

# Service learning: An empowerment agenda for students and community entrepreneurs

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Service learning (SL) presents apposite opportunities for students to share with and learn from businesses for mutually beneficial development and experience. This article focuses on a SL project conducted by undergraduate students in South Africa, to devise advertising and marketing strategies for community businesses. The reciprocity of benefits for participants, as well as ontological aspects of student learning were explored. Questionnaires administered to three student cohorts and feedback from business owners were subjected to content analysis. Theoretical underpinnings of SL as work-integrated learning (WIL) modality and the curriculum approach of knowing, doing and being, framed this study. The findings revealed that a well-structured SL project is a valuable learning experience with permeable boundaries between knowledge and practice. This article focuses on, firstly, the importance of relating classroom learning to real world experience; secondly, the emergent ontological perspectives of SL, and thirdly, empowering community businesses by sharing knowledge and skills to foster entrepreneurial ideals.

Keywords: Vocational education, service learning, business studies, reciprocity, ontology

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South Africa is a country where third world abject poverty lives alongside first world wealth and materialism. It is also a country where the official unemployment rate stood at 26.5% in the fourth quarter of 2016, and where “the youth (aged 15-34) remain vulnerable in the labor market with an unemployment rate of 37.1%” (Statistics South Africa, 2017). The high unemployment rate necessitated many amongst the unemployed to enter the formal and informal business sector as a survival strategy. South Africa (SA) has seen a proliferation of small businesses from the house shop, barber or hairdresser in township areas to formally registered small businesses started by aspirant entrepreneurs. Against this background, it is incumbent on higher education to respond to the needs of sectors where it can indeed make a difference. Within an unequal society such as South Africa, an individualistic notion of higher education for personal gain, employability and personal career advancement needs to be reconsidered in favor of education for public good, thinking of ‘the other’ and providing community support as required. As such, community engagement and service learning (SL) projects have been incorporated into the majority of higher education qualifications to bring about change and improvement in various ways in mainly disadvantaged communities. This study reports on a SL project where marketing students in a diploma program of study in Cape Town, South Africa, engaged with small businesses in townships and local communities to assist with providing support to improve marketing and advertising strategies. The project was purposefully structured to improve current and envisaged business practices.

## OVERVIEW OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was threefold: firstly, to determine whether SL fulfilled its promise as a work-integrated learning (WIL) modality in aligning classroom learning with actual work experience; secondly, to explore the reciprocity that a SL project offers students and community partners, and thirdly, to review ontologies that emerged for students during the life of the project.

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The findings showed that students viewed this project positively in respect of all three objectives of this study. Students reported that this SL project succeeded as a WIL modality (refer to Figure 1) and that the authentic learning environment provided an appropriate learning experience to align theory with practice. Business partners without exception expressed appreciation for student support. The data and discussion draw attention to the reciprocal nature of the project where both students and their business partners derived benefit from the project. The project served to empower students as well as business partners. Although SL is an educational endeavor focusing on knowledge and skills in a structured way, the emergence of dispositions and qualities became more overt for students during the life of the project. The value of an authentic learning experience provided opportunities for students to develop personas of professionals in the field of practice and learning about themselves as individuals, an experience most likely not afforded in a traditional classroom setting. The point to be made here is that higher education should extend beyond epistemology to embrace ontological perspectives of learning in equal measure. The literature on service learning as pedagogy of learning and higher education that encompasses knowing, doing and being, frame the findings and discussion of this study.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### *Service Learning as Pedagogy for Learning*

Numerous definitions and understandings of SL have been formulated over the years. Chong's (2014) study on the definitional challenges of SL revealed that in excess of 147 definitions are in use. Chong (2014) noted that practitioners tend to align their definitions with the purpose of the SL project and the specific theoretical perspectives that underpin these purposes. For example, practitioners who viewed SL as "a vehicle to cultivate social and civic responsibilities and address social problems" drew on Dewey's "insights on the moral and civic function of education", while Kolb's learning cycles of experience, reflection, conceptualization and experimentation, provided the theoretical framework for SL as "a form of experiential education that offers students opportunities to experience real world learning and address genuine problems" (Chong, 2014, p.348). SL perspectives of several other theorists served as theoretical lenses to explain the rationale for a SL project (Chong, 2014). Commonalities across definitions include, SL is an educational project that provides community service, develops civic skills and responsibility, provides for the application of disciplinary knowledge and integrates theory with practice (Berle, 2006; Bringle & Hatcher 1996; Carver 1997; Chong 2014; Felten & Clayton, 2011; Meyers, 2009; Opazo, Aramburuzabala, & Cerrillo, 2016). The literature on SL shows that a well-structured SL project holds the promise of providing myriad learning opportunities for students that classroom learning might not afford by virtue of independent learning in real world contexts. When students are out in the field it is not only their knowledge and skills that are brought to bear, but how they transact with partners independent from lecturer oversight. Several SL definitions focus on knowing (i.e. knowledge) and doing (i.e. skills) without overtly acknowledging the being (i.e. qualities and dispositions) that a SL project offers.

The most apt descriptions that align with the objectives of this study draw from Bringle and Hatcher (1996), Carver (1997), and Felten and Clayton (2011) where ontology developed alongside epistemology. This study views SL not only as the integration of knowledge and skills, but acknowledges the emergent attributes, qualities and dispositions that a well-structured SL project affords. In other words, it might be argued that ontology and epistemology are two sides of the same coin. Felten and Clayton (2011, p.77), for example, consider SL as a vehicle "to develop academic

knowledge/skills/dispositions ... civic learning, personal growth ... such as intercultural competence and teamwork". As pedagogy for learning, (Carver, 1997, p.3) posits that service learning:

... consciously integrates students' experiences into the curriculum' and so doing develops: (1) students as change agents; (2) a sense of belonging in communities of which they form a part by empowering community partners, and (3) student competence 'beyond the academic realm to include leadership, communication and organisational skills.

One of the most widely used interpretations of SL as pedagogy for learning is that of Bringle and Hatcher (1996) who maintain that higher education should do more than prepare students for a career and employability. Higher education is for public good and should "develop effective citizenship among students, to address complex needs through the application of knowledge and to form creative partnerships between the university and the community" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p.236). To this end Bringle and Hatcher (1996, p. 222) view SL as:

A credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

Studies on SL espouse the virtues of SL as pedagogy for engagement with knowledge and skills being prominent without necessarily focusing on the personal attributes and dispositions that are intrinsic to service learning as pedagogy for learning.

#### *Vocational Education: A vehicle for Knowing, Doing, Being and Becoming*

Vocational education is distinctive, given the focus on the application of knowledge in situated learning contexts to prepare students for their respective professions. To this end, vocational education aims at "developing specific knowledge and skills to be applied in practice contexts within and beyond the educational program" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p.34). Dall'Alba (2009, p.34-35) distinguishes between epistemology as "what students know and can do", and ontology as "considerations to who students are becoming". According to Dall'Alba (2009, p.34) while epistemology, i.e. "knowledge and skills are necessary, they are insufficient for skilful practice and for transformation of the self that is integral to achieving such practice". In other words, entrenching a pedagogy of knowing and doing sets limitations for students to extend the boundaries of development as professionals in the field of practice. Dall'Alba (2009, p.35) avers that "a focus on epistemology occurs at the expense of ontological considerations relating to who students are becoming". In other words, developing a sense of professional self or 'being' is a journey to 'becoming'. To this end, "the purpose of professional education programs can then be conceptualized in terms of developing ways of being the professionals in question, rather than simply as a source of knowledge and skills acquisition" (Dall'Alba 2009, p.35).

Service learning as pedagogy, it might be argued, contributes to "developing ways of being the professionals in question" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p.35). SL speaks to knowing, doing and being where students are called upon to apply knowledge and skills within an authentic context while simultaneously applying and developing attributes, dispositions and qualities as professionals in the field of practice. Studies on SL referred to in this article show that the intended outcomes relate mainly to knowledge and skills while the emergent or unintended outcomes of reflexivity and dispositional gains for students are often peripheral.

In keeping with Dall'Alba's (2009) view of higher education's preoccupation with knowledge and skills (i.e. epistemology), Barnett, Parry and Coate (2001) note that higher education should embody epistemology and ontology, i.e. knowing, doing and being. In the case of business studies, from which this study draws, Barnett et al., (2001, p.437) note that "business studies are knowledge fields orientated more towards their use value to society, rather than to a disciplinary knowledge base". They posit that higher education is increasingly being judged on aspects of performativity such as "efficiency", "outputs" and "use-value", which "has played differently across subject areas" (Barnett, et al. 2001, p.437). Service learning, in turn, may be construed as the application of knowledge in terms of a qualification's efficiency, outputs and use-value towards providing capacity building for a specific community of practice. To this end, Barnett et al. (2001, p.438) suggest that a curriculum is an "educational project forming identities in three domains: those of knowledge, action and self". By way of explanation, knowledge "refers to those curriculum components that are based on discipline-specific competences and those aspects of teaching and learning that develop subject specialists"; action refers to competences acquired through doing (for example, skills and practices), and self refers to developing an identity in relation to the subject areas (Barnett, et al. 2001, p.438). Barnett et al.'s (2001) three focus areas of knowing, doing and being (self) was adopted as one of the approaches to curriculum development and implementation at this institution. The rationale for adopting this approach was that:

knowledge – and more specifically the process of coming to know and to form an understanding ... has implications for the student's *being* ... epistemology and ontology are irreducible to each to each other but are interlinked ... there is also a reciprocal case to be made whereby being can affect knowledge itself (Barnett, 2009, p.437).

The challenge for curriculum, however, is that the intersection and desired outcomes of the three domains should be carefully orchestrated and structured. Barnett et al, (2001, p.448) caution that "the challenge in developing curricula is not just to ensure that these three domains are adequately represented in the curriculum, but that the moments of these three domains are in due measure, integrated".

This study shows that service learning as pedagogy provides learning opportunities that extend beyond knowledge and skills to appropriately integrate the three domains. For example, students shared knowledge of marketing and advertising with business owners based on research conducted, artifacts were developed in response to the findings based on research (i.e. doing, skills, competences), and in the process students developed and confirmed understandings of self not encountered before.

## SETTING THE CONTEXT

### *The Project Brief*

This service learning project formed part of a second year business studies diploma. The project brief to students was that they were required to form a mini-agency with a maximum of three students in a group. Each group would approach a retail outlet in their local community, which had little or no advertising and develop a complete advertising campaign for the business. In liaison with the business owner, students were tasked to conduct research on the micro-environment of the business, the business product and brand analysis, competitor analysis and conduct consumer research, amongst others, to develop an advertising campaign. Based on this research each 'mini-agency' was required to present to the small business owner, a bespoke proposal for marketing communication objectives, a sales promotion strategy, a creative strategy and a media strategy tailored for business growth and development. The output and assessment of the project was a portfolio of evidence containing the

minutes of all meetings held, a record of correspondence with the business owner, evidence of research conducted, draft proposals and reports of the activities for the advertising campaign as well as client feedback. Each group presented their proposal to the lecturer as a formal presentation. The portfolio and presentation were assessed by means of rubrics provided to students with the project brief.

### *The Business Participants*

The majority of students at the institution where this study was conducted reside in townships and under-privileged areas where formal employment opportunities are limited. A township and informal settlement in South Africa is associated with infrastructural under-development and limited resources. South Africa's high unemployment rate necessitated an increase in informal trading and entrepreneurial initiatives in local communities. Many informal traders start businesses without any formal training in small business development and rely on basic business skills and their field of trade to sustain and hopefully grow the business. The willingness of business owners to participate in this project resulted in a mutually beneficial experience for their businesses as well as for the students.

### METHOD

This study was conducted with two second-year full time (FT) groups totaling 94 students, and a part-time (PT) class group of 31 students. The student sample was the full second year student complement in this business studies diploma. The part-time student group consisted of full time employees who attended evening classes with half the teaching contact time of the full time program.

A questionnaire with seven closed questions and a three option Likert scale, with five open-ended questions relating to the value of SL as a WIL modality, was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was administered to students in class by the subject lecturer. The questionnaire was administered on completion of the SL project, with student participation being voluntary and anonymous. In keeping with research protocols and voluntary participation of research participants, students could elect not to be part of the project and would not be required to complete the questionnaire. All students who were present on the day that the questionnaire was administered, completed the questionnaire individually. The subject lecturer was interviewed to determine the purpose and rationale of the SL project.

The business ventures that formed part of this SL project were located in townships and informal settlements, and the local community and surrounding areas where the institution is located. The feedback of 92 business owners across a broad range of retail outlets were reviewed, including, amongst others, hair salons, coffee shops, cafes/food outlets, clothing outlets, a nail bar, a tattoo studio, a florist, a pharmacy and liquor lounges.

Project documents were reviewed, including the project brief and the full complement of 92 written feedback reports of business owners, regarding their perceptions of student engagement and the success of the project. This feedback was an authentic unstructured account of business owners' perceptions, many of which were hand-written or were electronic documents. [Note that not all businesses had access to computers.] All feedback was submitted to the lecturer directly via e-mail, or by students who worked with the business owners.

A content analysis, of the questionnaire data, the interview data and document analysis of the project and the business owners' feedback was undertaken to determine students' and the business owners' perceptions of the learning experience that the SL project offered. Content analysis relates to analyzing

and extrapolating data according to themes that relate to the purpose of this study. Since this project was funded by an institutional research initiative, all ethical protocols were approved and followed accordingly. Research participation was voluntary, questionnaires were completed anonymously, as were the subject and lecturer to protect the identities of participants. An ethics clearance letter was provided by the institution on approval of the research proposal as endorsement that the project met ethics considerations as required.

## FINDINGS

The findings reflect the perceptions of research participants, i.e. students and business owners. Interview and document excerpts appear between quotation marks and represent a verbatim account of data provided.

### *Student Perceptions*

The findings of this section pertain to data obtained from student questionnaires. The findings of the full time(FT) and part time(PT) groups seemed to indicate similar patterns regarding the perceptions of the majority of students (refer to Figure 1). For example, the majority of students were of the opinion that the SL project was a valuable learning opportunity and that it enabled the application of theoretical concepts learned in the classroom to an authentic practice environment. Most students in both class groups noted that the SL project allowed them to apply knowledge acquired in the classroom setting to an actual world of work experience. These findings suggest that SL as a WIL modality fulfilled its purpose of providing a learning opportunity to apply knowledge to an authentic work experience. The success of the SL project as a learning experience was affirmed with the majority of students, (95% FT and 90% PT), recommending that the SL project be continued as part of the subject for future student groups.

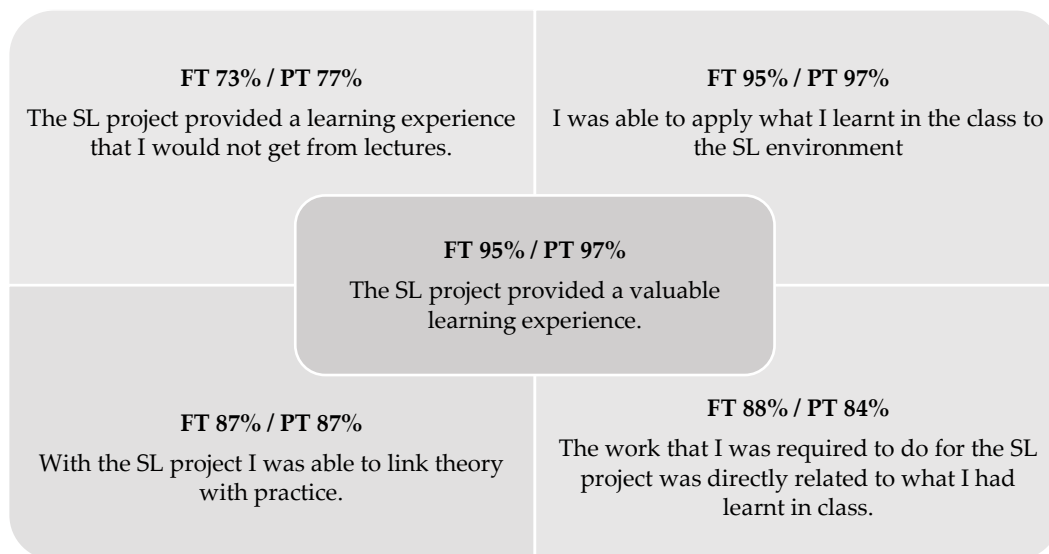


FIGURE 1: Student feedback (Full time student Group - N=94; Part-time Student Group – N=31)

The open-ended questions focused on student perceptions of the advantages of the SL project and the learning experiences encountered based on the kinds of services rendered.

Students provided a range of services in response to the research process, such as conducting a marketing and advertising needs analysis of the business. As such no generic advertising campaign was attempted as each business and business owner had unique requirements based on their respective research findings. Both business owners and students reported that the following advertising and marketing strategies were produced and used as part of the campaign, used in different measure in different businesses as required:

- developing online resources such as a *Facebook* page;
- designing and developing a website;
- developing *WhatsApp* communication groups to promote specials for loyal customers;
- using *Twitter* as an advertising medium;
- designing logos, letterheads, pamphlets, posters, business cards;
- introducing promotional specials (for example, for the launch of a new range in a clothing outlet);
- introducing a loyalty card with benefits for returning customers;
- writing a press report for a local community publication, and
- developing customer surveys to track buying trends.

Marketing and advertising strategies for each business evolved after several meetings between student groups, and students and business owners that resulted in responding to the needs of the business and the business environment. Various media modalities and social media platforms were used to align with current trends in advertising and marketing.

#### *Student Learning Experiences*

Students reported that the SL project afforded opportunities for learning that traversed academic, personal and social transformational spheres. Besides entrenching conceptual knowledge for practical purposes, students reported their SL learning experience as follows:

- having to work under pressure to deliver project outputs on time;
- drawing on group work and group ideas to find solutions;
- managing time effectively and coping with deadlines for business participants and lecturer expectations;
- building confidence in presenting to clients;
- using multi-media platforms and using social media as advertising and marketing platforms;
- the importance of doing research and making decisions according to the actual results', and
- being creative and innovative (in developing websites and a *Facebook* presence).

The recurring complaints from students were that the project was labor-intensive, time-consuming and costly. Interpersonal group dynamics had to be solved swiftly to ensure that optimal deliverables were achieved. It should be noted that project expenditure, which included travelling for meetings, printing and incidental costs, was for students' own account.

### *Perceptions of Business Owners: New Learnings and Benefits to Business*

The findings of business owners are presented here as a general overview of their communication to the lecturer. With reference to the perceptions of business owners, four themes were identified:

- being novices in marketing and advertising;
- learnings as a result of participating in the project;
- benefits to the business, and
- acknowledging students' roles in introducing and improving advertising practices.

Firstly, given the South African context of townships and informal settlements, the majority of business start-ups are by entrepreneurs who might not have attended formal or informal courses in small business management, of which advertising and marketing would be a component. The following excerpt by the owner of a clothing business captured this sentiment succinctly by noting that, "We have no theoretical experience in marketing and advertising, but we learned quite a few things from them [the students] that will benefit us in future".

All 92 business owners, without exception, were open to what students presented as part of the advertising campaign designed for their businesses. They acknowledged their shortcomings and knowledge gaps and availed themselves for meetings with students to discuss how best to develop an appropriate advertising and marketing strategy to promote their businesses. For example, Café owner A commented that, "advertising was never something our company considered very important and thanks to these students our business has realized the importance and necessity of advertising in order to grow our business". Similarly, the owner of a hair salon reported that the project "proved to be an eye opening as well as learning experience for me". The comments suggest that business owners were introduced to marketing and advertising strategies, some for the first time, and that "the project presented new ways of thinking about best practices to market their businesses' (Floral and Décor shop owner). One hair salon owner admitted, "I was skeptical at first but these students have taught me a thing or two".

Secondly, the prevalence of learnings was a common thread throughout the feedback provided by business owners. In addition to learning about advertising and marketing strategies as integral to business development, an online presence and learning how to use and maintain the various platforms of social media such a webpage, *Facebook* and *Twitter* were new phenomena. Comments such as, "students provided new ideas such as *Facebook* and *SMS*", and "I have learnt a lot from them, setting up online accounts, uploading pictures, and importantly, teaching me how to do it myself" (Gifting and floral shop owner) bear testament to how advertising and marketing knowledge and practice were communicated and shared. The positive feedback provided by business owners suggest that student engagement left an indelible impression on their advertising and marketing outlook as well as noteworthy benefits to business success.

Thirdly, the benefits to the various businesses seemed tangible and immediate. The benefits were reported verbatim by business owners as follows:

- "I am really impressed – the price list, business cards and loyalty cards really look professional" (Massage salon owner);
- "The posters and flyers they designed were beyond my expectations" (Liquor boutique owner);
- [The project] "made a massive contribution to the increase of profits" [Hair salon owner];



- “Sterling work done on the marketing of my coffee shop; it has been inspiring and the ideas have been creative and innovative” (Coffee shop owner), and
- “My shop has blossomed and grown successfully; totally impressed by their constant professionalism” (House shop owner).

Although specificities of statistics in profit margins, for example, were not available due to the brief life of the project, the kinds of improvements seemed to be noteworthy in the short term especially in light of advertising and marketing being introduced to most businesses for the first time. The purpose of entrepreneurship is to grow a business – that this SL project contributed to publicity and improvements for businesses in different ways may be construed as a success in itself.

Fourthly, all feedback reports included a comment(s) in appreciation of students’ work and terms like ‘professionalism’, ‘creative’, ‘dedicated’, ‘showed confidence’ and ‘passionate’ became the common refrain. The general sentiment of appreciation for what students had done could be summarized in the following statements: “these students showed us their creativity, hard work, ambition and determination in the work they do” and “I am grateful for all their hard work, support and concepts and it will definitely be put into action” (Pizza shop owner). Similarly, the reciprocal nature of SL was evident, with a general retail business owner “being glad that [s/he] was able to assist them in their studies as a community partner”, and to the lecturer, “we admire the fact that you give the students the opportunity to go out into the real world to acquire knowledge and experience before they graduate”.

## DISCUSSION

The data and findings show that this service learning (SL) project as a structured, educational endeavor met all the requirements of what a SL project aims to achieve, according to the SL definitions on which this study draws. SL as pedagogy for learning fulfilled the threefold purpose of this study, i.e. whether SL fulfilled its promise as a WIL modality; the reciprocity that a SL project offers, and to review ontologies that emerged for students during the life of the project.

In terms of SL as WIL modality, the majority of students maintained that the SL project provided insights into how classroom-based learning aligned with real world practice. (Refer to figure 1.) SL was shown to be a transformative learning experience in that textbook knowledge was transformed into practice within a real world context, with “equal focus on the service being provided ... while also ensuring that learning happens” (Clinton & Thomas, 2011, pp51-52). The high percentage of respondents who viewed the SL project as a valuable learning experience bears testament to SL as an effective WIL modality and pedagogy for learning.

Although Hammersley (2012) questions whether reciprocity in partnerships between students and community partners is indeed a reality, the findings show that students and business partners derived benefits from the project in equal measure. Reciprocity, according to Godfrey, Illes and Berry (2005, p.317) “means that students and community partners contribute different types of knowledge that work together to reinforce learning and improve performance by both parties”. Students used their knowledge, skills and agency to equip business partners and their businesses with relevant bespoke advertising and marketing strategies. The knowledge shared by business partners about their businesses and business environments allowed students to apply their knowledge of advertising and marketing for intended improvements in business. Similarly, students were afforded an opportunity to see how advertising and marketing impacts and transforms a small business. As this study shows, Godfrey et al. (2005, p. 318) observed that SL:

. . . experiences that are designed in the spirit of reciprocity will provide both students and community partners with ample opportunities to interact rather than merely transact, resulting in mutual respect and learning about what it really takes to manage projects and organisations effectively.

As a result of the interaction between the students in groups and with their business partners, the journey of 'being' and 'becoming' a professional in practice was evidenced in students' reflections. Comments from full time students, such as "I never knew I was so creative until I worked on this project ..." (Student No. 12); this SL project "makes me believe that I'm a marketer/advertiser" (Student No. 23); "I'm getting a feel of what things in the field could be like" (Student No. 30) and "I now know the small details that need to be taken into account when dealing with clients (Student No. 36)" attest to the ontology of thinking and being a professional in the field of practice. Students noted that the project improved communication skills such as liaising with people, speaking with confidence, listening to the needs of the business partner and presentation skills. The learnings derived from group work such as group problem-solving and dealing with interpersonal dynamics of participants featured prominently in student's responses. Working with a small business necessitated a shift from being a student to being and thinking like a professional in practice. The ability to establish and sustain a business relationship was something new to most students that would stand them in good stead for future projects. The findings revealed that students developed a new sense of being that opened up new vistas for professional practice.

## CONCLUSION

Felten and Clayton's (2011, p.77) assertion that "the interdependence of learning processes ... renders service learning powerful as a vehicle for learning and social change" rings true within the context of this study. Students extended their learning beyond the classroom and learnt much more than the application of knowledge and skills. Dall'Alba's (2009, p.35) notion of the 'transformation of the self' emerged as integral to learning. Although a small measure, student input might well result in long-standing and sustained community entrepreneurial endeavors. SL projects such as these render higher education a public good where further education of one or a group of students has a ripple effect in the communities in which they reside. The benefits of a well-structured SL project where 'the moments' of the three domains, i.e. knowing, doing and being "are in due measure integrated" (Barnett et al 2001, p.448), and one that has reciprocity and ontology as key outcomes, augurs well for all those engaged in it in one way or another. Café owner B presented an apt summation of the benefits of SL as follows: "Subjecting learners to real business marketing by involving them in real business operations is without doubt the best means of education and preparedness for when they have to face the real business challenges by themselves".

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## About the Journal

The International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning (IJWIL) publishes double-blind peer-reviewed original research and topical issues dealing with Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). IJWIL first published in 2000 under the name of Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education (APJCE). Since then the readership and authorship has become more international and terminology usage in the literature has favoured the broader term of WIL. In response to these changes, the journal name was changed to the International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning in 2018.

In this Journal, WIL is defined as "*an educational approach that uses relevant work-based experiences to allow students to integrate theory with the meaningful practice of work as an intentional component of the curriculum*". Examples of such practice includes work placements, work-terms, internships, practicum, cooperative education (Co-op), fieldwork, work-related projects/competitions, service learning, entrepreneurship, student-led enterprise, applied projects, simulations (including virtual WIL), etc. WIL shares similar aims and underpinning theories of learning as the fields of experiential learning, work-based learning, and vocational education and training, however, each of these fields are seen as separate fields.

The Journal's main aim is to enable specialists working in WIL to disseminate research findings and share knowledge to the benefit of institutions, students, co-op/WIL practitioners, and researchers. The Journal desires to encourage quality research and explorative critical discussion that leads to the advancement of effective practices, development of further understanding of WIL, and promote further research.

## Types of Manuscripts Sought by the Journal

Types of manuscripts sought by IJWIL primarily of two forms; 1) *research publications* describing research into aspects of work-integrated learning and, 2) *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and provide critical explorative discussion around a topical issue. The journal will, on occasions, consider best practice submissions.

*Research publications* should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry. A detailed description and justification for the methodology employed. A description of the research findings - tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance to current established literature, implications for practitioners and researchers, whilst remaining mindful of the limitations of the data. And a conclusion preferably including suggestions for further research.

*Topical discussion* articles should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to relevant literature, critical and scholarly discussion on the importance of the issues, critical insights to how to advance the issue further, and implications for other researchers and practitioners.

*Best practice and program description* papers. On occasions, the Journal also seeks manuscripts describing a practice of WIL as an example of best practice, however, only if it presents a particularly unique or innovative practice or is situated in an unusual context. There must be a clear contribution of new knowledge to the established literature. Manuscripts describing what is essentially 'typical', 'common' or 'known' practices will be encouraged to rewrite the focus of the manuscript to a significant educational issue or will be encouraged to publish their work via another avenue that seeks such content.

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