

Chapter 8: SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

This chapter briefly summarises the key findings of the meta-study as presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. The purpose of the study was to lay a foundation for Service-Learning in campus-based MBA degree programmes in South Africa, and the three inter-related contexts in which the investigations were conducted were that of the business sector, the social sector and higher education. Specifically being researched were business managers, playing a dual role; that of managers and that of MBA students, community organisations and the MBA degree respectively. As a reminder of the relationships between the different contexts, processes and performance of the entities under investigation, Figure 2.3 is repeated below as Figure 8.1.

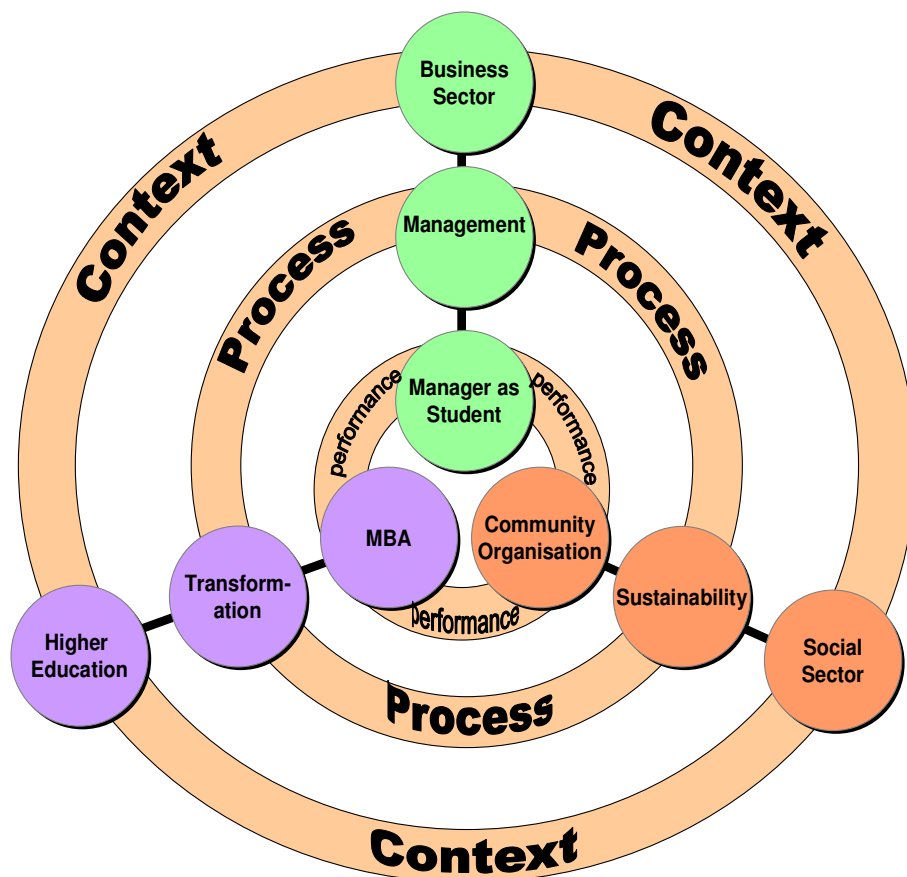


Figure 8.1 The inter-related contexts, processes and entities in this meta-study

Applying a mixed methodological approach, this meta-study has introduced a pedagogy (Service-Learning) new to campus-based MBA programmes in South Africa.

The findings have confirmed that the generic competencies represented by SAQA's CCFOs are perceived to be important management meta-competencies and that they are developed to varying degrees through MBA study. Further, these competencies are considered to be developed generally through Service-Learning based courses, and were found in this study to be developed (again to different extents) through the implementation of the pedagogy into Organisational Design and Development courses at Wits Business School.

Solving problems and working with others were found by most participants to be the most important and most strongly developed CCFOs and using technology the least important and least developed through the Service-Learning courses implemented.

MBA students also generally met the academic course content requirements, experienced personal growth and developed an increased awareness of the socio-economic structures and dynamics in the South African environment. The action learning approach of the Service-Learning pedagogy lead to authentic work place learning, which was enhanced by the reflective activities undertaken. A positive correlation was found between the depth of reflection and extent of learning as measured by Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive outcomes.

The participating community organisations, which included but were not limited to NPOs, indicated that they had a variety of business needs and that the MBA students acting in the role of consultants did assist them in meeting some of these needs. However, they also indicated that the time allowed for the projects was too short, and that greater benefit would accrue from longer interventions and / or follow up activities.

A brief summary of the findings relating to each hypothesis or proposition follows. The format presented in Chapter 3, where the hypotheses and propositions have been presented in such a way as to demonstrate their links to the problem and associated sub-problems, has been retained for consistency and ease of association with the model presented in Figure 8.1.

Problem 1 is located within the business context:

Problem 1: Correlate the perceived importance of SAQA'S CCFOs to players in the business sector with the extent of their development through Service-Learning

<u>Sub-problems:</u>		<u>Hypothesis 1.1</u>
1.1	Establish the relative perceived importances of SAQA's CCFOs to players in the business sector	H ₀ : There are no significant differences between the perceived relative importances of SAQA'S CCFOs to players in the business sector H _A : There are significant differences between the perceived relative importances of SAQA'S CCFOs to players in the business sector
1.2	Establish the extent to which SAQA's CCFOs are perceived to be differentially developed through Service-Learning	Hypothesis 1.2 H ₀ : There is no positive correlation between the perceived development of SAQA'S CCFOs through Service-Learning and the perceived requirements of players in the business sector for the CCFOs H _A : There is a positive correlation between the perceived development of SAQA'S CCFOs through Service-Learning and the perceived requirements of players in the business sector for the CCFOs

The findings for both Hypothesis 1 and 2 were found in favour of H_A. Although all the CCFOs were considered important, there were perceived differences between them. Solving problems was consistently one of the top three most important and best developed of the CCFOs, with working with others appearing almost as frequently. Perceived to be the least important and least developed through MBA study was the use of technology.

Problem 2 is located within the social context:

Problem 2: Evaluate the extent of matching between the business needs of community organisations and the types of support that could be supplied by MBA students.

<u>Sub-problems:</u>		<u>Propositions 2.1 to 2.4</u>
2.1	Define the scope of “community organisations” relevant in the South African context	2.1 The scope of “community organisations” relevant to the South African context extends beyond the non-profit sector
2.2	Identify the business needs of community organisations in terms of skills development and expert support	2.2 The business needs of community organisations includes skills development, expert support and basic management functions.
2.3	Identify the business benefits of MBA Service-Learning to community organisations	2.3 Community organisations derive business benefits from MBA Service-Learning students

Propositions 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 were all accepted. The Service-Learning experts and the MBA students agreed that the range of community organisations that should benefit from Service-Learning interventions should be broad-based and contextually selected.

Community organisations indicated that most of them were aware of the legislated reporting requirements of the NPO and amended NPO Acts and that they did require general, human resources and financial management skills development and support in these areas. They generally found that the MBA students acting in the role of consultants were able to assist them meet some of their needs, although not all students appeared to fully engage with the process, and more time would be required for greater impact.

Problem 3 is located within the Higher Education context:

Problem 3: Evaluate the extent and general academic quality of student assignments in terms of both functional and CCFO learning

<u>Sub-problems:</u>		<u>Propositions 3.1 to 3.4</u>
3.1	Evaluate the extent of functional course content learning achieved by MBA students as reflected in their assignments	3.1 MBA students' course content learning in Service-Learning courses meets educational standards
3.2	Evaluate the extent of CCFO learning achieved by MBA students as reflected in their assignments	3.2 MBA students learn the CCFOs through participating in Service-Learning courses
3.3	Describe the preferred assessment methodologies used in an MBA Service-Learning course	3.3 Reflection with reflective journals are considered to be the most effective assessment methodology for Service-Learning courses
3.4	Evaluate the general academic quality of students' Service-Learning assignments	3.4 The general academic quality of student assignments reflects the integrated and appropriate use of references and follow a logical report structure 3.5 The depth of reflection by students is positively correlated with the extent of cognitive development as measured by Bloom's taxonomy for each CCFO

The intent with this part of the investigation was not to establish whether Service-Learning was better than other teaching methods used in MBA study, but simply to explore its stand alone effectiveness. Comparisons are suggested for further research,

but would have been premature at this exploratory stage of Service-Learning implementation into MBA programmes in South Africa. A similar approach is taken in medical research, where a new medication's efficacy is first established before it is compared to those already available.

Proposition 3.1 was tentatively accepted because the evidence of course content learning could only be gathered indirectly and in relation to group, not individual work. Although the group assignments suggested a fair quality of implementation, students' self reports indicated that they felt that they had acquired ODD skills, and that the action-based Service-Learning process had greatly facilitated this. Also, feedback from the community organisations in which the students conducted their assignments indicated that they had generally benefited from the interventions.

Proposition 3.2 was accepted as evidenced by analysis of their individual reflective journals, although multi-rater analysis would have added greater validity. Students did not acquire uniform competence in all the CCFOs, but found that working with others was the most strongly developed, followed by solving problems. Use of technology scored the lowest, principally because students felt that their skill levels were already sufficient for their business needs.

Proposition 3.3 was accepted based on the strong motivation from the sample of expert Service-Learning practitioners and students' comments. Not all the students reflected on all the CCFOs as specified, but did demonstrate an ability to reflect deeply and express their insights on those that they did include.

Proposition 3.4 was neither accepted nor rejected on the basis that some, but not all students' assignments showed evidence of formalised structure, inclusion of a sufficient number of good quality references and integration of references into their reflections. Only around half of the assignments were completed as instructed. However, these factors may apply to assignments where Service-Learning was not implemented, but this was not investigated.

Proposition 3.5 was accepted based on the evidence that deeper reflection was positively and significantly ($\alpha=0.05$) correlated with the achievement of higher Bloom levels.

Problem 4 is located within the Higher Education context:

Problem 4: Discuss MBA students' preferred Learning Styles in the context of Service-Learning and describe their experiences, personal growth and insights from attending a Service-Learning course.

<u>Sub-problems:</u>		<u>Propositions 4.1 to 4.2</u>
4.1	Relate MBA students' preferred Learning Styles to the context of Service-Learning	4.1 MBA students' Honey and Mumford learning style profiles will not conflict with the reflection requirements of Service-Learning.
4.2	Describe MBA students' experiences, personal growth and insights from attending a Service-Learning course	4.2 MBA students experience personal growth and new perspectives from attending a Service-Learning course and are able to articulate insights to contribute to further Service-Learning course development.

Both Propositions 4.1 and 4.2 were accepted.

MBA students around the country demonstrated that they are stronger than would be expected in the reflective, theorist and pragmatic learning styles and approximately within the normal range for the activist learning style.

The students indicated that the action-based approach of Service-Learning assisted their learning through implementation of their assignments in a real workplace context. Their reflections gave them an opportunity to examine their own assumptions about themselves and the communities that they had been somewhat unaware of, and appreciate their own circumstances.

All but one student said that they had grown personally in some way through the intervention.