

**CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENT AND ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP IN TWO
SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES AT RHODES UNIVERSITY AS A
CONSEQUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

(Service-learning, Community Engagement and Leadership)

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

HEIDE NOZUKO KHUHLANE

March 2021

Declaration

I, Heide Nozuko Khuhlane, hereby declare that this is my own work written in my own words, and that where I have drawn on the words or ideas of others, this has been acknowledged according to the Rhodes University Referencing Guide. I also declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.



(Student's signature)

15 March 2021

(Date)

Abstract

The COVID-19 global pandemic altered many aspects of learning. Learning through service, a component of community engagement in higher education linking academic learning and the community was no exception. Informed by Experiential Learning Theory, this study investigated the curriculum adjustment of two service-learning courses at Rhodes University and the leadership development of those who lead the courses as a consequence of COVID-19. The study's initial goal was to highlight the position of service-learning as a component of academic learning. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic the goal was extended to understanding the impact of the pandemic not only on service-learning, but on leadership as well. Furthermore, the study sought to determine the responsiveness of service-learning policies at Rhodes University at a time of crisis. The study was designed as an interpretivist case study with four participants and one secondary participant. The study employed document analysis, individual interviews and a focus group interview to collect data. Data analysis took the form of content analysis and coding, through the lens of Experiential Learning Theory and an alternative service-based model. The study findings revealed that as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic both service-learning courses had to be adapted to ensure successful completion. The adaptations included attention to scaffolded learning, assessment and course outcomes; in one course the service engagement aspect with the community was lost entirely to ensure the safety of students through adherence to COVID-19 safety regulations. The study also found that the participants developed adaptive leadership competencies and skills, technological and collaboration skills as well as a heightened regard for pastoral care and social justice. However, it was evident that the pandemic revealed gaps in the conceptual understanding of service-learning in the context of the two courses, a need for responsive policy, and practical strategies to implement those policies in smaller units in the institution. The study thus recommends an alternative service-based model approach to service-learning, increased policy responsiveness to issues posed by the 'new normal' to support adaptive leadership development, re-defining of the university-community partnership and the identification of opportunities for innovation and collaboration intra-departmentally through service-learning.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother; Liziwe Nomthunzi Kuhlane. Congratulations Ntombi, you have done well. Usigcinile isithembiso sokubafundisa abakho abantwana ungafundanga nje, enkosi Mama. Ndiyabulela ngokundazisa eNkosini yakho; ndibonile ukuba “Kungeenceba zikaYehova lento singagqityelwanga, azipheli iimfeINTB2e zaKhe; zintsha imiso ngemiso, kukhulu ukuthembeka kwaKhe”.

To my son Musawenkosi Mikhulu Ngcayisa, may you become a lifelong learner baby. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life, surely.

Acknowledgements

To God, I am saturated with the fatness of Your house. You cause me to drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light I see light, Psalm 36:8-9.

This thesis could not have been possible without the support of the following individuals: to my supervisors Professor INTA1 Grant and Dr INTA2 Kajee I extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude. INTA1's extensive and informative feedback and her amazing ability to see potential in others is so humbling. Thank you for holding the light for women like myself to brave the often difficult and steep path to realised dreams and potential. INTA2 has been a faithful cheerleader and well of wisdom since my Honours journey. Her vast insight into Education Leadership and Management and research, and the passion with which she shares knowledge is unmatched; thank you for your kindness and prayers INTA2. Both women are my role models in academia.

Furthermore, I wish to thank my mother Liziwe, my son Musawenkosi, my sister Thethelwa and my nephew Bunakho. I am aware that my academic work borrowed from our family time. Yet, you have supported me throughout; ndiyanithanda kakhulu.

Lastly, my sincere gratitude and appreciation goes to the participants of this study. You have helped me achieve a childhood dream. This was more than just acquiring a qualification, but an attempt to improve our practice and contribute to a broader body of knowledge. Thank you so much for your time and patience, for your willingness to be interviewed, at times more than twice. I hope that this journey has been just as valuable to you.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CHAT	- Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CHE	- Council on Higher Education
COVID-19	- Novel Coronavirus Disease
DBE	- Department of Basic Education
DHET	- Department of Higher Education and Training
ELM	- Education Leadership and Management
ELT	- Experiential Learning Theory
IDP	- Institutional Development Plan
IMF	- International Monetary Fund
NCHE	- National Commission of Higher Education
SL	- Service-learning
TP	- Teaching Practice
WHO	- World Health Organisation
WIL	- Work Integrated Learning

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The unprecedented nature and surge of the global COVID-19 pandemic posed a series of threats to Higher Education. The fluidity of the pandemic threw universities into uncertainty, requiring from these institutions innovation and creativity to ensure continuous, inclusive and efficient modes of delivery (DePietro, 2020). Because of the measures put in place to minimise the spread of the virus among humans, measures such as social distancing and the discouragement of large gatherings set out by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Republic of South Africa (Government Gazette, 2020), as well as modes of teaching and learning have had to be reimagined to ensure the successful completion of the academic year. An aspect of higher education learning affected, amongst others, is service-learning, a component of community engagement. This study looks at how two service-learning courses at Rhodes University have been affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic, how they have had to adapt their original designs as a consequence of the pandemic, how the leadership of those who lead service-learning might have developed, and the responsiveness of community engagement and service-learning policies at Rhodes University as a result of the challenges posed by the pandemic.

This chapter introduces the reader to the South African higher education context and how policy in the country has shaped this sector since the start of the democratic era in 1994. This is to contextualise to the South African democratic university, how it has evolved over the last two decades, and highlight some of the values that shape the sector. The chapter continues with the rationale for the study and then introduces the potential value and goals of the study, the research questions and orientation and the methodology adopted. Lastly an outline of the thesis is presented.

1.2 The study background and context: South African higher education

In a country with a history which birthed grave social and economic injustices whose effects are still prevalent to this day, South Africa is ranked as one of the most unequal societies in the world (Rhodes University, 2019). Three major challenges plague the country well beyond the apartheid era: poverty, inequality and unemployment. Crime, a limping basic education system, corruption, a widening income gap between the rich and the poor are just some of the ills prevalent since the dawn of democracy (Christie, 2010). Maloi, Makgoba and Miruka (2017) suggest, "South Africans live in one of the most unequal societies in the world where squalor and abject poverty live side by side with abundant wealth" (p. 1). The International Monetary Fund (2020) wrote in a review, "The South African government has used different tools to tackle the stubborn levels of inequality that have plagued the country, including ... progressive fiscal redistribution" (p. 1). Statistics South Africa attest to this and adds "Despite many efforts by government to reduce inequality since our democratic transition in 1994, progress has been limited" (Statistics South Africa, 2019, p. 17). Moreover, according to the Gini index which is the most widely used measure of income inequality (Govender, Kambaran, Patchett, Ruddle, Torr & van Zyl, 2007), inequality is a direct result of a largely unequal income distribution, low and at times declining levels of economic growth, rising unemployment, regional disparities, and unequal access to resources and opportunities (International Monetary Fund, 2020). Statistics South Africa, reflecting on the complexities of the challenges faced by the country, suggests that

the result is that in every sphere of our society – economic, social, political, moral, cultural, environmental – South Africans are confronted by serious problems. There is not a single sector of South African society, nor a person living in South Africa, untouched by the ravages of apartheid (Statistics South Africa, 2019, p. 18).

All of these have a direct impact on both basic and higher education in the country.

Any attempt to understand these challenges requires not an abstract model of analysis but an indepth understanding of the South African context and the various forces at play. With regard to the impact on education in the country, Christie (2010) says,

Given that apartheid policies had structured the education system along racially unequal lines, the post 1994 government was faced with two simultaneous tasks: to dismantle apartheid structures and to design and implement a new education system (p. 701).

Consequently, many policies were developed and implemented, at times unsuccessfully, in an attempt to accelerate the redress of these injustices. These included the African National Congress policy on Education and Training (1994), the National Commission of Higher Education (NCHE 1996), and the White Paper on Higher Education (1997). Policies post apartheid have focused on redressing the injustices by challenging the systemic roots of the injustices challenging what Odhav (2019, p. 36) describes as a “fragmented system that existed prior to 1994 ... characterised by a racial and ethnic divide between institutions”. The International Monetary Fund suggests, “In the future, South Africa will need further fundamental reforms for more robust and inclusive growth” (2020, p. 1). In relation to the higher education context in which this study is based,

Transformation of the system is needed to ensure increased access to Higher Education, links with the community, the production of skilled graduates, and research for the knowledge requirements for socioeconomic advancement of the country (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 11).

Responsive policy is one of the means to achieve this.

1.2.1 Higher education policy development

The many policies developed since 1994 have not only provided opportunities and directives to redress past injustices, but have shaped the higher education sector in its numerous growth stages (Christie, 2010). The challenges are not in any way unique to South Africa but bring to light the unaffordability of higher education across the world (Yingi, 2018). In a chapter titled *South African Higher Education Before And After 1994: A Policy Analysis Perspective*, Hay and Monnapula-Mapesele (2009) argue, “One could argue that not enough has been done to analyse the manifold policies with the intention to evaluate their appropriateness at a given time, as well as their success in delivering what they advocate” (p. 3). More than thirty-five policies relating to higher education in South Africa have been launched since 1994 (Yingi, 2018). Besides the alarming number of policies in a short space of time, Hay and Monnapula-Mapesele identify a number of challenges which explain possible reasons why the evaluation of policy in delivering what they advocate at appropriate times is lacking:

Their voluminous nature, lack of clarity of implementation steps, the vast number of coordinating bodies, as well as the wrong assumption that institutions and academics have enough capacity and support to implement these policies — have created and continue to create, among others, a stagnation in policy implementation, fears of encroachment in academics' sphere sovereignties, and sometimes animosity and resistance to change (p. 6).

The main aim of policy in higher education should be, suggests Hay and Monnapula-Mapesele (2009), a focus on what the democratic university should look like in a developing and transforming country.

The *Fees Must Fall* movement of 2015 and the *Rape Culture* movement of 2016 in Higher Education (Desai, 2019) are recent examples that show some of the sector's pressing issues in a transforming and developing South Africa. The movements highlighted for the country the negative ripple effects of past injustices. According to Yingi (2018, p. 21) "What prompted the protests were envisaged hikes of 10–12% in tuition fees in the forthcoming 2016 academic year".. In the past, many South Africans, largely black South Africans, were denied opportunities to get an education and earn a decent living. Consequently, the citizens today cannot afford to pay exorbitant university fees to get their children what is considered a decent education (Yingi, 2018). At the height of the *Fees Must Fall* movement, Desai (2019) wrote in a reflection on how this movement shone light once more on societal concerns, "The students' continuous assembly became the heart of all debates and decision making. New young black female voices also came to the fore" (p. 1). He concluded, "They [students] made me feel complicit in our highly unequal society and in some ways they are right" (Desai, 2019, p. 3).

To understand better the role of government and policy in shaping higher education, Hay and Monnapula-Mapesele (2009) suggest

governments have the responsibility to ensure that higher education institutions perform well, deliver graduates of high quality, address short skilled research areas and contribute towards the socio-economic demands of a particular state (p. 7).

Higher education in South Africa, it was determined, needed to be made more functional, relevant and responsive to social issues after the advent of democracy. In the evolvement of higher education policies post democracy, varying focuses can be noted.

Lange (2017) suggests that in the early years of South Africa's democracy the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) policy focused on equity and redress of past injustices and the structures and quality of the curriculum. Policy included the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) of 1996, the White Paper 3 of 1997, the Higher Education Act of 1997, and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of 1995 that led to the creation of the the National Qualifications Framework. Furthermore, after the first ten years of the new democratic state, the focus on the Council on Higher Education (CHE) recommendations shifted to teaching and learning, efficiency and a flexible curriculum.

Policy weaknesses in higher education manifest in various areas such as funding, access to higher education, the capacity of higher education institutions to handle the demand for higher education, capacity building, redress, and responsiveness to emerging issues. Odhav (2009) adds, "despite all the changes after 1994, redefining a new higher education system remains problematic if such problems, perceived or real, persist" (p. 1). Community engagement and service-learning as a component of the curriculum play a pivotal role in not only providing opportunities for students to create links between theory and practice but in redefining the role of higher education as a public good, extending the role of academic learning beyond the classroom to work with communities for the overall development of the community (Bender, Daniels, Lazarus, Naude, & Sattar, 2006), and the development of responsive policy .

While governments have the responsibility to ensure that higher education institutions perform well, deliver graduates of high quality, address scarce skills and research areas and contribute towards the socio-economic demands of a particular geographical area, it is important to understand what responsibility lies with institutions and particularly individual university courses in ensuring student performance, high quality learning, and the meeting of course goals, even at a time of a global pandemic.

Community engagement and service-learning are fields of learning that seek to create a link between theory and practice through community relations. Kezar and Rhoads suggest that community engagement and service-learning "form part of the historical mission of Higher

Education to foster corporate social responsibility and citizenship” (p. 149). Community service, therefore, should form part of the culture and values of universities through service-learning, ensuring that students, staff and the community benefit from such initiatives (Bender, Daniels, Lazarus, Naude & Sattar, 2006).

Below I discuss the rationale and value of the study, through my role as a Teaching Practice Coordinator, and how the interest on leadership emerged as a result of my Honours project prior to registering for a Master’s degree. I also discuss the changes to my focus brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3 Rationale of the focus and value of the study

The Novel Corona Virus of 2019 (COVID-19) global pandemic is an infectious disease that charged at the global community in an unprecedented manner. The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or exhales (Government Gazette, 2020), making close contact with others risky. The social distancing measures imposed by the South African government as a result had a direct impact on the carrying out of service engagement at Rhodes University, an institution in which I am employed as a Teaching Practice Coordinator responsible for the service-learning component of the curriculum.

Service-learning, a component of community engagement in higher education, is a critical yet often ignored aspect of learning. The literature I consulted looks at the roots of service-learning (Dwight and Eyler, 1994), traditional versus developing service-learning models (Mitchell, 2008), academic service-learning (Howard, 1998), service-learning partnerships (Bringle, Clayton & Price, 2009), and student preparation (Clayton & Ash, 2004) amongst others. Service-learning during times of crisis and the effects thereof on sustainability and delivery have received little attention. Furthermore, there are a few practical examples of service-learning in South African universities. Hlalele and colleagues (2015) offer some insight by comparing how students and community members learned and applied their knowledge in university–community engagement projects, but do not explore the service-learning leadership development aspect. Furthermore, service-learning courses generally have three

objectives: contributing to local human and community development, improving the quality of academic learning within a specific discipline, and improving the leadership and civic character development (Cooper, 1999) of staff and students involved in the course. Leadership and leadership development through service-learning in times of crisis is largely unexplored. The study could further assist in devising strategies to ensure the sustainability and development of service-engagement in unprecedented times.

Community service is close to my heart. In my role as Teaching Practice (TP) coordinator at Rhodes University, I have been grappling with how TP aligns (or not) with service-learning. Furthermore, during 2019, I participated in a service-learning course during the second year of my Honours degree at Rhodes University. This Education Leadership and Management (ELM) elective stimulated my interest in leadership as it relates to service-learning. This personal experience contributed to my rationale for embarking on a study with a focus on service-learning and leadership. However, just as I was developing my proposal, the country went into lockdown as a consequence of COVID 19.

Having witnessed firstly how the pandemic halted service engagement and made it impossible initially for university students to access schools in order to fulfil degree requirements as set by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa, my focus shifted, having resumed my duties as Teaching Practice Coordinator. Secondly, the difficulties of putting together an alternative programme to ensure that students meet degree requirements and are able to graduate created an interest in me to study the effects of the pandemic on service-learning courses and the leadership of academic staff members who lead these courses. I also felt that the study would contribute to and improve my own practice possibly leading to finding lessons to take forward as higher education navigates what has been imposed by the pandemic as the 'new normal'.

In this study I work from the premise that democratic universities should have community engagement and service-learning integrated into their undergraduate and postgraduate curricula (Hay & Monnapula-Mapesela, 2009), that service-learning is a critical component of learning central to formal teaching and learning, community engagement and research and

not an add-on or an extramural activity. Lastly, I argue that clear policy should be developed to support the functioning, continuity and adaptive leadership of service-learning, more so in a time of crisis such as the Covid-19 global pandemic.

1.4 Goals of the study and research questions

The goals of this study listed below highlight the importance of service-learning as a component of academic learning. With the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the goals were extended to seeking to understand the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic on service-learning and the leadership of those who lead the service-learning courses. The goals were to

- Understand service-learning and its design and goals from the lived experiences of academic staff members who lead the courses
- Understand how academics who lead service-learning and the work that they do have been impacted by the global pandemic
- Encourage intra-departmental conversation, reflection and collaboration between the two service-learning courses
- Determine the responsiveness of higher education policies as they relate to service-learning during a pandemic
- Contribute to the development and sustainability of service-learning in higher education.

To achieve the above goals, the study was guided by the following five research questions:

1. How do the participants understand service-learning?
2. How were the service-learning courses initially designed and to what purpose?
3. How have the service-learning courses had to change in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. What leadership skills, knowledge and attributes are required of service-learning lecturers in response to a global pandemic such as COVID-19?
5. What evidence is there of policy responsiveness to ensure the sustainability of service-learning during a pandemic?

1.5 Research orientation and methodology

The study was designed as a qualitative case study, using the interpretivist paradigm. Constructivism is based on the premise of a social construction of reality, and "recognises the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning but does not reject the notion of objectivity" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). Interpretivists seek to understand meanings and motives behind people's actions that are important to them as well as behaviour and interactions with others around them and the world (Chowdhury, 2014). The study draws on Dewey's theory of education and experience, that effective education comes primarily through social interactions (Williams, 2017) and his concept of reflective activity. The study seeks to highlight possible areas of consideration and development, to ensure the sustenance of service-learning at Rhodes University during and post the Covid-19 pandemic.

Data were collected from four participants who are academic staff members leading the two service-learning courses at Rhodes University. Data collection methods included the following qualitative methods: document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group interview. The data were analysed inductively using thematic analysis coding and observing the categories and themes emerging from the data. The categories and themes were then used in structuring the discussion of findings. Furthermore, deductive content analysis was used to understand the alignment of the findings with Dewey's theory of education and experience and the role of reflective activity.

1.6 Thesis outline

This thesis comprises five chapters. The introduction (chapter one) provides an overview of the study. This chapter looks at the higher education context and policy development, the rationale of the focus and value of the study, the goals and research questions, the Rhodes University case site, the research orientation and a brief account of the methodology, data collection and analysis. This chapter ends with an outline of the entire thesis.

Chapter two is the literature review. The literature locates community engagement and service-learning within existing literature. It looks at the background of service-learning, and its role as a component of broader community engagement. Furthermore, the review looks

at adaptive leadership and its critiques, service-learning in the curriculum and implementation. The chapter ends with a critique of service-learning and identifies possible opportunities for adaptive leadership development of academic staff through service-learning.

Chapter three discusses the methodology and research design of this study. In this chapter, I describe the rationale behind my choice of research methods and data collection tools, data analysis, semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview. I also locate the study within Dewey's theory of education and experience and Experiential Learning Theory. The chapter also provides a description of the research site, the participants, and an account of the selection of the research participants. The chapter ends with addressing issues of validity, trustworthiness and ethical considerations which have guided the study.

Chapter four presents the data and research findings. In this chapter I present the original data grouped according to themes that emerged. The data were collected according to the five research questions of this study. In the chapter I discuss the data according to the theoretical lens of Experiential Learning Theory and present the research findings. Finally, I present an alternative model to service-learning in this chapter, arguing for a service-based approach to service.

Chapter five is the final chapter of this thesis and provides the conclusion. The chapter recalls the goal of the study and the research questions and provides a summary of the research findings presented in chapter four. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the limitations of the study, as well as the benefits I believe it has to offer in the field of service-learning. Thereafter, the chapter makes some recommendations for service-learning during a crisis such as a pandemic, touches on the alternative model introduced in chapter 4, and highlights gaps for further research. Lastly, this chapter presents my reflections on the theoretical lens adopted during my study, and the journey travelled during this research.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

2.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 global pandemic and the effect on service-learning is unprecedented. For this reason, a gap in research exists in how the pandemic has affected Service-Learning and the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) components of the higher education university curriculum. In this chapter, I provide a review of literature focusing on the following concepts: community engagement, service-learning, work integrated learning, curriculum and leadership. I also look at adaptive leadership in light of how the COVID-19 global pandemic has made it almost impossible to conduct service activities in the conventional manner and how it might have provided opportunities for this kind of leadership to emerge and develop in the academic staff leading service-learning courses. Lastly, I discuss the conceptual framework of the study. I begin with community engagement.

2.2 Community Engagement: an integral part of teaching and learning and research

Community engagement is service performed by individuals for the benefit of others, for an organisation, and/or for a community (Hollis, 2002). Community engagement is referred to in the South African White Paper of 1997 as the need to make students aware of their role in the development and promotion of social citizenry and responsibility through community engagement programmes (Bender, Daniels, Lazarus, Naude, & Sattar, 2006). Furco (1996) extends the definition of student engagement in activities that primarily focus on the recipients of service and the benefit they gain from the experience, and the service activity being provided. An example would be students who volunteer to read to children at an orphanage once a week. The focus is on the children and the benefits they derive from being read to on a weekly basis. This is not to say they students who provide the service do not benefit, however, the focus of the engagement is on the recipients of the service. Kezar and Rhoads (2002) argue that community engagement “forms part of the historical mission of Higher Education to foster corporate social responsibility and citizenship” (p. 149). Bender *et al.*, (2006) speak of a need to balance education for the job market with education for good

citizenship. In a discussion of the White Paper, Bender *et al.* (2006, p. 7) argue that “community engagement should not be optional in South African higher education” but that institutions of higher learning should be supported with resources to take seriously their responsibility to inculcate the notion of citizenship in students through integrating community service in mainstream academic programmes” (p. 7), as illustrated in figure 2.1.

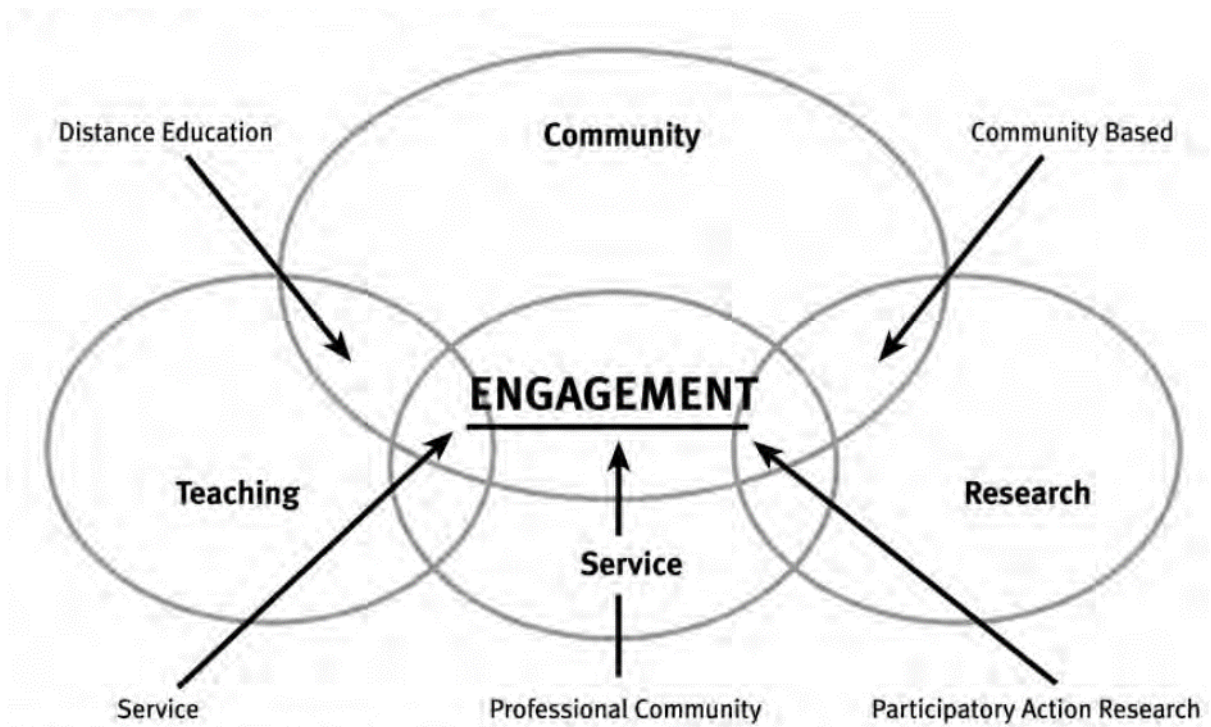


Figure 2.1: Adapted from Bringle, Games and Malloy, 1999

The White Paper also makes the following provisions:

- Community engagement should not be an add-on to the academic programme, but requires integration into the teaching and learning and research programmes;
- Community engagement should be rewarded accordingly;
- Community engagement should receive support from the leadership of higher education institutions;

- Community engagement programmes should ideally be audited annually at sector level (Bender *et al.*, 2006).

These efforts gradually and reluctantly shifted the view of community engagement as a stand-alone add-on to higher education to a necessary and integral part of research and teaching and learning. This understanding would later evolve to what is termed “scholarship of engagement” (Bender *et al.*, 2006). Service-learning forms part of the pedagogies of engagement and differs in definition according to context; but generally the focus on learning and service differs from community engagement.

2.3 Towards an understanding of service-learning

The definitions of service-learning differ according to context and the conditions in which the service learning takes place; they are as wide as the community contexts in which they operate, suggests Furco (1996). Service-learning is a counter normative teaching methodology (Howard, 1998) and forms part of the pedagogies of engagement. It is a critical teaching and learning complement to learning outcomes and goals of an academic course (Howard, 1998). Service-learning is a synergistic model, explains Howard (1998). It is about the integration of service to learning, creating a compatible and integrated balance (Furco, 1996) between the students’ community experience and the assessed academic learning goals of the course (Howard, 1998), under the supervision and mentorship of an individual representing the community (University of Johannesburg, 2019). Service learning occurs when “there is a balance between learning goals and service outcomes” (p. 5), leading students to gaining deeper understanding of the connection between curriculum content and the dynamics faced by the community in which the learning takes place (University of Johannesburg, 2019). It is a rich, new, innovative, and creative pedagogical approach to enhance teaching (Furco, 1996); a method under which students learn and develop through active participation. Further, service-learning is “thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs, are integrated into the students' academic curriculum and provide structured time for reflection” (Furco, 1996, p. 2). The meeting of these actual community needs requires explicit expression and should be mutually beneficial.

Unlike community engagement, service-learning offers a balanced focus between service and learning by addressing specific service needs of the community and linking them to academic learning (University of Johannesburg, 2019), with equal focus on service and learning (Furco, 1996).

The learning goals stem from the academic curriculum and what students are expected to achieve at the end of the course; these including formative and summative learning goals. Service outcomes refer to the results of the service by the giver to the recipients and can involve benefit to the giver of the service as well, suggest Furco (1996). An example would be students who go into an organization such as the SPCA to assist with caring for animals, but also gather data for own research, given that there is a balance between the service and learning.

Further, service-learning is an extension of the academic learning in the classroom and not merely a complementary tool of research and teaching and learning, suggests Fleming (2018). Rather, it is a method of learning that develops students through active participation, in a structured, thoughtfully organised and carefully-monitored environment. Furthermore, service-learning experiences should be designed to meet actual and expressed community needs; needs that are integrated into the academic curriculum of the students partaking in the service experience (Furco, 1996). This suggests that the service experience is not student centred or beneficial for one party in the partnership but is based on the involvement of the students in the actual needs of the community in which the service takes place. On the active participation element of service-learning, Oates and Leavitt (2003) emphasise, “service-learning is active, builds community, and provides the means to provide broad concepts in the wider community” (p. 10). Service-learning programmes provide structured time for reflection by leading the students to thinking about their impact and involvement in the community. Their reflection should focus on discovering the context of ideas and the belief systems that shape how we perceive community’s sources, nature, and consequences (Fleming, 2018), furthering our understanding of specific course content by developing a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher 1995, p. 112). Howard (1998) suggests that service-learning functions as a critical

learning complement to the academic goals of a course. In other words, academic service-learning is not about the addition of service to learning, but rather the integration of service with learning.

While service learning can be misunderstood as Work Integrated Learning (WIL), it is important to understand the difference. Work integrated learning in higher education is born from the growing demand for specific skills and occupations as a result of evolving technology and innovation, and the pressure on universities to produce work-ready graduates and respond to skills shortages (Patrick, Peach, & Catherine, 2009), requiring that employees or those entering the workforce to continuously develop their knowledge and skills (Cooper, Orrell, & Bowden, 2010). With the combination of learning with work, work integrated learning addresses the concerns that university qualifications are too theorised (Cooper et al., 2010), through a documented agreement between the University and the workplace in a form of a learning agreement or memorandum of understanding. Further, Cooper (2010) suggests, "Work integrated learning intends to produce graduates who are able to integrate, adapt and apply this knowledge across diverse global contexts" (p. 4). Work integrated learning however, cautions Cooper (2010), comes at a considerable cost and requires resources from the stakeholders, especially the workplace in which it takes place as it may also include remuneration as stipulated in the memorandum of agreement (University of Johannesburg, 2019). Unlike service-learning where the community partner supervises the learning and service; in work integrated learning the supervision and mentoring are provided by an individual or group in the workplace (University of Johannesburg, 2019). WIL is student oriented and, "addresses specific competencies identified for the acquisition of a qualification that make the learner employable and assist in the development of related personal attributes" (University of Johannesburg, 2019, p. 53).

For Furco (1996) what distinguishes service-learning is the carefully monitored service experiences in service-learning, in which a student has deliberate learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the duration of the experience. My study views service-learning as a pedagogy and learning strategy that ought to be woven into the fabric of higher education institutions (Furco, 1996). Since the introduction of the 1997 White

Paper (1997) the perception of community engagement and service-learning has changed significantly in the higher education sector in South Africa (Bender *et al.*, 2006). Great strides have been made in acknowledging service-learning as an integral part of the higher education curriculum. Service-learning is premised on the need to create positive collaboration, where mutual benefit exists for all parties involved.

Bringle and Hatcher (1996) extend the view of academic attainment to an awareness of community needs arguing that “service-learning is service activity that meets identified community needs and reflects on the service activity” (p. 222), placing emphasis on the aspect of civic responsibility. That is, as universities and academic staff reimagine service-learning considering the COVID-19 global pandemic, the needs of the community and student agency ought to guide the thoughts and carefully structured planning. Hironimus-Wendt and Lovell-Troy (1999), relating service-learning to critical theory, suggest that humans are agents for social change: “critical theory and service-learning are both interested in the development of a curriculum and pedagogy that make schools agencies of social change” (1999, p. 363). Butin (2003) suggests that service-learning “subverts the notion of the classroom as a graveyard - rows and rows of silent bodies - for an active pedagogy committed to connecting theory and practice, schools and community, the cognitive and the ethical” (p. 1675). In positioning service in learning, Hironimus-Wendt and Lovell-Troy (1999) suggest that there is an urgent need to validate experience as one of the many sources of knowledge in the curriculum as it provides an additional way to educate students outside the conventional classroom. Moreover Butin (2003) adds that by emphasising real-world learning and reciprocity between schools and communities, “service-learning serves as a powerful counterpoint to contemporary positivistic educational trends that deprofessionalise teaching through prescriptive curricula, behaviourist outcome measures, and instrumental conceptions of teaching and learning” (p. 1675). The value of service in the curriculum encompasses a number of aspects. Bringle *et al.* (2009, p.1) assert that

One of the defining characteristics of contemporary models of civic engagement is mutually-beneficial collaboration, in which all persons contribute knowledge, skills, and experience in determining the issues to be addressed, the questions to be asked, problems to be resolved, strategies to be used, outcomes that are considered desirable, and the indicators of success.

All service activities should be aimed at meeting real and expressed challenges or goals in a community.

Aligned with the traditional view of a linkage between academic course work and community-based learning, service-learning is influenced by two major interests, “governments’ interest in and sponsoring of civic engagement and the general public’s desire to see higher education provide more meaningful and relevant experiences and outcomes for its students” (Butin, 2003, p. 1). For this reason, service activities must involve community members as active participants who are involved in the planning, execution and assessment stages of the service activity. Highlighting the mutuality of service, Bringle (2009) says that in service-learning the beneficiaries are not only the community members, but also the students who find opportunities for citizenship and learning through service in the community space.

The service and the learning are reciprocally related (Howard, 1998) with service experiences informing and transforming the academic learning, and the academic learning doing the same to the service experience. Learning flows from the service activities and experience for all involved, suggests Howard (1998). Thus the service and learning aspects of the course are of equal importance; making service-learning a transformative pedagogy. Howards (1998) compares this transformative potential to that of having a newborn in a family, “Intergrating service-learning with academic learning catalyze a complexity to the teaching-learning process that is analogous to adding a newborn to a family” (p. 22). This requires a concerted effort and the strategic bridging of service and learning.

As a counter normative pedagogy (Howard, 1998), service-learning undoubtedly raises pedagogical challenges for the academics who design and lead the courses, “The practice of integrating service and learning is anything but simple” (Howard, 1998, p. 21). Ensuring that student maximise benefit from the service-experiences for example is a challenge, preparing students for the community experience (Furco, 1996), developing responsible citizenry (Butin, 2003), and ensuring students learning the “right” outcomes — are some of the challenges. Howard (1998) notes however, that despite the challenges, service-learning raises the “pedagogical bar” (p. 22), as it requires from students learning and applying at the same time

in unfamiliar (and often challenging) community situations. Further to these challenges, service-learning has no standardised framework.

2.3.1 Service-learning conceptual framework

Service-learning lacks a well-articulated framework which is attributable to its status as a fairly new social and educational phenomenon. It is not clear whether it is a field or a social movement (Dwight and Eyer, 1994). According to Dwight and Eyer (1994, p. 77) “this is reflected in criticism of service-learning as ‘fluff’”. The process of developing a well and clearly defined comprehensive and commonly shared body of knowledge has been fairly slow since the coining of the term in the early 1980s. Dwight and Eyer (1994) mention three possible reasons for this slow development: i) the focus of practitioners is on practice rather than scholarly pursuits; ii) until recently the field has been ignored as a potential area of study for conceptual and empirical enquiry, and iii) there is a general reluctance to theorise service-learning. A growing body of literature, sharing Butin’s (2003) views, suggests that service-learning has a positive impact “amongst academic, social and cultural variables” (p. 2). These include greater awareness of civic responsibility and community needs, a sense of individual purpose, and a contextualised and practical view and application of course content. Butin (2003) suggests that “such results appear to be sustained even years after the actual service-learning has occurred” (p. 2).

On the pedagogical possibilities of civic engagement through service-learning programmes, Spiezio, Baker, and Boland (2005) present empirical evidence to support the positive outcomes of service-learning in the curriculum, given well-structured programmes. Spiezio (2005) speaks of the potentially transformative nature of a well-structured service-learning programme claiming that it “can produce measurable and statistically significant changes in student attitudes toward the importance of engaged citizenship” (p. 273).

2.3.2 Service-learning’s transformative potential

Service-learning models, potentially transformative in their nature, produce in students a cultural awareness of the social environment in which they exist. Participation improves communication and collaboration skills and supports service-learning as an effective practice

to enhance student learning and development (Mitchell, 2008). Described as a tool for nurturing a sense of engaged citizenship amongst students, service-learning achieves two main learning outcomes, namely developing the students' moral voice and a sense of community (Spiezio *et al.*, 2005). This can only be achieved, suggests Kwatubana and Bosch (2019, p. ??), through "a structured mentorship programme, proper supervision, suitable placement and formal assessment". The extent to which this is possible during a global pandemic is one of the interests in this study.

An emerging body of literature is promoting a more critical approach to service-learning, with a focus on social justice (Mitchell, 2008). The critical approach model considers issues of social justice, equality, power relations in community, university relations with the community and the environment in which it is situated, and the maintenance of positive relationships. Mitchell (2008) suggests that the goal of the critical stance is to deconstruct systems of power, positioning students as agents of change through service-learning programmes. Kezar (2002) suggests a move away from traditional ways of learning and assessment that limit the potential of service-learning as an integral part of the learning process. A move away from traditional ways of cognition requires a responsiveness to societal issues to find the best possible solutions and to identify opportunities to use those opportunities for the benefit of the higher education-society partnership. A critical approach, Mitchell (2008) suggests, embraces the often-ignored political nature of service and seeks social justice over more traditional views of citizenship.

However, Mitchell cautions, "to suggest that all forms of community service equally develop an ethic of care, a flowering of a mature identity, and advance our understanding of community is misleading" (2008, p. 51). In similar vein Osman (2013) speaks of the charity and social change models of service-learning. He argues that universities must choose between engaging in service-learning as a charity cause or service-learning as social change. Social change aligned with the social justice agenda "refers to a process in which role players are in society work with people who are closely affected by underlying social problems to find ways of addressing these problems" (Osman & Petersen, *Service Learning in South Africa*, 2013, p. 6), fostering a transformative pedagogy. Universities need to be deliberate about the

kind of service outcome they envision, and what service-learning means and refers to in each learning context and community engagement experience. This will enable the clear articulation of the value of service-learning in the curriculum.

2.4 The value of service-learning in the curriculum

The curriculum is a set of learning interactions designed to support and facilitate learning and development in a particular discipline (Bender, 2006). Explicit intentions are spelt out in course outlines and the various policies that guide the teaching and learning of service-learning, while the implicit aspect is found in what Bender *et al.* (2006) refer to as the 'hidden curriculum', the values and norms that shape service-learning in a particular context. Sullivan-Catlin (2002) argue that the effectiveness of service-learning is largely influenced by the institutional context in which it takes place. A conducive institutional environment provides opportunities for students to incorporate personal goals and passion into service (Eyler, 2002), form bonds with one another and with community members while undertaking worthwhile service activities. Furthermore, a well-structured and developmentally oriented institutional context "promotes an interdisciplinary approach to academic study and breaks down barriers between institutions and community" (Eyler, 2002, p. 518). This not only builds enthusiasm for service participation in the institution and subsequently the community but improves service-learning outcomes. In addressing some of the concerns of educational reformers, Eyler emphasises that integrating service-learning in the curriculum "addresses many of the concerns about the lack of 'connectedness' in education and the failure to prepare students for lifelong learning and participation" (Eyler, 2002, p. 518). The design and development of the curriculum, which is a continuous process, generally involves following four phases with several activities within each phase: planning, implementation, reflection, assessment and evaluation (Bender *et al.*, 2006). I discuss each of these briefly in the sections below.

2.4.1 Planning phase

Among the principles of good practice, suggests Sullivan-Caitlin (2002), in service activities is the inclusion of community voices in the creation of service-learning activities. This fosters

the development of ongoing collaborative relationships with stakeholders and community partners. The planning phase should spell out the service-learning goal and what each partner wants to achieve to ensure that service activities are closely aligned with the partners' organisational goals and their mission (Bender *et al.*, 2006). It is important to acknowledge that the institution and community partners

often have different cultures, goals, resources, roles, and power. It also recognizes the possibility that staff at community organizations may not always share or provide adequate representation of the views and positions of residents in communities" (Bringle *et al.*, 2009, p. 6).

The planning phase irons out these possible differences. It is therefore important, Bender *et al.* (2006) add, that service-learning is planned, resourced and managed in a developmental manner "that takes cognizance of the needs of staff, students and the community, without compromising the quality of provision" (p. 12). The next phase is reflection.

2.4.2 Reflection phase

Reflection is described as a structured consideration of surroundings and experience in the context of expressed learning objectives (Eyler, 2002). Sullivan-Caitlin (2002, p. 32) point out that reflection is often referred to as "the hyphen in service-learning: it is the link that ties student experience in the community to academic learning". Dewey on the role of reflection states that humans do not learn from experience, but rather learn from reflecting on their experiences (Bender *et al.*, 2006). Eyler (2002) on the role of reflection in linking academic learning and community experiences adds that

there is evidence to suggest that service-learning programs which thoroughly integrate service and academic learning through continuous reflection promote development of the knowledge, skills, and cognitive capacities" necessary to prepare students and allow them to process the community engagement experience (p. 517).

Furthermore, there is evidence that suggests that extensive reflection contributes to a deeper understanding of social issues, empathy and cognitive development in students' understanding of their role in improving the societal issues (Eyler, 2002). With the developing integration of service into teaching and learning and research there is mounting evidence of its benefits in the community when structured reflection is an intrinsic part of the experience. Eyler (2002) however warns that with the varying degree of practical involvement and

immersion in different service contexts, reflection loses depth when involvement is minimised. Eyler suggests that “the few attempts to measure quality of service-learning do suggest that quality matters and that the quality that matters most is the amount and type of reflection” (2002, p. 519). For this reason, reflection in service-learning is a form of assessment tool which I discuss in the next section.

2.4.3 Assessment phase

The assessment of service-learning is fairly complex because of the difficulty of measuring and assessing experience. According to Oates and Leavitt (2003), service-learning forms part of broader learning communities and for this reason, adding assessment to service is not a natural progression. Oates and Leavitt (2003, p. 7) point out that “Adding assessment requires a shift in the organization, planning and management of service activities”. To support this view, Dewey explains that “a quality educational experience is judged by whether or not the individual grew in intellectual understanding of the subject, and whether an individual can demonstrate how the subject links with other disciplines and ways of knowing” (Oates & Leavitt, 2003, p. 8). On the complexity of assessing service-learning and how it is conducted, Kezar (2002) asks if the right outcomes are being identified, because “what is assessed affects what is taught or emphasized in education” (p. 15). He submits that assessment looks at narrowly described traditional outcomes such as citizenship, leadership, contextual problem solving, personal growth and development through reflective practice, amongst other things. However, not enough focus is placed on outcomes such as the degree of moral reasoning, interpersonal intelligence, and community-building skills (Kezar, 2000). Kezar concludes by saying academics need to think more holistically about what constitutes an educated individual (Kezar, 2000). Reflective practice is not just short-term reflection but is an integral part of service.

2.4.3.1 Reflective practice

Drawing on theories of experiential learning, Kolb promotes reflection as a way of knowing and learning (Oates & Leavitt, 2003). Students learn through experience and reflection on experience. Service-learning as a form of experiential experience is a cycle consisting of the following four stages: “concrete experience, observation and reflection, formation of abstract

concepts and generalizations, and testing of implications in the learning context” (Oates & Leavitt, 2003, p. 22). This could be done through various tools including a reflective journal or reflective essays before, during and after the service experience (Kezar, 2002). Oates and Leavitt (2003) caution that there is still some scepticism around service-learning as a pedagogy, and therefore there is a need for authentic assessment criteria since the results have the potential to validate or eat away at the value of service-learning. More needs to be done to reflect the effects and benefits of reflection in service-learning through literature and empirical evidence. These are likely to emerge through the evaluation of service-learning.

2.4.4 Evaluation phase

The goal and potential of evaluation should be to improve service-learning courses by identifying what is effective and what needs modification, critically examining the service activity process holistically, demonstrating service-learning successes, and providing academics and institutions of higher learning with opportunities to publish the evaluation findings as scholarship of engagement (Kezar, 2002). Even though there is minimal literature written on the evaluation of service-learning activities, the evaluation should be in relation to the course outcomes and service activity goals, as discussed by the parties involved. Paphitis (2019, p. 1) suggests that the service-learning evaluation process is also useful “for evaluating whether the service activity you are undertaking in your course is meeting your learning objectives in terms of transformation and discipline specific learning”. Evaluation can be conducted using various tools such as questionnaires, surveys, interviews, assignments and a debrief meeting.

Each phase presents an opportunity to reimagine the curriculum to meet desired outcomes. Revisiting the primary goals of service-learning for students’ positive civic and academic outcomes (Parker-Gwin & Mabry, 1998), it is clear that the first goal addresses the potential and ability of service-learning to promote positive attitudes toward citizenship, enhancing students' sense of social responsibility in society. The second addresses the need to enhance academic learning by integrating community service and curriculum content (Parker-Gwin & Mabry, 1998). The Covid-19 global pandemic presents a challenge to these goals, that of adapting the curriculum to suit a time when conventional face to face learning and interaction

is limited, and in some cases, not possible. As with any teaching strategy, Parker-Gwin and Mabry (1998) suggest that service-learning's pedagogical value depends on its implementation and the ability to adapt to best suit its context.

2.5 Service-learning as a pedagogy

Service-learning is one of many pedagogical tools and its effectiveness is dependent on how it is utilised (Parker-Gwin & Mabry, 1998). Higher education in South Africa is criticised for inadequate consideration of and response to the needs of society (Bender *et al.*, 2006). Marrying service with learning is but one of the means to remedy this. For this reason, emphasis is put on proving the value of service-learning as part of the curriculum. Supporting the value of service-learning with evidence from practical engagement is critical in promoting this pedagogy. Service-learning as a pedagogy serves as a heuristic tool for understanding and contrasting distinct and often divergent forms of work integrated learning as they are perceived and enacted across multiple disciplines (Butin, 2003). Parker-Gwin and Mabry (1998) share thoughts based on an empirical study conducted in a Columbian university on the effectiveness of service-learning as a pedagogic tool. They ask, should students be forced to participate in service-learning instead of volunteering? The study found that cognitive development and civic engagement are likely to increase when students participate in service activities voluntarily. The issue of service-learning being a voluntary activity even though in actual terms it has an academic attainment element, is seen as problematic (Hollis, 2002). It is suggested that students who volunteer freely are more likely to make a success of the service-learning experience compared to those who participate involuntarily merely for academic attainment, as is the case with service-learning courses at Rhodes University.

Closer to home in the South African context, Bender *et al.* (2006) view service-learning as scholarship of engagement” (Bender, 2006, p. 67) a collaborative, integrative and reflective pedagogical approach. These authors speak of four necessary and inter-related components that make up the scholarship of engagement:

-*Scholarship of discovery* - encompassing research and the contribution to human knowledge.

-*Scholarship of integration* - involving giving meaning to the discovery,

-*Scholarship of application* - acknowledges the role of service-learning in informing theory and practice through reflection, and,

-*Scholarship of teaching*- referring to the learning community born of service relationships. All of these, Bender *et al.* (2006) suggest, make up the pedagogic tool that is service-learning. They conclude:

Community engagement, as a scholarly activity, is of critical importance both in shaping our students and future citizens and in producing knowledge that is most relevant and useful in the South African context (Bender *et al.*, 2006, p. 11).

The implementation of this pedagogic tool as a component of the curriculum is an important consideration and a key aspect of the success or failure of service-learning. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) challenge higher education institutions to think again about the mission of preparing students for certain career paths, but to rather educate students for a life of service and responsible citizenry. What this could translate to in a time of a global pandemic presents an opportunity to reconsider the implementation of service-learning even further. Implementation “should seek to meet challenging social problems”, suggests Bringle and Hatcher (1996, p. 221). Furthermore, service-learning has the potential to enrich learning and renew communities but will also give new dignity to the scholarship of service (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Effective course design is central to this potential.

2.5.1 Service-learning course design

The struggle of integrating theory with practice in service-learning is not uncommon. Petersen and Henning (2010) describe how students are expected to apply what they have learnt in the lecture halls in their pre-service experiences to the service activity context, and the difficulties encountered. Drawing on Vygotsky’s concept of mediated learning Petersen and Henning (2010) suggest that a step towards successful integration is through planned, systematic and mediated action. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) support this argument. Mediated learning, based on Vygotsky’s theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), involves a more knowledgeable other guiding students to learn how to learn (metacognition) (Presseisen & KoZulin, 1992). In the service-learning space, the role of academic staff is to facilitate the integration of theory with practice by aiding and facilitating the metacognition process of the students.

2.6 Critiques and challenges of service-learning

Service-learning as a pedagogy is critiqued for many reasons, including unintended outcomes, concerns about its practicality, and the sometimes-unclear impact service-learning has on communities. Multiple agendas brought by the different partners aimed at addressing the priorities of each while balancing the costs and benefits of participation in the partnership is a challenge (O'Brien, 2005). When students are involved in service activities, Cooper (1999) cautions, three things might happen. First, students might learn something about themselves as social agents, their community and urgent social issues. Second, no evidence of learning might appear. Finally, students might learn the wrong lesson; prejudice and stereotypes might be created or enforced through service activities which have been poorly planned or not reflected upon. Without the exercise of care and consciousness, which leads students to an awareness of the root causes of social issues faced by communities and involve students in coming up with solutions to these issues, service-learning might be a futile exercise with no real impact. As effective a pedagogical tool service-learning is, it requires careful consideration and a structured approach to yield successful results and the meeting of outcomes for all partners involved (Mitchell, 2008). These include improved academic achievement, positive effects on students' performance on subject-matter examinations and assessments, increased motivation toward school and more positive attitudes toward learning (Furco & Root, 2010) and extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community (Furco, 1996). These positive outcomes are as yet untested and need to be considered as informed speculation. Understandably there is a degree of scepticism over the educational benefits of service-learning. Furco and Root (2010) cite the lack of strong and compelling evidence that has been scientifically tested on the effectiveness of service-learning (Furco, 2010) in spite of the fact that research evidence shows how service-learning activities exposed students to factors and opportunities known to mediate academic achievement. This exposure included "opportunities for students to act autonomously, develop collegial relationships, and boost their self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy" (Furco & Root, 2010, p. 16). Below I discuss some difficulties associated with the carrying out of service-learning.

2.6.1 Difficulties of working with the community

Service-learning, premised on mutually beneficial partnerships between students, universities and the community, is a relational exercise. The bedrock of community-based learning, Bringle (2009) suggests, is joint collaboration of knowledge, skills and experience in solving identified problems. One of the guiding principles of community engagement is that service activities should always be carried out 'together with' or in 'solidarity with' the community and not done 'for' or 'at' members of a community (Bringle, 2009). However, relationships are complex and do not always yield the desired outcome(s). Palmer (1994) sums up some of the reasons why working with the community is not as easy as it is often thought to be, arguing that "there has been a collapse of civic virtue in the society around us, a collapse into expressive and competitive individualism, and a loss of integrated vision" (p. 1). The collapse in civic virtue speaks to many societal values that have been lost through the generations. Ubuntu, an African philosophy that encompasses African values is defined by Letseka (2011) as "a form of human engagement that allows for critical thinking, non-domination and the optimal development of human relationships". Ubuntu is premised on the understanding that the existence and humanity of another is expressed in relationships with others, in community. The phrase '*Umntu ngumntu ngabantu*' captures the essence of Ubuntu: a person is a person through others. Service-learning is another tool for teaching students this value and modelling Ubuntu in the community setting. Palmer (1994) suggests that connecting the concept of community to questions of epistemology about service-learning's methods, validity, and scope is a starting point to re-imagining and perhaps restoring a sense of responsibility towards one another in society. He argues that we must ask "How do we know? How do we learn? Under what conditions and with what validity?" (Palmer, 1994, p. 3). He continues:

I believe that it is here, in our modes of knowing, that we shape souls by the shape of our consciousness and knowledge. It is here that the idea of community must ultimately take root and have impact if it is to reshape the doing of higher education (Palmer, 1994, p. 3).

I argue that the service-learning curriculum is a good place to shape this consciousness and knowledge. Leadership development through service is the third objective of service-learning courses and I now discuss this objective in relation to staff leading service-learning courses.

2.7 Opportunities for adaptive leadership development through service-learning

Service-learning courses have three objectives: contributing to local human and community development, improving the quality of academic learning within a specific discipline, and improving the leadership and civic character development (Cooper, 1999) of staff and students involved in the course. In this section I look at the third objective, leadership and leadership development, specifically adaptive leadership development through service-learning. Howard (1998) suggests that leadership development through the service experience functions as a critical learning complement to the academic goals of a course. Bender *et al.*, (2006) explains the leadership role by citing a duty to align service-learning with the learning philosophy, mission and vision of the educational institution and that of the community partners.

2.7.1 Leadership and leadership models

Leadership, the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts (Ardichvili, Natt och Dag, & Manderscheid, 2016) to accomplish shared organisational goals and objectives, is critical to the success and efficiency of large and small organisations. Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) suggest that it is even more so for innovation in educational institutions. Traditional approaches to leadership describe leadership in relation to a set of personality traits and formal leadership positions (Spillane *et al.*, 2004) where leadership emerges as a set of behaviours of individuals that lead to the overall success of an organisation. Contemporary theories, however, view leadership as an organisational quality that goes beyond individual positions and personality traits towards leadership practices pointing to an evident and observable set of abilities, skills and competences (Spillane *et al.*, 2004). Endrissat and von Arx (2013) describe leadership in relation to context, citing context as a situation that influences the kind of leadership at a given time. This means that the relationship between leadership and context is recursive (Endrissat & von Arx, 2013), supporting Spillane's view of leadership as an organizational quality. Context does not only influence leadership but shapes its form. On the consideration of the role of context in leadership, Endrissat and von Arx (2013) further note that "context is both a resource (structure) and a product of practice and leadership" (Endrissat & von Arx, 2013, p. 279), expanding the definition of leadership to that

which is contextually influenced and context-produced (Endrissat & von Arx, 2013). Studying the subject in relation to its context helps us understand the transaction between an individual and the environment in which he or she operates (Dwight & Eyler, 1994). Dwight and Eyler suggest that “acquisition as well as application of knowledge is dependent on the context, a key element of which is the interaction in the situation” (1994, p. 79).

2.7.2 Leadership and adaptive leadership development through service-learning

There is tacit expectation for service-learning coordinators to demonstrate the necessary leadership skills such as those needed to plan, recruit, orient, train, motivate, evaluate, assess needs, ensure reasonable quality and manage budgets (Benitez & Sass, 2008) to ensure the successful running of the service-learning courses. Focusing on the third objective of service-learning courses, leadership development (Cooper, 1999) is central to fostering healthy work cultures (Ardichvili, Natt och Dag, & Manderscheid, 2016), and is described as a process of personal development, the expansion of a person’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes (McDermott, Kidney & Flood, 2011). Unlike leader development which focuses on building human capital, leadership development is a process that should aim at building social capital (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2016), which is concerned with equipping leaders for fostering the work cultures’ networks, shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation in the organisation. It is central to improved output, productivity, delivery and quality in a given context (Bolden, 2005).

Hlalele, Manicom and Preece (2015) refer to adaptive leadership in community engagement as change leadership that enables the capacity to develop and thrive. Adaptive leadership is, suggest Hlalele *et al.* (2015), leadership that in a given context mobilises people to tackle challenges and thrive. Adaptive leadership takes a context-sensitive approach to service-learning, premised on consultation and collective decision making by all service partners. This leadership stems from two major community problems, namely technical and adaptive problems (Hlalele *et al.*, 2015). Technical problems are those whose solutions are easy to determine and are readily available; they require no abstract thinking or solutions. Adaptive problems, however, by their very nature are more complex. The solutions are unknown, at times beyond the community-institution relationship, “and no single entity may be able to

provide the appropriate service” (Hlalele *et al.*, 2015, p. 174). Adaptive leadership has the potential to be transformational, suggests Garcia (2009): “For change to take place, adaptive leaders know they must move out of their comfort zones, which include past solutions, ideologies, their own cultural beliefs, and so on” (Garcia, 2009, p. 19).

In the context of community engagement Hlalele *et al.* (2015) suggest that there are three types of leadership situations: Type I, II and Type III. In the Type I community situation, the leader assumes an expert position, with expert knowledge and solutions, often overlooking the knowledge community partners bring to the service engagement. The Type II leader approaches problem solving as a collaborative endeavour with the community partners. This approach, explains Hlalele (2015), “combines the leader’s expertise, persuasive powers, and input of the communities” p. 173. Type III refers to a situation where the leader has no idea how to even begin to tackle a particular problem. This type of situation, suggests Hlalele (2015), requires an honest and courageous leader who is not afraid to be vulnerable to the community members, a leader “who would demonstrate the need for redefining the problem, changing priorities, and possibly inspiring greater sacrifice from the members” (2015, p. 174). The Type III situation which demonstrates adaptive leadership, explains Hlalele (2015), provides space for fruitful dialogue between the university and the community; the consequent vulnerability opens up space for mutual learning and development and the shifting of power-relations as the institution and the community learn together. However, adaptive leadership is not immune to critique.

2.7.3 Critique of adaptive leadership

Other than not conforming to traditional understandings of leadership, adaptive leadership is critiqued for being a practice rather than a theoretical framework. It is seen as the charismatic practice of “mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Heifetz, Linsky and Grashow, 2009). It is also described as too abstract (Heifetz, *et al.*, 2009) and said to have little empirical evidence to confirm its effectiveness.

2.7.4 Leadership development approaches

Traditional theorists adopted a traits approach to leadership development (Bolden, 2005), stating that leadership development is largely influenced by innate leadership traits that individuals are born with (McDermott *et al.*, 2011). These traits are viewed as key factors in influencing the development of leadership competencies, a vision and adaptation skills later in life. Following this era of traditional theorists, developmentally focused theorists attributed leadership development to mentoring and coaching - behaviours and competencies that can be learned - and working through difficult and complex work environments (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2016) as the main contributors to leadership development. This view acknowledges the role of the individual's progression "through stages of cognitive and moral development, and also their place in the larger context of organizational and societal influences, including culture, power and politics, and continuous learning processes" (McDermott *et al.*, 2011) as contributing factors to leadership development.

Subsequent models of leadership development find common ground between the contemporary and traditional views, citing that while a number of leadership qualities can be developed (Bolden, 2005) such as strategic thinking, effective communication and team leadership, individuals possess individual traits that are less amenable to change (Bolden, 2005). These traits influence the leadership style of the individual, a style which varies according to context and situation (Ardichvili, 2016). Situational leadership development prepares the leader to adapt their leadership style to suit developing contexts (Ardichvili, 2016), while contingency leadership development looks at the development of adaptive traits and diagnostic abilities in a leader, where "the leaders' first task is to recognise the salient features of the situation (e.g. nature of task, ability of followers, etc.) and then to adapt accordingly" (Bolden, 2005).

The transformative potential of service-learning courses, their influence and span depend on the leadership competencies of those who lead the courses. Leadership competencies are described as leadership skills and behaviours that contribute to efficient and effective performance (Shields, 2010). Competencies marry understanding, behaviours and the

application of skills and knowledge (Ruben, 2019). These can be grouped into the following five competency areas:

Analytical: These are skills needed to become a reflective, attentive and self-aware practitioner. Ruben (2019, p. 21) suggests that

These analytic competencies also include clarifying situations and problems, assessing stakeholder and system issues, considering and selecting among alternative strategies, and factoring in relevant data and historical accounts in planning and implementing strategies and evaluating outcomes.

Personal: These are largely encompassed by the traditional views of leadership, that attributed leadership to personal attributes such as gender, character and capabilities (Ruben, 2019).

Organisational: These are skills related to strategic and administrative management (Ruben, 2019). They refer to a leader's ability to align operations with the vision and goals of an organisation and how the leader translates these to his/her subordinates.

Positional competencies: These refer to field knowledge and context-specific skills possessed by a leader. For example, the skills of an experienced teaching practice specialist.

Communication competencies: This area looks at interpersonal skills and professional conduct and extends to skills such as "establishing credibility and trust, persuasion, team-building, listening, writing and speaking, diversity and intercultural relations, and facilitation, negotiation, and conflict resolution" (Ruben, 2019, p. 19).

Having discussed the literature pertinent to my study, I now discuss the conceptual framework of the study.

2.8 The conceptual framework of my study

A conceptual framework, argues Maxwell (2008), "explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied - the key factors, concepts, or variables - and the presumed relationships among them" (p. 222). Service-learning lacks a well articulated conceptual framework largely due to the lack of research in the area. Dwight and Eyler (1994) attribute this to a lack of research interest in service-learning, with a focus on action rather than research, and how service-learning has been treated as a separate entity to the main

academic programme. In motivating for a conceptual framework for service-learning, Dwight and Eyler suggest that “By providing a rationale, the theory introduces a ground for prediction which is more secure than mere empirical extrapolation from previously observed trends” (1994, p. 78).

In efforts of undergirding service-learning theory, 20th century philosopher John Dewey’s work offered a starting point, more so his philosophy of experience and learning from it (Dwight and Eyler, 1994). The central question explored by Dewey in this philosophy, “*How is it that experiences are educative?*” (1994, p. 79) offered a reasonable foundation for understanding and conceptualising service-learning. Experiential learning refers to an active learning process with strong emphasis on reflection and analysis (Mukherjee, 2016). Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) provides a holistic model for understanding the learning process, with a central focus on the role primary experience plays in learning (Dwight & Eyler, 1994). This places emphasis on the potential for first-hand experience supported by reflection in learning. American psychologist and educational theorist David A. Kolb illustrates the experiential learning theory as a cycle of four elements: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation, as illustrated below:

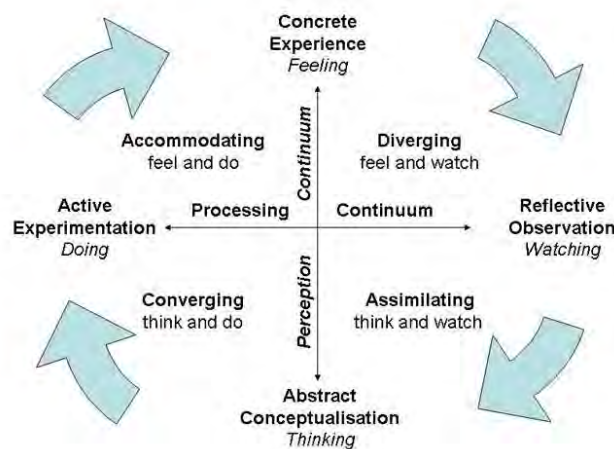


Figure 2.3

The experiential cycle begins at the top of the diagram, with student experience in a learning setting, in the case of this study, the community setting (Mukherjee, 2016). The university

student feels the tangible and intangible parts of the experience in a continuum. In a structured learning experience the experience is followed by opportunities to reflect on the experience, the role of the student and the environment in the experience. This is followed by conceptualisations and drawing conclusions from the experience, which guide the next step, shaping future action (Mukherjee, 2016). Andresen, Boud and Choen (2000) present criteria for learning that are driven by experience and/ or learning through experience:

- The experience has personal significance for the student
- Involves personal engagement
- Includes individual and group reflection
- The whole student is involved; their personality, intellect, psyche and emotions. It is not a tick box exercise
- The prior learning of students is recognised and utilised
- There is a shared sense of trust in the learning environment.

(Andresen, Boud and Choen, 2000)

Bergsteinera *et al.* (2010) suggest that Kolb's theory reminds us that learning is a cognitive process "involving constant adaptation to, and engagement with, one's environment. Individuals create knowledge from experience rather than just from received instruction" (p. 30). It appears, suggests Dwight and Eyler (1994), "that service-learning reflects, either consciously or unconsciously, a Deweyian influence" (p. 78). Kolb, according to Mukherjee (2016), takes a holistic approach to experiential learning, putting emphasis on the role played by emotions, the context in which the learning takes place, and cognition.

2.8.1 Relevance to my study

Service-learning is about the relationship between learning and the community experience. In chapter one I explained that the study takes on an interpretive approach, seeking to understand the effects of the Covid-19 global pandemic on service-learning and leadership from the lived experiences of the participants. The Deweyian influenced philosophy of experiential learning helps the study achieve this goal by putting service at the centre of learning experience. It will help me understand how the pandemic's influence on experience

(or lack thereof) might have affected the entire experiential learning cycle of the two service-learning courses.

2.8.2 Critiques of the theoretical framework

Kolb's theory of experiential learning is influential largely because of its incorporation of development and personal change as part of the learning process (Bergsteinera, Averya, & Neumann, 2010). However, it is critiqued for separating the four phases when at any given time they can occur simultaneously in the learning process (Bergsteinera *et al.*, 2010), and a "highly muddled typology of what constitutes concrete and abstract learning" (Bergsteinera, Averya, & Neumann, 2010, p. 32). These arguments are beyond the scope of this study.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I provided a review of literature undergirding this study. I looked at service-learning and community engagement, experiential learning as the theoretical concept on which this research is based and how it aligns with service-learning. I also discussed leadership and the opportunities for adaptive leadership development through service-learning in the curriculum.

The next chapter describes the research design and methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of research design is to establish order, system and consistency for a study (Maxwell, 2008). Flexibility, however, is also important especially in qualitative research; “qualitative research simply requires a broader and less restrictive concept of design”, warns Maxwell (2008, p. 216). The research design offered a guide for me as researcher to how to go about achieving the set research goals. However, flexibility and adjustment as the research process evolved were important. This chapter presents how I conducted the research and for what reasons in an attempt to determine curriculum adjustment and leadership development in two service-learning courses at Rhodes University as a consequence of the Covid-19 global pandemic. The chapter discusses the research paradigm and theoretical framework on which this study is premised and how it aligns with what this research was trying to accomplish. Details about the orientation of the study, research site, selection of participants, qualitative data collection methods and their critiques are shared. I then discuss how the data were analysed and the challenges encountered during the analysis process. Finally, I address issues of validity and trustworthiness of the data and the ethical considerations which influenced each stage of the research process.

3.2 Orientation of the study

Designed as a qualitative interpretive case study, this study explored what was learnt about service-learning and leadership development as a consequence of the pandemic using two service-learning courses in the Education Department at Rhodes University. The study sought to highlight, indirectly, possible areas for consideration and development to ensure the

sustainability of service-learning at Rhodes University during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Qualitative studies are useful for a number of reasons, according to Maxwell (2012): understanding the meaning for participants in a particular context, understanding the participants' context and how it influences their actions, understanding new phenomena to create new theories and concepts, generating relatable results and developing formative studies that aim to improve practice. This is in line with interpretivism which aids understanding of the social world and the factors that influence it (Chowdhury, 2014).

Interpretivism, born of the influences of German sociologist Max Weber, recognises the subjective aspect of human interactions (Maxwell, 2012) and brings emphasis to "the meaningful nature of people's character and participation" (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 432) in a given context. It is a research practice that "moves away from de-humanised, objective research towards a rehumanized, contextual and reflexive approach, which centralises human meaning making and knowledge claims" (Dean, 2018). By observing what is important to people, their thinking and ideas, interpretivists comprehend them and their contexts. Interpretivism "looks for meanings and motives behind people's actions" (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 433), and holds that human beings construct knowledge as they interpret their experiences in and about the world (Hiller, 2016), and from those experiences valid knowledge is produced. What is important in interpretivist research, suggests Hiller (2016), is to make clear for the reader the processes and reasoning that led to the findings, and that the dynamics that exist between the researcher and participants are made clear. While interpretivism supports qualitative research well (Dean, 2018), the stance is critiqued for how the researcher's perceptions are used to guide the research process, and how they have the potential to influence the perceptions of the participants (Maxwell, 2008). This requires deliberate awareness of possible bias (Chowdhury, 2014), touching on issues of validity and trustworthiness of the data and research findings.

The interpretative researcher believes that reality is relative and subjective to the participants, (Edirisingha, 2012). Further, the interpretivist "has to assume that the world they investigate is a world populated by human beings who have their own thoughts, interpretations and meanings" (Ahmed, 2008, p. 26) situating these realities to the conditions

and influences of the participants' context. This means that reality is socially constructed (Edirisingha, 2012), and varies according to changing contextual conditions. For this reason, the research structure of interpretivist research is flexible and personal and is informed and shaped by human meaning and experience. In the case of my position as an insider researcher in the study, I enter the research site with some degree of prior knowledge, but cannot assume that this knowledge is enough, due to the multiple perceptions of reality (Edirisingha, 2012) acknowledged in interpretive research. Therefore, suggests Edirisingha (2012), "the goal of interpretivist research is to understand and interpret the meanings in human behaviour rather than to generalize and predict causes and effects" p. 1.

The research takes on a case study approach, looking at two service-learning courses (cases A and case B) in an Education Department in a relatively small traditional university. Case A is an Educational Leadership and Management elective within a Bachelor of Honours postgraduate programme, while Case B is a Teaching Practice course within a Bachelor of Education undergraduate programme. I discuss the suitability of the research approach and its benefits later in the chapter. I now discuss the research site.

3.3 The research site

The research took place at Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, a university with a student population of approximately 9000 students and an average student staff ratio of 14:1. Rhodes University, described as a research-intensive institution, offers various formative and professional qualifications. The institution's focus is on the nexus between teaching and learning, research and community engagement. In its Teaching and Learning Policy (Rhodes University, 2019), the University speaks of seeking to provide quality education, described as that which is "fit for purpose", suggesting that any teaching and learning is of good quality if it is fit for the purpose for which it is intended. The University, has a reputation for academic excellence (Rhodes University, 2019) and explains the purpose of its operations in its mission and vision statements:

Rhodes University's vision is to be an outstanding internationally-respected academic institution which proudly affirms its African identity and which is committed to democratic ideals, academic freedom, rigorous scholarship, sound moral values and social responsibility" (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 1).

The institution states in its mission statement that Rhodes University “strives to produce outstanding internationally accredited graduates who are innovative, analytical, articulate, balanced and adaptable, with a life-long love of learning” (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 1). Furthermore, the institution seeks “to strive, through teaching, research and community service, to contribute to the advancement of international scholarship and the development of the Eastern Cape and Southern Africa” (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 1).

The research site was chosen because I am an employee in the institution and have relative ease of access to the site and the two cases in my capacity as Teaching Practice Coordinator in the Education Department. I am also a former student of the Educational Leadership and Management Honours elective. The Education department in the institution falls within the Education Faculty which houses a variety of undergraduate, in-service, and post-graduate qualifications. In addition to teaching and learning, the Faculty is involved in research, policy development and professional and community work (Rhodes University, 2020). The department states in its mission that it seeks “to provide initial professional education of high quality for students wishing to become qualified as professional teachers in South African schools” (Rhodes University Education Department, 2021).

3.4 The two cases

Case A, the Educational Leadership and Management (ELM) elective (course code 9073200) is a leadership elective in the Bachelor of Education Honours programme pegged at level 8 on South Africa’s National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The aim of this postgraduate qualification is to consolidate and deepen Honours students’ knowledge of education and develop their ability to research educational contexts using appropriate methodologies and techniques (Rhodes Education Department, 2021). The ELM elective exercises service-learning through an interventionist approach in the form of the setting up and running of learner leadership clubs or professional learning communities for learners and staff respectively by the Honours students in the schools in which they teach.

Case B is a service-learning course within the Bachelor of Education (NQF level 7) Foundation Phase undergraduate degree which spans four years. Service learning in Case B is in the form of teaching practice that is structured and assessed, and includes structured reflection in

community schools, over differing periods in each year of study for the duration of the degree (Rhodes University, 2020). The B Ed degree is one of two ways in which a professional teaching qualification can be obtained in the department, the other being via a Postgraduate Certificate course focusing on giving post graduate students opportunities for practising academic learning through teaching and observation in local schools.

3.5 The research participants and sampling

The research was small-scale but in-depth and for this reason purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling is a method of targeting a specific group that represents the wider population (Bertram & Christiansen , 2014). Maxwell (2008) describes this type of sampling as a procedure whereby specific settings, persons, or events are intentionally chosen because of the specific information they can provide that cannot be obtained from those who are not directly involved in the context of study. The study participants formed part of the sample because of the participants' involvement in the service-learning courses (cases A and B) under study. The primary research participants in my study were the four academic staff members leading the service-learning components in the two cases. Case A was staffed by two colleagues, an academic coordinator and a lecturer. Case B was staffed by three colleagues, a coordinator, a lecturer and me. An additional secondary participant, the Director of Community Engagement at the institution, was later included because I needed to find out whether the university's community engagement policies had been adapted in any way as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Collecting data took six months and was followed by the data analysis process. Ethical clearance was received on 29 July 2020 for the study and that marked the start of the data collection (data analysis and individual interviews) from August to October 2020 during South Africa's various lockdown levels as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The focus group interview took place on 9 December 2020, and a secondary interview with the fifth participant in January 2021. By then some lockdown restrictions had been eased, but the country was still in lockdown.

When my research proposal was accepted, ethical clearance (see **Appendix A**) was applied for and obtained on 29 July 2020 through the University's ethical clearance committee and the Human Resource Division to work with the staff member participants. An invitation to participate voluntarily in the research (**Appendix B**) was then extended to the participants, and consent was obtained from the participants to participate in the research and generate data with them. It was important to work with two cases instead of one, to get more than one perspective on the phenomenon under study.

Below I discuss the research methods and tools.

3.6 Research method and tools

The study was designed as an interpretivist case study with the aim of making sense of the participants' own understanding and knowledge of the world through their experiences and reflecting on those experiences, as stated in chapter two. Interpretivism views the world as "an integrated system of symbols, ideas and values that should be studied as a working system, an organic whole where he [the researcher] observed people's mental content as being judgement minded in relation to individuals" (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 433). Data collection took place during the second semester of 2020 whilst the country was in lockdown. Data were collected using three methods in this order: document analysis, individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview which brought together the research participants from Cases A and B.

3.6.1 Analysis of documents

Documents analysis was used to give an account of some of the historical influences and decisions that shape current service-learning practice within the individual courses, the department and the institution. Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents - both printed and electronic material" (p. 27). Furthermore, documentary analysis was used as a complementary data collection method to refine ideas that emerged from the interviews (Bowen, 2009) for purposes of triangulation and supporting interview data. Moreover, the global pandemic made it almost impossible to meet with participants and have lengthy interviews to discuss the various

elements of their courses. For this reason, I had to rely on getting supplementary data from documents and pick up on some of the points found in documents during the interviews which were held using virtual platforms.

The analysis process included setting inclusion criteria for the documents, collecting the documents, determining key information to be analysed, coding and verification, and analysis (Wach, 2013). Validity and dependability considerations were reflected on throughout the analysis guided by Wach's (2013, p. 3) advice that "An analysis is considered 'dependable' if another reader would have reached the same general conclusion given the opportunity to analyse the same set of documents under similar conditions".

Documents were selected based on their relevance to the design, operations, and assessment of the two service-learning courses, community engagement and service-learning policies and policy supporting documents. Most of these documents were available in the public domain, but documents D, 8, D, 9 and D, 11 were obtained from the records of the ELM course coordinator.

The following documents were analysed: the Educational Leadership and Management (ELM) course outline (D1), Teaching Practice student handbook (D2), Rhodes University's Institutional Development Plan (D3), Rhodes University's Academic Staff Promotions Policy (D4), Rhodes University's Teaching and Learning Policy (D5), RU's Community Engagement Policy (D6), RU's Community Engagement Policy Protocol Document (D7), ELM communication to students from the coordinator (D8), ELM External Examiner's Report (D9), Rhodes University Vice Chancellor's letter to staff (D10), communication with the institution's Director of Community Engagement (D11) and Academic Staff Members' Promotions Application of Participant XX (D, 12). The research involved going through the documented departmental arrangements that inform and shape service-learning. The analysis of documents provided valuable information about trends in documents, policies and practices, helping me as the researcher to identify disparities and congruencies between the documents (Wach, 2013). Furthermore, documents assisted with gaining a historical understanding of the context and the culture that informed decision-making and shaped the two academic

courses (A and B) and were therefore helpful in contextualising my research within its field (Wach, 2013).

I found the method to be cost-effective but time intensive. Accessing the documents from participants and the public domain was easy but going through the documents and sifting out relevant information was time-consuming. However they provided an opportunity to keep going back to the text to better understand what was recorded. The information found in the documents was similar to that shared by participants during the interviews, even though some participants were not aware of some of the policies' contents. However, when I reviewed the documents again after the interviews to track traces of change and development of service-learning (Bowen, 2009), I found none accounting for a crisis such as the global pandemic, where the carrying out of service-learning may be disturbed, or impossible. This speaks to my third research question on how service-learning has had to adapt as a result of the global pandemic.

Other limitations of this data collection method include difficulty of access of updated documentation. I found that some policies and course outlines and policies were outdated, having been created when the situation was 'normal'; i. e. before the global pandemic. Towards the end of the writing up process I was fortunate to be able to get hold of the University's revised Community Engagement Policy and Protocol document (Rhodes University, 2020). This revised policy detailed changes to the existing policy, but no details of the change were as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

3.6.2 Interviews: Semi-structured

Four individual semi-structured interviews were conducted, one with each of the four participants. These were followed by short follow-up informal interviews through email and WhatsApp to clarify some points raised during the interviews. The qualitative research interview, often called the primary method of data collection in qualitative research (Oltmann, 2016), seeks to "describe the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects" (Valenzuela, 2019, p. 2), with the intent to understand informants on their own terms and how they understand their own lives, experiences and cognitive processes

(Brenner, 2006). This process opens up space for participants to share experiences most salient to them (Azungah, 2018) in line with interpretivist reasoning (Chowdhury, 2014). Through the interviews I sought to understand the participants' lived experiences of the service-learning programmes during the Covid-19 global pandemic, how the courses have had to be adjusted and how their leadership through the service-learning programmes may have developed. Azungah (2018, p. 383) suggests that semi-structured interviews work well with the qualitative research design for "answering the questions 'how' and 'why'". Semi-structured interviews, he explains, "are associated with the ontological and epistemological stance that reality is socially constructed and interpreted in line with the worldviews of participants" (2018, p. 383), an argument supported by Brenner (2006). The interview questions were designed to answer the five research questions. For the researcher a semi-structured interview facilitates understanding of beliefs and practices that arise from cultural perspectives (Brenner, 2006), an understanding that would not be possible from a minimal-engagement tool such as a questionnaire.

Contrary to the norm of holding interviews face to face, interviews for this study were conducted virtually because it was relatively unsafe to meet in person. This was because, during the data collection period, South Africa was under a strict lockdown which limited movement and human interaction largely to that of essential services (Government Gazette, 2020). The site of study - Rhodes University - also discouraged the meeting of individuals on campus and encouraged staff to work from home (**Appendix 10**). While this took away the human element of meeting face-to-face in one room "the gold standard, or the assumed best mode in which to conduct interviews" (Oltmann, 2016, p. ??), it did not take away from the authenticity of the interviews. All interviews were successful. Interviews were held via a virtual Zoom platform, "a web-based video conferencing tool with a local, desktop client and a mobile app that allows users to meet online, with or without video" (News24, 1).

Further to this, I had a brief informal email interview with the Director of Community Engagement in the institution in connection with a revised Community Engagement and Protocol document which she kindly shared with me (see **Appendix D11**). Some advantages of using interviews are giving the participant an opportunity to clarify meaning in their own

words and opening up dialogue for both researcher and participant (Brenner, 2006). This was a bit difficult when the interview was not conducted in person, face-to-face. A challenge and strength, which forced me to be concise in the interviewing process, was the time-limit for a Zoom session in two of the interviews, and the physical distance between myself and the participants in all the interviews. Literature suggests that these types of interviews, including those conducted using a telephone, produce results comparable to the traditional face-to-face interview (Oltmann, 2016). After the virtual interviews, participants gave me permission to follow up using other virtual platforms such as WhatsApp and email. With the new normal imposed by the pandemic I believe that interviewing through online platforms will gain increased credibility rivalling that enjoyed by traditional methods of data collection (Oltmann, 2016).

In upholding ethical considerations Brenner suggests that ethics “will guide consideration through the different phases of the research and support the researcher in making ethical and moral reasons” (2006, p. 361). Other than being time-consuming, interviews also present a possible power imbalance where the interviewer can come across as having power over the participant. Frey and Fontana (1991) suggest that defusing the power differential in an interview by asking questions that are relevant to the participant helps in this regard (see **Appendix E**). In my case the power differential was reversed: two of the participants were my study supervisors. The main supervisor, however, was not the course coordinator in the two courses, but a lecturer in one course. While I found this very intimidating, especially during the data collection and analysis processes, my insider researcher position - the study of one’s social group or society (Greene, 2014) – and my knowledge and experience aided the interpretation and validation of the experiences of the participants. To tackle the challenges of being an insider researcher, colleagues in the faculty attempted to establish a community of practice to deal with insider research. However, this community of practice was not successful. An article shared, however, amongst colleagues (Temper, McGarry, & Weber , 2019) assisted in understanding my position as an insider researcher, the potential challenges, and possible solutions to combat any negative effects of being an insider researcher. Furthermore, following the advice of Milner (2007), I had to understand that it was my

responsibility to “listen to the voices and perspectives of those under study, and to provide compelling, fair evidence” (p. 396) of their experiences, as free as is possible of my bias.

3.6.3 Focus group interview

The focus group interview, a qualitative research method in which a researcher conducts a collective interview of typically no more than ten participants from similar backgrounds (Frey & Fontana, 1991), brought together three of the four participants via an online platform Zoom, two from Case A and one participant from Case B, to discuss the initial research findings and clarify and expand on points raised during the individual interviews for triangulation purposes. The bringing together of participants and interviewing them as a group (Bowen, 2009) provided an opportunity for invaluable inter-course and intra-departmental analysis and discussion as well as an opportunity for devising possible strategies for the future of service-learning in the department and the University considering the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic. The questions used to lead the focus group discussion (**Appendix F**) emerged from themes presented by the data collected from the individual interviews and the analysed documents. They were used as a means to add valuable insight to the interpretation of data by aiding recall and opinion elaboration and collaboration (Frey & Fontana, 1991). Focus groups, however, introduce various group and power dynamics. Firstly, I was an insider researcher interviewing a fellow colleague and two of my study supervisors, and secondly, the participants present had varying levels of seniority in the site of study and varying levels of qualification and experience. I discussed these dynamics earlier. Frey and Fontana (1991) caution that “The characteristics of the group, for example, size, personalities and background of members can impact the interaction and response patterns within the group” (p. 175). The focus group brought together three academics with different qualification and seniority levels. This required deliberate focus on giving everyone an equal opportunity to express themselves and be heard.

3.7 The data analysis process

Data analysis is the process as a systematic, logical technique to describe and evaluate the collected data Savenye and Robinson (2005). Merriam (1998) extends this definition to consolidating, summarising and interpreting with the help of theory that which has been

shared by the participants. The data were analysed using thematic inductive and deductive analysis in three broad steps: data reduction and sorting, display, and conclusion drawing and verification in relation to the research questions, and abduction. Thematic analysis is a method of analysing qualitative data, best used to understand people's views, opinions, knowledge and experiences (Bazeley, 2009). I had to go back to the data many times to make sense of them and draw objective conclusions, often re-examining certain themes to ensure I was understanding what the data were presenting.

3.7.1 Data organisation and preparation

The data were coded and grouped into a thematic structure to reflect common patterns emanating from the data (Bazeley, 2009). I closely examined the data to identify common themes, ideas, topics and patterns of meanings between the interview schedules and the documents. Furthermore, I looked at ideas or themes that came up repeatedly, analysing and making sense of these themes and sorting them into weakly framed categories to allow for flexibility and give the data room to present more themes, possibly outside the research questions. Bazeley (2009) states that "There is no problem with a priori categories or themes as long as they are recognised and declared as such, and they are actually supported in the data". To aid the analysis I familiarised myself with the set of data, assigned codes and descriptions of the data in a tabular format. Coding refers to the process of indexing and categorizing the data, identifying concepts and finding relations among them (Bowen, 2009). The weak category frames gave the data room to present their own themes which helped me to remain open to themes I had not yet encountered.

The verifying and drawing of conclusions were done based on what was observed in the reduction and display of data, supported by the evidence, as presented in the table example above. It is important, however, to note that the three activities - data reduction and sorting, display, and conclusion drawing and verification - are interwoven (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

In comparing the two cases I did a cross-case analysis between the two service-learning courses. Cross-case analysis, Merriam (1998) suggests, "can result in building substantive

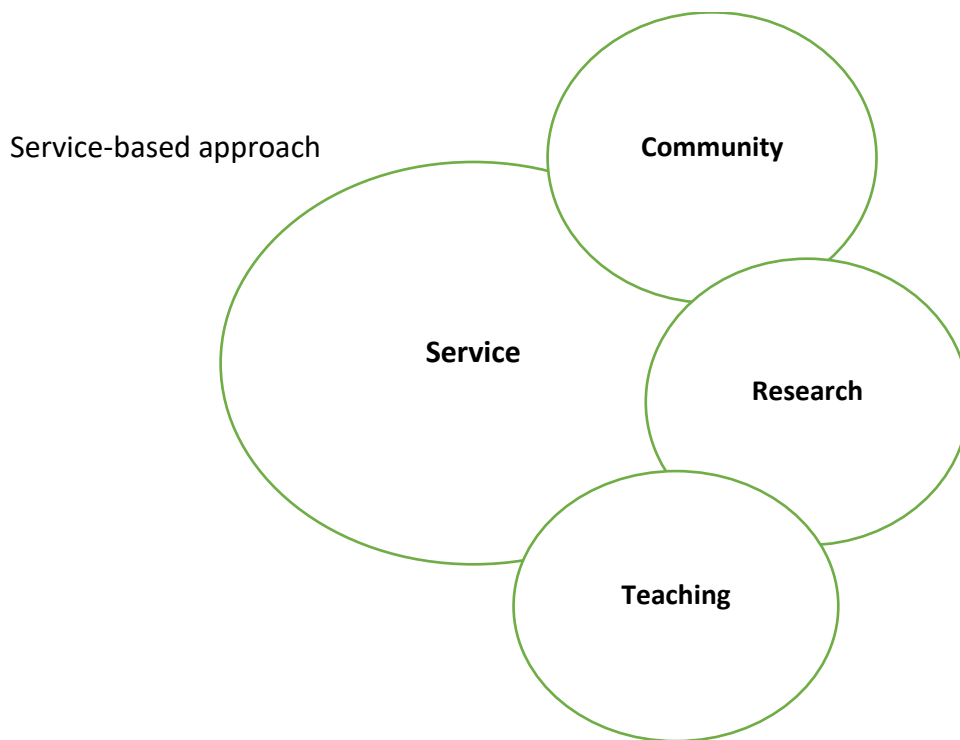
theory offering an integrated framework covering multiple cases” (p. 195). I looked at themes arising from the two sets of data, using tables to compare and contrast data by themes between the two cases, and identified differences and similarities. While the cases differed in their characteristics and data presented, I tried to find both general and unique explanations emerging from both cases.

Three modes of inference were used in the data analysis process: abductive, deductive and inductive analysis. Abduction plays the role of generating new ideas and/or hypotheses, examining a certain number of facts emerging from the data, “attempting to sort out the facts in order to attain an idea of what the data is communicating” (Asvoll, 2013, p. 4), generating new ideas and hypotheses. Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen, and Karlsson (2002, p. 91) explain: “abduction is neither a purely empirical generalization like induction, nor is it logically rigorous like deduction” ; rather it shows how the object of study might be, and not how it should be; simply put it links the findings to the theory. Deductive analysis was employed through an alternative service-based model to service-learning; this mode of analysis bases analysis on the conceptual framework or theory employed in the study (Azungah, 2018). Inductive analysis seeks to ensure that all important aspects of the data are captured and understood holistically using the research questions as a reading lens (Azungah, 2018). In the study I used the research questions as an organising framework and a lens.

The inductive approach, because it uses the research questions as a lens, is critiqued for opening up the possibility of a researcher forcing predetermined results onto the data (Azungah, 2018). I illustrate only the inductive and abductive processes briefly.

3.7.1.1 Inductive analysis process

Below are examples of the inductive analysis process I undertook.



As an insider researcher It was challenging to be objective about my prior understanding and knowledge of the courses. To overcome this, I embraced the advantages of my position as stated in the positionality section and reflected continually on my duty to be as objective as possible.

3.8 Researcher positionality

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, I am an employee of Rhodes University and a service-learning coordinator in the department where the two case studies are situated holding two roles in the research process: that of a researcher and being part of the researched. As an insider researcher who holds prior knowledge and understanding of the context as a member of the department (Greene, 2014), I had to be aware of seen and unseen dangers in the research process. Insider research, common in work integrated learning (WIL) research, “is said to exist on a continuum that is dependent on the closeness of the researcher to the aspect being researched” (Fleming J. , 2018, p. 311). Insider research carries many benefits for a researcher, one of which being the potential for improvement of own practice. As Fleming (2018, p. 312) puts it: “such opportunities enable contributions to knowledge,

meaning and understanding that is directly related and relevant to practice” But it presents a number of challenges as well.

Seen dangers are those explicit potential problem areas that can result from the decisions made by the researcher, while unseen dangers are implicit potential problem areas in the research process (Milner, 2007). These can emerge from misinterpretation, misinformation, lack of sufficient communication, and misrepresentation of the context by the researcher. The narratives a researcher forms about a context are formed by what he or she has been told and the researcher’s experience in relation to the participants (Greene, 2014). This requires active awareness and efforts to manage and possibly avoid these dangers. My insider position might have brought a power differential and some bias to the study, particularly during data collection and analysis. Aware of the possible power relations, these issues of positionality were discussed with the participants, and they were always assured of my commitment to observe research ethics during the research. My position was an advantage as I did not have to orientate myself to aid understanding of the context and I blended easily without causing much disturbance to the context (Greene, 2014). However, the same position was a challenge in the analysis and writing-up process, as I often forgot to sketch a full picture of the site, cases and what I would refer to as tacit contextual understandings to aid the understanding of the reader. I took things for granted. Furthermore, I had some understanding of the historical context in which the study took place. A challenge was always maintaining objectivity, lest my familiarity with the participants and the courses lead to a loss of objectivity. For this reason, data validity and trustworthiness considerations were important. I discuss this in the next section.

3.9 Issues of trustworthiness

Constructivist theorists describe the validity of a study as “being dependent on the resonance of the researcher’s findings with communities” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 127). This suggests that the context of the study, the researcher’s understanding of the context, participants, their conditions, and their understanding of their context determines the reality of the study; therefore, its validity. However, cautions Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001), it is challenging to develop validity in qualitative research because of the “the necessity to

incorporate rigor and subjectivity as well as creativity into the scientific process” (p. 522), this coupled with a vague intangible framework.

The data collected were managed systematically and stored in a password protected laptop and on the Cloud. Data were analysed to reflect as accurately as possible the information shared by participants. Whitemore argues that “elegant and innovative thinking can be balanced with reasonable claims, presentation of evidence, and the critical application of methods” (2001, p. 527). Data were then shared with and verified through a focus interview with all four participants, to authenticate what they have been captured and interpreted as accurately as possible to reflect the lived experiences as shared by the participants. Trustworthiness in qualitative research, “relies heavily on the use of specific procedures, such as member checks, prolonged engagement in the setting studied, peer review, rich description, and an ‘audit trail’ of the research” (Maxwell, (2012, p. 129), and is critical in insider research as this type of research is often open to scrutiny (Fleming J. , 2018). After the findings were generated and recorded the focus group provided a wonderful opportunity to ensure trustworthiness. Crystallization was also employed in the study as a validity measure.

Crystallization in qualitative research refers to the capacity for a writer to break out of traditional generic constraints of research, often involving multi-genre approaches (Ellingson, 2008). It is the validation of results using multiple methods of data collection and analysis, “often realized by means of applying different methodological approaches to balance out the subjective views of individuals” (Flick, von Kardorff , and Steinke, 2004, p. 178). Bowen (2009) asserts that a qualitative researcher is expected to draw upon “multiple (at least two) sources of evidence; that is, to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods” p. 28.

Crystallization, explains Ellingson (2008), provides the reader with a deepened, complex, partial, understanding of the topic, disrupting conventional methodological approaches. And perhaps more telling of my role as an insider researcher, crystallization “Includes a significant degree of reflexive consideration of the researcher’s self and roles in the process of research design, data collection, and representation” (Ellingson, 2008, p. 10).

In the early stage of my data collection, I was fortunate to be invited by my supervisors to submit a chapter for review in a proposed book on Teacher Education in the COVID-19 era. At that point in time I had concluded the interviews for my first case and was able to develop a chapter based on these findings. My chapter was entitled, '*Challenges to University Service-learning Courses as a consequence of COVID-19*' and is currently under review. This experience enriched my study because at the initial stages of my research, I piloted the research instruments with my supervisors, and necessary adjustments were made to ensure that the research questions and instruments best suited what I was trying to achieve with the study and in relation to the research topic. Furthermore, once the individual interviews were concluded, a focus group with the participants was conducted to verify data and findings, and to minimise researcher bias.

Considering my position as an insider researcher which was discussed earlier in the chapter, reflexivity was crucial throughout the study. Described as "an active engagement of the self in questioning perceptions and exposing their contextualized and power-driven nature" (Greene, 2014, p. 26), reflexivity is one of the tools I found useful in not merely avoiding but embracing potential researcher bias through the use of a personal diary and positive talk with self and a colleague in my teaching practice office, examining both myself and the research relationships. Greene further (2014) suggests, insider bias may be a source of "insight as well as error" (p. 4), depending on how it is managed. I was especially aware of managing the bias and ensuring that the data are bias free in the data analysis process, and that they reflect accurately the lived experiences of the participants as shared by them. Some ethical considerations were considered throughout the duration of the study, as discussed next.

3.10 Ethical considerations for the study

Aware of my obligation to uphold beneficence and my obligation to do no harm (non-maleficence) at all times (Bishop, 2019), I sought to minimise risk to the participants and the environment throughout the study. The study involved adult participants who consented to participating in the research through a discussion with myself and signed participant forms (**Appendix D**). As already mentioned, before any data was collected, an ethical clearance

certificate from Rhodes University's Ethics committee and permission to conduct research with staff members from the Human Resources Division were obtained.

Over and above the production of a thesis was a professional goal: to start a conversation between the academic staff involved in service-learning in the department, one that would be beneficial to all participants through the sharing of information and lessons learnt during the pandemic. Beneficence refers to an action done for the benefit of others (Bishop, 2019). Although the data were collected at a very stressful time when three out of the four participants expressed feelings of anxiety due to the pandemic, the study did no harm to the participants, the environment or society. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research as expressed and promised in the invitations to participate and the participant consent forms. Moreover, the autonomy of the participants was always respected by seeking permission prior to recording any sessions. Throughout the study participants participated voluntarily and were free to withdraw their participation at any time. I believe this research will be beneficial to the participants and to service-learning in the department, university and the higher education sector, as it contributes to the wide literature base on the effects on the pandemic on various teaching and learning spheres in the higher education sector.

A significant challenge was that the institution in which the two cases are situated is relatively small, and so is the department, so there was a threat that the anonymity of the participants could be compromised. The participants were informed of this concern individually; the responses were positive, and participants provided written consent to continue with the study.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the thinking behind the design of this study, how the research process unfolded, and some of the considerations that guided the process and the interaction with the research participants. I discussed the interpretive paradigm which this study is premised on and how it aligns with what this research was trying to accomplish. Furthermore, the chapter detailed information about the research site, the selection of participants, the qualitative data collection methods, the rationale behind their use, and some of the critiques

of those methods. I then discussed how the data were analysed using both inductive and deductive analysis approaches to address specific needs of the study. The challenges encountered during the data analysis process were discussed, one in particular my position as an inside researcher and how I was able to move forward ensuring accurate and bias-free data as much as possible, that reflects the lived experiences of the participants. I then addressed issues of validity and trustworthiness of the data and the ethical considerations which influenced each stage of the research process.

Chapter four presents the data and the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the data from the study and discuss the findings. To remind the reader, the study investigated curriculum adjustment and leadership development in two service-learning courses at Rhodes University as a consequence of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Five research questions guided the study through the bulleted themes below, together with the study goals. I present the data separately where the findings differed significantly between the two cases and as one where findings were similar across the cases. The data are presented in relation to the five research questions of the study.

- Participant's understanding of service-learning
- The original design of the two service-learning courses
- Original course outcomes and assessment
- Curriculum adjustment of service-learning during a global pandemic
- Adapted course outcomes and assessment as a consequence of the pandemic
- The development of adaptive leadership in the service-learning lecturers
- Communities of practice as reflective spaces for academics
- A review of policy responsiveness to the pandemic
- An alternative service-based approach to conceptualising service-learning

4.2 Coding of data sources

In this study different codes were used to represent different data sources. The data were sourced from various university documents, including policies, guidelines and course outlines coded **(D, 1 to D, 10)**. Data were also collected from four participants and one secondary participant **(D, 11)**, from case A **(A1, A2)**, and **(B,1, B,2)** case B participants. The data collection methods and tools used were four individual interviews **(INT, A1; INT, A2; INT, B1; and INT, B2)** with four participants, and an informal interview with the secondary participant, and one focus group interview **(FGI)** with three of the four participants **(FG, A1; FG, A2 and FG, B2)**. A

combination of these codes is used to indicate the source of data in terms of the tools and participants.

I now present the data from the sources and discuss the findings of this study, beginning with the participants' understanding of service-learning, in relation to research question one.

4.3 Participants' understanding of service-learning

The understanding of service-learning differed between the two cases the consensus being that service-learning is vaguely understood as a link to the community experience but that it needed clarity and articulation at course level. The understanding of service-learning is described by the participants within the premises of community engagement at Rhodes University. I begin with course A, followed by Course B. Thereafter I offer comment across the cases and suggest possible recommendations to improve understanding.

4.3.1 Case A

In case A — service-learning means taking an interventionist approach to learning, teaching, research, and the community experience, framed by Cultural Historical Activity Theory (INT, A1). Describing the service nature of the elective, a participant said, *"it is some kind of service-learning, because this is teaching and learning in the community, and then trying to actually find out where the leadership has developed"* (INT, A2), suggesting some understanding though not clearly defined. Service-learning in the course outline is vaguely alluded to as a pedagogical style that enables students to become active participants in their learning, through a carefully structured process (D, 1; INT, A1). Furthermore, *"In our view learning involves participating in the various ELM debates and moving between different points in the community with the ultimate goal of moving towards a complete identity and the possibility of a plurality of full participations"*, writes the coordinator in the course outline (D, 1). In a promotions application of one of the course A participants, service in relation to the ELM elective is aligned with the university's definition, as an activity which *"takes learning to the service of communities and, at the same time, brings learning from those communities to bear on academic knowledge and knowing through formally curriculated and assessed activities"* (D, 12). Participant A1 during the focus group interview refers to service-learning in the

context of the Academic Staff Promotions Policy by referring to the principles of service-learning: *"I remember a promotions document I came across that spells out some of the principles of service-learning. It speaks of how the service-learning course needs to be carefully planned and executed; it cannot be willy nilly - it has to be made explicit in our course outlines"* (FG, A1). Furthermore, *"Service has to be sustainable over time, transformative - not only to change the community, but us as academics need to change our courses, research and pedagogy, learning through the engagement"* (FG, A1).

The principles this academic is referring to are mentioned in the institution's Academic Staff Members Promotion Policy and are:

- *"Community engagement is a planned intervention,*
- *Community engagement initiatives include assessment strategies*
- *Community engagement initiatives are mutually beneficial*
- *'Engaged' refers to the building of relationships and active participation by those involved.*
- *Community engagement initiatives are transformative – they promote social justice, and;*
- *Ethical engagement is guided by Rhodes University community engagement, as well as human, animal and environmental ethics policies"* (D, 5).

In contrast, staff in case B present a more limited understanding of service-learning, with no mention of service principles.

4.3.2 Case B

The understanding of service-learning in case B seemed vague, and knowledge of the existence of the institution's service-learning principles were absent from any discussion. Understood as learning through active participation in schools (INT, B1), participant B2 explained that *"Service-learning is about getting practical experience in schools"* (INT, B2). Not limited to student development, service-learning was understood as an opportunity to provide service to the community: *"students engage to learn, but also the aspect of providing service is very important"* (INT, B2). A participant felt that *"Rhodes spends a big amount of time preparing students from year one to year four through Teaching Practice (INT, B1)",* the schools being the community partner. A need for the institution to clarify and facilitate

understanding of service-learning and its principles to staff was highlighted by a course B participant: *"I am still a little hazy about the aims of providing service"* (FG, B2); *"I would like to understand how we unpack the position of the other role players such as schools. How do they understand service-learning?"* (FG, B2), suggesting a need for the role of the community partner to be clarified as well. A participant shared, *"I have never even heard of the service-learning community engagement principles referred to here"* (FG, B2), suggesting a possible problem in the implementation of service-learning within the community context. The participant added: *"It would be interesting to see if we subscribe to those; are we practising them? Or are we just getting what we want out the situation and moving on?"* (FG, B2).

4.3.3 Comment across two cases: Service-Learning needs to be made more explicit

It emerged from the data across the cases that there is a need to make explicit the definition of service-learning and the principles that guide service in the institution, and to conceptualise service-learning in relation to each case. This especially as it relates to Case B, which appears to incorporate aspects of both service-learning and work- integrated learning, although not clear to what extent. One participant suggested: *"I think we should discuss these principles and make them more explicit"* (FG, A1), for the benefit of staff and the community partnerships. Dwight and Eyler (1994) attribute the vague understanding of service-learning to lack of research interest in the field and the lack of research informing practice and supporting the policies. Further, according to Furco (1996), at the core of service learning; learning flows from the service experience. Through the giving of service according to actual and expressed community needs in the learning goals: service outcomes balance — learning occurs. This suggests that when the balance between service and learning is not in equilibrium or unclear; learning may be compromised.

Further, the focus in both cases tends to be on practice more than the principles and guidelines that guide the practice, this although one participant in case A showed awareness of the institution's service-learning principles. A participant in the group interview asked, *"How do you view the position of service-learning in a teaching practice course for example?"* (FGI). Another acknowledged the struggles in service-learning in bringing forth the practical understanding of service-learning and translating that understanding to the institution-

community partnership: *“There are systems of learning and meaning making, some work better in some platforms and some in others”* (FG, B2). This brings the following to mind: if the academics leading service-learning do not have a thorough understanding of service-learning and the principles that guide it, *“To what extent does it become explicit in our communication with schools that there is this thing that we subscribe to and would like to develop collaboratively?”* (FG, B2). It begs the question: Does the community have a sound understanding of that which takes place in their setting?

These findings suggest the need to make more explicit a contextual understanding of service-learning and its principles through a broad definition and the roles of all partners involved. This, Cooper (1999) suggests, assists in preventing unintended outcomes such as prejudice and stereotypes created or enforced through service activities which have been poorly planned or not reflected upon collectively prior the engagement.

Next, and in relation to research question two, I discuss the design of the two service-learning cases prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

4.4 The original design of the two service-learning courses

The two cases are service-learning courses situated in the same department; however, they differ significantly in their design, outcomes, and assessment practices. I begin with a review of case A, the Educational Leadership and Management course, using the Types of Community Engagement model first introduced in chapter 2.

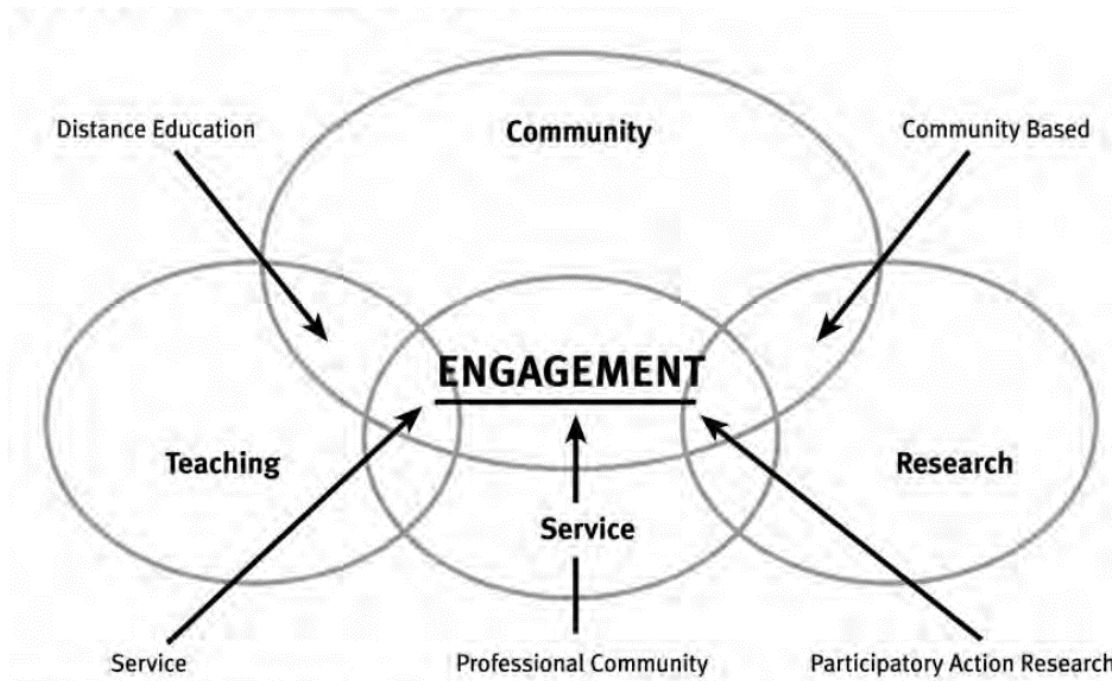


Figure 4, 1. Community Engagement model adapted from Bringle, Games and Malloy 1999

4.4.1 Case A: Leadership development through a community intervention

As indicated in Chapter Three, Case A forms part of the Bachelor of Education Honours programme pegged at level eight (8) on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of South Africa. Led by two colleagues, one the course coordinator and the other a course lecturer on the course, it is a 10-credit course (D1), which spans a ten (10) month period in the second year (specialisation year) of the BEd Honours. The course, designed as an interventionist approach and informed by Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2009) and expansive learning theory (D, 1), enrolls students on a two-year cycle both in the Makhanda and Namibia programmes (Rhodes University Education Department, 2020). In order to qualify for the course applicants, need to have possessed an NQF level 7 qualification with a teaching professional qualification, and a minimum of two years' experience of discipline knowledge (RU Education Department, 2020). Learning in the course is described as involving participation in the various ELM debates between the teaching and research spheres in the figure 4.1 above, extending academic learning in the classroom to the community, and moving between different points in the larger community space, *"with the ultimate goal of moving towards a complete identity and the possibility of a plurality of full participations"*

(D1). Furthermore, the ELM elective requires students to *“participate in an organised service activity in their institution and reflect on it 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”* (D, 1). This participation is mandatory for the student to pass the course. The external examiner of the elective attests to this in a 2019 report: *“The ELM elective offers a comprehensive interplay between theory and practice. It provides a really solid foundation for students, who wish to pursue further postgraduate studies”* (D, 9).

The inter-dependent and inter-related components of the ELM elective as illustrated in figure 4.1 are as follows:

Community: An interventionist approach in case A involves the acquisition of knowledge as well as technical competence through a community experience. The course outline claims that this pedagogical style *“enables diverse student bodies to begin to participate in the learning community and as the students gain confidence their level of participation increases”* (D, 1). The community in this case refers to the learners (in some instances teachers) and school communities in which the research is conducted, and the intervention projects are set up. Community encompasses the voluntary involvement of learners in after school learner-leadership clubs or teachers in professional learning communities in schools in which the Honours students work.

In its outline of strategic partnerships, the institution re-iterates that Rhodes University is a key stakeholder in society and exists for the public good: *“Partnerships with the community enable us to express our values and realise this strategic purpose. It is also through partnerships that we can acknowledge our location as a place of knowledge in a remote town stricken by poverty and other social ills”* (D, 5). The university acknowledges that effectiveness and relevance as an institution for public good is heavily dependent on the partnerships it forms and their transformative nature (D, 5). This is realised in the teaching and interaction with students. The Educational Leadership and Management course meets the criteria that service activities must involve community members as active participants who are involved in the planning, execution and assessment stages of the service activity. This is because the

learners and teachers are active participants through their involvement in the school change projects. The course external examiner agrees: *"The approach to this elective which is teaching research while at the same time ensuring that students are engaged in service-learning grounded in identifying and finding solutions to real life issues is commended"* (D, 9). It is important to note here that the comments by the external examiner also form part of the evaluation of the course, through the identification of what is effective and what needs modification and critical examination of the service activity of the course process holistically (Kezar, 2002).

Teaching: True to the counter-normative nature of the service-learning pedagogy (Clayton and Ash, 2004), the ELM elective is not taught in the traditional sense. It consists of five part-time contact sessions during the second year of the two-year Honours programme. The five sessions involve a combination of *"discussion of academic readings, report backs, guided discussions, lecturer presentations, informal student inputs and formal student presentations"* (D, 1). Between the five sessions students work with the community partners in the leadership clubs/professional learning communities, reflect on their experiences, and write five assignments which form part of the final research report at the end of the academic year (D, 1). Reflective practice through reflective journals is another teaching and reflection tool in the ELM course (D, 1), aiding students in the discovery of the context of ideas and the belief systems that shape the way they think about the community's sources, nature, and consequences (Fleming, 2018), shaping the service experience.

Service: ELM Honours students set up after-school learner leadership clubs or teacher professional learning communities in schools (D, 13). The social issue ELM aims to address through these leadership clubs/PLCs is developing the learner/teacher voice and giving learners/teachers a platform to exercise that voice (D1). Universities need to be clear about the kind of service outcome they envision in addressing underlying social issues, suggests (Osman & Petersen, Service Learning in South Africa, 2013). These learner leadership clubs, the ELM course outline explains, are envisaged to provide learners/teachers with opportunities to;

"- develop their voice in a space in which they can 'be heard'

- identify a focus area that matters to them

- plan and implement an intervention to address the focus area

- develop their leadership and 'learn how to become citizens prepared to actively engage in their communities and participate in democracy'" (D, 1).

The Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University described the institution's development goals as efforts towards *"providing quality and transformative education, that produces knowledge that advances our understanding of social and natural environments and that applies knowledge to transform lives for the better"* (D, 3). Four pillars are identified in supporting the development goals: sustainability, simultaneous local responsiveness and global engagement, advancing social justice, and advancing the public good purpose of higher education (D, 3). The leadership interventions in the ELM students' communities are in line with institutions' expressed role of *"lifting the standards of living of our local community"* (D, 3). Furthermore, the case supports Spiezio's (2005) claim regarding the transformative nature of service-learning that learning through service *"can produce measurable and statistically significant changes in student attitudes toward the importance of engaged citizenship"* (p. 273).. Moreover, the institution's Teaching and Learning Policy (2019) stipulates that community engagement should not be an add-on to the academic programme but requires integration into the teaching and learning and research programmes. The ELM elective appears to have been successful in fully embedding the service-learning aspect of the course in the B Ed Honours qualification.

Research: Through the learner-leadership clubs and PLCs, the Honours students assume the researcher-interventionist role, playing an active role in their learning and that of the club/PLC members. Through structured reflection in the form of five course assignments (D, 1) and data, the students are able to make research findings on leadership development in their context (D, 1). Students collect data through surveys, interviews, participant journals and their own reflective journals which are a requirement for the elective (D,1) to keep track of their development and the leadership development of their participants. The institution

acknowledges the contribution made by service-learning through the community partnerships to the learning and development of students: *"We are also cognisant of the benefits to our students' own learning and growth which derive from partnerships"* (D, 3). The institution claims that the various programmes work towards *"producing independently minded and socially progressive students who are critically engaged with the world and their place in society"* (D, 3).

One of the strengths of the university, as a result, is a service-learning and community engagement programme *"embedded within the mainstream research, teaching and learning endeavours of the institution"* (D, 3), supporting the inter-dependent and inter-connected nature of the community, teaching, research and service in the ELM elective. A particular benefit of the elective for the ELM course has been *"the cutting-edge disciplinary knowledge that has emerged from this service-learning course"*, leading to a number of peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations (D, 12). The Grant and Nekondo (2016) paper on *Learners as leaders in Namibian schools: taking responsibility and exercising agency in Namibia?* published in the CPD Journal for Educators is one of them. The paper, drawing on one intervention set up by a student as part of the ELM course outcomes, argues that learners can be developed as leaders through the introduction of learner-leadership clubs in schools (D, 13)

I now turn to Case B, a practical teaching practice course concerned with developing professional educators.

4.4.2 Case B: Developing professionals in the community setting

Case B is a practical Teaching Practice course, a mandatory part of the Bachelor of Education Foundation phase degree, an NQF level seven undergraduate qualification. It is a 15-credit course which is a key component of the four-year programme, seeking to give students an opportunity for an active pedagogy (Butin, 2003) throughout the four years, to practise academic learning in a community setting. In order to qualify for the degree an applicant needs a minimum of 40 National Senior Certificate (NSC) points, Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy, and two languages, one of which is English. The coordinator explained

the purpose of the course to students in the student handbook as follows: *"We expect you to apply what you have learned, in the course, in an authentic learning environment"* (D, 2).

Community: the course's student handbook describes the aims of the community experience as follows:

"The TP experience aims to provide you with an opportunity to:

- develop an understanding of schools and schooling in Makhanda;*
- observe the teaching and learning process in Foundation Phase classrooms;*
- make links between the classroom environment and your courses at university; and team teach with peers."* (D, 3)

The coordinator advised the students in their preparation for the community experience to *"Plan well, be resilient, be circumspect, and remember that you are there to learn your profession and apply your knowledge and skills for the benefit of the children and the school"* (D, 2). The University's commitment to advancing the public good speaks to the development of knowledgeable, competent, skilled graduates who will contribute to the forging of critical and democratic leadership (Rhodes University, 2019). What seems to be of critical importance is an awareness and responsiveness to the socio-economic conditions of the location of the institution, the country and society. A commitment then, as stated in the institution's pillars, is necessary to proactively engage society with its pressing socio-economic challenges to realise the institutional mandate of social justice and transformation (D, 3).

Teaching: Teaching Practice (TP) is designed to build on the foundational concepts introduced in the first year of studies, with more hours dedicated to practice in the community context as the years progress. TP provides students with an opportunity to practise the knowledge learnt in other subjects such as Education and Professional Studies, Performance and Multimodalities (physical education), Understanding the Social and Physical World, and Foundation Phase Studies (including Mathematics, two languages and Life Skills). Students are divided into groups of 2 students per class, allocated to a local school, and placed in Grades R-3 (D, 2). Students are placed in different quintile schools in order to maximise and

extend their understanding of the different teaching and learning contexts in Makhanda schools. Generally, students will first observe teaching and learning. Thereafter, in consultation with mentor teachers, students are required to develop lessons which they will deliver using the team-teaching approach between the two students in the second and third year, and individually in the fourth year (D, 2). In terms of assessment, the coordinator explained in the student handbook, *“lessons will be observed by the mentor teacher and the other students at the school. For example, the students teaching Grade 3 observe the students teaching Grade 2 and vice versa”* (D, 2). More emphasis is placed on lesson delivery in the fourth year. A summary of what is generally expected of students during an observation/teaching week displayed in table below:

Time	Wednesday 19 Feb	Thursday 20 Feb	Friday 21 Feb	Monday 24 Feb	Tuesday 25 Feb
During School	Arrive at school 15 min before start of school. Meet teachers Observe lessons in appointed class Fill in observation sheets for all lessons observed Try to get to know the children Discuss with teacher possible lesson content for Friday	Observe lessons in mentor teacher’s class Fill in observation sheets for all lessons observed Continue with familiarising yourself with classroom and school environment Document observations Interviews with mentor teacher.	Teach 1 language lesson (group teaching) One group teaches while other group and teacher observes(if possible) After school: Groups meet to reflect on teaching and learning so that students can revise their lessons for the next day.	Students implement their revised language lessons in their peers’ class (if possible). In other words they move to teach in another grade. Observations Fill in observation sheets for all lessons observed Interviews	Teach (if possible) Students do final lesson and other observations. Fill in observation sheets for all lessons observed Greet and thank mentor teacher and principal at the end of the school day

Table 4, 1. (Abstract from Rhodes University Teaching Practice Student Handbook)

Service: Although not explicitly stated in the 2020 handbook (D, 2), the service engagement between the University and schools is sought to be mutually beneficial, with the schools benefiting from the knowledge, presence, and opportunity to impart field knowledge to students. Explaining the rules of the service engagement, the coordinator wrote to students, *“You are under the authority of the principal of the school. You are expected to adhere to his/her instructions in such matters as duties to be performed, learners you work with, dress, appearance, times and tasks that you are required to fulfil”* (D, 2). Moreover, *“Never lose sight of the privilege of having been invited as a guest. Be discreet and respect the school and the learners’ right to confidentiality. Never talk ‘out of school’”* (D, 2), explained the coordinator.

This practice is guided by the principle of mutual benefit: the community benefits from the volunteer services, while the university benefits from opportunities for student learning and opportunities for achieving the strategic goals as set out in the Institutional Development Plan (D, 3). This suggests that in this course and in the institution, service engagement is not merely a charity cause, but is a social change model (Osman & Petersen, Service Learning in South Africa, 2013), thus creating a thriving space for mutual benefit and further possibilities of service-learning and community engagement partnerships between the university and the local community.

Research: Minimal research is published on Teaching Practice service engagement within the department. The engagements, however, *“including student reflections and experiences are ground for rich research that could assist in improving the service relationships and take teaching practice in the department forward”* (INT, B2).

4.5 Original Course outcomes and assessment

The original course assessment and activities for each of the two cases were aligned with the outcomes, tacitly assuming reasonable access to the community space. Outcomes in case A were aligned with the establishment of a leadership intervention, and professional development and practice for case B. I begin with case A.

4.5.1 Case A: Assignments and an exam equivalent

Assessment in Case A consists of a course work and an exam equivalent component explained as follows: *“The course work component of the elective consists of five written assignments (making up 50%), and the exam component which “consists of a formal student presentation (30% of exam mark - midyear) and the written submission of a research report (70% of exam result – end of year)”* (D, 1), making up 50% of the final course elective mark. The reflective journal, mentioned earlier, forms part of the continuous assessment process, and makes a valuable data source for the final write-up (D, 1). The course’s external examiner endorsed the assessment approach adopted in the course, saying, *“The assessment in the module is structured to allow students’ development and support”* (D, 9). The examiner further comments: *“This, in my view, produces students who do not just pass the module but are able*

to reflect and improve on their weaknesses. This kind of assessment is developmental and can boost students' academic performance" (D, 9).

4.5.2 Case B: Observation lessons and files

In case B, three components make up the assessment of Teaching Practice;

- *"Teaching Practice File: the teaching practice file is developed throughout the academic year and serves as a collection of evidence of student development. A TP student handbook explained that "The TP File is essential in communicating your growth and professional development during TP" (D, 2). Furthermore "The file is used as a tool for: you to record your growth, the lecturers to develop a more comprehensive understanding of your experience with the school, and overall assessment" (D, 2).*
- *Mentor teacher evaluations: During the longer Teaching Practice sessions, students are assigned experienced school teachers to mentor and host them in the school. The mentor teacher at the end of a student's experience assesses the student and provides a comprehensive report (D, 2) of the experience.*
- *Assessments of students' lessons during the lecturer visits: The assessment of student lessons is a formative assessment process in schools, referred to as 'crit' lessons. The purpose is to monitor student progress and assess competence in the classroom. (INT, B1). The course outline explains that "You will have TWO crit visits during TP2. The lecturers will spend about 2 hours with each student. During this time, we will observe you teach, meet with your mentor teacher to discuss your progress and meet with you to give feedback and to ascertain how you're experiencing your TP" (D, 2). The starting point of this assessment is the students' TP file which is presented to lecturers during the crit lessons. However, the outline explains that "This is not sufficient to develop a comprehensive overview of your TP, which is why we rely on the mentor teacher reports and your TP file in assessing your competence" (D, 2). During your crit visits, visiting lecturers write a narrative report of each lesson presented, the report shares lesson highlights and makes suggestions for improvement.*

The role of the student during TP is to learn about the teaching profession practically (INT, B1) and apply knowledge and skills learnt in the lecture room. Students are required to “*plan well, be resilient, be circumspect, and remember that you are there to learn your profession and apply your knowledge and skills for the benefit of the children and the school*” (D, 2). Emphasis is always on the school learner as a priority during teaching practice (INT, B2), over and above the mutually beneficial relationship between the university and the schools (FG, B2). The mentor teacher, in consultation with the rest of the school, staff completes two evaluation reports on the student’s teaching and professionalism at the end of the student’s time at the school.

4.5.3 A comment across the two cases: Mandatory involvement in service needs guided understanding and application

The data across both cases seem to suggest that while mandatory involvement is necessary in developing students through the community experience, practical understanding and guidance at course level needs improvement. As mentioned earlier, Hollis (2002) critiques compulsory involvement of students in service-learning, saying voluntary involvement is likely to yield better results and an improved civic attitude. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), however, believe any disadvantage of mandatory involvement is far outweighed by the benefits (Bender *et al.*, 2006), some of which are mentioned in the course outcomes of the two cases, namely identifying and solving convergent and divergent educational problems creatively and responsibly (D, 1), developing an ability to work effectively with others and the community (D, 7), professional development (D, 2), application of academic learning to a community context (INT, B2) strengthening of the university-community partnerships (D, 3) and contributing to the group output/tasks pertaining to the educational field. On the benefits of mandatory involvement, Bender (2006) makes special mention of increased civic mindfulness, attitude and efficacy skills, and hands-on application and use of skills and knowledge acquired in the academic setting, especially in the case of pre-service professionals.

The guiding principles of community engagement and service-learning at Rhodes University (D, 3) shape service-learning understanding and practice in the institution. These principles

form part of the institution's broader transformation agenda as a link with the community is part of the university's efforts towards socioeconomic advancement of the country (D, 3). The Vice-Chancellor states in his foreword of the university's Institutional Development Plan, that one of the institution's strategic goals is to *"promote Rhodes University as an institution for public good in local, provincial, national and international contexts"* (D, 3); service-learning and community engagement are but two of the vehicles to achieve this. Viewing the institution as a public good requires responsible engagement with the community. These institutional goals and principles, explains the Vice-Chancellor, *"represent a high-level institutional dash board, which carries with it a multitude of important actions, immeasurable values, and focused aspirations, for which more detailed operational plans are necessary"* (D, 3), suggesting a need for more explicit discussion of service-learning principles, how they apply to the respective service-learning engagement contexts.

In response to research question three, the next section looks at the curriculum adjustments made in both cases as a consequence of the global pandemic.

4.6 Curriculum adjustment of service-learning during a global pandemic

As a direct consequence of COVID-19, Case A entirely lost its service-learning engagement component with the community while case B was able to salvage some parts of the service engagement through a mixed mode approach to teaching and learning. I begin with Case A.

4.6.1 Case A: Total loss of service-learning engagement

The service-engagement part of the learner/teacher leadership club interventions was lost in case A as a consequence of the global pandemic. The goal of the interventionist approach was that *"students needed to run a club or professional learning community with their stakeholder group and research leadership or development that could have occurred"* (INT, A2). With the global pandemic the interventionist approach through learner or teacher leadership clubs had to be abandoned and *"ceased to exist unfortunately"* (INT, A2). The respondent continued: *"When lockdown started, I informed the students to stop the interventions immediately"* (INT, A2). In an email communication to students and the external examiner of the course, the coordinator wrote: *"Issues of social distancing, no school, a very demanding*

situation focused on curriculum completion once schools resume is some of the reasons why this intervention will not continue. The intervention ends now” (D, 8). In efforts to salvage the course, a new research approach was adopted. The coordinator explained in her email: “I am revisiting the ELM programme so that you still receive a quality programme that meets the requirements at Honours level and still develop sound research skills” (D, 8). The research component of the course took on a desktop study approach where, “the focus will be on document analysis. You may ask why? From now on the data for your research report will be documents which I will provide at a later stage” (D, 8), losing the service engagement aspect of the course entirely. Addressing the students’ possible concerns about the validity of the research experience with the removal of the practical service engagement experience with the community, the coordinator explained to students in the email communication: “I have adjusted the programme to ensure that the research can still be done from the confines in our homes and desk top research is a valid form of research” (D, 8). Students still experienced a carefully monitored learning experience in which they had deliberate learning goals and reflected actively on what they are learning through the adapted desktop approach (Bringle, 2009), even though the practical community experience ceased to exist. A participant felt that “It is quite sad that the actual community service part is not possible. But the outcomes will still be reached, the students will be exposed to research, they will write a research report” (INT, A2). The respondent added: “They [students] will gain the knowledge in terms of leadership and management as envisaged in the programme. But it’s just that the service-learning part quite certainly is compromised” (INT, A2).

Lamenting on the loss of the service engagement a participant said: *“The loss for me has been a loss of the learner-voice; the voices in leadership were so important because previously they had been side-lined” (FG, A1), and “there is a sense of loss versus gain; the loss of intervening in a way we have been accustomed to” (FG, A1) shared a participant. This was a loss of one of the two key components of the course and its design namely the active participation of community partners (D, 1). This compromised the understanding of leadership as a process of change (FG, A1). Furthermore, because of the lockdown restrictions on human movement, students in case A missed out on an opportunity to develop adaptive leadership, leadership*

premised on change and enabling capacity to develop and thrive in trying circumstances (Hlalele *et al.*, 2015).

This can be attributed to the absence of an alternative service engagement plan prior to the global pandemic. In contrast to Case A, Case B, in response to the pandemic, shifted service focus to the exit years of the B Ed FP degree and the PGCE, using aspects of an alternative service-engagement plan trialled prior to the global pandemic.

4.6.2 Case B: A trimmed down service-engagement approach with stakeholders

Case B, the professional qualification course, is regulated by the Department of Higher Education and Training and the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualification (MRTEQ) guidelines that speak to teacher education accreditation, qualification and quality assurance (INT, B1). A respondent explained that *“TP is part of the MRTEQ official requirements by the DHET. It is part of the requirements for students to qualify as teacher”* (INT, B1). In a communique on the implementation of Teaching Practice / Work integrated Learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown to university Deans on 17 March 2020, A DHET director explained that *“Teaching Practice of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is a fundamental component of initial teacher learning programmes that cannot be compromised”* (D, 14). He also felt that *“Teaching Practice is likely to be significantly impacted, as the national lockdown period coincides with the time that many students are engaged with Teaching Practice in schools”* (D, 14). In the same communication a concern was raised on whether schools would be able to accommodate student teachers. There was an agreement reached on accommodating exit students (INT, B1). The DHET director said that *“It is advised that schools be given sufficient time to adjust to the Coronavirus [and] for this reason, it is advised that Teaching Practice should not take place before September 2020 or until Provincial Education Departments deem it appropriate”* (D, 14). This was followed by numerous communications from both DHET and the Department of Basic Education at different national lockdown levels. In another communique dated May 2020, the DHET started by acknowledging the impact of COVID-19 in higher education: *“The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has had unprecedented ramifications on South African society, and education is no exception”* (D, 15), and encouraged universities to think differently and

innovatively about teacher education delivery, especially as it relates to teaching practice (D, 15). The communication ended with encouragement to continue with supplementary activities because *“the extended impact of the pandemic has resulted in changes that must allow for increased supplementary activities whilst still ensuring that students in their final year of the B Ed and the PGCE receive opportunities to experience learning in practice in line with the provided guidelines”* (D, 15). These communications and internal deliberations in the university shaped how TP was conducted for the exit years at Rhodes University in light of the pandemic.

In case B, the service-learning engagement aspect of TP was retained with a focus on exiting years, i.e., BEd fourth years and Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students (INT, B1), drawing on an alternative simulated approach (INT, B2) to the service-engagement trialled informally before the global pandemic. The coordinator explained that *“I think that there were some parts of the pandemic approach that we had already piloted and managed in the past”* (INT, B2), though the coordinator admitted *“that system that we developed was not always very successful”* (INT, B2). This approach retained the experiential learning process of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation in the classroom and school environment, although at a reduced rate than it would be pre-Covid-19.

The coordinator explained the action taken as follows: *“We had to redesign everything”* (INT, B1). Outlining the complexity of the DHET requirements, and the possibility of further implementing these changes after the current year, a participant said *“And then of course, there were many aspects that we had to develop over time from the DHET. Then things nationally changed again, so we had to adjust yet again”* (INT, B2). A participant lamented that *“it was hard, because we didn’t always know what was going on ourselves”* (INT, B2), echoing the sentiments of the DHET: *“What we know now is that the pandemic is characterised by extreme uncertainty and that it is not possible to predict with certainty the impact on Teaching Practice and on the academic year for schools and for universities”* (D, 14).

Once the national government and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) had given the go-ahead to re-open schools, *"The fourth years and the PGCE are the exiting students, so they were being made a priority to go into schools"* (INT, B1). This meant that community engagement activities for students in non-exit years were suspended immediately, presenting a Type III adaptive problem, where all parties involved had no simple solution to the issue at hand (Hlalele *et al.*, 2015).

Some of the changes implemented in this TP course included the inclusion of a supplementary online portfolio that students had to complete and submit remotely for assessment. Normally, pre-COVID-19, explained the coordinator, *"students went out to schools and they would then have a teaching practice file with all the lessons in it, and they would be critted"* (assessed) (INT, B1). With the pandemic, *"the lockdown activities I mentioned need to be put together as an e-portfolio"* (INT, B1). Touching on the creativity and innovation encouraged by the DHET (D, 14), a participant shared, *"We as a TP team are also working on a chapter which includes themes that touch on social justice, lesson planning, reflection etc., which also contribute to the e-portfolio"* (INT, B1). This is in agreement with Parker-Gwin and Mabry (1998), that each stage of service-learning is an opportunity to validate experience as one of the many sources of knowledge in the curriculum, regardless – in my study - of the limited change agency role during the pandemic.

4.6.3 A comment across the cases: Experiential Learning during a pandemic

The COVID-19 global pandemic compromised experiential learning through service-learning in the two cases. Experiential learning is premised on the idea that learning best takes place through experience. According to Kolb (2010), learning through experience happens when knowledge is transformed through experience, in this case through the service-learning community experience in the community.

In case A experiential learning was completely compromised, with the service-learning engagements in the form of learner leadership clubs and teacher professional communities ceasing to exist because of restrictions imposed on movement and gatherings as a result of the global pandemic.

In case B, experiential learning was achieved partially by exit-year students — preserving a central focus on the role primary experience plays in the academic learning (Dwight & Eyler, 1994) of the student teachers, and forfeited by first, second- and third-year B Ed Foundation Phase students. This partial experience was achieved through a combination of e-learning and limited service-learning engagement when some students could finally go into schools.

As discussed in Chapter Two, experiential learning happens over four stages (see *Figure 2.3*): concrete learning through experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. None of these phases was fulfilled entirely in either case as a consequence of the global pandemic, but rather, in both cases some parts of the experiential learning cycle were adapted to ensure completion of the qualifications by students; reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation through a desktop analysis (INT, A2), and active experimentation and partial concrete experience (INT, B1) in case B. However, the inability to carry out experiential learning completely in both cases encouraged students and academic staff leading the service-learning courses to explore other alternatives such as scaffolded learning to achieve some of the outcomes of the individual courses; the desktop research approach drawing on past student research reports in Case A and an e-portfolio in Case B are examples. These are discussed in the next section.

4.7 Adapted course outcomes and assessment as a consequence of the pandemic

The data from across the two data sets showed that course adaptation and redesign of assessment as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic was driven by empathy for students during this time and the individual difficulties they faced while not compromising quality assurance. Scaffolding learning refers to a variety of instructional teaching and learning techniques used to support students progressively toward advanced understanding and developing independence in the learning process (Raymond, 2000).

4.7.1 Case A

A need for scaffolded learning was highlighted to support the curriculum redesign and students' ability to cope with the changes imposed by the pandemic. As a respondent put it *"Assessment is basically scaffolded"* (INT, A2) adding *"and the teaching approach basically is*

one that is also one that is supportive to students” (INT, A2). Students in the ELM course would have done some research on what mattered in their schools with respect to the teachers or learners. Another respondent explained that from identifying what mattered, the students “would have done an analysis to find out what change project they could have implemented on the issue that they felt, so the learner voice and teacher voice would have come out through that exercise” (INT, A1). This process would have led to “a teacher or learner driven intervention base, school-based/ community-based would have occurred. And then we went into lockdown” (INT, A1).

The move to online desktop research saw the coordinator providing students with completed research reports from past students. One respondent explained that *“I’m going to be providing each student with three research reports from previous years. We can just anonymize the reports” (INT, A2)* which was an effort to support learning and progressive understanding of the role of the interventionist approach (INT, A2). The course coordinator explained that *“I wanted to teach them all the different components of research in a way that was still doable and manageable. I didn’t want the actual curriculum to be compromised in any way” (INT, A2).* The participant mentioned receiving anxious calls from students as a result of the move to a desktop study and said that *“I just explained that no, these clubs now will cease to exist. Even if we go back to school at some point, teachers will already be under great pressure to complete the curriculum. They will not have space or time after school to run any club” (INT, A2).*

The course lecturer explained the thinking behind the scaffolding process and how it was carried out. She said

We asked ourselves, what can they learn from an intervention? And then how do we collect data and analyse data around the intervention because part of this Honours elective is to introduce students to research by doing research, because an Honours is a level seven qualification and, in a sense, it’s entry into a Master’s degree (INT, A1).

The coordinator explained that *“Students will be given a topic, ‘how has leadership developed through the intervention [in the provided research reports] and maybe some other specific research questions’, and then they’re going to do in depth analysis by looking at the findings*

across the three reports" (INT, A2), retaining the analysis and write-up stages of the research for students and adding to the growing set of ELM case studies (INT, A2). The lecturer explained that *"We realised that had we just continued the way things were, the students would not have been able to complete the Honours degree"* (INT, A1).

4.7.2 Case B

Guidance from the DHET helped shape the adaptation of teaching practice during COVID-19 and the preservation of the central focus on the role primary experience plays in learning, according to Experiential Learning Theory (Dwight & Eyler, 1994). In case B, learning also had to be scaffolded. As a respondent put it *"With things going online, the process needs to be scaffolded there's a little bit more scaffolding needed with online teaching practice than what they would have been with face to face"* (INT, B1). Deliberations between the DHET, stakeholders and the institution shaped the assessment from 'crit' lessons and teaching practice files to an e-portfolio and simulated learning. Respondent B1 explained *"We have had to redesign the course; they are still needing to do a TP file, but the Department of Education has instructed for fourth years and PGCEs to go out into schools only, and we added an e-portfolio"*. Students in the exit years were instead required to conduct micro teaching lessons with siblings or children in their communities, recording those lessons minding ethical principles, and submitting those recording for assessment. A participant explained that *"We have also incorporated many other aspects; for example, case studies and articles, school related articles, where we have had to then ask students to read and comment and reflect and reply on how they would handle specific situations in schools"* (INT, B1). This was supported by a comprehensive teaching themes activity book that was developed by the Teaching Practice team (INT, B2), and interventions from the Department of Higher Education and Training (INT, B1), to ensure successful completion of the academic year by students.

Explaining an empathetic approach adopted for the adaptation, a participant said that *"I think firstly it was taking care of the fears of the students who want to succeed and want to know what is going on"* (INT, B2). Another participant commented that *"We wanted to put together a teacher practice programme that will refresh students who were at home now for lockdown and had forgotten some things, we had to refresh their minds"* (INT, B2). Because of the fairly

large class size of teaching practice (FG, A2), the department took a decision to involve the entire staff in the assessment of the e-portfolios. *"The reason was that we needed to assess all students"* (INT, B2), said the course lecturer. Furthermore, the respondent added that *"we needed assessors to follow through with individual students throughout the course and oversee the progress students were making"* (INT, B2). The participant admitted that this system had its difficulties because *"Communication was hard"* (INT, B2), but *"having staff involved helped students feel connected to the department and campus, to know they are cared for"* (INT, B2). Reflecting on the decisions and implementation of the DHET directives the respondent explained *"So we developed it up to a point where it was quite complex, but it covered and assessed a lot"* (INT, B2). On the challenges of constant curriculum redesign the respondent felt that *"It was hard, because we didn't always know what was going on ourselves. Communication with students was a challenge, and sometimes caused friction because students are in different contexts"* (INT, B2). Ideally assessment should evaluate, suggests (Spicer, 2012); achievement of course goals and outcomes as set in course outlines, student demonstration of new knowledge, skills, and awareness, and the quality of student work in the community partner context.

4.7.3 Comment across the two cases: Scaffolding in learning and assessment

The adaptation approaches to assessment differed between the two cases, but both were able to preserve a carefully monitored service experience for students in which they had carefully considered learning goals and reflected actively on what they were learning throughout the duration of the experiences. The adjusted assessment criteria in both cases answers Kezar's (2002) question of whether the right outcomes are being identified, because *"what is assessed affects what is taught or emphasized in education"* (p. 15). Perhaps, going forward, service-learning lecturers could be encouraged to consider valuable areas of student development in service-learning that are currently ignored but perhaps should be included in assessment, areas such as community-building skills, interpersonal intelligence, moral reasoning and leadership development (Kezar, 2002).

Development, however, was not limited to students. Adaptive leadership development was noted in the participants leading the two cases which leads me to research question four of the study.

4.8 The development of adaptive leadership in the service-learning lecturers

Participants across both cases developed similar Type III adaptive leadership skills as a consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The situation was so complex, fluid and unexpected that the lecturers had no prior experience of how to tackle the challenges that arose as a consequence of the pandemic. Decisions were made in consultation with stakeholders in the different contexts, students in case A, and the DHET and schools in case B (FG, B2). Adaptive leadership, as mentioned in Chapter Two, takes on a context-sensitive approach to service-learning (Hlalele *et al.*, 2015), premised on consultation and collective decision making from all service partners. The participants in the two cases displayed a combination of Type II leadership traits approaching problem solving as a collaborative endeavour with the service partners and Type III leadership traits that require courageous leadership.

4.8.1 Honesty, courage and vulnerability

Leading service-learning during COVID-19 required honesty, courage and the ability to embrace vulnerability. *"We had to admit that we too were struggling, with the students"* (INT, A2); *"We had to learn together"*, explained a participant (INT, A1). These types of situations require the leader to demonstrate the need for redefining the often new context and initiate a change of priorities. A case B participant said that *"there were many aspects that we had to develop over time from the DHET"* (INT, B2); *"Then our department took the decision to involve the entire staff in the assessment"* (INT, B, 2) and *"with the job you have to interact and discuss things with the community and the different stakeholders as well"* (INT, B1). This vulnerability opened up space for collaborative mutual learning and development between the course participants and the community partners (INT, B2). It also led the shifting of power-relations as the institution and the community learned together, redefining the problem, changing priorities, and developing innovative solutions for the collective problem. The Type

III situation, explains Hlalele (2015), provides space for fruitful dialogue between the institutions and the community partners, but requires an honest and courageous leader who is not afraid to be vulnerable to the community partners. Commenting on the outcomes of collaboration during the pandemic a respondent said:; *“one of the discoveries this year is what a great advantage a hybrid system can be”* (FG, B2).

Further leadership attributes were developed by the participants.

4.8.2 Critical leadership attributes: Flexibility, adaptability and agility

Leadership skills are specific learned abilities that one needs to perform in a certain role successfully (Cooper, 2009). The Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University wrote in a letter addressed to staff in June 2020 (D, 10) on leadership, that what was perhaps critical for the university staff to survive a difficult and taxing time such as this was adaptability, flexibility, agility, a can-do attitude, and quick deliberation (INT, A1). Reflecting on the difficulties imposed by the difficulties on teaching and learning, Participant A1 explained: *“We had to think quite quickly on our feet to say what could we do to ensure that learning takes place despite the changes”* (INT, A1), Leadership development, one of the three outcomes of service-learning, along with contributing to local human and community development and improving the quality of academic learning within a specific discipline, extends to character and civic attitude development (Cooper, 2009). One participant agreed with the Vice-Chancellor of the university saying,

I think those are central leadership attributes during COVID-19, not deliberating for too long, you have to have quick deliberation and move ...I would add to that courage to take decisions, trusting your intuition and not being afraid of failure” (INT, A1).

This is illustrative of Bender (2006)’s point that one of the characteristics of leadership development is an ability to align service-learning with the learning philosophy, mission and vision of the educational institution.

A participant commented on the importance of being cognisant of student contexts. She quoted Karl Maton’s Legitimation Code Theory (with its emphasis on knowledge and knowers) as a tool which helped shape her leadership during the global pandemic. She explained that prior to the pandemic *“I wasn’t thinking about the students and the pedagogical space that*

allows them to actually learn at a time like this, but this is something I have now had to be intentional about" (INT, A2). What emerged from the data is how the unprecedented situation gave academics involved in service-learning no other option but to develop their skills in one way or another. As one put it, *"I'm also slowly developing also as a leader by trying to find alternative ways of kind of taking initiative in certain aspects"* (INT, A2). Of particular mention across the two cases was the development of technological competencies and a heightened regard for ethical care.

4.8.3 Technological skill development

Three of the four participants in this study said their technological competencies developed as a consequence of the pandemic. Participants shared the need to develop technological skills in order to participate in teaching and learning and departmental affairs on online platforms: *"I think the first word I must be very honest, is technological skills. I'm not very good with technology"* (INT, A2), *"the demands of being technologically literate are there"* (INT, A1), and *"moving the teaching online was a big challenge, but we managed"* (INT, B2). Another participant developed asynchronous teaching skills which were not part of her initial training as an educator and academic explaining *"So I mostly go asynchronous teaching route also",* and *"realising that we have our students are mature students, it is not practical to say you must come in online at one o'clock"* (INT, A2). Asynchronous teaching through online platforms as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic involves the lecturer in creating structure to support learning at the student's own pace and space (Finol, 2020), and requires much from the lecturer as an ethical carer.

4.8.4 A heightened ethic of care and an acknowledgment of insecurity and vulnerability

The role of the university lecturer as a pastoral carer was heightened during the global pandemic, bringing a level of vulnerability to both students and staff. Participants from both service-learning cases found themselves having to be more mindful of the wellbeing of students and themselves more than was necessary prior the global pandemic. Highlighting an expansion of existing ethical care rather than a new development, a participant said, *"I think more than anything one needed to heighten their existing skills during this time"* (INT, B2).

Another agreed: *"I've always been one to care for students, always my students were first, I always had the caring nature. But I think against the situation of the pandemic, the pastoral role has been heightened"* (INT, B2), suggesting that the COVID-19 developed in academic staff an ethic of care, placing the wellbeing of students at the centre of teaching and learning during this time. Another participant highlighted an increased regard for social justice in the teaching and learning process saying *"I grappled for a while because the social justice issue worried me"* (INT, B1), a comment elaborated on by another respondent who said, *"I don't want to widen the gap between the privileged and the non-privileged, so that becomes an issue for me"* (INT, A2).

4.8.4.1 Ethical care and social justice

From the ethical care experienced by the academics in the service-learning arose a regard for social justice. Positioning ethics of care and social justice in leadership, a participant asked: *"If we are defining leadership as a process of change, disrupting the status quo, then we ask 'What is the purpose of the change? Is it for social justice? For a selfish initiative?'"* (FG, A1). The participant continued: *"Whatever it might be. What COVID-19 has done is it forced us into leadership"* (FG, A1). Mitchell (2008) attributes this heightened regard for the well-being of others to the social and critical stance of leadership, saying "the critical approach model considers issues of social justice, equality, and maintenance of positive relationships" (p. 62). This development and growth towards a more just teaching and learning experience involves working with people who are closely affected by underlying social problems in a given context, to find ways of addressing their problems (Osmon and Petersen, 2013) (2013). A move away from traditional ways of cognition pre-COVID-19 requires from staff leading service-learning a responsiveness to societal and individual issues affecting students, to find the best possible solutions and to identify opportunities to create a more just and equal teaching and learning experience. Seeking to make students understand that the staff share in the struggles of the students, the case A coordinator wrote: *"I am aware there is still a lot of anxiety regarding the future in light of the pandemic; sadly, I am just as anxious as you are"* (D, 8). Another participant explained: *"I guess vulnerability to students links to something like humility. I guess if I were speaking to the students, as the coordinator or lecturer it's okay to*

say we don't know, to be up front instead of pretending" (INT, A1); (INT, B1). This required regular assurance to students about the support from staff: *"If people know that they are safe with you, and that you are there to ensure things go well, that helps"* (INT, B2). On the importance of assurance and communication as students are away from staff and off-campus because of the COVID-19 global pandemic a participant said, *"One also needs to communicate in a positive, productive way"* (INT, B2), and another said: *"And then say we are learning together, making the students feel secure"* (INT, A1). Hlalele (2015) speaks of the focus of service-learning in South Africa as "usually on addressing the needs of marginalized and often impoverished communities that are within travelling distance from the university" (p. 171). A participant explained that *"In a sense we are much more vulnerable; part of this is exciting, but it also leaves us with much more anxiety and stress"* (FG, A1).

Mitchell (2008) cautions that all forms of community service do not equally develop an ethic of care, a flowering of a mature identity, and an advancement of our understanding of community. However, I argue that these two service-learning courses developed an ethic of care to varying degrees. The often-ignored political nature of service-learning that seeks social justice for all (Mitchell, 2008) was brought forward by the global pandemic in both cases. Communities of practice within the courses and the department assisted immensely in this regard.

4.9 Communities of practice as reflective spaces for academics

Dealing collaboratively with COVID-19 implications provided space and opportunity for the development of communities of practice across the two cases. I discuss both cases in this section.

Reflective practice is a critical component of development in service-learning. This component has always been stressed for student development through service-learning engagements (learner or teacher leadership clubs for Case A, and interactions with learners and teachers in local schools in Case B); however, the pandemic has shown that it is a practice just as critical for service-learning academic staff. A participant noted: *"I developed a little bit more critical thinking skills; I have actually become a bit more critical"* (INT, A2), referring to

her own reasoning and practice. This manifested in continuous and more rigorous reflection for the participant as it relates to teaching and learning. *"I've learnt to be more reflective"*, she added, and *"I found that I need to think about the students' situations very carefully, and not make undue demands"* (INT, A2). Drawing on her own practice during the focus group interview another participant agreed that *"being a reflective practitioner and being critical of your own way of doing things is important. For example, when I sent all those emails. Even though I understood the purpose of the emails, I had to adjust as I got feedback"* (FG, B2). Sharing the difficulties of getting into the habit of constantly evaluating oneself, another participant added: *"It is not easy, it's not easy to work with practice and constantly reflecting, there are so many variables!"* (FG, B2). Individual reflective practice expanded to collective practice through communities of practice.

Communities of practice are organised groups of people with a common interest who work collaboratively for mutual development and the sharing of information and skills reflecting on their common learning (Wenger, 2000). On the nature of communities of practice, Wenger (2000) suggests that the success of organisations depends on their ability to participate in broader systems in their region, fields and industries. He adds: *"It is therefore useful to strive to develop these modes of belonging in combination, balancing the limitations of one with the work of another"* (Wenger, 2000, p. 229), highlighting the value each individual brings to the collective. In both cases in my study, the participants led the service-learning courses as teams.

A participant in case A described how the team works collaboratively: *"So *Participant A2 is the coordinator and basically, she calls on me when she feels the need or where we think there's an initiative for something to change or grow"* (INT, A1). On the development of communities of practice, the participant shared her appreciation saying: *"COVID has forced us to come together"*, and in the process, *"we brainstormed together"* (FG, A). The mentoring of colleagues is but one of the many benefits of communities of practice as the participant put it: *"The criteria speak about mentoring other people in and allowing other people to take the lead"* (INT, A1).

The team of colleagues in case B and the various stakeholders served as a community of practice, working collaboratively for the successful undertaking of the service activities during a global pandemic. Describing the role of the course B team in the larger learning system, a participant said:

Our role is to create opportunities for people from different backgrounds to learn from one another, and we get to be a part of that ... If we manage this process well and support one another in unfamiliar contexts, it builds new understanding- so people can see there is a future” (INT, B2).

On the benefits of communities of practice the case B coordinator said: *“It has been a challenging time, but the team, shall I say, in general, has been a support system” (INT, B1).* Another participant commented: *“In a sense we feel that COVID has opened up what everyone is doing, it has exposed us and opened the classroom doors”*. Online teaching and learning platforms such as Zoom and an in-house Rhodes University Learning Management platform called RUConnected have assisted in this regard (INT, B2).

Clayton and Ash (2004) suggest that faculties and departments ought to create a safe space for discussions and reflection on uncomfortable topics that might challenge students and staff on service-engagement, notions of privilege, identity, culture, and social justice. Establishing these safe spaces can be increasingly difficult using virtual platforms, as is the case during the COVID-19 global pandemic, but they are possible. These collaborations influenced changes made to the curriculum as a consequence of the pandemic.

4.10 A review of policy responsiveness to the pandemic

Rhodes University undertook a review of its Community Engagement policy in the last quarter of 2020.

The community engagement policy review process commenced in the last quarter of 2020. The process was driven by a need to update the language used in the previous policy and to factor in various structural, conceptual and practical developments of the institution since the initial policy document was written (D, 11). Furthermore, the review sought to emphasise the institution’s commitment *“to strive through community service to contribute to the development of the Eastern Cape and South Africa” (D, 7)*. This is realised though facilitated

development by the institution by making available the university's expertise, resources and facilities to the local and provincial community realising its vision of *“being a socially responsive institution through community engagement and the scholarship of engagement”*, through community engagement (D, 7). The policy not only brings forward the university's aims and commitment as it relates to community engagement and service-learning but aligns the ideals of the university with national policy (D, 11). The policy *“provides guidelines for the institutionalisation of community engagement as a core function alongside teaching & learning and research, at the university, reflecting the university's values of being contextually responsive and working for the public good”* (D, 11). Consequently, the policy is binding and guiding to all university staff, students and community partners and implemented and regulated by the Rhodes University Community Engagement office. The policy sets out the following responsibilities amongst others, for smaller university units such as departments and individual courses:

- *“Actively create opportunities for staff and student involvement in community engagement activities.*
- *Where appropriate, to involve students in the department in community engagement activities that enhance their discipline-specific learning, their social responsiveness, and their sense of social and civic responsibility. To involve students in the department in community engagement activities which bring the research and application of discipline-specific knowledge to bear on community development.*
- *Adhere to the guidelines of best practice and ethical standards for community engagement.*
- *Communicate the guidelines and ethical standards for community engagement to staff and students (D, 7).*

The reviewed policy, however, does not in any way allude to a revised strategy and/or approach to service engagement during a pandemic. When asked if the policy adjustment was due to challenges posed by COVID-19, the Director of Community Engagement said: *“We have revised our policy which is very old. Much has changed so I have attached the new policy and protocol document which is on its way through the approval process”* (D, 11). The

following new principles were added to the list of principles presented in chapter two in the revised policy:

- **Power:** *All parties involved in community engagement activities must have a critical awareness of the power dynamics in the relationship between the University and the community partner(s).*
- **Mutual respect, equality, and inclusion:** *Community engagement activities should always strive to acknowledge and respect the agency and diversity of all individuals involved and follow an asset-based approach to community development.*
- **Sustainability not Dependency:** *Community engagement activities must promote the sustainability of the engagement.*
- **Privacy and informed consent:** *All community engagement activities must be carried out in ways which respect the privacy of all members of the community.*
- **Accountability:** *Participants in community engagement projects are expected to behave in an honest, trustworthy and reliable fashion, and are accountable for the honesty and reliability of their reports on community engagement activities.*
- **Risk Assessment:** *All community engagement activities must include an analysis of the possible risks and benefits and should take appropriate measures for the minimisation of risks to university staff and students as well as members of the community. (D, 7)*

One could argue that not enough has been done at Rhodes University to analyse the manifold Community Engagement and Teaching and Learning (community engagement and service-learning sections) policies with the intention to evaluate their appropriateness at the time of the COVID-19 global pandemic. It appears that the review process of 2020 in the middle of a pandemic did not offer any guidance for service engagement during this time (D, 11). There was no guidance on ideal class size during COVID (FG, A2) and appropriate assessment (FG, B2) for example. This silence in the policy leaves those who lead service-learning courses with room to exercise agency and initiative, but it also fosters uncertainty on whether decisions made to sustain service-learning in the community setting are in line with the university's ideals. A participant during the focus group interview said: *"I think you make a really good point about how the department needs to be explicit about service-learning"* (FG, A1).

Furthermore, highlighting the need for policy discussion at department and/or course level, the participant said, *“I think we should discuss these policies and university guidelines and make them more explicit and see if there are more principles so we can take them forward”* (FG, A1). Hay and Monnapula-Mapesele (2009) identify policy as the main driver and source of innovation for what the democratic university should look like in a developing country and global environment that is constantly transforming. Bender (2006) agrees, alluding to policy responsiveness to societal issues as critical in asserting the role of service-learning as an extension of classroom learning into the community.

Having now responded to each of the research questions guiding my study, in the next section I propose a service-based alternative approach to service-learning during a pandemic.

4.11 An alternative service-based approach to conceptualising service-learning

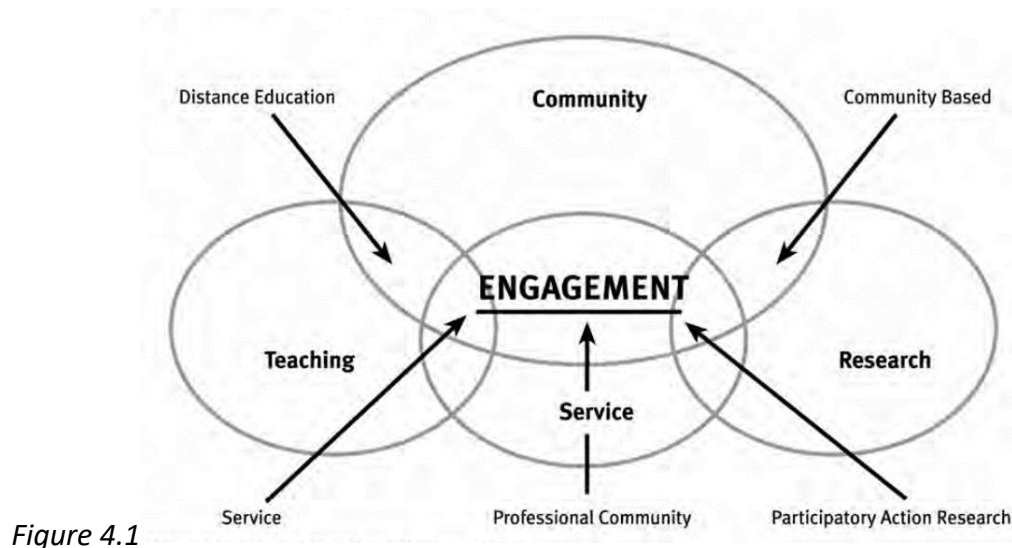


Figure 4.1 which I have referred to a number of times in this thesis, shows what the institution brings into the service engagement, teaching, service, and participatory action research. The two cases presented examples of these components in varying degrees and showed how the components connected to community-based learning. To remind the reader, in figure 4,1, the community is represented in the largest circle which brings research, teaching and service together and through which they interact, and to which professional community efforts,

distance learning, participatory research and service are directed. This approach, explains Watt, Ettinger, Pitiphat, and Horowitz (2020), is designed to respond to community-identified concerns and needs, and therefore encourages broader social change and development through research, teaching and professional community efforts (Watt *et al.*, 2010). True to Experiential Learning Theory, the interaction between these components creates space for critical reflection (Watt, *et al.*, 2010) and the practice of academic learning in the community setting. Having completed my study, I propose an extension of this understanding with a service-based approach to service-learning.

A service-based approach to service-learning, I argue, entails a multi-component intervention that combines individual and environmental change strategies across multiple settings, aiming to promote the well-being of all partners in a defined community setting. The service-based approach puts service at the centre of the engagement, and not the community, yielding service-based research, service-based community engagement, and service-based teaching. This approach strives to broaden the service circle in Figure 4.1, as seen in the following diagram:

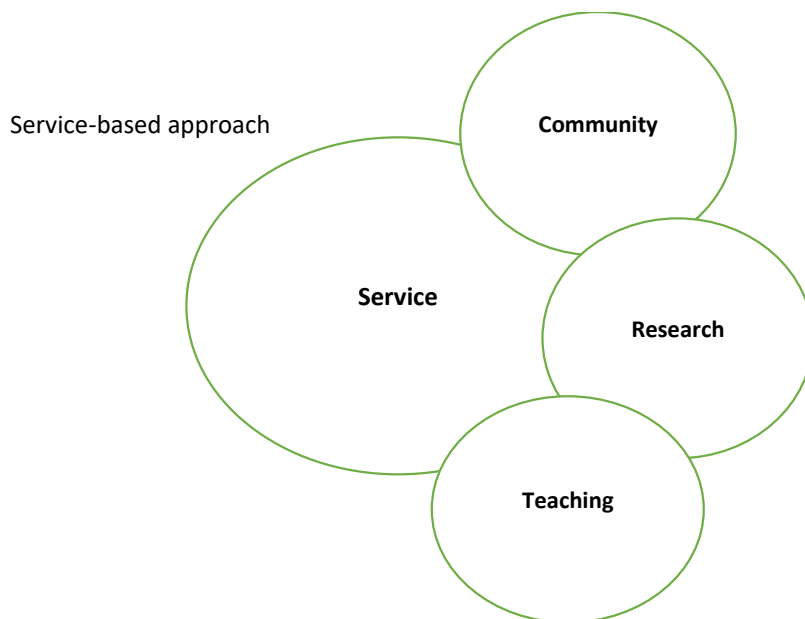


Figure 4.2

I now discuss the state of the two service-learning courses as a consequence of the COVID-19 global pandemic, using the service-based approach to service-learning presented in Figure 4.2.

4.11.1 Case A: A virtual community, accessed through the research reports

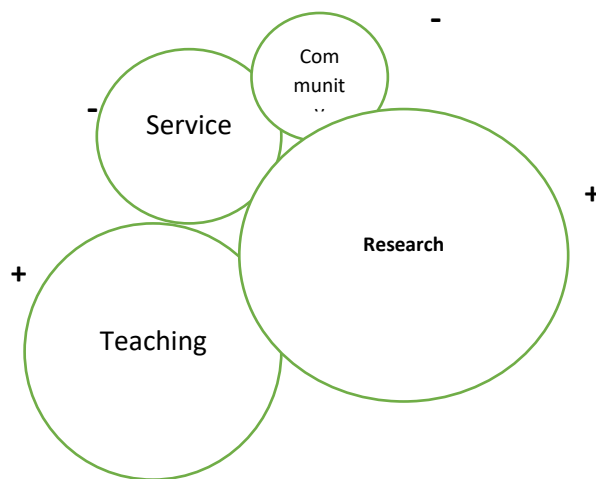


Figure 4.3

In case A, the Educational Leadership and Management Honours elective, service-learning is understood as an interventionist approach to learning, providing students and learners/teachers in school contexts an opportunity to develop leadership through learner leadership (D, 13) clubs/professional learning communities. Unfortunately, as a consequence of COVID-19, the learner leadership clubs/PLCs ceased to exist and the change agency opportunity for students was lost as depicted in Figure 3 with the smaller service-learning and community circles. However, service was not completely wiped out as it was partially achieved through the analysis of the research reports (D, 12). As a consequence, the research capacity in the elective expanded significantly through a desktop approach to research. Scaffolded teaching, learning and assessment was adjusted accordingly, helping to maintain

relatively the same level of teaching seen pre-COVID-19. I argue, therefore, that a service-based approach to service would assist in establishing service that is independent of the conditions and constraints of the community context, minimising the possibility of completely losing the service component as a result of community-based threats such as COVID-19.

4.11.2 Case B: A retained yet reduced community

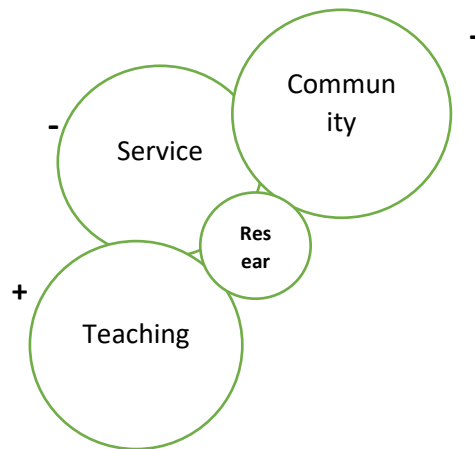


Figure 4.4

In case B, a Work Integrated Learning Teaching Practice course, service-learning is understood vaguely, highlighting a need for discussion of service-learning and its principles to aid understanding. During the global pandemic service and community engagement reduced significantly with the focus only on exit years (Bachelor of Education fourth year and PGCE students) as directed by the Department of Higher Education and Training and stakeholders, as seen in figure 4.4 while teaching increased with scaffolded learning, and research remained minimal, highlighting a possible area of improvement.

4.11.3 A few closing comments

In the service-based alternative model (Figure 4.2), service is defined as the acts of helping and/or doing work with others (Bender, *et al.*, 2006) through inter-connected teaching, research and time spent in the defined community. The COVID-19 fluid global environment made it almost impossible for university students to go into and perform service in the

physical community-based service-learning spaces (schools in Cases A and B), resulting in the need for a variable community setting. In this service-based engagement, as depicted in Figure 4.2, the learning experience will be informed by teaching and teaching by the service experience. Research will inform service and vice versa, the defined community setting (which is relative and changes according to project conditions) will be informed by service and service by the community setting. Furthermore, this approach has the potential to amplify civic duty through education, with the potential to alter civic mindfulness and responsibility, extending the notion of education for individual advancement and gain (Bender, Daniels, Lazarus, Naude, & Sattar, 2006) to that of education through service in relation to a defined community setting.

4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the data and discussed the study findings guided by the five research questions. The next chapter concludes the thesis and I summarise the main findings and thereafter make recommendations for future practice and research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter of this thesis, I begin with a recollection of the research goals and the questions of this study and provide a synopsis of the research findings. I then explain the limitations of the study, the value I believe this research holds, and the contribution it has the potential to make in higher education and in the field of service-learning within community engagement. This chapter also offers some recommendations for practice and further research in service-learning and reflects on the value of the alternative model to service-learning introduced in chapter 4. Furthermore, I share my experience of using Experiential Learning Theory to undergird the study, and the difficulties I encountered in conceptualising a service-learning study. Lastly, I provide my final thoughts on this research journey, and conclude the chapter.

5.2 The goals and questions of the study

To remind the reader, the goals of this research were to highlight the importance of service-learning as a component of the curriculum, and to determine the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on this aspect of learning in two service-learning courses and the leadership of those who lead it. I sought to understand service-learning and its design from the lived experiences of academic staff members who lead the courses, understand how the academics and the work that they do has been impacted by the pandemic, as well as encourage intra-departmental conversation, reflection and collaboration between the two courses. The study also sought to determine the responsiveness of institutional policies as they relate to service-learning during a pandemic and contribute to development and sustainability thoughts of service-learning in higher education through presenting an alternative service-based model to service-learning. This was achieved through exploring the following five research questions:

1. How do the participants understand service-learning?

2. How were the service-learning courses initially designed and to what purpose?
3. How have the service-learning courses had to change in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. What leadership skills, knowledge and attributes are required of service-learning lecturers in response to a global pandemic such as COVID-19?
5. What evidence is there of policy responsiveness to ensure the sustainability of service-learning during a pandemic?

Data were gathered through document analysis, semi-structured individual interviews, and a focus group interview. Next, I summarise the findings of this study.

5.3 Summary of research findings

Service-learning is an international reform embedded in the higher education curriculum, seeking to achieve two major outcomes, namely linking academic learning with practical work in a community setting through meaningful and relevant experiences, and developing a civic mind (Butin, 2006). The findings suggest that service-learning plays a significant role in holistic development of students in the two cases at Rhodes University, this even though some participants have a limited understanding of service-learning and the principles that guide it within Rhodes University. Furthermore, the COVID-19 global pandemic negatively affected the delivery of the two service-learning courses and their course outcomes, consequently altering the design of the courses to ensure successful completion by students. Through the lens of Experiential Learning Theory, the study found that learning took place through the adjusted curriculum learning experience, despite limited interaction with the community partners, limited understanding of service learning, and a conflation arising out of whether Teaching Practice is a service-learning or a work integrated learning course (Case B), and absence from the community setting in Case A. Furthermore, learning was extended to the staff leading the two service-learning courses at Rhodes University. The leadership development of the academic staff leading the courses developed as a consequence of the global pandemic through the acquisition of several skills and competencies, but mostly technological skills, pastoral care, collaboration, a heightened regard for social justice, and Type II and III adaptive leadership skills. The pandemic opened up spaces for dialogue,

developing in the participants abilities to approach problem solving collaboratively, combining their expertise and experiences with those of the community partners. The leadership further developed the Type II leadership traits through fostering spaces of mutual learning and development in a global pandemic which the participants as leaders in their courses had no prior experience of. Service-learning courses, suggests Cooper (1999) have three objectives: contributing to local human and community development, improving the quality of academic learning within a specific discipline, and improving the leadership and civic character development of staff and students involved in the course. These objectives, during the COVID-19 global pandemic, were partially achieved in the two cases.

The data suggests, however, that there is a need for responsive service-engagement policies in the institution and a focus on the understanding of the policies in smaller university units such as departments and individual courses. A few areas of issues, for example ideal service-learning class size and the understanding or roles between the university and community in the partnership, require clarity through policy, though this may not necessarily have been an issue of concern prior to the pandemic. An alternative service-based approach to service-learning I believe is a starting point to re-imagining and thinking critically and creatively about the sustainability of service-learning, and the value that can be yielded from this scholarship of engagement, even in times of crisis.

To address the disruption and need for redesign and adjustment of community-based service-learning at a time of crisis such as the global pandemic, the study suggested an alternative service-based approach to service-learning that instead of designing service to be community-based (dependent on community conditions) service-learning should alternatively be service-based, designed and conceptualised in relation to the defined service activity.

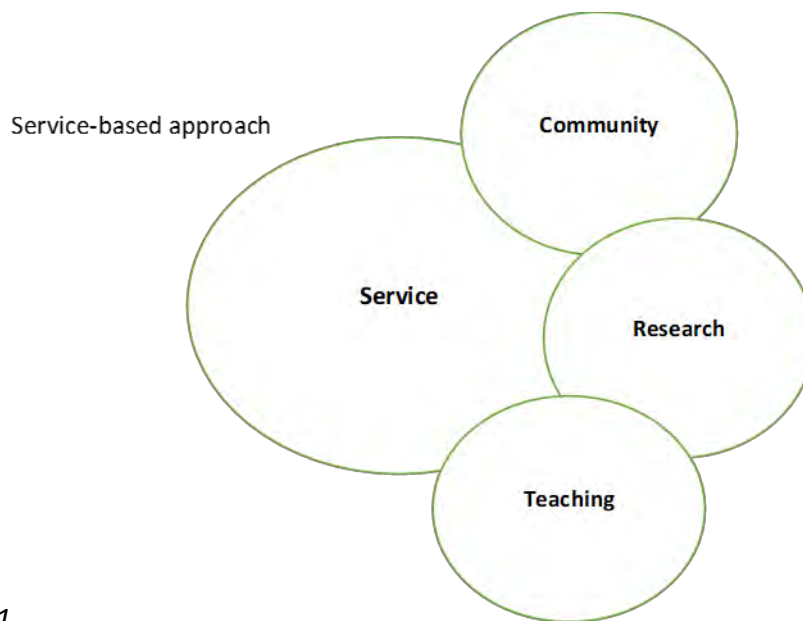


Figure 5, 1

Service-based service-learning shifts the basis of the service engagement from the community to the service itself, presenting a situation where research, teaching and the defined community adapt to the conditions of the service engagement, conditions which are agreed upon by all service partners. The approach has the potential to change the narrative about universities going into communities to take from them, instead, positioning the institutions as co-learners, improving mutual benefit. Furthermore, the alternative model (depicted in Figure 4.2) has the potential to redress the isolation of research from practice, furthering the ideals of 'scholarship of engagement', a move from education just for the job market and advancement to education for civic responsibility. Boyer (1996, p. 26) suggests that "The academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement".

The benefits of a service-based model, as indicated in Figure 5.1, are fluid adaptable service defined by and tailor-suited to individual community settings. It encourages a move from seeing community engagement, teaching and learning and research as three separate components to seeing components which infuse and enrich one another through service. Perhaps, more importantly, during a time of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, through a service-based model, major changes or crises to the community, teaching and research will

not threaten the existence and going concern of service, at least not entirely, as has been the case with the restrictions imposed by the global pandemic on communities. Furthermore, the service-based service-learning approach has the potential to improve reciprocal relations between academic learning and the service experience, ensuring that service experiences inform and transform the academic learning and the academic learning does the same to the service experience. A service-based community engagement model calls for institutions to demonstrate service by making their expertise and infrastructure available and extending the community engagement partnerships beyond student learning in practice, to a commitment both to the common good and to practical social responsibility (Bender *et al.*, 2006).

This service-based approach in no way takes away from the value of placing the community at the centre of service, but rather contends that the community, teaching and research share equal importance in the university-community partnership, as each influences service and is influenced by service. The alternative model brings to the forefront the potential for service to drive teaching, research and community engagement, and for these three components to drive service in any defined context.

5.4 Reflections on the use of Experiential Learning Theory as a conceptual framework

I found Experiential Learning Theory to be a useful theory to understand service-learning. Through the experiential cycle I grew to understand that even though the community experience ceased to exist in case A and was limited in case B with student experience in the community setting lost and at times limited, learning still took place through a different kind of experience supported by scaffolded learning and mixed modal learning in a structured learning setting, albeit at a distance in some instances. Students continued to feel the tangible and intangible parts of the experience across a continuum. Moreover, because students continued to learn in a structured learning experience, the experience was followed by opportunities to reflect on the experience, the role of the student and the environment in the experience, as Dwight and Elyer suggest (2004). As required by Experiential Learning Theory this reflection was followed by conceptualisations and drawing conclusions from the experience which guide the next step namely shaping future action (Mukherjee, 2016).

5.5 Limitations of the study

Study limitations, describes Simmons (2009), are potential weaknesses in the research that are out of the researcher's control, yet have the potential to impact or restrict the methods and analysis of the collected data. The study was limited to two cases in one university department in one institution, so the results can only be applicable to the original two cases or cases with very similar characteristics. However, if the readers of this thesis find it fitting, it is possible to reflect on findings of this study to understand or compare with other similar contexts. Furthermore, the study had only four participants who were directly involved in the service-learning courses which was deemed sufficient by the Higher Degrees Committee in my institution. Increasing the number of participants or the number of cases might have strengthened the study. Another limitation, the minimal availability of updated policies in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic in the institution, made it difficult to ascertain the view of the institution on the matters that arose in this study. I therefore relied on the lived experiences of the participants and the conversations that took place in the focus interview when the participants were brought together. The study also excluded the lived experiences of the community partners, with a focus only on the university staff leading the service-learning courses.

Lastly, the absence of a comprehensive theoretical framework to understand service-learning was another limitation. Scholars attribute this to limited available research in the field. The findings of this study could have been enriched through the analysis of the different components of service-learning within a university setting, through a comprehensive theoretical framework. This however does not take away from the value of this study.

5.6 Value of the study

Despite the limitations I have highlighted above I believe this study is valuable in a number of ways. Firstly, research on the COVID-19 global pandemic and its effect on service-learning and leadership is limited and this study adds to the limited research base in the fields of community engagement, service-learning, and leadership. Secondly, the study highlights possible areas of development and further research in the above-mentioned fields, as it

relates not only to the current global pandemic, but to national and global crises in general and the effect on teaching and learning in higher education.

Thirdly, the research provides valuable insights for the institution under study, the department and the individual courses on the operations, policy, and responsiveness to a changing environment. It provides insight into how service engagement policy might be shaped, reviewed and developed going forward and how policy can shape and develop the partnership relationship between the institution and community partners. Moreover, the study provides practical examples of how service-learning has been affected by the global pandemic and the potential that exists to develop this component of learning.

Lastly, the service-learning staff at the institution of study might be interested in drawing on the findings of this study to plan for the short-term and long-term future of service-learning and community engagement in their department. The focus group was an invaluable starting point for conversations and collaboration for mutual development of the leadership of academic staff and the greater good of the field in the department and in the wider institution.

5.7 Recommendations for further research

This study drew on two cases in one department in one university. There is room to expand the study to more departments and faculties within the institution and to other institutions in the province and the country. It is likely that the form of service-learning varies according to faculties, so there is room for exploring different models of service engagement across faculties and institutions. The impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on community engagement is another opportunity, expanding the analysis to forms of community engagement other than service-learning.

Further, there is room to further interrogate the two cases and tease out the extent to which they are service learning, work integrated learning, or other forms of community engagement within their specified contexts. Understanding the make-up of the courses will assist the department to structure the best possible course structures, delivery, and interaction with community partners. This will improve the quality of the courses.

There is also potential to approach this study from the perspective and lived experiences of community partners. There is minimal research available from this perspective, especially in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa. The form and shape of the community partnerships is also an interesting model to explore, through Experiential Learning Theory.

Lastly, there is room for development in service-learning policies through research; the service-based approach is an effort towards this.

5.8 My final thoughts

I thought I was a bit ambitious when I registered for an MEd degree. Through this study, I have gained invaluable knowledge of the field of community engagement and service-learning, and immeasurable insight into my own practice as a service-learning practitioner and researcher. I have also discovered many aspects to take further in my research. My research skills, the foundations of which were laid in my Honours years, developed significantly through this study, and I learnt much about my role as an insider interpretivist researcher. Furthermore, because of this study I signed up for a community-based service-learning course that has transformed my understanding of service in the community setting since so many doors and opportunities opened up. I have grown academically, as a professional and service practitioner. Dewey, theorising Experiential Learning theory asks the question, *"How is it that experiences are educative?"* (Dwight & Eyler, 1994, p. ??). He emphasises the point that learning is an active learning process with strong emphasis on reflection and analysis. His work has helped me understand that learning did take place in the two cases despite the global pandemic, even though this learning took on a different form from the original plans and course designs. This has helped me understand the learning and reflective practice of the participants as leaders in their respective courses, and ultimately my own role and practice through this research study.

5.9 Conclusion

This study investigated the curriculum adjustment and leadership development in two service-learning courses at Rhodes University as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. To promote the value of service-learning and contribute to service dialogue and sustainability,

the study offered an alternative model to understanding service-learning, from a service-based perspective and as means to develop service-learning and promote sustainability. The COVID-19 global pandemic required a responsiveness from leaders of service-learning and policy and drew on the adaptive leadership of participants to ensure the carrying out of service-learning, albeit significantly adapted. Responsiveness to the issues that the pandemic continues to present to service-learning at Rhodes University presents opportunities for collaborative development within individual courses and departments, and in the university-community partnership. As Kezar (2002) suggests, a move away from traditional ways of cognition prior to COVID-19 requires a responsiveness to current societal issues, and proactive leadership to find the best possible solutions and to identify opportunities to use those solutions for the benefit and preservation of the higher education- society partnership through service-learning. Beck (2020) suggests that any deep crisis is an opportunity to make life extraordinary in some way. Service through crisis is one possible way.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of informed consent to study participants

Education Department
RHODES UNIVERSITY
h.khuhlane@gmail.com
h.khuhlane@ru.ac.za

Dear Participant

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN SERVICE-LEARNING RESEARCH STUDY

I am a Master's student in the field of Educational Leadership Management in the Education department at Rhodes University, and also employed as a Manager and Teaching Practice Coordinator in the same department. I am conducting research on the following topic, **CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN TWO SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES AT RHODES UNIVERSITY AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**. The research sub-questions are as follows;

1. How were the service-learning courses initially designed and to what purpose?
2. How have the service-learning courses had to change in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What leadership skills, knowledge and attributes are required of service-learning lecturers in response to a global pandemic such as COVID-19?
4. What evidence is there of policy responsiveness to ensure the sustainability of service-learning during a pandemic?

I invite you to please assist me in conducting this research with your permission and willingness to participate. I plan on working with two service-learning courses, interviewing and working with the four coordinators that lead these courses as follows; Teaching Practice 3 course at third year level (course code 9110039) and Bachelor of Education Honours, focusing only on the Educational Leadership and Management (ELM) elective (9073200) both in the Education Department.

I undertake to work ethically by obtaining your written consent should you be interested. You will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences. Once the study is concluded; I will make available to you and the Human Resources department the findings of my research.

I will conduct an individual semi-structured interview with you for approximately 30 minutes, and later once I have drawn findings a focus interview with you and the other three

participating coordinators for approximately an hour. I will also be conducting document analysis using university documents in the public domain, such as the Institutional Development Plan and course outlines. If you could please provide me with a course outline of your course, this will only be used for data generation purposes, and not in any way to assess your course.

At a time when universities and higher education at large are finding ways to continue teaching and learning despite the global pandemic; understanding how service-learning as a component of the curriculum is impacted by the pandemic and evolving- will give coordinators and the Rhodes University an opportunity to understand the impact, but also to identify opportunities of ensuring sustainability and continuity. Moreover, this understanding on the two cases will present opportunities for inter-departmental collaboration for the coordinators that lead the service-learning components of the curriculum, contributing to ideas informing the university and perhaps the sector on how best to reshape service-learning during and post the pandemic.

I am aware that talking about the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic might cause distress, and that focus group interview might pose power struggles amongst academics from different departments and faculties, and on different ranks. However, I will seek to mitigate the situation so that every participant's view is listened to and treated with respect at all times. Should you at any stage feel the need to pull out of the study, you may do so.

Please feel free to communicate with me or my Supervisors Professor INTA1 Grant and Dr INTA2 Kajee at c.grant@ru.ac.za and f.kajee@ru.ac.za respectively, should you require further information about this endeavour.

Yours sincerely

Heide Khuhlane
072 294 8748

Appendix B: Ethical Clearance Certificate



Education Faculty
PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140, South Africa
t: +27 (0) 46 603 8393
f: +27 (0) 46 603 8028
e: e.rosenberg@ru.ac.za

www.ru.ac.za

g09K4027@campus.ru.ac.za

Dear Heide Khuhlane

Your application for the study provisionally titled "Curriculum adjustment and leadership development in two Service-Learning courses at a University in the Eastern Cape as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic" (1464) has been reviewed by the Education Faculty Ethics Committee.

Ethics approval has been granted pending the required Permission Letters being obtained from the organisations listed in your application. These are: The University's Human Resources Director.

Your application can be downloaded as a PDF and forwarded with your permission letter request. Please refer to the Applicant User Guide for how to do so. Once you have received the required permission letter/s please forward it to the Education Ethics Coordinator in order for your approval to be finalised.

For comments from the Education Faculty Ethics Committee please refer to your online form.

Sincerely

Professor Eureta Rosenberg

Chair: Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Appendix C: Gatekeeper's Permission Letter



23 June 2020

Ms Heide Khuhlane
Education Department
RHODES UNIVERSITY

Dear Ms Khuhlane

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH RHODES UNIVERSITY STAFF AND/OR STUDENTS

This letter is to confirm that your request to conduct research on ***“Curriculum adjustment and leadership development in two Service-Learning courses at a University in the Eastern Cape as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic”*** topic has been approved by the Ethics Committee. In my capacity as Acting HR Director, I do not have any objection should you wish to follow a coordinated approach by surveying and/or interviewing staff.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S Robertson
Acting HR Director

Appendix D: Participant consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(Participant)

Project Title: **CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN TWO SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES AT RHODES UNIVERSITY AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Heide Khuhlane (g09k4027) from the Department of Education, Rhodes University has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to investigate how the service-learning course that I lead might have been impacted by the Covid-19 global pandemic.
2. The Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. I will be interviewed individually and in a focus group by Heide Khuhlane (not exceeding 30 minutes).
4. By participating in this research project, I will be contributing towards Ms Khuhlane's understanding of service-learning as it relates to the Covid-19 global pandemic.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research.
7. I reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any point, with no harm.
8. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that:
 - a. the following risks are associated with my participation: **During the focus group interview I might be asked to elaborate on the information (that is not confidential) I shared in the individual interview. The interview will be used as a starting point for discussion amongst the coordinators.**

- b. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: **All information shared in the group is strictly confidential and shall not be used for purposes other than the explained research.**
9. The researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of a Masters' thesis submitted towards a Masters' degree in Education, and perhaps later in the form of a journal article. However, confidentiality and will be maintained.
 10. I will receive feedback in the form of a short report regarding the results obtained during the study.
 11. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Heide Khuhlane (h.khuhlane@gmail.com), or the study supervisor Professor C Grant (c.grant@ru.ac.za) and Dr F Kajee (f.kajee@ru.ac.za).
 12. By signing this informed consent declaration I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
 13. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.

I, have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

..... Participant's signature	 Witness	 Date
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Rhodes University, Research Office, Ethics
 Ethics Coordinator: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za
 t: +27 (0) 46 603 7335 f: +27 (0) 82 739 4378
 Room 220, Main Admin Building, Drostdy Road, Grahamstown, 6139

Appendix E: Individual Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

Research question: **CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN TWO SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES AT RHODES UNIVERSITY AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Please give me the name and background of the service-learning course that you are leading.
2. When did the course start, and how was the course designed when it started?
3. Have there been any challenges in delivering the course as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak?
4. How have you had to redesign the course to ensure continuity during and post the Covid-19?
5. How have these changes challenged you as a service-learning coordinator?
6. Is there anything else that you would like to mention?

Thank you very much for your participation.

Appendix F: Focus Group Interview Schedule

Focus Group Interview Schedule

Date: 09 December 2020

Research topic: **CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN TWO SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES AT RHODES UNIVERSITY AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Aim: The aim of this focus group interview is to bring together the coordinators of the two service-learning courses to discuss the research findings before they are published, for mutual learning, and for triangulation purposes. This focus group will provide an opportunity valuable inter-departmental analysis and feedback, and for devising possible strategies for the future of service-learning considering the Covid-19 global pandemic.

Semi-structured Questions

1. Please introduce yourself and the service-learning course that you are leading. What does leading service-learning mean to you, what does it entail?
2. Has anything changed in your service-learning courses since we last spoke during the individual interviews?
3. What kind of policies are then needed at a time like this going forward?
4. In what ways have you as a leader developed during this time?
5. How do we take service-learning forward with the 2020 lessons? Have you identified any opportunities for curriculum and course design? Opportunities to enhance your leadership.
6. Is there anything else that you would like to mention?

Appendix G1: Rhodes University Institutional Development Plan

https://www.ru.ac.za/media/RHODES_UNIVERSITY_IDP.pdf

Appendix G2 Rhodes University Policy and Procedures for Personal Promotion

https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/POLICY_AND_PROCEDURES_FOR_THE_PERSONAL_PROMOTION_OF_ACADEMIC_STAFF_2019.pdf

Appendix G3 Rhodes University Teaching and Learning Policy

<https://www.ru.ac.za/teachingandlearning/about/teachinglearningpolicies/>

Appendix H: Email communication with secondary participant

On Wed, 20 Jan 2021 at 11:56,
Hello Heide

Very happy to meet. We have revised our policy which is very old. Much has changed so I have attached the new policy and protocol document which is on its way through the approval process.

Kind regards

From: Heide Kuhlane <H.Khuhlane@ru.ac.za>
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 9:22 PM
To:
Subject: MEd Interview: CE Policy

Dear

I trust that you are well.

I am writing up my Masters in Education (under INTA1's supervision), and have realised that I need to ask you one or two questions on policy changes to Community Engagement (and/or Service Learning) policies at Rhodes during this pandemic.

I would like to know if there has been any policy adjustment or new policies introduced? And where I can possibly find these changes documented?

If I could please meet with you for about 15 minutes via Zoom, or if you could kindly respond to this email if that is more convenient for you.

I look forward to hearing from you

Regards,

Appendix I: Extract of Individual Interview Schedule (INTA2)

Date: 07 July 2020

Participant: Participant A2

Research questions:

1. How were the two service-learning courses initially designed and to what purpose?
2. How have the two service-learning courses had to change in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What leadership competencies have surfaced (or not) in the coordinators and lecturers in the process of adapting the service-learning courses as a result of the global pandemic?

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Background of the service-learning course that you are leading.

INTA2: This course is a kind of an interventionist approach, and the word intervention is actually a theoretical concept that comes from Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). So, this program has been designed and framed by CHAT. So this interventionists approach, going into the community running the club, which is some kind of service learning, because this is teaching and learning in the community, and then trying to actually find out where the leadership has developed. It is also framed by trying to see possible challenges or contradictions in an activity system that led to maybe to leadership not developing or whatever. So, it's kind of designed as a service-learning initiative, with a research component from day one.

Heide: Could you expand on the service-learning aspect of it?

INTA2: Okay, in terms of the service learning, I think it's about going back into the community and going and getting Honours students to get a community service experience wherever they are based. They must go in and experience some kind of community service, but at the same time the community service is linking to academic learning. There is some academic learning and an educational experience in some form that's taking place in that particular initiative. So, it's a kind of a teaching and learning strategy I would say.

But at the same time, the student which is the Honours student, and the community there is a reciprocal relationship, both in some way benefit and develop from that experience.

Challenges in delivering the course as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak

Heide: The course outline agrees with what you're saying, because it speaks of agency and active participation is one of the key components of the course. How is the design of the course been impacted as a result of the pandemic?

INTA2: Yes, it definitely has, I think on numerous levels. So, I'm going to start with the actual part in terms of the service learning, which is your community service experience. So in terms of community service experience, where the course is conceptualized was that the students needed to run a club or professional learning community with their stakeholder group, and research leadership or development that could have occurred. But in the light of COVID where

we have now moved to contactless, total social distancing, no schools opened; clubs have ceased to exist. It was a huge challenge.

This led me then to really think beyond the curriculum. What can I do now? And how can I move forward? Then I start and I reflected, I had reached a point in the curriculum where the students had just only found out what mattered in their contexts; what those stakeholder groups were interested in. So, they kind of analysed that data and the voices of those students or teachers in that context. But it didn't move on to the actual interaction in the clubs, so that did not take place. So, from that point onwards, I had to look at the research requirements of this particular course, what my expectations were, and how to actually change it. Eventually I did have to change it.

INTA2: Do you want me to explain our change that is?

Heide: Yes, please kindly explain.

Course re-design to ensure continuity

Heide: How have you had to redesign the course to ensure continuity during and post the Covid-19?

INTA2: Okay, so basically when I had to go back to the drawing board, and I thought here, we know what matters. Now we need to move on to literature review and do a literature review of the phenomenon that they were interested in, whether it was learning leadership, or teacher leadership. So that kind of progressed as normal. And then I realized that I will also teach them methodology. So, I wanted to teach them all the different components of research. I didn't want the actual curriculum to be compromised in any way, I wanted these various components in a way that was still doable and manageable. So, we went ahead with the literature review and research methodology.

And then I got some anxious messages at one point when we started working with the literature review. I've got a WhatsApp group where students asked what now happens to the clubs? What happens to the research? I just explained that No, these clubs now will cease to exist. We won't be running these clubs, providing reasons. Because even if we go back to school at some point, teachers will already be under great pressure to complete the curriculum. They will not have space or time after school to run any club. The limited time in schools will be sufficient just for the academic program. So, I realized with the stress on the teachers, and the schooling context and the learners themselves, these extracurricular activities are no longer the most important in their life at this point. If they go to school, it's about just completing the and passing the section.

I told the students that hopefully, in the near future, you can run these clubs informally, not for a degree purpose. But I can always give you some guidance if you'd like to run these clubs in the future, because you also don't want to draw these learners that way who are interested in some kind of maybe cleaning the environment or whatever. So in the future, although those students may not be my students next year, I will still support them if they want to run some kind of initiative on a small scale. Furthermore, the reason why we could not run these clubs; besides not having contact and not going to school, those students of are Namibian students. And when this pandemic came about, many of them had gone back to their villages, so many from up North and in the villages have no access to internet; finishing up becomes a bit of a problem. And many of the learners in their school do not have access to devices.

Appendix J: Focus Group Interview Schedule Example

Date: 09 December 2020

Participants: INTA1, INTA2, INTB1, INTB2

Research question: **How have four Service-Learning sub-cases at Rhodes University had to change or adjust as a consequence of the COVID-19 global pandemic?**

Aim: The aim of this focus group interview is to bring together the coordinators of the two service-learning courses to discuss the research findings before they are published, for mutual learning, and for triangulation purposes. This focus group will provide an opportunity valuable inter-departmental analysis and feedback, and for devising possible strategies for the future of service-learning considering the Covid-19 global pandemic.

Semi-structured Questions

1. Please introduce yourself and the service-learning course that you are leading. What does leading SL mean to you, what does it entail?

INT01: I don't lead the course, INTA2 does. but I have been involved in the curriculum re-design as a consequence of Covid. I am thinking of a workshop we had yesterday, because we have had to continue the ELM elective within the new curriculum. As we plan for 2021, we ask, how do you plan for an intervention in the backdrop of Covid? And in my view, service-learning courses have to be interventionist approaches while working with the community. If you are working in and with the school and the community; what makes it service-learning engagement if you can't interact with the school and community face to face? So INTA2 and I are struggling. Do we do an interpretive study in ELM and ask interpretive questions next year? But it feels like such a loss to me, like we are giving up on the service-learning. And this is what made our BEd Honours course a service-learning course for me. Is it necessary to drop the service-learning? So, that's in a sense what I am grappling with at the moment.

INT02: Hi everyone, I'm INTA2. Together with INTA1 we are in the ELM programme, which is conceptualised as service-learning programme. Just to briefly share; we had a lot of challenges in this current year. The course was designed as an interventionist study for Namibia this year. However, students were only involved in the design of the study, and then we went into national lockdown. This posed a huge challenge, and we had to think quite strategically; how do we then manage this which was design as an intervention service-learning, against the backdrop of Covid. Unfortunately, we had to stop the interventions and had to move to a desktop study. The students were involved in the design of the study, but they did not implement an intervention study as service-learning would require. But they were given research reports of four to five years on the African context, where students were involved in implementing an intervention, and from that data and findings, they did get that knowledge and skill on how to implement an intervention. This was a challenge, but I guess there was nothing else that we could do. We are trying to be proactive for next year, we want to incorporate service-learning and an actual intervention and change laboratory. However, we do not know how things will unfold, so we are on the eer on the side of caution. If things go well we will pick up on the interventionist research. If things don't

go as anticipated because of the pandemic, we will end up doing an interpretivist study, but we cannot be sure with the pandemic.

2. **Heide:** Before we move on, I would like to share with you some themes that emerged from the data:

RQ1 speaks to the initial design of the courses

- Marriage of service and learning
- Course aims:** Technical competence (TP) and Learning through participation (ELM)
- Course design & outcomes

RQ2: Changes to courses as a result of Covid 19

- Curriculum re-design to meet outcome (ELM not so much, but TP was a whole new adventure)
- Scaffolded learning came up strongly
- Compromised community experience (Clubs ceased to exist in ELM, abandoning the interventionist approach; new classroom and school normal in TP?)
- Assessment had to be adjusted
- Heightened regard for social justice
- Covid has opened up the classroom; collaboration

RQ3: Emergence or not of YOUR leadership competencies during this time

- Deepened reflection
- Technology skills (highlighting a need to train lecturers)
- Pastoral care
- Risk-taking and curriculum innovation
- Teamwork skills
- Flexibility, agility, quick decision-making, patience, enhanced critical thinking

Appendix K: Data Analysis Tables according to research questions

What has been learnt about service learning in a B Ed Honours Service-Learning course at Rhodes University as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Question 1 extract

Data Analysis Tool A

How were the service-learning courses **initially** designed and to what purpose?

Source	Theme	Evidence from data
INT 01	Emergence of leadership as a field of knowledge	he started to think of leadership as a field of knowledge that as opposed to just a field of practice
INT 01	Paradigm	the course had an interventionist element to it
INT 02		This course is a kind of an interventionist approach,
INT 01	Development	we felt that our field shouldn't just try and describe and explain- if it is about leadership it should to try to change
INT 02	Theoretical underpinnings	this program has been designed and framed by CHAT
		also framed by trying to see possible challenges or contradictions in an activity system that led to maybe to leadership not developing
		CHAT brings the theory practice beautifully, it gives you the language of description then gives you tools to look not only in practice, but at theory as well
INT 02	Course aim	which is some kind of service learning, because this is teaching and learning in the community, and then trying to actually find out where the leadership has developed
		I think it's about going back into the community and going and getting Honours students to get a community service experience wherever they are based.
		They must go in and experience some kind of community service, but at the same time the community service is linking to academic learning
INT 01		they would have gone about trying to set up school clubs or teacher development or teacher professional communities

		they would have done an analysis to find out what change project they could have implemented on the issue that they felt, so the learner voice and teacher voice would have come out
		That teacher or learner driven intervention, school-based/ community-based would have occurred
INT 02	Course design	it's kind of designed as a service-learning initiative, with a research component
INT 01		If something's a service-learning course, it can't just be ad hoc, it has to be embedded in a curriculum
INT 01		The course is designed as a 10-month course intervention
		course is a two-year part- time course
		because part of this Honours elective is to introduce students to research by doing research, because an Honours is a level seven qualification and, in a sense, it's entry into a Master's degree
DOC 01		The Bachelor of Education Honours ELM elective is designed as a service learning initiative, i.e. a teaching and learning strategy which links the academic learning of the Honours students with a community service experience (CHE, 2006; Hart, 2006).
INT03	Professional preparation	Rhodes spends a big amount of time preparing students from year one to year four through TP
INT 02	Teaching & Learning strategy	, it's a kind of a teaching and learning strategy I would say
DOC 01 (ELM Course Outline)	Learning through participation	In our view learning involves participating in the various ELM debates and moving between different points in the community with the ultimate goal of moving towards a complete identity and the possibility of a plurality of full participations (Romer, 2002).
DOC 01	Acquisition of knowledge and technical competence	This requires the acquisition of knowledge and technical competence required for the degree but it also demands the "emotional, social, political and cognitive experiences that together constitute such learning" (Jansen et al. 2004, p. 80).
INT03		students need to be taught more about reflection because that seems to be lacking in most students. So that when they get to the year four TP we aren't struggling with teething problems. The reason for the TP module as a whole is it's a Department of Higher Education and Training requirement.
	Course outcomes	

Research Question 2 extract

How have the service-learning **courses had to change** in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Source	Theme	Evidence from data
INT01	Curriculum Redesign	we don't actually as a consequence of COVID, have to start a whole new project and think how we find equivalence in another project
		we are drawing on those research reports; document analysis
		we are unable to do the intervention- but here are some other interventions from past students
		instead of the data being drawn from the school project, they can draw on the past data and work out research questions
INT02		This led me then to really think beyond the curriculum
		I had to look at the research requirements of this particular course, what my expectations were, and how to actually change it. Eventually I did have to change it.
		I had to go back to the drawing board
		So, I realized with the stress on the teachers, and the schooling context and the learners themselves, these extracurricular activities are no longer the most important in their life at this point
		I'm going to be providing each student with three research reports from previous years
		teachers will already be under great pressure to complete the curriculum. They will not have space or time after school to run any club.
		We changed the curriculum such that it became a desk top study
		Change in research questions
they'll read about somebody else's challenges in their reflective journals. So, it will be covered but you know, as a third person rather than as a first person		
INT01	Meeting of outcomes	we can still meet the outcomes

Research Question 3 extract

What leadership competencies have surfaced (or not) in the coordinators and lecturers in the process of adapting the service-learning course as a result of the global pandemic?

Source	Theme	Evidence from data
INT03	Initial competencies required	When I started on this post, the department was looking for people who are in the education field, as well have a keen interest in students and teaching practise and creating a good teaching practice experience for students.
INT03		they were looking for an easy-going person who would fit in well with the rest of the staff and the colleagues. Because it is a team effort.
INT03		I think they were looking for people's person as well. Because with the job you have to interact with the community and the different stakeholders as well
INT01	Quick deliberation	We then had to think quite quickly on our feet to say what could we do that ensures they learned the same things which would be about in the sense once they've done an intervention
INT02	Deeper reflection	I had been reflecting quite a bit of my practice as teacher. But I think my reflection has now become deeper. Because in terms of whatever I'm doing now, with this new approach against the backdrop of COVID, I've got to think a lot deeper on issues
INT02	Thinking beyond the curriculum	This led me then to really think beyond the curriculum
		Maybe I could share with you a coping tool for me in terms of curriculum in the light of COVID, and how to adjust curriculum in the light of COVID, quoting on the work of Karl Maton
INT01	Exciting challenge	I guess I get quite excited. I mean, I don't get excited by COVID, but by the challenge of thinking and coming up with solutions
		And then I get quite excited when I can see a way forward for being creative around the stumbling block
	Teamwork skills	And so, when INTA2 came to me and said, "What should we do?", I had already given it some thought and then we brainstormed together
INT01	Risk-taking and curriculum innovation	but I think I'm not afraid of trying something out and risking it. And then if it fails, it'll never be the

		students failing, it will be a curriculum innovation failing
INT02		and also there is a risk element involved in certain pedagogical approaches or changes to the curriculum that I make, but I'm willing to take the risk as well
INT01	Creating an enabling environment for others	And at that time basically I had carte blanche to recreate the course as I wanted to. And I just think in terms of leadership that's such an enabling factor.
		I think as leaders we ought to try and create a space that allows people to try something that is new or innovative
		There is an enabling culture, well I cannot speak about everywhere, but in my experience coming into the department with Hennie
INT03	Team work	the TP team environment has enabled me to work to the best of my ability.
INT01	Leadership Competencies	that flexibility, the agility
		, I think the VCs letter we spoke about mentions these; the adaptability, flexibility, agility, a can-do attitude. I think those are central leadership attributes during COVID-19, not deliberating for too long, you have to have quick deliberation and move
		add to that courage to take decisions, trusting your intuition and not being afraid of failure
		And I guess it links to something like humility. I guess if I were speaking to the students, as the coordinator or lecture, it's okay to say we don't know, to be up front instead of pretending. COVID is unprecedented
		imagine very important would be a careful structuring of the process
		I've learnt to be more reflective. I found that I need to think about the student's situation very carefully, and not make undue demands as well.
INT02		I'm also slowly developing also as a leader, because by trying to find alternative ways of kind of taking initiative in certain aspects
INT03	Patience	patience was a skill that I personally have had to acquire because there are so many things to do
INT01	Technology literacy (skills dev)	the demands of being technologically literate are there