



# Service learning as part of tertiary music programmes in South Africa: a framework for implementation

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## *Abstract*

As of 2009 service learning has been integrated into the music programme at the Odeion School of Music, University of the Free State (South Africa), as a compulsory module for final-year students. In order to uphold academic and institutional standards, it was stipulated that the said module had to include mechanisms that would promote quality interaction and engagement activities within a framework that would ensure the implementation and coordination of meaningful, sustainable service and learning.

The need for the development of such a module formed the rationale for this study, which draws on relevant pedagogical theories and perspectives on the relation between service learning and the social and educational realms of music in order to formulate a framework for the implementation of quality service learning. It is believed that the framework presented in this article may offer a generic basis for the implementation of service learning at higher education institutions, specifically in music departments.

## *Introduction*

Throughout the centuries music has been valued as a profoundly significant part of socio-cultural, intellectual and spiritual life. As far back as the ancient Greeks, and indeed also in the African context, music has been found to exert a decisive influence on human character, which has ever since earned it a place of paramount importance in education (Bowman 1998:13). With specific reference to music education, Eisner (2001) identified distinct reasons why music has earned such a developmental status. To begin with, music contributes to and enriches the human experience; it enables humans to express what cannot be said in words (Eisner 2001:8). This corresponds with the finding of the British sociologist, Tia DeNora (2000:x), that music may act as an intensely powerful medium for instantaneously communicating a comprehensive set of socio-cultural messages.

In the context of the present article this implies that music may function as a dynamic intermediary for not only sustaining but also changing social worlds and social activities (cf. DeNora 2000:x). As Eisner contends, music is distinctive in that it ‘enriches the human experience’ (2001:10). As far as the African context is concerned, this has been clearly illustrated through seminal work done by, amongst others, Blacking (1973).

It is, therefore, hardly surprising that present-day music educationists have come to recognise the connection between music and service learning.<sup>1</sup> As Job states, ‘service to others provides a context for exploring the meaning and emotional effect of music, while, reciprocally, specific emotions can be focused by the service’ (2000:76). Siebenaler views the connection between music education and service learning as ‘a natural one’ (2005:25). In arguing that service learning can prepare future music teachers for future employment while contributing to their sense of self-confidence, Siebenaler confirms the formative intellectual and emotional value of music as outlined by Eisner (2001).

In a socially and politically changing South Africa, curriculum development for a culturally diverse society has become an issue in which service learning plays a critical role. In addition, South African higher education institutions have to meet the requirements of a competitive globalised society. They furthermore have to adhere to the transformational demands put forward by the National Department of Education. This includes the promotion and development of social responsibility and awareness among students through their involvement in community programmes (Republic of South Africa 1997:8). In this regard, Nongxa sees a link between community involvement and the notion of social responsiveness.<sup>2</sup> He contends that the development and implementation of research and teaching programmes that respond to a wider social responsiveness project ‘are more likely to address the broader social and economic contexts in which distressed communities are located’ (Nongxa 2010:64).

Erasmus argues that community engagement initiatives can be the catalyst for the abovementioned transformational demands of the South African government. Service learning can be considered as the vehicle for embedding such community engagement activities in academic work through teaching and learning (Erasmus 2009:23).

The integration of community engagement activities through the implementation of a structured service learning module is relatively new within music departments at South African tertiary institutions. Although various studies have been undertaken in the United States on the implementation of service learning within the higher education realm of music and music teacher education (see Barnes 2002; Burton & Reynolds 2009; Reynolds 2004), in South Africa this terrain has not yet been explored in terms of academic study.

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1 Bringle and Hatcher (2004:127) define service learning as a ‘course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students a) participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs and b) 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’.

2 The University of Cape Town, South Africa, has adopted the notion of social responsiveness as the main premise for their community programme (see <[www.socialresponsiveness.uct.ac.za](http://www.socialresponsiveness.uct.ac.za)>).

While numerous US studies illustrate the significant contribution of service learning towards student development (see Enos & Troppe 1996; Eyler & Giles 1999), the general pedagogy of service learning is still regarded by some South African scholars with much scepticism, which might offer some explanation as to why tertiary music institutions in South Africa are reluctant to make what Siebenaler (2005) describes as a natural connection between their academic programmes and service learning. In this regard Erasmus states that South African service learning practitioners are

constantly confronted with suspicion and scepticism by an academic cadre that rightfully values and treasures the discipline, rigor, and high standards that have been regarded as the hallmarks of scholarly work for many decades. (Erasmus 2009:46)

She proposes that service learning should respond constructively to such criticism by, for example, adhering to the guidelines set forth by *A Good Practice Guide and Self-Evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service Learning* (HEQC/JET 2006).<sup>3</sup>

In response, this article proposes a framework for the implementation of service learning within the context of tertiary music training and consequently helps realise community engagement through teaching and learning, also providing guidelines for peer South African institutions that might be interested in incorporating the service learning pedagogy into their academic programmes. The purpose of this article is therefore, firstly, to demonstrate what constitutes such a framework and, secondly, to supply an example of how such a framework can be implemented within a higher education music programme. In adherence to guidelines set forth by the *Good Practice Guide* and other resources relevant to the discipline of music, the first part of the article focuses on the way in which this framework can encapsulate a product of noticeable quality regarding teaching and learning, while simultaneously responding to Eyler and Giles's (1999) question: 'Where is the learning in Service Learning?'

The second part of the article illustrates the way in which such a framework can be implemented within the South African context by sketching contexts of service learning at the Odeion School, University of the Free State (UFS), where service learning became an integral part of the music department's music programme in 2009. This is an indication of the commitment not only of the UFS, but also of the said department to community engagement and transformation. While being structured within the context of tertiary music training, such integration adheres to the UFS's official policy on community service learning (University of the Free State 2006). The policy states:

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3 The HEQC (Higher Education Quality Committee) of the CHE (Council on Higher Education) is mandated by the Higher Education Act of 1997 to operate a quality assurance system that focuses on the accreditation of higher education programmes and on the audit of the quality management systems of higher education institutions (HEIs) relating to the core functions of the HEIs: teaching, research and community engagement. JET Education Services (formerly known as the Joint Education Trust) has worked with HEIs since 1999 to implement pilot service learning modules. The development of (community) service learning as implemented by the University of the Free State, of which the researchers form part, is a direct outgrowth of the thrust for community involvement as driven by tertiary institutions.

The inclusion of compulsory community service learning modules in all academic programmes is a policy priority and will be propagated accordingly. This prioritisation is informed by the proven record of community service learning as an educational approach that leads to a deeper understanding of the linkages between curriculum content and community dynamics as well as the achievement of personal growth and a sense of responsibility within students and staff involved. (University of the Free State 2006:13)

In order to propose a possible framework for service learning relevant to a South African music training context, it is important to briefly introduce the theoretical platform on which the pedagogy of service learning is based and to indicate how this educational approach contributes to student development. This perspective will serve as a point of departure for formulating a framework for implementing service learning in the context of tertiary music training, while delivering a quality service that contributes to the development of the community members involved.

### *Service learning – the real ‘transfer of learning’*

Learning can be regarded as a social phenomenon, constituted in the experience of a lived-in world (Lave 1991:64); this is one of the grounding attributes of situated learning (Lave & Wenger 1991), which pertains primarily to the context of apprenticeships, where learning takes place through membership in a community of practitioners. The connection between socially interactive world experiences and in-depth learning could also be relevant to the broader context of higher education. In this regard, real-life experiences within social settings are reinterpreted in terms of academic content. However, as Eyler (2009) maintains, such a learning experience is often challenging in the liberal arts. She points out that too often there seems to be a mismatch between the classroom and real life: ‘Knowledge in the classroom tends to be compartmentalized into disciplines, whereas in use in the community or workplace it tends to be organized around problems or domains of practice’ (Eyler 2009:17). Classroom-based institutionalised knowledge does not prepare students for the ‘rapidly changing, unpredictable, interconnected temporary world’ (Vaill 1996:48); it often resembles what Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) refer to the experience of ‘praxis shock’ when students are confronted with the discrepancies between their expectations and the reality of the music industry. When connections can be found between what is learned and experienced in class and what happens outside the class through involvement in a service project, the likelihood of a ‘transfer of learning’ is increased (Yob 2000:76).

A properly designed service-learning programme should therefore mirror the outcomes of a ‘real transfer of learning’ and be managed in such a way that students are compelled to develop a committed relationship with their community. Such engagement can lead to the fostering of intellectual curiosity, which brings new energy, capacity and creativity to both the community and tertiary learning.

It is through a pedagogy of experiential learning that the ultimate goals of service learning are met. In this regard it may be noted that John Dewey’s perceptions and

philosophy of education informed the pedagogy of service learning to a considerable degree. A philosophy of experiential learning is central to his early works on pedagogy and later works on epistemology, of which the most prominent are *How We Think* (1933) and *Experience and Education* (1938) (Giles & Eyer 1994:78).<sup>4</sup>

Kolb views this learning paradigm as directly opposing behaviourist theories of learning as based on empirical epistemology (1984:20). An experiential approach proposes a different educational context, which presupposes the construction of proper relationships between learning, work and other life activities, as well as the creation of knowledge itself.

Apart from academic benefits gained from an experiential pedagogy such as service learning, students also develop a sense of civic responsibility (Canada & Speck 2001) and become aware of current social issues (Butin 2010:10). In this regard service learning has been regarded as a 'pedagogy for citizenship' (Mendel-Reyes 1998:34) as it often exposes students to the realities of daily social life.

The significance of students being able to make the necessary connection between knowledge obtained through their coursework and using that knowledge in conjunction with application and social skills cannot be over-emphasised; this process includes the nurturing of social awareness and civil responsibility. A properly designed service-learning programme should therefore mirror the outcomes of a 'real transfer of learning' and secondly be managed in such a way that students are compelled to develop a committed relationship with their community. Such engagement can lead to the fostering of intellectual curiosity, which brings new energy, capacity and creativity to both the community and tertiary learning.

### *A proposed framework for the implementation of a music service learning module*

A framework for the implementation of service learning within the discipline of music should include the abovementioned dispositions with regards to learning and align itself with universally accepted generic guidelines for service learning. Such a framework should also be practical to ensure productive results.

Various scholars focused on service learning as well as institutions have reflected on what constitutes a successfully implemented service learning initiative (Howard 2000; Swick & Rowls 2000; Stacey *et al.* 2001; McCarthy & Tucker 2002; Bringle & Hatcher 2004; Higher Education Quality Committee 2006). This discourse has led to the formulation of numerous criteria and defining characteristics of service learning. The University of the Free State defines service learning as

an educational approach involving curriculum-based, credit-bearing learning experiences in which students (a) participate in contextualised, well-structured and organised service activities

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4 These works by Dewey played a huge role in the designing of David Kolb's Experiential Learning Model almost fifty years later. Giles and Eyer refer to Kolb's work as neo-Deweyian (Giles & Eyer 1994:78).

aimed at addressing identified service needs in a community, and (b) reflect on the service experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of the linkage between curriculum content and community dynamics, as well as achieve personal growth and a sense of social responsibility. It requires a collaborative partnership context that enhances mutual, reciprocal teaching and learning among all members of the partnership. (University of the Free State 2006:9)

According to the *Good Practice Guide* (Higher Education Quality Committee 2006:19), various factors determine the quality and success of a service learning module. Firstly, this includes a reciprocal relationship between the university and the community involved. Through structuring open channels of communication, the needs of both parties can be voiced and consequently met. Secondly, service learning courses should be designed, implemented and assessed in collaboration with the community involved. In the process the objective of the service learning engagement can be aligned with the needs expressed by the community. The third point concerns the students involved. They should be placed in a context for which they are fully prepared and from which they will gain the most experience. Lastly, critical reflection plays an essential role in the learning process. Service learning modules should therefore contain well-structured reflective activities to guide the student towards transformative critical reflection.

The following analysis of Bringle and Hatcher's (2004:127) definition of service learning may serve as another guideline for the formulation of an applicable framework that should consist of

- Participation in an organised service activity;
- Meeting of identified community goals;
- Reflection on the service activity;
- Gaining further understanding of course content;
- Broader appreciation of the discipline;
- An enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

According to this guideline, reflective activities should not only culminate in the last four points mentioned above, but the service learning activity should also stimulate the realisation of these activities. It is therefore important to find an adequate service activity that aligns both learning and service outcomes. Howard (2000) and Stacey *et al.* (2001) propose that service learning should be relevant and meaningful within the community, should enhance academic learning, accumulate purposeful civic learning, and entail structured opportunities for reflection.

Burton and Reynolds (2009:28) deem the research conducted by Swick and Rowls (2000) on the perceptions of 240 education students about service learning to be valuable for planning and engaging in service learning work. In their study Swick and Rowls (2000) found that pre-service teachers emphasise several characteristics that constitute a meaningful service learning experience. Students should have access to meaningful service learning placements where their needs and expectations as well as those of the community can be clearly articulated. There should be a clear linkage between the objectives of the course and service learning activities, and students should have an opportunity to reflect on

what they experienced during their service activities. They should also have the chance to comment on the nature of the service learning activity through well-structured reflection activities. Swick and Rowls note the importance of feedback sessions during which the students can share their experiences with their peers and also receive feedback from their service learning coordinator.

Similarly, McCarthy and Tucker (2002:34) emphasise three factors as important requirements for a service learning course. Firstly, experiential learning should be tied to the key concepts of the course. Secondly, service should preferably be provided to a non-profit agency and, lastly, there should be sufficient allowance for structured reflection.

Astin *et al.* (2000), Billig (2000) and Eyler *et al.* (2001) emphasise that the principles of service, learning and reflection encompass not only the most important ideals and concepts of service learning, but also have an impact on student development and achievement.

After considering all of the above-mentioned factors, criteria and characteristics, three primary factors emerge that encapsulate the various dimensions of service learning. These are *servicing the community*, *learning* and *reflection*, which together form the founding pillars of music service learning implementation.

Table 1 provides a summary of the quality service learning criteria as set out by the abovementioned authors and institutions.

### *The service learning and reflection framework*

With this theoretical backdrop in mind, this section integrates these primary factors into a possible framework that consists of community partnerships, learning and reflection as fleshed out in the following three subsections.

#### **Community: civic engagement through building community partnerships**

An essential part of service learning is community engagement in order for service to take place. Bringle and Hatcher (2007:80) state that teaching, research and service should be incorporated 'in and with' the community. Hence, they distinguish between (a) community engagement solely defined by the location of the teaching, research and/or service activity within the community, and (b) civic engagement defined as teaching, research and service that is both 'in and with' the community, implying that values of reciprocity, mutual benefit, democratic processes and community voice are fundamental aspects of civic engagement (Bringle, Hatcher & Holland 2008). Bulot and Johnson (2006:638) concur with these viewpoints in stating that service learning would not be worthwhile without the cooperation, understanding and assistance of community partners. Therefore, the establishment of community partnerships leading to community engagement, which in turn leads towards civic engagement, should be considered as one of the first crucial steps in implementing service learning within course curricula.

Table 1: Quality service learning criteria

	Common factors		
	Serving the Community	Learning	Reflection
<i>Good Practice Guide</i> Higher Education Quality Committee (2006:19)	Reciprocity; Collaboration;  Needs assessment of the community;  Alignment of service and learning goals.	Good and relevant student placement;  Student roles and activities clearly articulated.	Reflection.
Bringle and Hatcher (2004:127)	Participation in an organised service activity;  Inclusion of community goals.	Greater understanding of course content;  Appreciation of the discipline;  Enhanced civic responsibility.	Reflection on the service activity.
Howard (2000), Stacey, Rice and Langer (2001)	Relevant and meaningful service within the community.	Enhanced academic learning;  Purposeful civic learning.	Structured opportunities for reflection.
Swick and Rowls (2000)	Placements through which expectations of community and students are clearly articulated.	Clear link between course goals and service learning activities.	Opportunities to reflect;  Importance of students' input on service activities;  Continuous feedback on service learning performances;  Feedback sessions amongst students for shared reflection.
McCarthy and Tucker (2002:34)	Service provided to a non-profit agency.	Experiential learning tied to the key course concepts.	Allowance made for structured reflections.

The context of service provision is undoubtedly an identified community with specific needs, challenges and goals. The community forms a significant pillar of service learning since, arguably, without a community to serve, the constructive triads of experiential learning cannot easily be realised. It is, therefore, of paramount importance to ask who this 'community' is. Within the service learning sphere the concept of 'community' refers to specific, local, collective interest groups who participate in the service learning activities of a specific institution. It is critical that the identification of service needs of such communities should be recognised and respected and be adhered to within the context of course outcomes. Especially the music needs within a community should be identified and



analysed before continuing with the service. In the South African context members of the above-mentioned communities will generally be disadvantaged, materially poor inhabitants of under-serviced urban, peri-urban or rural areas (Higher Education Quality Committee 2006:15).

In order for service to be of value for the community, while offering the student the optimal learning experience, one might argue that music training contexts may address both considerations. The probability of a music graduate student allocating some hours to some aspects of music education as a graduated musician is a topic for further discussion. Within the South African context, any experience gained within the field of music education, which serves as a primary link to our culturally diverse society, will be of considerable value for the future professional endeavours of the student. Emmanuel (2003) suggests that the immersion of students in a field experience may help them to develop intercultural competence. This coincides with Cambell and Brummett's stance that school-based partnerships offer students 'hands on' opportunities 'to develop an initial repertoire of teaching competencies, comprehend the various dimensions of music experience and understand student learning' (2007:52). Arguing from the same vantage point, Clarke and Hollingsworth view schools as 'learning communities' (2002:949).

Community partnerships, which operate under the auspices of already existing educational bodies such as school and educational programmes and after-school programmes linked with specific institutions, supply a well-structured foundation in the form of available venues, which assist personnel and improve security. With music tuition not being a primary concern for most school administrators and after-school outreach programmes, mostly because of budgetary constraints and frequent curriculum changes, service learning can serve as a meaningful gateway and trajectory towards civic engagement. Under the right conditions, music can prompt particular emotional responses that provide the opportunity for music educators to realise the significant role that music can play in developing good citizenship qualities (Yob 2000:76). It is, therefore, crucial to have a well-designed plan when introducing a service learning project in which outcomes and community goals are clearly identified and met. Participants in the service learning partnership should work together to define mutually beneficial outcomes of the service learning experience (Reynolds 2004:13). One of the time-consuming demands that results from planning service learning experiences for students is the cultivation and maintenance of communication among community members, students and academic staff during the experience (Root & Furco 2001). Because of the historical inequities that existed between those in higher education and the larger South African society, community development needs and goals should be regarded as a priority when designing a service learning module (Fourie 2003).

### **Learning: scaffolding with the utilisation of a proper 'script'**

Capstone modules of the *Good Practice Guide* (Higher Education Quality Committee

2006:39) require of students 'to draw upon the knowledge they have obtained throughout their learning programme and combine it with relevant service work in the community'. The main goal of a capstone module is to synthesise students' understanding of their discipline and it therefore offers a great way for students to make the transition from the world of theory to the world of practice by helping them establish professional contacts and gather personal experience.

The Bruner principle of scaffolding<sup>5</sup> by means of the capstone module should function as a step-by-step 'script', guiding the students in appropriate ways of teaching and ensuring that they feel safe and comfortable during the service activities.

As mentioned in the sections above, well-planned service learning activities foster growth in social and civic responsibilities, as well as a better understanding of course content, through the concept of 'transfer of learning'. It is important to keep in mind that, apart from their intellectual development, students also develop on a psychosocial level, which focuses on the issues and preoccupations relating to their development. The research of Chickering (1969) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) offer a useful framework for understanding the development of students at a tertiary level and they propose key elements for a collegiate environment that fosters student development and that is, according to McEwen (1996:72), relevant to service learning. Chickering (1969) describes tertiary student development by means of seven vectors: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy towards interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, and developing purpose and integrity. Thus, students have a great array of non-academic situations to deal with and, therefore, should feel completely at ease with the material used during the service activity and be provided with the necessary guidance and support. This complies with the scaffolding principle in Bruner's constructive theory, which states that, with sufficient scaffolding, optimal learning is attainable. A proposed service learning 'script' supplies the student with professional guidance as if a lecturer were on site, enabling them to think about 'expanded ways of engaging in music and in pedagogy' (Cambell & Brummett 2007:50). The student should know *what* to do and *when* to do it during his or her service. This will lead to greater security and certainty on the part of the student.

Tertiary music programme qualifications as offered by South African universities comprise a varied selection of subjects, such as performance, music theory, education, musicology and music technology. Thus, it is advisable to find an academic common ground with regard to the music profession that would provide for predetermined community needs. Such common ground can easily be found within a capstone module design and the great demand in the field of music education can serve as a guide for music service learning students when they engage in service activities. The capstone that is serving the purpose of a 'script' supplies a well-formulated and well-constructed plan, clearly stipulating what is expected from the student during the service activity.

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5 Bruner (1983:60) defines 'scaffolding' as an interactive learning process where the need for support is regulated and dispensed with as it becomes unnecessary.

## Reflection

Reflection is the final and most significant element of the three-part implementation framework, as it brings closure to the service experience and functions as a means of learning assessment. Service learning involves a combination of cognitive, affective and practical aspects which are connected and drawn together through critical reflection (Deeley 2010:51). Dewey sees reflection as

active, persistent, and careful considerations of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends. (Dewey 1933:6)

Reflection is central to effective service learning as it helps students to question their assumptions, identify questions that arise from their experience, and link what they are learning in the classroom with the lives of communities (Eyler 2001:42). Intensive and continuous reflection is a necessity if the objectives of a service learning module include cognitive goals such as deeper understanding of subject matter, critical thinking and perspective transformation (Eyler & Giles 1999). Such deeper understanding obtained through a reflective process coincides with the deeper level of knowledge associated with critical pedagogy within music education. Critical pedagogy (see McClaren 1998) advocates for more than merely acquiring classroom knowledge. It values the role of social awareness and emphasises the way in which continued critical reflection of learning experiences can be essential towards educational transformation.

A considerable body of literature exists on the topic of the importance of reflection within the realm of service learning. According to the previously mentioned experiential learning model of Kolb (1984), reflection follows direct and concrete experience and precedes abstract conceptualisation and generalisation. Kolb's model underscores the centrality and significance of reflection in the entire process of learning. Reflection is not only an important agent for measuring the academic and personal growth of students, but also an effective strategy for negotiating changes or challenges within partnerships (Strouse 2003:33).

For reflection to be effective, Eyler (2001:36) argues that it should embody the following principles: reflection should be continuous and not only consist of occasional, irregular assignments; it should explicitly connect course content and the community experience; it should be challenging and force students to 'confront their own assumptions and pursue hard questions'; it should be integrated naturally into the project and not be seen as an 'add-on' activity. McEwan (1996:66) points out that Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development suggests that service learning educators should intentionally structure reflection in order to help students reflect on and clearly articulate the reasoning behind their moral judgements. McEwan also suggests that interactive opportunities such as group discussions should be designed to enable students to examine thoughtfully the moral dilemmas raised during their service experience. Yob sees service activities, in general, as

outward engagements with the 'raw messiness' and 'dark underside' of real life (2000:68). She argues that music and other art forms afford inward engagements with meaning making and self-understanding. This occurs primarily at an inductive, abstract, idealistic and metaphoric level. This meaning-making and self-understanding process can be achieved by means of reflection.

Introducing music students to the concept of reflection as part of their service learning activity has the potential to instil a habit, which closely resembles that of action research. Cain explains action research in music education as a form of research used in 'fields where it is helpful to integrate research with action and is essentially practical in nature' (2008:284). The process of constant reflection can instil a constant investigative habit within educators to reflect on their impact, technique and teaching results, leading to a better quality education. Questions such as 'What did I do?', 'What did the learners do?' and 'What did they learn?' force students to reflect on their actions and the consequences thereof. The question asked by the student, 'What did I learn?', spontaneously leads to reflection and to considering changes to a particular teaching style or approach.

Such reflection often takes on the form of written work done by the student at various stages of service learning. Bringle and Hatcher (1999:112) state that, through writing, new meaning can be created, new understanding of problems can be realised, and new ways of organising experience can be developed. Verbal discussions can also be seen as valuable reflective activities as they encourage interactive dialogue in order to link experiences and to learn in meaningful ways.

The synergy of the three factors, community, learning and reflection, are equal role players in terms of service learning implementation. The next section investigates their functions as illustrated in an implementation of a framework of service learning at the UFS Odeion School of Music.

### *The implementation of the proposed framework: The UFS Odeion School of Music service learning module*

The implementation and coordination of the service learning module at the UFS Odeion School of Music outline not only the three pillars of the proposed framework, namely service, learning and reflection, but also illustrate how these pillars are interconnected to realise maximum learning.

#### **Community: The Mangaung String Programme**

As mentioned earlier, the success of a service learning initiative depends primarily on the partnerships formed between the higher education institution and the community. Prior investigation into possible partnerships should be a high priority for a higher education institution in order to establish a firm, trustworthy and safe base for service to commence. Research supports the premise that partnerships formed between universities, schools

and art institutions can strengthen music teaching and learning, if such partnerships are designed and executed well (Myers & Brooks 2002).

The Mangaung String Programme (MSP), founded in 1998 by Peter Guy, is a community outreach programme committed to creating opportunities for children to learn music. This programme, which is a collaborative initiative of the UFS and the Free State Department of Arts and Culture, focuses on music education for children from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. These children do not have any access to formally structured music education other than the lessons they receive through the String Programme. In a study conducted by Cloete (2006), the influence of the MSP on both the learners and the society in which they live was investigated. One of the main findings of this study was that the participants in the programme emphasised the musical and social advantages that involvement with a music programme such as the MSP holds. These findings are supported by what the findings of Devroop's (2009) study revealed, namely the positive influence of instrumental music instruction, as part of a music development programme, specifically on the career plans of South African learners from historically disadvantaged areas.

The MSP strives to respond to the overwhelming demand for music education in and around the city of Bloemfontein. The reality of this demand over and against the programme's shortage of personnel places the MSP under considerable pressure. Teachers within the programme have to, apart from the normal responsibilities of teaching, see to a multitude of administrative and non-musical matters; consequently, it is not feasible to cover all aspects embedded in a holistic learning process. The importance of the MSP learners receiving a more in-depth and rounded music development in addition to the development of their practical skills thus created a service opportunity for the service learning module of music undergraduates. The demand for music classes that offer additional training in musical elements such as aural development, theoretical skills and improvisation is met through service learning activities presented by undergraduate music students. The service provided by the students is, therefore, in line with the needs established within the MSP, which offers an opportunity for community engagement on the part of the Odeion School of Music, grounding and undergirding an important partnership for both the UFS and the MSP.

The ages of the learners in the MSP range between 7 and 18. With the help of the MSP administrative staff, learners are divided into groups which are determined by their age and standard of playing. Each student is assigned to a group for a lesson of an hour and a half once a week. The frequency of the interaction between the MSP, students and service learning lecturer ensures not only quality service, but also builds trust and a sense of security.

### **Learning: a proper script**

The service activities organised and coordinated by students should provide for the specific needs within the community, which should guarantee learning on the part of the student

and ensure the desired contribution towards the community. As mentioned previously, there is a great need for the development of additional music skills within the MSP, more specifically those of aural and theory development. The music students involved in the UFS service learning module are in their final year of undergraduate studies. One can, therefore, assume that these students should have a firm knowledge with regard to music theory and well-developed aural skills, even though they are not necessary all music education majors.

The capstone module followed by the UFS Odeion School of Music consists of a five-step process (see Fig. 1), which corresponds closely with Altman's (1996) typology of knowledge. This typology, used by Clawson and Couse (2001) for designing their service learning module, includes (a) foundational knowledge of theory, content and methodology of a discipline, (b) professional knowledge, including practitioner skills and vocationally oriented knowledge and techniques, and (c) socially responsive knowledge in which students experience the social issues in their communities, but now have the knowledge and skills to respond to such issues (Clawson & Couse 2001:65).

The process followed to implement the capstone service learning module of the UFS Odeion School of Music comprises five clearly defined steps, as outlined below.

Firstly, an in-depth literature review is conducted on service learning pedagogy in order for the students to understand why and how the service learning experience is incorporated within their course and how they as students and individuals can benefit from it. This part of the module needs to unfold prior to the community engagement in order for students to grasp the experiential basis of the practical work. The literature review not only serves an informational purpose, but also manifests the scholarly nature of the pedagogy, bringing to the fore the academic and scholarly characteristics of the pedagogy.

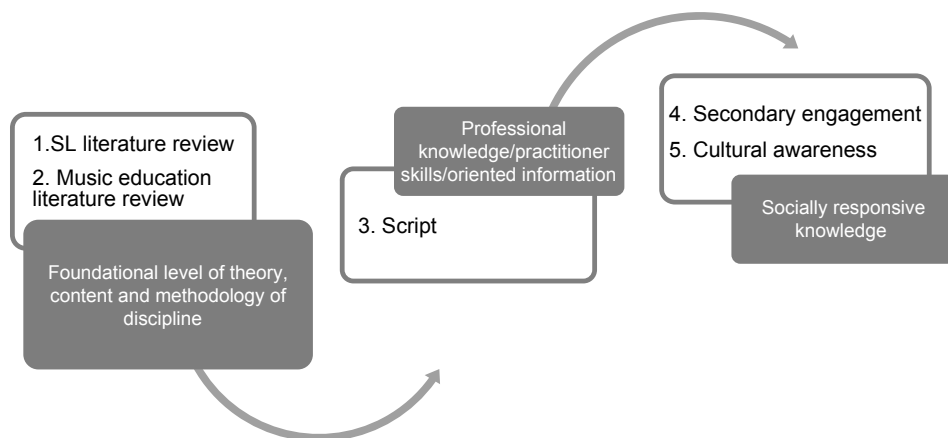


Figure 1: Juxtaposing the MSP five-step process with Altman's three levels of learning as part of cognitive development

Secondly, the students need to be briefed about and prepared for the often unfamiliar, diverse cultural contexts to which they will be exposed. In this regard, they need explicit guidance as to what is expected of them in terms of cultural sensitivity and how to express it.

Thirdly, the students' attention needs to be focused on the relevant field of study regarding music and, in this case, music education. Because the students will be working with younger learners, various learning theories concerning music need to be discussed in order to expose the students to this field of teaching and learning. Such exposure is a further confirmation of the scholarly and academic approach being followed in order to embed service in the concept of a scholarship of teaching and learning, as propagated by Erasmus (2009). In the case of the student activities within the MSP, Edwin E Gordon's (2007) Music Learning Theory<sup>6</sup> forms the backbone of most of the lessons.

Fourthly, the 'script' that the students will be using during the service activity encompasses the sequence of learning and activities of Music Learning Theory as guidance for maximum aural skills development. It is carefully laid out to form a foundation upon which the student's own initiative and creativity is to be built. This step consumes most of the hours spent in the course and during this time a relationship develops between the community (in this case the children participating in the MSP) and the student. The children participating in the MSP can be referred to as primary community members as they are the ones who are the direct recipients of the service. In addition, the secondary community, which consists of the children's parents, guardians, families and friends, should also benefit from service in both direct and indirect ways.<sup>7</sup>

Fifthly, projects such as community concerts, workshops and community interaction in the form of parent/guardian meetings are included as the final step in the five-step process and seen as secondary engagement. The transition from passive 'note taker' to 'active participant' is highly relevant at this stage of the process (Clawson & Couse 2001:63). The students learn through such activities to develop and reinforce organisational and social skills, which they might not have seen as a priority within their field of study prior to their community engagement.

## Reflection

Reflection is a powerful educational strategy that enables students to make connections and derive meaning from their experiences; reflection is the 'debriefing process', since it appears to 'enable participants to assess what happened, examine the impact and evaluate whether or not the goals and objectives have been addressed' (Henry 2004:2).

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6 Music Learning Theory is a music learning method based on the development of audiation skills; the ability to think about music with understanding. (For further elucidation of the concept see <[www.giml.org/mlt\\_about.php](http://www.giml.org/mlt_about.php)>).

7 A qualitative study conducted by Cloete (2006) shows that community members, parents and guardians recognise the positive advantages a music programme such as the MSP holds for their children.

The coordinator of the service learning module plays a crucial role with regard to successful reflective and debriefing activities: 'the leader is responsible for creating an environment that stimulates trust and crucial knowing and ensuring that the session ends with a sense that something has been achieved' (Henry 2004:2). This process can be formal or informal, but needs to be under the direction of the coordinator. Such direction can be in the form of semi-structured questionnaires, semi-structured questions forming the backbone of essay-style reflective reports, one-to-one discussions between the coordinator, student and the community partner, and frequent contact sessions between the students, coordinator and the community partner.

The reflective process followed by the service learning module at the UFS Odeion School of Music starts at the beginning of the course with a *pre-reflection* session in which the objectives and morale of the students are measured and noted. This session is guided by specific questions (see Appendix A) prompting the students towards focused argumentation and answers. At the end of the service learning module a *post-reflection* session is a second measure of altering and growing experiences, if applicable (see Appendix B). Referring back to the first session at the end of the service learning endeavour provides excellent opportunities for studying and illustrating the civic and academic changes that have occurred.

A continuous reflective process occurs in the form of reflection reports compiled by students after every service session and weekly group contact sessions. Initially, the writing process can be a daunting task, since the primary aim of the reflective process is to investigate whether the students developed on a social, moral and academic level. For this development to be noticeable, the students must take a critical and inquisitive look at their service activity. Thus, they first need to develop an open and honest 'relationship' with themselves, which means acknowledging shortcomings and identifying critical incidents such as difficult situations that caught them off guard. Basic questions are, therefore, provided for the reflective essays, guiding the students towards independent reflective writing (for examples, see Appendix C).

## *Conclusion*

The social activist and author Bell Hooks (2000) listed prerequisites for social justice: care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, acceptance and self-efficacy. Silverman sees these prerequisites as crucial human and educational values and proposes that the music profession should consider including such notions, strategies and aims in its teaching and learning (Silverman 2009:118). She further argues that all forms of music teaching and learning should consider people's humanity first and foremost.

Hooks (2000) contends that contributing to the whole is essential to social justice, and that living a purposeful life pivots on creating a life that means something beyond oneself. This corresponds with Yob's (2000:76) notion that service learning embodies 'a feeling for others', and Silverman's (2009:180) advocacy that 'through love-as-action, relationships amongst people are fuller and not seen as individuals filling roles but as people caring



for people'. Love, in this context, is defined by Hooks (2000) as something holistic, an integrated and working combination of care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect and knowledge.

Service learning can function as a purposeful tool in nurturing loving and caring relationships, and in demonstrating responsibility towards others through engagement, which contributes to social change that is structured within a workable framework. As argued in this article, such a framework should incorporate the needs, goals and dynamics of the community on which it focuses, constructively guide students through a quality service endeavour, and lead them towards reflective thinking, which ultimately fosters academic and personal growth and a renewed love and compassion for their community. Successful service learning implementation within higher education music programmes, such as the example provided in this article, offers and illustrates a well-defined mechanism toward more goal-oriented community engagement. The contention is that the capstone service learning module of the UFS Odeion School of Music might serve as a guide for other higher education arts and humanities programmes to follow as they strive to deepen their responsiveness to the unique challenges and opportunities of a world in which 'a feeling for others' is in constant short supply.

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## *Appendix A*

### **Pre-Reflection Report**

1. Why do you think is expected of you to do this service learning module (MOP 334/344)?
2. What do you think this service learning module (MOP 334/344) entails?
3. What are your expectations of this module?
4. What do you think is expected of you in doing this module?
5. How will you define community engagement?
6. Who and what is the community?

## *Appendix B*

### **Post-Reflection Report**

1. Why do you think was expected of you to do this service learning module (MOP 334/344)?
2. How, if so, did this module influence your perception of our society?
3. How, if so, did this module influence your perception of your academic coursework?
4. How, if so, did this module influence/alter your future career plans?
5. What do you consider to be the advantages of this module?
6. Do you think this module should be altered in any way? If so, how?

## *Appendix C*

### **Framework for written reflective essays**

Use the following questions as the frame for writing your reflective essay. Your essay should focus on three different domains of learning: academic learning with regards to your discipline, the gaining of social and civic responsibility, and also personal growth and development.

**A: The *session* with the community (in your case the class session with the children):**

- What lesson material did you cover?
- How did you feel about the lessons you had to present?
- Did you find the lesson material sufficient? If not, what did you do to compensate?
- What was the reaction of the children towards the lesson and lesson material?
- Did you gain any insight with regards to your profession during this session?

**B: The *community* (in your case the children assigned to you):**

- What was the overall atmosphere during the session?
- Were there any highlights or any uncomfortable situations? If so, how did you handle it?
- What was their approach toward you?
- Were there any outside elements that influenced your session?
- Did the session contribute to any learning on behalf of the community (children)?

**C: You, the *student*:**

- Did you have had to adjust to any situations?
- Did you feel uncomfortable at any time and how did you handle this situation?
- Were there any situations with regard to cultural and social indifference that was noticeable? How did you feel and react to this?