness campaigns which can inform academic staff, students and community members about service-learning as well as to encourage them to participate in service-learning initiatives. Collaborations should be made with national and international experts in service-learning. These experts should train university leaders, community members, and students about service-learning. University leaders should provide support and input in order to produce professionals who can interact with the community. Strategic plans about the concept service-learning should be shared among various role-players in the faculties and schools. The community engagement office should promote inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary initiatives in order to assist departments to understand service-learning.

For service-learning to be conceptualised at rural-based universities, all faculties and schools should be involved. This includes developing and strengthening university-community partnerships, developing service-learning modules, and improving research publications about service-learning. This includes establishing networks within the university as well as launching inter-faculty and inter-school research projects. It is necessary to develop short courses in order to provide knowledge and skills necessary for implementing service-learning. Educational programmes with specialisation in Service-Learning for Rural Development and Transformation can be developed at the levels of Advanced Diploma, Honours and Masters Degrees. These programmes should be problem oriented, practical and research focused. Such programmes should

specifically differentiate service-learning from other forms of community engagement. Efforts should be made to integrate service-learning into teaching and learning and research. Academic staff should identify modules into which service-learning can be integrated.

- *Coordination for service-learning*

The development of a formal coordinating structure, a service-learning office, within each rural-based university could be an invaluable move towards coordination and management of university-community partnerships essential for conceptualisation and spreading of service-learning. This structure may increase the familiarity of service-learning among academic staff, students and community partners. Workshops and presentations at faculty, school, departmental, and community meetings should be conducted with the intention to provide support and guidelines for adding rural development service-learning component to existing modules. The service-learning office should promote compulsory participation in service-learning.

Faculties/schools/departments should submit regular reports to the service-learning office about the progress made in conceptualising and implementing service-learning initiatives. Such reports should be compiled into an institutional report and submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training for quality assurance. The service-learning office may also avoid the duplication and conflicting schedules of service-learning activities. This structure should also serve as a link for addressing both the needs of the students and surrounding rural communities.

- *Motivation for service-learning*

Motivation is the strongest and most significant element for engaging academic staff in conceptualising service-learning at rural-based universities. Academic staff may resist engaging in service-learning due to lack of knowledge and skills, confidence, and rewards for its involvement. Institutional leaders should conduct several motivational workshops to create an intellectual foundation for conceptualising and implementing service-learning as well as to align it with the vision and mission of the university. The creation of an inspired environment for engaging academic staff in service-learning may lead to effective rural development and transformation in these universities. Academic staff may be motivated to use service-learning by being capacitated with

knowledge and skills on how to use service-learning, given enough time, be convinced that service-learning can increase student learning, and be provided with the necessary logistics.

Academic staff should be informed that they will be acknowledged and rewarded for participating in service-learning initiatives. This may improve their low morale by convincing them that service-learning can be a useful tool to enhance their research output. Opportunities should be enhanced to make service-learning a compulsory module so that students can learn about it and how it will benefit them. They need to know that they will be credited for working in and with communities. Furthermore, students should know that their experiences from the community would be conveyed into the lecture halls in order to make learning more meaningful. Students should be made aware that they will be rewarded for their involvement in service-learning.

Community members need to know that their engagement in service-learning can make a huge difference in addressing their social problems. They should know that they will be rewarded for being responsible citizens by taking active participation in service-learning.

#### - *Monitoring for service-learning*

At institutional level, the vice-chancellor, director of Community Engagement, and deans of the faculties need to provide guidance and support in recruiting academics to engage in service-learning. Availability of institutional leaders to spearhead service-learning debates can be the best way to keep academic staff, students and community partners well-informed. The Directorate of Community Engagement should organise conferences at institutional level with the goal to encourage academic staff to include active rural development service-learning modules into existing programmes. This might be one way of attaining social justice by putting measures in place to familiarise service-learning. The Directorate of Community Engagement should develop strategies to conceptualise service-learning and promote its permanent adoption and use.

Schools and departments within the rural-based universities should consider service-learning as an integral core of their undergraduate programmes. Directors of schools, project coordinators, departmental heads, and student leaders need to include service-learning within the agenda of their departmental and school board meetings.

Departmental heads should actively initiate service-learning in their departments. Each department should assign a staff member to advocate service-learning. Such a staff member should represent the department at school level regarding issues of service-learning, and should provide feedback regarding the progress of service-learning initiatives in the department to the school board meetings. He/she should serve as a liaison officer whose responsibility is to ensure that academic staff includes rural development service-learning modules into existing academic programmes. He/she should also ensure that both academic staff and students actively participate in service-learning activities. Transport and other logistical arrangements should be provided for free at each department in order to make participation in service-learning compulsory. Student leaders should play a pivotal role in strengthening partnerships with community leaders, as well as strengthening the bonds within their groups as students.

- *Staffing for service-learning*

Conceptualisation of service-learning involves a great deal of work. Employment of human resources at institutional level is required on a fulltime basis for the daily functioning of the service-learning office, conceptualising service-learning and assisting community partners in amplifying their voices for rural development and transformation. Staff should include the director, deputy director, facilitators, researchers, student assistants, principal administrator and administrators, and Advisory Board with representation from all faculties, schools and departments within the university. These staff members should advocate and champion service-learning.

Working in rural communities with students is not an attractive option to many academics. At faculty, school and departmental level, academic staff members and administrative officers should be appointed permanently to drive the process of spreading service-learning. The administrative officer's responsibility would include supplying students with the necessary information regarding service-learning, placing students at relevant community service sites, making other logistical arrangements and consulting with relevant community service agencies in case problems arise when students are providing service in the agencies.

#### - *Funding for service-learning*

The majority of community engagement initiatives conducted by universities are of an *ad hoc* nature, fragmented, not state-funded and are not linked in any way to the academic project measurable outcomes. Future funding of such initiatives should be restricted to programmes which are directly linked to the academic programme of the universities and form part of teaching and research functions of these institution initiatives (Republic of South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013:39).

Availability of funding contributes a lot towards the support for service-learning. Therefore, funding is a central factor in the whole process of conceptualising and implementing service-learning. University leaders need to revise their policies in order to create opportunities for funding service-learning as compared to teaching and research, as well as rewarding academic staff for participating in service-learning. A committee should be established consisting of academics, municipal officials, community representatives and traditional leaders. This committee should be engaged in fundraising initiatives in order to provide services to surrounding rural communities. Possible donors may include international universities, government departments, district and local municipalities, traditional leaders, and relevant community representatives.

Arrangements should be made with the Department of Higher Education and Training to fund service-learning initiatives at rural-based universities. This is critical because the rural-based universities selected for this study are presently depending on external funding to run their existing community engagement activities. Faculties, schools and departments should continuously apply for funds from external donors for their service-learning initiatives.

#### **6.4.4.5 Component 5: *Evaluation and assessment***

Academic staff and students should develop a team spirit in providing service in surrounding rural communities. Students should be monitored by an accompanying mentor while they are in the field. They should be equipped with the necessary skills to conduct community-based research. They should keep diaries while providing services

in the community. These diaries should inform their mini-research reports which should be part of their assessment.

Community partners should also evaluate the quality of the service provided by academics and students by completing evaluation forms. Academic staff should also be evaluated by their head of departments for their involvement in service-learning. This will enhance transformation, participation and improvement in providing services to the rural people.

#### **6.4.5 Summary of the SMART conceptual framework**

The SMART conceptual framework is developed to guide the practice and management of the quality of service-learning at the two rural-based universities. This framework is grounded within the principles of social relevance, manageability, adaptability, rural-based, and transformative.

#### **6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

This study was limited in its research population and sample. It could have included other rural-based universities in South Africa, but limiting the study population to the two rural universities in the Limpopo Province was based on convenience since the researcher is a resident in the province. This implies that this study cannot generalise to other rural-based universities in South Africa. It would thus be fitting for other researchers to conduct research in other rural-based universities to obtain a holistic view about how service-learning is conceptualised.

In an attempt to align this study with grounded theory design, the researcher has critically reviewed the majority of literature after data collection. During the initial phases of this study, the researcher has reviewed more American literature, which places less emphasis on the inclusion of the voices of community members in the processes of conceptualising service-learning. This led to the exclusion of the voices of community partners in this study. Further studies would be necessary to match the current debates of South African service-learning which put the community voices at the forefront.

## **6.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The following hiatuses were identified during the research which provides a platform for future debates and research about the conceptualisation of service-learning within the context of South African rural-based universities:

- There is a need for longitudinal studies regarding the conceptualisation of service-learning at other rural-based universities countrywide. These can be invaluable towards the adoption and use of service-learning countrywide by providing clarity about what service-learning is, and its benefits for various stakeholders.
- Relevant and appropriate models for conceptualising and implementing service-learning need to be developed in order to broaden the service-learning agenda within the South African context.
- The voices of community members were omitted in this study. Further research is needed in order to investigate, amplify and include the voices of community partners in the development agenda.
- Factors contributing towards improved funding for service-learning at rural-based universities in South Africa should also be studied.
- Policy implementation issues for service-learning at rural-based universities in South Africa should also form part of further research in order to enhance opportunities for its adoption and utilisation.

## **6.7 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the study revealed that service-learning is an unfamiliar concept among directors of Community Engagement, heads of departments, project coordinators, academic staff, and students at the two rural-based universities in South Africa. This might be because there are no turnaround strategies for conceptualising and implementing service-learning in this regard. Advocacy of service-learning has never been done at these institutions. This leaves the role-players at these institutions without clarity about what service-learning is, what it involves, and how it can benefit them. The various stakeholders are also confused because they are unable to distinguish service-learning from other forms of community engagement. Its misunderstanding creates loopholes for its use, adoption, and support by academic staff, students and community members.

The study also revealed a number of existing community engagement projects at these institutions. Such projects are not service-learning oriented but include activities such as volunteering, community outreach, practicum, internships and Work-Integrated Learning. Participation in such initiatives is not compulsory.

At present there has been no extensive research about conceptualisation of service-learning at rural-based universities in South Africa. Considering the fact that service-learning is no longer an option in South African universities, it would be proper to conduct research towards the identification of barriers for its adoption and use. This might be of benefit in assisting the two universities under study to meet international, national and regional standards in serving the impoverished and finding solutions for Africa. This calls for the development of a conceptual framework in order to enhance an understanding, adoption and utilisation of service-learning at the target universities.

Finally, it is hoped that this study will contribute towards a better understanding of service-learning at these two universities. The proposed framework in this study serves as a blueprint for conceptualising, providing guidelines and managing the quality of service-learning within the context of the universities selected for this study. This will assist the various role-players to understand the concept service-learning, its benefits, and how it can be adopted and used in enhancing student learning while addressing the needs of their communities.

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## **APPENDICES**

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### **APPENDIX 1 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE DIRECTORS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

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1. How many community engagement projects are in existence at this institution?
2. When did these community engagement projects start?
3. What are the primary goals of these projects?
4. When were you appointed as Director of Community Engagement at this institution?
5. What are your duties and responsibilities as Director of Community Engagement?
6. How many schools are involved in community engagement activities at this institution?
7. What is your understanding of the concept service-learning?
8. When, how and where were you informed about service-learning for the first time?
9. How is service-learning commonly defined within this institution?
10. What forms of misconceptions do other stakeholders have about service-learning?
11. Which strategies are in place to create a better understanding of service-learning on campus?
12. What measures are in place to make participation in service-learning compulsory?
13. What are the advantages of having a clear definition of service-learning on campus?
14. What are the disadvantages of lacking a clear definition of service-learning on campus?
15. What is your understanding of the social mission of this institution?
16. How is your practice of community engagement tailored to achieve the social mission of this university?
17. How is your community engagement projects aligned to teaching and research?
18. Which official strategic plan informs the conceptualisation of service-learning on campus?
19. Which academic staff members serve as leaders in the conceptualisation of service-learning?
20. How does this university encourage academic staff members to engage in service-learning?
21. What kinds of incentives are provided to academic staff members in order to pursue service-learning?

- 22.** In what way is performance of academic staff in community engagement recognised for promotion?
- 23.** What form of student activities are conducted in line with the provision of service-learning?
- 24.** How are students evaluated for participating in community engagement activities?
- 25.** Who are your community partners?
- 26.** How is the local community involved in the conceptualisation of service-learning?
- 27.** In what way does your community engagement project benefit the local community?
- 28.** How does this university work in coordination with the surrounding community to address social needs?
- 29.** How is the coordinating structure devoted to assist in the conceptualisation of service-learning?
- 30.** Which policy-making entity recognises service-learning as an essential educational goal?
- 31.** Which staff members are primarily paid to conceptualise service-learning?
- 32.** How is your community engagement project funded?
- 33.** What efforts are made to account for the quality of community engagement activities in your project?

## **APPENDIX 2**

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### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PROJECT COORDINATORS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

1. In which community engagement project are you involved?
2. When did this project begin?
3. What are the primary goals of this project?
4. When did you become the coordinator of this project?
5. What are your duties and responsibilities as coordinator of this project?
6. How many academic staff members are involved in this project?
7. How many students are involved in this project?
8. What is your understanding of the concept service-learning?
9. When, how and where were you informed about service-learning for the first time?
10. How is service-learning commonly defined within this institution?
11. What forms of misconceptions do other stakeholders have about service-learning?
12. Which strategies are in place to create a better understanding of service-learning on campus?
13. What measures are taken to make participation in service-learning compulsory?
14. What are the advantages of having a clear definition of service-learning on campus?
15. What are the disadvantages of lacking a clear definition of service-learning on campus?
16. What is your understanding of the social mission of this institution?
17. How is your practice of community engagement tailored to achieve the social mission of this university?
18. How is your community engagement project aligned to teaching and research?
19. Which official strategic plan informs the conceptualisation of service-learning on campus?
20. Which academic members serve as leaders in the advocacy of service-learning?
21. How does this university encourage academic staff members to engage in service-learning?
22. What kinds of incentives are provided to academic staff in order to pursue service-learning?

- 23.** In what ways is academic work in community engagement recognised for promotion?
- 24.** What form of student activities are conducted in line with the provision of service-learning?
- 25.** How are students evaluated for participating in community engagement activities?
- 26.** Who are your community partners?
- 27.** How is the local community involved in the conceptualisation of service-learning?
- 28.** In what way does your community engagement project benefit the local community?
- 29.** How does the university work in cooperation with the surrounding community to address real social needs?
- 30.** How do you ensure consistency of participation by community partners in your community engagement activities?
- 31.** How is the coordinating structure devoted to assist in the conceptualisation of service-learning?
- 32.** Which policy-making entity recognises service-learning as an essential educational goal?
- 33.** Which staff members are primarily paid to conceptualise service-learning?
- 34.** How is your community engagement project funded?
- 35.** How is service-learning advocated in your department?
- 36.** What effort is made to account for the quality of service-learning activities in your project?

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ACADEMIC STAFF MEMBERS**

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1. In which community engagement project are you involved?
2. When did this project begin?
3. When did you join this project?
4. What are the primary goals of this project?
5. What are your duties and responsibilities as academic staff member in this project?
6. How many academic staff members are involved in this project?
7. How many students are involved in this project?
8. What is your understanding of the concept service-learning?
9. When, how and where were you informed about service-learning for the first time?
10. How is service-learning commonly defined within this institution?
11. What forms of misconceptions do other stakeholders have about service-learning?
12. What strategies are in place in order to create a better understanding of service-learning on campus?
13. What measures are in place to effect compulsory participation in service-learning?
14. What are the advantages of having a clear definition of service-learning on campus?
15. What are the disadvantages of lacking a clear definition of service-learning on campus?
16. What is your understanding of the social mission of this institution?
17. How is your practice of community engagement tailored to achieve the social mission of this institution?
18. How is your community engagement project aligned to teaching and research?
19. Which official strategic plan informs the conceptualisation of service-learning on campus?
20. Which academic staff members serve as leaders in the conceptualisation of service-learning?
21. How does this university encourage academic staff members to engage in service-learning?

- 22.** What kind of incentives is provided to academic staff members in order to pursue service-learning?
- 23.** In what way is academic work in community engagement recognised for promotion?
- 24.** What form of student activities are conducted in line with the provision of service-learning?
- 25.** How are students evaluated for participating in community engagement activities?
- 26.** Who are your community partners?
- 27.** How is the local community involved in the conceptualisation of service-learning?
- 28.** In what way does your community engagement project benefit the local community?
- 29.** How does this university work in cooperation with the surrounding community to address the real social needs?
- 30.** How do you ensure consistency of participation by community partners?
- 31.** How is the coordinating structure devoted to assist in conceptualisation of service-learning?
- 32.** Which policy-making entity recognises service-learning as an essential educational goal?
- 33.** Which staff members are primarily paid to conceptualise service-learning?
- 34.** How is your community engagement project funded?
- 35.** How is service-learning conceptualised in your department?
- 36.** What effort is made to account for the quality of service-learning activities in your project?

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FINAL YEAR STUDENTS**

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1. In which community engagement project are you involved?
2. When did this project start?
3. When did you join this project?
4. What are the primary goals of this project?
5. What are your duties and responsibilities as a student in this project?
6. How many academic staff members are involved in this project?
7. How many students are involved in this project?
8. What is your understanding of the concept service-learning?
9. When, how and where were you informed about service-learning for the first time?
10. How is service-learning commonly defined within this institution?
11. What forms of misconceptions do other stakeholders have about service-learning?
12. Which strategies are in place to create a better understanding of service-learning on campus?
13. What measures are taken to effect compulsory participation in service-learning?
14. What are the advantages of having a clear definition of service-learning on campus?
15. What are the disadvantages of lacking a clear definition of service-learning on campus?
16. What is your understanding of the social mission of this university?
17. How is your practice of service-learning tailored to achieve the social mission of this university?
18. How is your community engagement project aligned to teaching and research?
19. Which official strategic plan informs the conceptualisation of service-learning on campus?
20. Which academic staff members serve as leaders in the conceptualisation of service-learning?
21. How does this university encourage academic staff members to engage in service-learning?
22. What kinds of incentives are provided to academic staff members in order to pursue service-learning?

- 23.** In what way is academic work in community engagement recognised for promotion?
- 24.** What form of student activities are conducted in line with the provision of service-learning?
- 25.** How are students evaluated for participating in community engagement activities?
- 26.** Who are your community partners?
- 27.** How is the local community involved in the conceptualisation of service-learning?
- 28.** In what way does your community engagement project benefit the local community?
- 29.** How does this university work together with the surrounding community to address social needs?
- 30.** How do you ensure consistency of participation by community partners in your community engagement activities?
- 31.** How is the coordinating structure devoted to assist in the conceptualisation of service-learning?
- 32.** Which policy-making entity recognises service-learning as an essential educational goal?
- 33.** Which academic staff members are primarily paid to conceptualise service-learning?
- 34.** How is your community engagement project funded?
- 35.** What effort is made to account for the quality of service-learning activities in your project?

## APPENDIX 5

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

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P O Box 164  
Masemola  
1060

20 February 2012

The Director  
Research and Innovation Office  
University of Venda  
Private Bag X 5050  
Thohoyandou  
0950

Dear Sir/Madam

#### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

**Degree:** PhD (Community and Continuing Education)

**Department:** Education Studies

**Supervisor:** Dr M A Rampedi

**Student No:** 201015494

I hereby apply for permission to conduct research at the University of Venda in order to complete my PhD study. I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of Limpopo. My research study is titled "**Conceptualisation of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa**".

Service-learning as is "a form of community-based experiential and a curriculum-based, credit-bearing and carefully structured educational experience in which students participate in an organised community interaction activity that meets identified and agreed upon community goals; reflect on the service activity in order to gain deeper understanding of module and programme content; acquire a broader appreciation of the discipline and develop an enhanced sense of social responsibility towards society as a whole" (Smith-Tolken, 2011:351).

This study seeks is to explore a possible framework for conceptualisation of service-learning in order to provide directors of community engagement, academic staff members, project coordinators of community engagement and students with a useful guide for future service-learning practice at two rural-based universities in South Africa.

Data will be gathered from participants in the existing community engagement projects in the School of Education; School of Agriculture; School of Law; and School of Health Sciences. Participants will include one project coordinator, two academic staff members, and two final year undergraduate students per selected school. The Director of Community Engagement will be included as a participant in this study.

More information is provided on the attached copy of my research proposal or you can contact me at 082 939 2748 or email [morgan.maphutha@ul.ac.za](mailto:morgan.maphutha@ul.ac.za).

Yours faithfully  
M M Maphutha

19 August 2013

Mr. M M Maphutha  
School of Education  
Department of Educational Studies  
University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus)  
Sovenga  
0727

Dear Mr. Maphutha



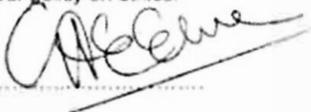
**University of Venda**  
Office of the Director  
Research & Innovation  
University Road,  
Thohoyandou, Limpopo  
Private Bag X5050,  
Thohoyandou, 0950  
Limpopo, South Africa  
Tel: +27 15 962 6464 /  
6313  
Fax: +27 15 962 4749  
[Research@univen.ac.za](mailto:Research@univen.ac.za)

**Permission to conduct Research at the University of Venda**

Research and Innovation Directorate has hereby granted you permission to conduct research at the University of Venda on the Project titled: ***"Towards institutionalisation of service-learning at historically black universities in South Africa"***.

The conditions are that all the data pertaining to University of Venda will be treated in accordance with the Ethical principles and that will be shared with the University. In addition consent should be sought by you as a researcher from participants.

Attached is our policy on ethics.

Thank you 

Prof. G. E. Ekosse  
Director Research and Innovation

Cc: *Director of Community Engagement*  
*Dean of School of Law*  
*Dean of School of Education*  
*Dean of School of Agriculture*  
*Dean of School of Health Sciences*

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## APPENDIX 6

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

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P O Box 164  
Masemola  
1060

20 February 2012

The Director  
Turfloop Research Ethics Committee  
University of Limpopo  
Turfloop campus  
Private Bag X 1106  
Sovenga  
0727

Dear Madam

#### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

**Degree:** PhD (Community and Continuing Education)

**Department:** Education Studies

**Supervisor:** Dr M A Rampedi

**Student No:** 201015494

I hereby apply for permission to conduct research at the University of Limpopo in order to complete my PhD study. I am a student in the School of Education at the University of Limpopo. My research study is titled "***Conceptualisation of service-learning at two rural-based universities in South Africa***".

Service-learning as is "a form of community-based experiential and a curriculum-based, credit-bearing and carefully structured educational experience in which students participate in an organised community interaction activity that meets identified and agreed upon community goals; reflect on the service activity in order to gain deeper understanding of module and programme content; acquire a broader appreciation of the discipline and develop an enhanced sense of social responsibility towards society as a whole" (Smith-Tolken, 2011:351).

This study seeks to explore a possible framework for conceptualisation of service-learning in order to provide directors of community engagement, academic staff members, project coordinators of community engagement and students with a useful guide for future service-learning practice at two rural-based universities in South Africa.

Data will be gathered from participants in the existing community engagement projects in the School of Education; School of Agriculture; School of Law; and School of Health Sciences. Participants will include one project coordinator of community engagement,

two academic staff members, and two final year undergraduate students per selected school. The director of Community Engagement will also be involved in this study.

More information is provided on the attached copy of my research proposal or you can contact me at 082 939 2748 or email [morgan.maphutha@ul.ac.za](mailto:morgan.maphutha@ul.ac.za).

Yours faithfully  
M M Maphutha



**University of Limpopo**  
Research Development and Administration Department  
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
Tel: (015) 268 2212, Fax: (015) 268 2306. Email: [nolo.monene@ul.ac.za](mailto:nolo.monene@ul.ac.za)

**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**  
**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**MEETING:** 09 May 2013

**PROJECT NUMBER:** TREC/FHM/19/2013: PG

**PROJECT:**

**Title:** Towards institutionalization of service-learning at Historically Black Universities in South Africa

**Researcher:** Mr MM Maphutha  
**Supervisor:** Dr HD Mabasa  
**Co-Supervisor:** Dr MA Rampedi  
**Department:** Educational Studies  
**School:** School of Education  
**Degree:** PhD in Education

  
**PROF TAB MASHEGO**  
**CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council  
Registration Number: **REC-0310111-031**.

**Note:**

- i) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
- ii) The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.  
**PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.**

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**APPENDIX 7**

**LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT**

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I declare that I have been informed about this research study. I am also aware of the nature and aim of this study.

I therefore agree to participate in this study and I understand that I can withdraw anytime from the study if I so wish.

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_