SERVICE – LEARNING IN
MBA DEGREE PROGRAMMES
IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this exploratory meta-study was to establish a foundation for the implementation of Service-Learning as a pedagogy into MBA programmes in South Africa. Three major inter-related contexts underpinned the study; a) the business sector, with its deep need for appropriately skilled managers and leaders, b) the social sector within which is situated a considerable number of currently or potentially economically active community organisations, and c) higher education, particularly with reference to its legislated transformation imperative.

Service-Learning as a pedagogy has never been implemented in MBA programmes in South Africa, yet the literature suggests that it is one of the most effective management development tools available to educators.

The mixed methodological approach taken in this study was based on the published perceptual shift from that of analysis to one of synthesis. In this paradigm, the basic tenet was that of investigating several constructs from different perspectives (the meta-study format) with the intention of combining them into a new coherent framework to offer the field of management education. Within this framework, data were gathered from several relevant populations, including business leaders and managers, MBA students, Service-Learning practitioners and community organisations.

Through triangulation and aggregation of findings from the different sources, it was established that MBA students acting in a consultant capacity experienced real workplace learning in an authentic context, where the outputs of the work that they conducted via their academic assignments were utilised productively by the community organisations with which they worked. They were able to address at least some pressing social needs whilst meeting their academic objectives, measured using Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive outcomes. They also reported a high level of personal growth and increased awareness of the socio-economic fabric of the country.

Although the findings from this research cannot necessarily be generalised to all MBA programmes in South Africa, they do suggest that Service-Learning has an important role to play in educating South African managers, whilst addressing social, economic and educational transformation needs.

This research has established that MBA Service-Learning is a worthwhile pedagogy on which to conduct further research and implementation in South African business schools.

PUBLICATIONS RESULTING FROM THIS RESEARCH

Publications in Department of Education (DoE) accredited journals

Carmichael, T. & Sutherland, M. (2005) A holistic framework for the perceived return on investment of an MBA, *South African Journal of Business Management* 36 (2), pp. 57-70

Carmichael, T. & Stacey, A. (2006) Perceptions of SAQA's critical cross-field outcomes as key management meta-competencies, *South African Journal of Business Management*, 37(2), pp. 1-15.

Conference presentations with full paper published in proceedings

Carmichael, T. (2005) *Leveraging MBA students' skills to support organisations catering for the disabled*, A paper presented at the Federation of Tertiary Institutions of the Northern Metropolis (FOTIM) Conference, held in Johannesburg on October 4-6, 2005.

Conference presentations with abstracts only published

Carmichael, T. (2005) *Collaboration on Post-Graduate Service-Learning*, A round-table discussion held at the University of Johannesburg / CHESP Conference held at the University of Johannesburg Community Service-Learning Conference on March 17-18 , 2005.

Carmichael, T. (2005) *How NOT to teach Service-Learning for the first time*, A paper presented at The International Symposium on Service-Learning - Models for the 21st Century: Intercommunity, Interdisciplinary, International, run jointly by the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Indianapolis, held in Stellenbosch, November 20-22, 2005.

Carmichael, T. (2005) *A proposed model for combining Research, Teaching and Service-Learning into an MBA Curriculum*, A paper presented at The International Symposium on Service-Learning - Models for the 21st Century: Intercommunity, Interdisciplinary,

International, run jointly by the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Indianapolis, held in Stellenbosch, November 20-22, 2005.

Conference presentations accepted but subsequently withdrawn by the author of this research due to unforeseen inability to attend said Conference

Carmichael, T., Green, P. & Cameron, A. *Moving beyond academic boundaries to make a difference in the real world*, a paper submitted to The 2nd International Symposium on Service-Learning to be held in Indianapolis, May 2007. This submission is a collaborative contribution co-authored with faculty from Wolverhampton University.

Carmichael, T. & Hurry, D. *A structured three-dimensional reflection model for Service-Learning*, a paper submitted to The 2nd International Symposium on Service-Learning to be held in Indianapolis, May 2007. This submission is a collaborative contribution co-authored with a faculty member from Sheffield Hallam University.

Other publications and outputs

Carmichael, T. (2005) Grow better managers by supporting Service-Learning at WBS, *WBS Journal*, April, 88-91.

Carmichael, T. (2005) Management Competencies: What are they really?, *WBS Journal*, November, 2005

DECLARATION

I, Teresa Carmichael, declare that this thesis is my own original work, except as indicated in the acknowledgements, the text and the references. It is submitted in full fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before, either whole or in part, for any degree or examination at this or any other university.

TERESA CARMICHAEL

Signed at …………………………………………………………

On the ……………….. day of …………………………………. 2007

DEDICATION

To all those who cared enough to tell me the truth . . .

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And a big thank you to:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

GLOSSARY

Term	Meaning	Reference
AMA	American Management Association	(AMA 2001)
Applied Competence	"Applied competence is the overarching term for three interconnected kinds of competence: practical competence (skill), foundational competence (knowledge), and reflexive competence (implementation in different contexts)."	(RSA 2000a)
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework	(Australia 2003)
Business sector	The formal, normally profit orientated organisations operating in the commercial environment; the employers or potential employers of MBA students and graduates	
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment	
CCFO	Critical Cross-field Outcome. They are defined by SAQA as "generic outcomes that inform all teaching and learning" See Appendix 10.	(RSA 1995b)
CHE	Council for Higher Education	
CHESP	Community Higher Education Service Partnership Programme (South Africa)	
Community organisation	Organisations destined to be the recipients of the interventions offered by MBA students in the course of their Service-Learning. Examples would be NGOs, non-profit organisations, community clinics, schools or religious organisations, city councils, community service providers of various types, departments or units within universities, colleges or technikons, or organisations identified by the 25 Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).	
Community service	The term implies a servant, a contribution to the welfare of others without expectation of reward, doing something for a defined community	
CSI	Corporate Social Investment	
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility	
CUPS	Community University Partnerships Office	
DoE	Department of Education	
DSD	Department of Social Development of South Africa	
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry	
Foundational competence	"The demonstrated knowledge and understanding of what the learner is doing and why. This underpins the practical competence and therefore the actions taken."	(RSA 2000a)

Term	Meaning	Reference
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative	
HEI	Higher Education Institution	
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee	
HRDS	National Human Resources Development Strategy	(RSA 2002b)
JET	Joint Education Trust (South Africa)	
Markinor	A South African marketing research organisation	(van Niekerk and Penman 2002)
MBA	Master of Business Administration degree	
NGO	Non-governmental organisation	
NPO	Non-profit organisation	
NQF	National Qualifications Framework	(RSA 1995)
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy	(RSA 2000b)
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications	(United Kingdom 2000c)
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority	(New Zealand 2000)
Practical competence	"Practical competence is the demonstrated ability, in an authentic context to: consider a range of possibilities for action; make considered decisions about which possibility to follow; and perform the chosen action."	(RSA 2000)
Reflexive competence	"The learner demonstrates the ability to integrate or connect performances and decision-making with understanding and with an ability to adapt to change and unforeseen circumstances and to explain the reasons behind these adaptations."	(RSA 2000)
ROI	Return on Investment	
SA	South Africa	
SANGOCO	South African National NGO Coalition	
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority	(RSA 1995)
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Authority	(SQA 2003)
SDA	Skills Development Act	(RSA 1998b)
Section 21 Co	An organisation registered with the Department of Social Services as being not for profit	

Term	Meaning	Reference
Service-Learning	"Service-Learning is a pedagogical technique by which a student completes the objectives of a course while fulfilling a community need in a coordinated effort between the school and the client. This experience allows the student to use academic skills in real-world situations representative of the academic major"	(Talbert, *et al* 2003)
SL	Service-Learning	
SMME	Small, Medium or Micro Enterprise	
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority	(SQA 2003)
UCT	University of Cape Town	
Unit Standard	A registered statement of desired learning outcomes and their associated assessment criteria	(RSA 1998b)
WBS	University of the Witwatersrand Graduate School of Business Administration / Wits Business School	
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa	