Service-learning: Business School Students Working for the Common Good

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Abstract

Although service-learning pedagogy is widely applied internationally, and has been shown to effectively incorporate the experiential element of adult learning, its application to business education in South Africa has been limited to less than a handful of studies. However, it is one of the most effective management development tools reported in the literature.

The objective of this study was to evaluate the student learning and community organisation benefits from introducing service-learning into a Master of Business Leadership (MBL) programme in a South African University.

Service-learning creates the opportunity for students to apply the theoretical knowledge of their discipline (marketing and operations management in this study) to real (usually Non-profit or Non-Governmental Organizations) workplaces, in this case special-needs schools in various African countries, to the benefit of the needy organisations. In this exploratory, action research case study, teams of MBL students embedded their theoretical learning through practical implementation of a fund-raising project, as well as showed the development of management and leadership competencies.

The groups collectively raised South African Rands (ZAR) 1 811 128.57 (after expenses and excluding pledges) for the schools. The business school students reported high levels of personal growth, a strong sense of having developed as socially responsible citizens, an appreciation for practical learning methods and improved subject matter learning.

Keywords: Service-learning, MBA, management education, special-needs schools, community service, education, Africa, South Africa

Introduction

A popular definition of service-learning is:

> … a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs, and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher 1996).

It should be noted that clear educational objectives or outcomes must be met, through the mechanism of providing a desired (by the community organisation) service to a community organisation.

Literature has increasingly reported that the service-learning pedagogy is a powerful and effective mechanism for management learning and development (Lamb, Swinth, Vinton *et al.* 1998; Tucker, McCarthy, Hoxmeier *et al.* 1998; Gujarathi & McQuade 2002; Andrews 2007; Holtzman, Stewart & Barr 2008; Gundlach & Zivnuska 2010). Service-learning provides students with the opportunity to apply and expand their theoretical knowledge in a real workplace environment leading to the development of management competencies (Kenworthy-U'Ren 2000; Carmichael & Rijamampianina 2008; Kenworthy-U'Ren 2008). In line with the expectation that academic scholars not only teach and conduct research but also become personally involved (academic citizenship), and involve their students in service to society, service-learning has the potential to make a real difference to organizations in the not-for-profit sector (Gujarathi & McQuade 2002; Republic of South Africa 2002). Indeed, service-learning can not only integrate the university with its community but also to prepare students for their careers, citizenship, and community involvement (McCarthy & Tucker 2002; Leung, Liu, Wang *et al.* 2007).

Business schools in particular can play an important role in helping community organisations operate with higher efficiency and effectiveness while enhancing the curriculum-related learning experiences of students (Gujarathi & McQuade 2002). Although service-learning is in its infancy in South Africa, particularly in the context of management education, Carmichael and Rijamampianina (2008) found that this teaching method

provides unique opportunities to improve teaching and learning practices in Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees.

Internationally, literature on the use of service-learning assignments in business schools emerged from the mid 1990s but very little has been reported on from a South African business school perspective (Gujarathi & McQuade 2002; Kenworthy-U'Ren 2008; Carmichael & Rijamampianina 2008). In addition, little empirical data has been collected in terms of the value and impact on students (McCarthy & Tucker 2002; Wittmer 2004).

Problem Statement and Objectives of the Study

The problem under investigation was to evaluate the student learning and community organisation benefits from introducing service-learning into an MBL programme in a South African University.

The purpose of this study was to describe the implementation of service-learning within a South African Business School environment and provide feedback on the learning, value and impact this assignment had on students and on the reciprocal benefits to the communities.

This paper reports on the incorporation of service-learning into two first-year capstone Master of Business Leadership (MBL) courses offered by the University of South Africa's (Unisa) Graduate School of Business Leadership (GSBL).

Literature Survey

Service-learning

Service-learning is a pedagogy whereby students acquire both knowledge and workplace skills by performing curriculum-based services or activities for non-profit or other community organisations (Bringle & Hatcher 1995; 1996). Service-learning thus has the potential to enrich specific learning goals through structured community service opportunities that respond to community-identified needs and opportunities (Kenworthy-U'Ren 2008). As such, service-learning can balance academic rigor with practical relevance within a civic engagement context. Service-learning as a learning instrument can therefore provide students with a broader and richer educational

experience (Godfrey, Illes & Berry 2005; Andrews 2007; Holtzman *et al.* 2008).

Successful service-learning, according to Godfrey et al. (2005), consists of four elements, namely reality, reflection, reciprocity and responsibility. Reality is offered as students are exposed to real-world situations where they address real-world needs. Projects challenge students to solve problems with no single 'right' answer but real-world consequences (Kenworthy-U'Ren 2008). Through reflection, students take the application of their skills and translate it into knowledge whilst learning about social issues through reciprocity. Responsibility captures the philosophy about professionalism as business service-learning experiences should send a clear message: 'Because business students have received much (in terms of educational opportunity, skill development, and job opportunities), much can and should be expected of them in strengthening community life' (Godfrey *et al.* 2005:318).

In business schools this can be considered a mutually beneficial arrangement, as students receive credit for their academic achievements and the community organisations receive valuable and relevant business benefits and skills (Holtzman *et al.* 2008). Furthermore students learn the generic management skills encompassed by the South African Qualification Authority's (SAQA) Critical Cross-Field Outcomes (CCFOs) as described previously (Carmichael & Stacey 2006). Other outcomes of service-learning initiatives are, amongst others, a commitment to social change, communication skills and issues relating to social awareness and responsibility (Tucker *et al.* 1998; Roschelle, Turpin & Elias 2000; Leung *et al.* 2007; Holtzman *et al.* 2008). Furthermore, service-learning is closely correlated to leadership development, teamwork, information literacy, problem solving, critical and systems thinking, emotional intelligence, community development and enrichment particularly in diverse contexts (Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley *et al.* 1996; Althaus 1997; Griffith 1999; Chesler & Vasques Scalera 2000; Albert 2002; Black 2002; Manring 2004; Hurt 2007; Carmichael & Rijamampianina 2008).

Despite the advantages of incorporating service-learning into business education programmes, resistance from faculty members is high, and institutionalisation of the pedagogy remains the greatest barrier to success (Furco 2001).

Intellectual and Pedagogical Legitimacy in the South African Educational Landscape

Over 40 years ago, Townsend (1970) emphasised that the only way to learn how to manage is 'on the job', a principle strongly advocated by Mintzberg and various co-authors in more recent times (Gosling & Mintzberg 2003; Mintzberg 2004; Mintzberg & Sacks 2004). In addition, experiential learning is a fact of life in business schools, and is a primary aspect of high quality adult learning (Kolb 1984; Knowles & Holton 2000; Gundlach & Zivnuska 2010), giving a 'definitive edge in the job market' (Clark & White 2010:115). Business school students at Unisa, for example, undertake practical assignments as 30% of their course mark. These are usually carried out within the business sector employing them. Over time, it can be seen that many of the basic principles of adult learning have not changed, and that adults learn best when opportunities for exploration, experimentation, reflection, active implementation and collaboration are present (Kolb 1984; Honey & Mumford 1992; Bringle & Hatcher 1999; Brock & Cameron 1999; Desai, Damewood & Jones 2001; Kuh 2003; Bender, Daniels, Lazarus *et al.* 2006; Kamath, Agrawal & Krickx 2008). Adults learn by doing, and an action component is essential for real learning to take place (Kenworthy-U'Ren 2000; Erasmus 2005; Clark & White 2010). It has also been reported that experiential learning applied to social entrepreneurship builds other important management skills such as King's (2002) Triple Bottom Line reporting (Gundlach & Zivnuska 2010).

Reflection is core to adult learning (Kolb 1984; Bringle & Hatcher 1999; Knowles & Holton 2000). As such, the development of this relatively new methodology must, by virtue of justifying its theoretical foundations, include reflective activities. Writers on the topic of management education have stated that insufficient practical application is included in MBA education, and have made repeated references to the fact that managers need to reflect, and that management education needs to include reflective activities (Porter & McKibbin 1988; Boyatzis, Cowen & Kolb 1995; Mintzberg 2004; Mintzberg & Sacks 2004).

Service-learning has been implemented in various forms, but, by considering the dates of the literature, it appears to be is a relatively recently applied pedagogy. In the United States of America (USA), community

engagement in education began in the 1970s, based on the ideas of Dewey (1938), cited in Bender *et al.* (2006), which is one of the earliest references obtained relating to the practice. In South Africa, service-learning has been identified as a key initiative in the transformation of higher education (McMillan & Saddington 2000; HEQC 2001).

The service-learning methodology focuses on student experiences and application of theory in the real world of work (Lamb *et al.* 1998; Albert 2002; Hurt 2007). This application, together with strategically guided reflection leads students to the discovery of greater meaning from their experiences (Bringle & Hatcher 1999; Bender *et al.* 2006). The nature of service-learning thus dovetails well with the concepts of experiential learning and it can therefore be suggested as an effective adult learning methodology (Butin 2006).

The South African Good Practice Guide (HEQC 2006), recommends that all service-learning courses in South Africa include:

- Relevant and meaningful service to the community. The service must be meaningful, not only to the community, but also to the students and to the institution – the service intervention must be negotiated and agreed with the community so that the criterion of reciprocity is met. The intervention should be meaningful to the community and improve their quality of life, and students must meet the stated course outcomes.
- Enhanced academic learning – course outcome achievements should be enriched through the practical experience by ensuring that there is a close linkage between the course objectives and the service objectives.
- Purposeful civic learning/social responsibility. This type of learning prepares students for their citizenship role – as described in the CCFOs, and includes knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.
- Structured opportunities for reflection. Service-learning theorists regard reflection as crucial in order to transform, clarify, reinforce and expand student learning through relating their experiences to deeper theoretical learning, a greater awareness of personal values and a sense of social responsibility.

Service-learning Experiences in Management Education and MBA degrees

Service-learning assignments not only fit the scope of the business courses but it also help to promote the goals of relevant management education i.e. it can give students a context within which to place the course content which increases the quality and depth of their understanding (Gujarathi & McQuade 2002). Through this action learning approach, MBA/L students more easily acquire foundational (course content) competence, practical competence (skills) and reflexive competence (the ability to apply their learning in different contexts) as required by local legislation. MBA students have indicated a strong preference for more interactive learning environments, so their 'processing' through the educational system should be smoother (Carmichael & Sutherland 2005). This learning takes place within a functional context relevant to the community organisation, which does, through mutual understanding and agreement, benefit from the students' interventions. Should service-learning implementation in MBA / MBL programmes take place widely, it is possible that both social and economic upliftment could result, particularly if graduates implement or participate in corporate social responsibility initiatives back in their workplaces.

Student learning is reciprocated through this pedagogy and Carmichael and Rijamampianina (2008) have demonstrated that students acquire competence in generic management skills as well as experience a high level of personal growth and wisdom, increasing the return on their investment into their education. As a result of the authentic workplace learning, applied competence will be greater and students should perform better in their own workplaces, benefiting themselves and their employers.

In conclusion, Papamarcos (2005:325) found that service-learning represents perhaps the most effective teaching tool available to the contemporary management professor: 'It provides students with exposure to the vast network of interdependencies of business and society as well as expansive real-world management experience that gives traction to theory – preparing them to be workers in the economy and citizens in a democracy'.

Non-profit and Community Organisations in South Africa

The work conducted in this research applies to a broad concept of 'com-

munity'. Soukhanov (1992) defines a community as either a group of people living in one locality, or as society generally. These are the usual recipients (implied or stated) of most Service-Learning interventions. Generally Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) interface with government and / or business to support public and societal causes to promote various levels of survival and wellbeing, depending on the degree of success of their operation (Leisinger 2007). They fill important gaps in government efforts, especially in poor communities.

The scope of community organisations under consideration for the purposes of this research is not limited to the non-profit sector. There are many community based organisations, not registered with the Department of Social Services (DSD), but who perform a critical role in society (Rippon 2002). These organisations, as well as more formalised NPOs, fund their operations from a number of sources, including donations, (a portion of which is tax deductible to the donor), grants, gifts, endowments, membership fees, fund-raising activities, or the sale of goods or services, such as may be found in charity shops, counselling services, research, education and training or medical / convalescent support and care. Fund raising was a core objective of the service-learning intervention conducted in this study. In the South African (perhaps common to African nations and other developing countries) context, it is likely to be of value to be flexible when defining who service-learning beneficiaries should be, rather than adhering strictly to the more specific formalised non-profit sector described in the Western literature.

Service-learning: Working towards the Common Good

Being enrolled for a Master's level degree assumes that students understand the importance of a good education. Ironically the prospect of a good education is not shared by all as many children cannot aspire to building a similar bright future, due to learning disabilities. According to Abosi (2007), the increase in the number of children with learning disabilities in schools in Africa has become a major issue and concern. Although there are no statistical records available in most African countries on the number of children with learning disabilities, it is believed that about eight percent of the students in school are experiencing learning difficulties in the classroom. In order to address this, some of these children receive special education.

Special education refers to a range of educational and social services provided by the public school system and other educational institutions to individuals with disabilities who are between three and 21 years of age (Dalton 2002). The problems of special-needs schools are two-fold. Firstly, there are not enough of these schools to cater for all the children with special needs. Secondly, the few schools that are available are not adequately funded; hence lack the appropriate facilities to provide quality education to these children (Govender 2009). According to the South African Department of Education there are approximately 88,000 disabled pupils in roughly 400 special schools across South Africa. (SAgoodnews 2008). It is also estimated that a further 288,000 disabled children are not attending school. The sheer complexity and scale of the challenge means that sustainable solutions are beyond the reach of any single actor.

As such, there is a role for all enlightened individuals, local communities, nation states, foundations, corporations and multilateral institutions to each bring their specific resources, skills and experiences to the table and cooperate to compile the 'solution mosaic' to address greater societal challenges (Leisinger 2007). This call for action inspired faculty members at the GSBL to play a role in helping special-need schools to operate with higher efficiency and effectiveness whilst enhancing the course-related learning experience of students.

Research Methodology

The exploratory case study approach taken here was appropriate to the convenience sample under the direct control of the first author. However, although broad generalisations to other MBA and similar qualifications cannot be made, it is hoped that the lessons learned may usefully be applied in similar contexts.

In line with the purpose of service-learning, the students were to implement and be assessed on projects in accordance with their academic curricula, within the context of providing a service of value to a community in need.

Service-learning was incorporated into group assignments of two first-year capstone MBL modules (Operations Management and Marketing Management). Exam admission for these modules requires students to

successfully complete and submit two group assignments and one individual test per module. This article reports on the second assignment completed by the 2009 first year class for the above mentioned modules.

This sample consisted of 405 students comprising 42 groups geographically dispersed over the African continent. Most of the group members resided in South Africa (31 groups), followed by Ethiopia (seven groups), Swaziland (two groups) and lastly students from other African countries (two groups). Thus, it can be noted that 61 per cent of the students were resident within South Africa and the remainder in other African countries.

Although not analysed as part of the study, it may be of interest to researchers wishing to undertake similar projects, that the student demographics showed that 66.4 per cent were male and 33.6 per cent female. Most had been working full time for an average of 10 years. Twelve per cent were in top management positions, 69 per cent in middle management and 18 per cent were professionals. Race composition was 7.7 % Asian students, 81 % black, 3.7 % coloured and 7.7 % white.

The community organisations selected for both assignments were special-needs schools. Groups were required to approach a special-needs school within the geographical area of their residence and obtain permission to use the school as a case-study for their assignments. The operations management assignment required students to conduct a detailed situational analysis of the school's internal and external environment. In doing so students had to compare local realities against expectations from all stakeholders. It was also expected that groups would identify internal operational challenges, best practices and external opportunities and threats in order to identify areas for potential improvement. Finally, students were required to recommend operational improvements required by the selected schools and provide recommendations for implementing changes. The operations management assignment was used as the foundation for the marketing management assignment.

As the students had a clear mandate in terms of the selected school's needs, the marketing assignment required them to plan and execute a charity event to raise money. This money would be used to implement the recommendations from the operations assignment. Students were required to demonstrate that they followed the principles of marketing planning and

needed to use analytical, planning and creative skills for the successful implementation of their elected projects. On completion of the project students reflected on how these assignments differed from other assignments and how they had changed their personal philosophy towards the community, learning and self-being.

Assessment of the assignments constituted one of the measures of success for the service-learning interventions, and had to include the theoretical foundation used to develop a sound marketing plan (50 marks). This plan had to include a thorough situation analysis and clear target markets based on stakeholder needs and expectations. In addition it had to state the event objectives and the marketing mix strategy for the planned event. The second part of the assessment (50 marks) considered the execution of the event and success was measured by the sustainability of the event (for example answering the question of whether the school could use the event again next year to raise funds), the funds raised, community involvement, media coverage and feedback from the schools. Finally, students were required to reflect on their learning experience, both curricular and personal. Both assignments adhered to the pedagogical foundations of service-learning.

The key numerical measure of success was the amount of money raised for the schools, and the measures used for student subject-matter learning were the content analysed (Cooper & Schindler 2008) assignments and reflections as well as the mark allocated to the assignments against the criteria stated earlier. Such triangulation of the findings is appropriate for case study research, which is, in contemporary literature, typically regarded as following a mixed methods approach (Creswell 2009).

Results and Discussion

All assignments were submitted to content analysis in order to make inferences about the content (Cooper & Schindler 2008), and were allocated a course mark. In total 38 special-need schools participated in the student projects.

Geographically, most schools were located in South Africa. Provincially, these were distributed as follows: 16 schools were located in Gauteng, three in Limpopo, two schools each in North West Province,

Mpumalanga, and KwaZulu Natal as well a one school in the Western Cape and one in the Free State. Schools located outside the South African borders include one school located in Uganda, one school in Namibia, two schools in Swaziland and seven schools in Ethiopia.

Four groups elected to implement their projects at a later stage due to time constraints and the results of these projects are therefore not included here. All groups did, however, adhere to the theoretical planning principles and closely followed the assignment guidelines. It was possible to conclude that the intended academic learning was realised and that the specified academic outcomes were achieved.

The charity events took various formats and were customised to cater to the needs of the local community and potential donors. Most events (15) focused on some form of entertainment, including sport days (corporate soccer tournaments, golf days, athletics and motor cycle events) and music (jazz, rock and variety concerts). Corporate sponsorship drives (nine projects) were also popular and projects classified in this category focused on developing awareness and fundraising proposals presented to local corporates. In most cases, projects in this category developed promotional material such as information brochures, sponsorship proposals, websites and press releases to promote the schools. The third category of projects involved fundraising breakfasts, luncheons or dinners (five projects). Funds were raised by selling tables to corporate and individual donors. During the event the groups mostly arranged a topical speaker and auctioned sponsored items to the guests. Other projects included raffle tickets, selling fruit and vegetables, a youth arts exhibition and arranging car washes.

As success of the project was measured against the sustainability of the event, schools were part of the planning and execution of the projects and where possible donors committed to ongoing support. The combined funds raised totalled ZAR1 811 128.57 (after expenses and excluding future pledges) and the average funds raised per group was ZAR46 661.28. In addition the projects also raised much needed community and corporate awareness about these schools which would contribute to the success of future fundraising initiatives. Most groups (90 per cent) were given access to local radio and/or community newspapers and three groups were able to secure national television coverage in order to promote the schools and fundraising events.

Student Subject Matter Learning

Students acknowledged that the practical nature of the assignment, with the inclusion of the reflection exercise, made their academic learning more exciting and effective, although few were aware of the basic models of adult learning (Kolb1984; Honey & Mumford 1992; Bringle & Hatcher 1999; Brock & Cameron 1999; Knowles & Holton 2000; Desai *et al.* 2001; Kuh 2003; Bender *et al.* 2006; Kamath *et al.* 2008; Clark & White 2010). These findings are well illustrated by the following direct quotes from students:

- I want to extend my thanks for the opportunity of engaging us in such a practical manner to study material.
- I must say that this assignment was by far the most exciting. It was an extremely worthwhile learning experience.
- The assignment lifted our team spirit and we experienced the real meaning of teamwork!

All the schools that benefited from this assignment expressed their gratitude towards the students and the GSBL contributing to the positive experience of the students. In many cases, groups and schools agreed to a continued relationship confirming the relevance of service-learning on both a personal and professional level. Students described their experiences as follows:

- Our team is still getting more contributions. We have also decided to adopt the school for the duration of the MBL.
- There is a need of a broader scope, a higher aim, a higher calling than just passing the course. Our group has made an undertaking to continue the good work with the school and rally the corporate community behind the needs of those that are without.

We have learnt that one does not have to be rich to make a difference. The most important thing is to care about others and initiate activities or similar events that will change their lives. Our valid contribution towards the development of the school has made us proud about ourselves, knowing that we have made such a positive change towards our community. It also made

us realise that changing the world does not end with the assignment but it is something that one should consider as mission of existence. In this economic downturn with scarcity of resources the most vulnerable needs should be prioritised and institutions of higher learning should contribute substantially to make them relevant to the broader society. What purpose will education serve if it fails to respond to the needs of society to empower and engage?

Student Experiences and Personal Growth

Similarly to the findings of Carmichael and Rijamampianina (2008), students perceived and reported that they had experienced high levels of personal growth, in the sense that the assignment had created an increased awareness of, and empathy for the socio-economic context of the countries in which they lived. They also felt fulfilled in contributing positively to communities in need, whilst, importantly, learning about the communities through immersion into the process and communication, although not all students maximised this learning opportunity. This generally created a stronger awareness of the principles of corporate citizenship, which some stated they were intending to use in their workplaces to further Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes. The following illustrative statements were extracted from the data:

- It has opened the whole new view in us as individuals towards our community and made us realise that the little things that we do may have a greater impact on others than we realise.
- … our experience was exciting and more practical compared to other assignments. It involved us with the community and we felt worthy that we could do something for others.
- … this quickly became one of life's treasured pursuits, to make a difference to the community. It was the first time that we were able to ply our MBL skills in the real world. It was both exciting and daunting that members of the community would not only rely on the group, but look to us for inspiration – we carried a portion of their hopes and dreams forward, a responsibility not taken lightly.

- I am proud of our MBL group, myself as an individual and my company too, I hope we can do more practical and worthy assignments like this. One thing I learnt is never to take anything or anyone for granted, everyone is special in their own way.
- I appreciated the opportunity to work with a needy organisation and to add value to them in such a profound way.

When we set out to do this assignment, it was business as usual, crafting a strategy on how the group would execute the assignment within the deadlines. When the time came to approach the school Principal, it dawned on us that we would have to dig deeper into ourselves to achieve the task that lay ahead. It was a humbling experience to embrace the needs of the learners and the challenges they face. The necessity for us to contribute meaningfully to meeting their needs became larger than just making the grade in our assignments.

This humbling experience of realising that 'disability is not inability' taught the group that with humility and giving your best at all times despite insurmountable challenges, one can achieve beyond your wildest expectations. It has at a personal level challenged us to introspect and bring us to the realisation of how lucky we are. It has motivated us to give selflessly of ourselves without being asked, be it in kind or otherwise.

Umuntu, Ngumuntu, Ngabantu' which roughly translated means 'A person only becomes a human through other people.

Conclusion

Sustainability is not possible unless individuals and groups uplift the society within which they live and leave it better than they found it. Education is a fundamental tool in this endeavour, and synergies can be leveraged to the benefit of so many, if time is taken to seek them out. Too often in programmes like the MBA, MBL and similar, this is forgotten. Students enrol, often with the prime objective being for personal career advancement, promotion or a better salary. Whilst this is clearly not 'wrong', pedagogies that include assignments encouraging participants' involvement in practical social programme can deliver both academic learning and community benefit

(Bringle & Hatcher 1999). In this study, the chosen schools and the communities in which they were situated benefited immediately, the students delivered on their academic assignments and finally, possibly most importantly, were left with a humbling experience that put the value of their studies into perspective. Approached correctly, service-learning can be a life changing experience that can positively shape the future of future business leaders in ensuring that the concept of the triple bottom line (King 2002) is fully understood.

A final student quote sums up the findings from this study:

- The marketing assignment we undertook had a profound bias towards the practical dimensions of education. Most assignments encompass the application and interpretation of theoretical concepts, and as such the exercise remains largely abstract. The marketing assignment required us to operate in the cross section where theory meets practice. This stretched our minds as we realised that our success or failure would be physical – it would be three dimensional! As we engaged in the process of knowledge application, the motivation levels transcended the group from assignment fulfilment to making a social contribution.

It was found that this assignment complied with the recommendations set by The South African Good Practice Guide (HEQC 2006). Raising R1 811 128.57 to assist special schools was reported by the participating schools to be relevant and meaningful. The schools stated their intent to use the funds raised to improve identified operational weaknesses and shortcomings aimed at improving the quality of life for the students.

It was also apparent from student reflection that the criterion of reciprocity was met, as academic learning was enriched and deepened (Holtzman *et al.* 2008) through practical experience. As highlighted in the reflection documents, students became aware of their social responsibility and in many instances decided to continue with their citizenship role. Finally, as per the literature, reflection offered students the opportunity to transform, clarify, reinforce and expand their own learning through relating their experiences to deeper theoretical learning, a greater awareness of personal

values and a sense of social responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher 1999; Bender *et al.* 2006).

Service-learning as pedagogy could therefore be effectively implemented widely in MBA and similar programmes in South Africa, as both the literature and the findings from this study suggest that it is one of the most effective management development tools available to educators. Based on Furco's (2001) recommendations for institutionalising service-learning, one of the first steps in creating this reality in higher education institutions is to build critical mass. Should the pedagogy be implemented in MBA / MBL programmes around the country, this could be built rapidly, and the competitiveness between business schools for better local and international rankings has the potential to add impetus to the efforts.

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