IMPLEMENTING A SERVICE-LEARNING MODULE AT A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA: LESSONS I LEARNED

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an account of my experiences in the implementation of a service-learning (SL) module in a higher education institution in South Africa. The study is a longitudinal study from 2011 to 2013 and I want to share the story of my inquiry with the aim that the lessons I learned may help others who aspire to undertake a community-based module. My commitment and dedication were not only rewarding to my students and the community but it transformed my teaching and improved my practice as well. I learnt many lessons, including becoming innovative and being comfortable with having my work evaluated by students and other colleagues. The methodology I used is the qualitative approach of action research guided by Whitehead and McNiff's (2006). The data included students and community evaluations and critical friends' reflections and comments. The paper concludes with why I believe the project worked. This is therefore a story of my own epistemological journey, and tells of what I now know and how I came to know it (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006).

KEYWORDS: lessons learned, concerns, action research, community engagement, implementation strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of community engagement - of which service-learning is a component - in South African higher education, came in the late 1990s when the White Paper 3 on the Transformation of Higher Education (1997) called for feasibility studies and pilot programmes which explore the potential of community service in higher education. The White Paper places community engagement as one of the three niche areas of higher education along with teaching and research - as a mechanism to infuse and enrich teaching and research with a deeper sense of context, locality and application. Lazarus et al., (2008, p. 4) put it as an integral part of teaching and research.

The Council on Higher Education (2004) defines community engagement as 'initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community' (p.26). Meanwhile, S-L as community engagement "combines the academic curriculum of the discipline and the student with service to, or in, a community" (Peterson and Osman, 2013, p.5).

Strand et al. (2003) cited by McCallister (2008, p.1) further asserts that three forces have led universities to begin implementing a variety of community outreach efforts: a criticism of the disconnection between higher education and the community; a narrow definition of research; and a recognition of the need to develop students' civic capacity and prepare them to actively participate in their communities once they leave school. Consequently, the 1997 White Paper states that one of the goals of higher education is 'to promote and develop social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes' (p.10). My institution has been engaged with initiatives of community engagement amidst teaching, learning and research. It took the decision to institutionalize community engagement to ensure that no student graduates without participating in a community engagement activity. The Centre for Community and International Partnership (CCIP) charged with this initiative at the institution has in the past called for several meetings and organized workshops encouraging Departments/Disciplines to introduce any aspect of community based-learning in their disciplines.

According to McCallister (2008):

"universities should not operate in isolation but should become more involved in the communities in which they are located, whether through opening facilities for community meetings, providing students for service work, or utilizing the expertise of faculty and staff to facilitate research or social change. (p. 2)"

This statement actually captures the goals of the 1997 White Paper on Higher Education in South Africa. It was in response to this goal that my service-learning module - Rural Local Government (RLG) was born. I have implemented the module for a couple of years now and have learnt some valuable lessons which I want to share with my colleagues and other people who may be interested to undertake the same initiative especially because there seem to be a reluctance on the part of the academic staff to do so despite many calls by my University.

2. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This module was designed to teach students conflict resolution skills to students. They are then taken to conflict-affected communities to share the knowledge learned in the classroom. Before the creation of this module, a needs-assessment was done within the rural communities as a response to the 1997 White Paper and the CCIP office at my University found that so many types of conflicts existed in the rural communities from which these students come from; especially amongst the youths, women, councilors and traditional leaders. Hence it was important that students learn conflict resolution skills in the classroom as these skills will assist them in their everyday life and also solve problems as adults. The S-L module therefore will assist students to disseminate the practical knowledge they learned in the classroom to their communities. The module is taught to third-level students of political studies who are mostly from disadvantaged rural communities as the institution itself is located within a rural setting, thus a pool of its students are from the rural areas. The student finds it difficult to communicate with the language of instruction which is English. It therefore became important that presentation skills form an important component of the module exist-level outcome.

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research approach was used in examining how I change and improve the teaching and learning of my students in this module. Though both quantitative and qualitative research approaches are appropriate for a study in educational research (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Patton, 2002); qualitative research was more relevant to my research as it was primarily concerned with gaining direct experience within a setting. Moreover, it was essentially an exploratory endeavour; hence it has the potential for generating new theories and ideas which was mainly applicable to this case. The lessons I learnt in the course of implementing the module have actually become my living theories which I intend to share with lecturers interested in community engagement activities.

Beginning with the action research methodology, which according to McNiff and Whitehead (2006), is a way of investigating your practice in order to improve it. It is a rigorous methodology that begins with a question of the form, 'How do I improve my practice?' The rationale for choosing this method was because McNiff with Whitehead (2002, p.22) sees action research as leading to the generation of the 'I-theory of knowledge' as oppose to the E-theory. The 'I' represents knowledge generated internally and 'E' is externally generated and focusing on others. There is therefore an insider and outsider perspective here; where outsiders are not part of the classroom, therefore they do not possess the situated knowledge of the classroom or the I-theory of the practitioner. Another important point made by Altrichter (1993) is that, action research promotes and recognizes the concept of a 'teacher as researcher' by suggesting that research in educational practice should be done by the practitioner themselves and not by outsiders or external agents.

Miller (2007) further adds to this notion when she alludes that action is a normal part of teaching, where teachers continually observe their students, collect data and change their practices to improve student learning, the classroom and the school environment. It provides a framework that guides the energies of teachers toward a better understanding of why, when, and how students become better learners. With this few explanations, I believe that the 'outsider' cannot be in a position to understand or change my classroom situation. It is entirely up to and begins with me (the practitioner).

I used this methodological component to reflect on the challenges I faced prior to, during and after the implementation of the module (McCallister, 2008), and by so doing turn them into opportunities; which resulted in improving my practice. To bring about change and develop my personal and professional learning, I reflected on my practice as a lecturer of the RLG module; used critical friends' feedback, course outline, lecture notes, community and students' evaluations, analysis of students' actions during presentation, reflections with students, reflections on written reports, reflections during interactions with other colleagues on community engagement, introduce a circle and participatory discussion, symbolism and other innovative strategies of teaching. In order for students to achieve maximize benefits from this module, on a yearly basis, I reviewed my practice, planned changes, implemented them and evaluated the results. All of these I believe have assisted in the enhancement of my practice, the assessment of the module and improvement of knowledge to my students.

4. ETHICS

Being aware of ethical issues or protecting people's rights, students and members of the community

filled in the evaluation forms on the basis of anonymity. Feedback received from 'critical friends' were done so based on anonymity and confidentiality. Thus I used numbers such as student 1, student 2, critical friend 1 and 2 and community member 1 and 2.

Permission was also sought from members of the community – through the chiefs - even before the visit to the communities took place. This was done through our liaison officer at the CCIP office and during the visits to the communities. Informed consent was also sought before evaluation forms were filled. This process was done on a voluntary basis as no member of the community was forced either to attend the students' presentations or the filling of the evaluation forms.

5. RESULTS

Lesson 1: Generate an implementation strategy that is feasible

It is important for lecturers to clearly understand and define their areas of interest (McCallister, 2008). When I started the module I was told by the CCIP that strategy was to teach conflict resolution skills in class and they will provide those skills by solving conflicts between the councilors and tradition leaders in the targeted communities. In the first two weeks of lecturing this module, I spent sleepless nights trying to comprehend how the said strategy will work. The questions which kept coming to my mind were: how feasible was it that students would solve these problems within the communities? I questioned the type of mediation and negotiation skills students could acquire within a three-month period in order to successfully implement the module. Further, I questioned whether students could be bold enough to sit in front of their councilors and traditional leaders to tell them what to do? I also questioned whether the community could be a partner in this process, which according to Mooney and Edwards (2001) a community-based learning is 'any pedagogical tool in which the community becomes a partner in the learning process.' (p. 182)

These questions were all puzzling to me. Seemingly, I was not the only one in this position. I remembered two students cancelling the module two days after I told the class the aim of the module and the method of implementation. I later learnt that the two students dropped out because they thought that they were too shy and would be unable to handle such a module at the community level. At this point, I knew I needed to do something about the way the module was to be implemented; otherwise I would end up having very few or no student in the module. Through these observations and questioning, I realised that it would be problematic for me to implement this module using the strategy that I was told by the CCIP office. Acknowledging the high esteem in which traditional leaders and councilors are held in the rural communities, both culturally and politically, I decided that I would use another strategy to teach the module.

I then decided to consult a lot of literature to find out what ever could be of help to me. Concurrently, I decided to seek help from a colleague already involved in a community engagement module in another discipline. I approached this colleague when I could not make sense of what to do and how best to handle the initial strategy used. I explained my doubts and fears about the way I have been told the module was conducted. The colleague immediately rejected the idea and exclaimed:

"How on earth can these students solve conflicts between these people? Councilors and Chiefs are not fools! Who are students anyway to tell them what ought to be done? Students cannot do that

(Lecturer 1 - personal communication, July 27 2011)."

I was very much relieved and glad that I shared my tensions with this colleague. I then went ahead to explain the approach I had been thinking of using. She positively supported the idea as the best strategy and also made some contributions to it. I remember leaving her office feeling so light as if a heavy load had been lifted off me. I believe that those already in the 'business' are happy to welcome novice lecturer to the field and are willing to share their experience and also help in providing some solutions to problems one may encountered.

Eventually I came up with a new strategy to replace that of the CCIP office. As put by Samaras (2011), self-study teachers can initiate their own research question generated from observations of their classroom. The approach was to teach students conflict resolution skills along-side presentation skills. The students are then taken to the communities to present the skills learned and also interact with the members of the communities on the relevance of the skills they have presented and also find their preferred skills and why.

The new approach has been very helpful as it assisted me to reflect back by taking a closer look again at the aim of the module and the method of implementation that has been used so far. This change has been a workable one and has clearly captured some of the problems faced in the communities. The evaluations by the students and those from the community showed that both parties have benefited from the module. I have come to realized that the challenges I faced in the course of this module became opportunities for my professional growth and learning (Berry, 2007) as I keep introducing different approaches using the personal situated inquiry.

Lesson 2: Allow colleagues, students and members of the communities to evaluate your work.
As earlier mentioned in the introduction, the RLG module enabled students to present to the communities the skills learnt in the classroom. In order to make sure that this process was successful and beneficial, a preparatory workshop took place to prepare students for the community trip. I invited colleagues from my discipline, other disciplines and officials from the CCIP office, who then formed the audience. This cohort of people I called 'critical friends'. The students presented to them, and inputs or feedbacks were provided both to the students and me. These inputs were then integrated to the classroom activities to enhance the students understanding. They helped me to determine how prepared the students were before they were taken to the communities. As stated by Samaras (2011), 'critical friends encourage and solicit respectful questioning and divergent views to obtain alternative perspectives…' Two comments from my critical friends on ways of improving this module read:

"Encourage the students to use current examples that are taking place in the communities'. (Critical friend 1, October 19, 2011)"

The above comment made me to understand that I needed to acquaint myself with what was happening in the communities in order to provide examples that the community would be familiar with. The other one read:

"There is a need to be more dramatic i.e. to ensure that technical issues are connected to the practical

realities; examples really need improvement, i.e. problems versus solutions must be issues that a community can understand ... (Critical friend 2, October 19, 2011)"

From this comment I got the impression that I was being more theoretical than practical in class when teaching the module, hence I needed to work on that aspect.

Meanwhile, I integrated the feedback from my critical friends and rework on the weaknesses discovered during the preparatory workshop. I invited two colleagues again who were part of the initial preparatory workshop to once more listen to the students' presentations and comment on any noticeable changes or differences. This took place a week after the initial preparatory meeting before students eventually visit the communities. The feedback I gathered this time around were fewer compared to those of the previous meeting. Sometimes, there were hardly any comment for improvement but more on complimentary and congratulations to the students.

Thereafter students were taken to the communities where they finally did their presentations. Evaluation was also done by members of the communities. Some of the comments received for improvement of the module included:

'Students must build confidence when presenting'. (Community member 1, October 21, 2011)
'The module can be improved by providing more examples on issues within the communities so that the people can be clear'. (Community member 2, October 21, 2011)
'…when students are here to do their presentation, they must act it so that even those who do not understand IsiXhosa can co-operate in the drama' (Community member 3, October 21, 2011)
'It is imperative that community members and leaders participate in this module'. (Community member 4, October 21, 2011)

These were the type of feedbacks I took back to my classroom and they assisted me to equip the students of the subsequent year.

Meanwhile, on our way back to the campus; inside the university bus and in a journey of about 45 minutes drive; I also try to engage the students so that they can share the experiences they have gathered from the community. I quickly noted down this information in my reflexive journal and this has also assisted in improving the strategy I used in the implementing of the module.

A day after returning from the community, we met again in class and the students evaluated the module and my teaching method – on the question 'what specific suggestion do you have for improving the module so as to facilitate or improve learning?' A sample of their comments read as follow:

'The lecturer needs to spend at least 30 minutes of the lecture preparing the students on the presentation'. (Student 1, October 26, 2011)
'Enough time, more presentations in class, practical in communities even in provincial institutional levels …' (Student 2, October 26, 2011)
'The module should also include more than two presentations in class and trips to different communities.' (Student 3, October 26, 2011)

'The module must dwell more on practical issues'. (Student 4, October 26, 2011)
'…students should visit the villages in order to learn more on what is going on in communities'. (Student 5, October 26, 2011)

Comments such as the above enlightened and informed me that I needed to do more because it seems students were not well prepared before going to the community and thus needed more mentoring and preparation. Furthermore, similar to some comments raised by the critical friends, I needed to be more practical than theoretical when handling the module in class. With the last comment on 'student visiting the villages', I challenged them rather to provide information from their villages or communities on the issues dealt with in class; recognizing that many of them do come from the rural areas and so the conflicts faced were similar. I realised that it was difficult for students to talk about conflicts happening in their communities. Hence I began to use this as part of a diagnostic assessment at the beginning of the module where I asked them to write on conflicts taking place in and around the communities they come from as part of a take home test. During lectures in class, I used most of these conflict situations as examples and I realized that students were able to relate to them easily when they presented.

At first it was hard listening to or reading some of these feedbacks but a careful reflection and attention to the comments went a long way to transform the way I continue to handle the module. I began to understand the meaning to the common saying that 'two heads are better than one'. The feedback brought out the weaknesses and strengths in me with regards to the module and these helped me to work on my weaknesses while strengthening on my strengths. I saw myself being in the limelight or hot seat and this acts as the 'blind and unknown paines' of the Johari Window .

Lesson 3: Be innovative
Self-study helps lecturers to study their teaching. This in tend assists in the improvement of their work as professionals, impact students' learning, inform education and school programs, influence policy decisions, and reform education (Samaras, 2011). Continuing research to upgrade my practice led me to the work of Terrence Wheeler (2004) where animals have been used as personification in conflict management. Since the module dealt with conflict related issues and resolution, I decided to device a way of engaging the students using animals to symbolize different behaviours portray by human beings. I came to realized that this creative method also gave me a new impetus in the module.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) hold that it is a requirement that teachers embrace new scenarios and become active learners themselves if they wish to be empowered teachers. This will enable them to better understand their work of teaching. In the below diagram are five different animals associated with five conflict management styles. The dolphin (ihlengesi/ingusi in IsiXhosa – a South African language used in the area where my University is located) represents the collaborative or cooperative problem-solving, the lion (ingonyama) with competing, the turtle (ufudo) with avoiding, the chameleon (ilovane) with accommodating and the zebra (iqwarhashe) with compromising.

Figure 1: Conflict management styles (See Appendix A)

Using a method such as the one displayed in the figure to connect human behaviours to animals saw

a great difference in the way the students grasp the concepts, their engagement in class and consequently the impact in the communities.

Class restructuring was another strategy I used to improve teaching and learning among my students. I considered this strategy 'an initiation into new ways of seeing, hearing, feeling and moving … it signifies the nurture of a special kind of reflectiveness and expressiveness, … a learning to learn' (Van der Veen 2012, p.360 cited from Greene, 2001). In this module, I had diverse group of students. There were students who performed better in presentation than test and vice versa and students who did well in written assignments. Having this in mind, it was very important to concentrate more on those students who were shy and had difficulties expressing themselves in class. I had to make them talk and ask questions if they were not doing so. Applying the Bloom's taxonomy in this module and level meant that 80 percent weighting was applicability. Fortunately, the cohort of international students had good presentation and interpersonal skills. I knew the academic capabilities of most of my students because I have taught them in the lower classes. However, the instructor should begin identifying the strengths and weaknesses of students in the first two to three lectures especially if the class is small.

In my first year of teaching this module, students were made to present individually. But as the class grew bigger, the implementation in the second year took a different phase. Students were put in groups consisting of a mixture of both the academically strong and weak students. The strongest students needed to empower the weakest ones who then presented on behalf of the group. The mark allocated went to each member of the group. This therefore meant that if a group presenter did not perform well, the group ended up having a low mark. This news was disappointing to the academically strong students especially, but it was also a challenge which they took to make sure their presenters were well equipped and ready for the audience in the community. I later learned that the students used to meet in their residences or after lectures to polish their presenters and made sure any sort of identified challenge was sorted. This strategy went a long way to build team work and interpersonal skills among the students and in the process helped the very weak students.

In addition, I used the strategy of engaging students more and making them speak in turns. In situations where a student was unable to do so, I simply informed the class that the student was still thinking; hence we should give him/her more time and return later. I then moved to the next student. Sometimes, by the end of the class, between five to seven rounds have been covered. I believe this could only be possible in a small class as I was dealing with a class of about 20 students. I believe this really went a long way to enhance the skills of the students and even the module implementation. I realized that students were very relaxed and confident when presenting. Some comments from students when asked whether they enjoyed the turns' sessions in class the overwhelming response was 'yes'. Their comments included:

'…it helped us to improve our relationship with each other and it also act as a learning task because we come across many issues.' (Student 1, November 1, 2013)
'It was a way of showing what you have read and what you know about the module.' (Student 2, November 1, 2013)
'The practical was very informative and improving communication skills.' (Student 3, November 1, 2013)

'It helped me in communication skills and even to understand the content of the module, the practical in class impressed me a lot.' (Student 4, November 1, 2013)

'It helped boast our confidence when speaking in front of people as well as helps us speak better.' (Student 5, November 1, 2013)

'It gave me an insight on how I will present to the community.' (Student 6, November 1, 2013)

'It provided me with the necessary skills required in tackling problems especially those that need practical solutions instantly.' (Student 7, November 1, 2013)

'I was able to gain knowledge and also confidence which can even help me in my career. It helped us interact with others … helped us get a deep understanding of community presentation.' (Student 8, November 1, 2013)

'Our lecturer is a patient person, taught us to be prepared as much as we can before we go to the community and we did it.' (Student 9, November 1, 2013)

The above comments were an indication that the students were empowered, though they came from diverse backgrounds. Just to add that more than 90 percent of our registered students come from the rural and remote areas. As a result majority are unable to express themselves using the English language and especially because English is taught in their schools as a second language. Therefore engaging them in class is very important. This inspired me to want to do more to help them no matter how challenging it may be sometimes. When I reflected on all of these, I can simply say, there is no gain without pain.

Lesson 4: Indigenous language enhances students' performance
I also realized that the indigenous language enhanced students' performance in the implementation of the module, as a result improves learning. Although the presentations for the first year of implementation were done using the indigenous language, I noticed that so many errors were committed as the students did not master some of the vocabularies before facing members of the community. This was because the decision to use the indigenous language only came shortly before students went to the communities. Hence some of the comments students wrote on the evaluation forms were:

'It was a bit difficult to translate what I have been taught in lectures in English to translate it in my home language (IsiXhosa)' (student 1, November 1, 2011)

'The problem I experienced was in the community trip. The interpretation of terms used in the module could not easily coincide that of IsiXhosa speaking people' (Student 2, October 26, 2011)

'The module was clear except for the part of language usage in the community …' (Student 3, October 26, 2011)

Based on this discovery, I made sure the students began class presentations in the indigenous language. This then proceeded to the preparatory meetings, then the community. This provided ample time for them to master certain words in time for implementation. Hence in one of the preparatory presentations a year later, a critical friend (colleague) commended:

I am really shocked by the performance displayed by you guys (the students) today. I wish the local language was being used in all presentations within the department, so that you people can continue with this spirit. I am really impressed. (Critical friend 1, October 17, 2012)

The colleague was not the only one who saw these surprises. As a matter of fact, students' expression of themselves using the local language made them portray a sort of confidence and boldness which I have never seen before in my other modules. This was the same spirit which the students carried to the community.

However, I faced a serious challenge as the lecturer. I could barely speak or understand the language but I was supposed to assess students' presentations in the communities. This therefore brings in another lesson which is discussed below.

Lesson 5: Co-opt a colleague who speaks the indigenous language and try to learn it too

Not being able to speak and understand well the local language has been my biggest 'tension' in the implementation of this module. I used the word tension because I felt like having an interpersonal conflict within myself and end up missing out on some of the gist that comes out during the students' presentations. I could see the smiles and hear the laughter from the audience but I was really not part of the show. I felt isolated and sad. I then took a bold step and decided to have some lessons in the language (IsiXhosa). This, of course is a long term strategy. For the meantime, I brought in an IsiXhosa speaking colleague to assist me during the module implementation. I empowered the colleague by making him attend some of my lectures in order to see what I teach and do with the students. He would then attend the class presentations, the preparatory meetings, and proceeded to the communities. I also showed him how to assess students using the different assessment criteria. I later realized that it was even more beneficial to have two colleagues co-opted. The second one assisted in interpreting to me the comments and questions raised by members of the community during implementation. It is also important to note that, the preparatory meetings were attended by the co-opted colleague. The preparatory meeting is meant to prepare students for the community. Hence the inputs from the co-opted colleague were very important as they enabled me to re-enforce the students' abilities. This could even lead to continuity of the module even when I am no longer available.

Lesson 6: Have a positive attitude and make your work known to others

Implementing the RLG module has not been as easy as any other module I teach; especially because I was overloaded with three other modules during the semester, in addition to supervising post-graduate students. However, I believe that, not being positive in what you do is tantamount to failure. The many positive responses I gathered from students and members of the community kept me going through out the implementation of this module. Pithouse et al. (2009, p.56) express this as gaining hope from the many personal and professional challenges teachers face which can make them feel hopeless and powerless. It is this hope and optimism that has kept me going with this module.

Hence, I am aware that many colleagues may be eager to implement a community based-learning module but finds it difficult to begin. I believe this is so because whenever invitations are sent out by the CCIP office for meetings or workshop on community engagement, the attendance is very impressive. But when at the end of the academic year, reports and evaluation meetings are called, the attendance becomes very poor. Therefore, I decided to share my experience so that other lecturers may learn a lesson or two from it.

Furthermore, I want my practice to be available for review and critique other academics. Hence, during the 6th International Research Conference hosted by my institution from the 5-7 March 2014, I presented the synopsis of this paper. I also made a presentation in a Community Engagement Symposium at Rhodes University in South Africa in May 2015. Thus this paper may be a way of putting to the general public what I have done in my practice of this module. I believe that this paper will contribute broadly to the knowledge base of personal, professional, programme and university development (Samaras, 2011).

6. Implications and scholarly significance

This paper has a lot of implications for the transformation of my practice as a higher education lecturer as I work towards improving teaching and learning and research in my discipline and beyond. I have learned how self-reflection and a commitment to do things differently no matter the challenges can improve one's practice. Approaches such as brainstorming, strategizing, creativity, student-centred learning, students' feedback and critical friends' feedback have made enormous positive change in my practice and influence my future teaching.

7. CONCLUSION

Though it has not been smooth sailing implementing this module, it was however beneficial to my students, myself and the communities. The students and I learnt from the process in a variety of ways. The completed evaluation forms by the students showed they benefited from career preparation, an increased awareness of their communities and problems, and learning how to connect classroom theory to practice. More importantly, McCallister (2008) commented that students can develop knowledge and skills that they can take with them and use later, regardless of their career choice. Students' comments on whether they benefited from the module included:

'Yes…the module connects theory to practical experience.' (Student 1, November 1, 2013)

'I have learned more from this module and I could use what I have learned … and apply it on my life.' (Student 2, November 1, 2013).

'I have learnt a lot … the visit to the community, the debate we had as students (on conflict). These have helped me to boost my confidence, especially talking in front of people that I am not used to.' (Student 3, November 1, 2013).

'I am very impressed about the module and enjoyed very much the visitation to the community. It helped me to learn more things about the module even in future as a political student. The practical that we did in the community has opened my mind about my future, keep it up.' (Student 4, November 1, 2013).

'Field trips are so interesting because we got to do the practical thing as well as help us to interact with the community.' (Student 5, November 1, 2013).

'This module must be taken into consideration because it helps to transform one's behaviour.' (Student 6, November 1, 2013).

Moreover, when asked whether they would take another community engagement module if possible, or refer other students to enroll in the module, the general response was positive.

McCallister (2008) further attests that, the community may also enhance their skills and receive information to help them better direct or implement programs and services. Though with regards to this module, more research is needed to determine the rewards gained by the communities; there was however an outright yes from members of the communities when asked whether they benefited from the module. Their comments included:

'…it is imperative that community members and leaders participate in this module. It is very good and teaches us a lot.' (Community member 1, October 25, 2013)

'We can live and unit with people in a good way … trust yourself and your community and forgive others.' (Community member 2, October 25, 2013)

'It is good to listen to other people's views and ideas, one person would never know everything. We learned from each other.' (Community member 3, October 25, 2013)

'The way you did the presentation is convincing, people love the way and fashion you did it especially by using IsiXhosa so that everyone can understand.' (Community member 4, October 25, 2013).

'the way you express yourself whenever you are around other people, the respective things you say to the communities are wonderful. Keep it up, you can make a very good leader one day.' (Community member 5, October 25, 2013).

On the part of the lecturer, as already alluded to in the section on 'implications and scholarly significance', I have gained professional growth as a lecturer and also opportunities to conduct applied research that may lead to community enhancement and/or change. I had to make adjustments to my teaching, assessment and students' presentation methods. Though it has not been easy working in an under-resourced institution, with too much workload and a lack of incentives; coupled with a vulnerable academic calendar due to recurring strike actions, I still try to find a way of turning these challenges to opportunities. This has helped me to develop an in-depth understanding of my practices and beliefs as a lecturer. As Mahatma Gandhi rightly put, 'You must be the change you want to see in the world.' Conclusively, I would like to recommend that community based-learning be made compulsory in all disciplines within the university. During the preparatory meeting in 2012, some of my critical friends commented that:
'The module be made compulsory to all Political Studies/Social Sciences students.' (Critical friend 1, October 17, 2012)
'…it needs extensive marketing to wider students or more students should register for this module.' (Critical friend 2, October 17, 2012)

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Appendix A