

## Student perceptions and attitudes about Community Service-Learning in the teacher training curriculum

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*Much of the international research on Community Service-Learning has investigated the benefits, outcomes, and learning experiences of students already engaged in service-learning projects and programmes. As there is scant research on students' attitudes to and perceptions of Service-Learning, before this learning became integrated into an academic programme, our purpose was to determine teacher training students' attitudes to, and perceptions of, Community Service-Learning, before integration of such a module into their academic programmes. A quantitative survey, employing a questionnaire as instrument, was used for measuring the attitudes and perceptions of third-year teacher training students (n = ±168) at a research university in South Africa. The Community Service-Learning Attitudes and Perception Scale (CSLAPS), developed specifically for this kind of investigation, was used in the analysis of the data. The findings indicated that students with prior knowledge of and/or participation in a community service project showed greater willingness to enrol for a course/module in Community Service-Learning, especially if it would add value to their career development, bear credits, and enhance their personal and social development. The findings provided information that would enable academic staff and institutions to design curricula for academic programmes that take account of these attitudes and perceptions and address them positively to enhance the learning experience.*

**Keywords:** *academic programme; attitudes; citizenship; Community Service-Learning; curricular community engagement; curriculum; perceptions; quantitative study; teacher training*

### Introduction and context

In the National Framework for Teacher Education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2005:3) the right to quality education for all in South Africa is noted as a democratic right without limitation, and schooling is described as a public good in which teachers are the key agents. A profound change in teacher practices is called for, which would entail the establishment of sustainable enabling environments and conditions for promoting fundamental and critical engagement with transformation. It is recommended that professional teachers should be accepted as the essential resource of the education system, and that our programmes of teacher education and support systems should reinforce the professional competencies and commitments of teachers as set out in the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000:6).

White Paper 3 on Higher Education (Department of Education, 1997:3) in the Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education states that part of the purpose of higher education is to contribute to and support the process

of societal transformation outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The transformation of higher education therefore calls for the following:

- Academic programmes that are responsive to social, political and cultural needs
- Community engagement as an overarching strategy for the transformation of higher education
- Institutions that demonstrate social responsibility and commitment to the public good
- Pilot programmes that explore the feasibility of community engagement in higher education
- Co-operation and partnerships among institutions of higher education and all sectors of the wider community (Department of Education, 1997: 8).

The Department of Education therefore calls on education institutions to become civic leaders by encouraging active citizenship among students through recognising that students should understand community needs and social values. The call is for

teacher education to provide coherence, direction and focus to the development of a vibrant and affordable teacher education system for South Africa, a system that will develop and nurture professional teachers as one key component in the qualitative transformation of our education system (Department of Education, 2005:2).

Conventional teacher training programmes place a strong emphasis on ensuring that student teachers develop techniques of classroom management and the ability to help students acquire the knowledge laid down in mandated curriculum documents. Though an experiential basis for this knowledge acquisition is customarily provided through experience in the professional field, such as the teaching practice or teaching internships, institutional constraints often restrict what student teachers learn from this experience about young peoples' lives, the communities in which they live and the nature of their lives outside the school.

Service-Learning has become increasingly popular among education institutions over the past decade in South Africa, and is now emerging in teacher education and training in South Africa (Bender, 2005a; Castle & Osman, 2003; Erasmus, 2005). A number of international studies suggest that Service-Learning can foster student teachers' engagement with the profession, enhance their self-esteem, their leadership and their mentoring ability, and increase their respect for and understanding of diverse communities (Henderson & Brookhart, 1997; Shimmons-Torres, Drew-Cates, Johnson & Overbeek, 2002). It can also provide a compelling and broadening context for the transformation of teacher learning, leading to new understanding of ways of connecting with students at the margins of society (Gannon, 2005; Dudderar & Stover, 2003; Gallego, 2001).

In view of the above as well as the description by Bringle and Hatcher

(2000:275) of Service-Learning as a multifaceted construct defined by the work and goals of several stakeholders, the focus should be on the four constituencies, namely, the institution, academic staff, students and community, who are the critical stakeholders in the institutionalisation of Service-Learning in higher education institutions. Accordingly, Service-Learning should firstly be represented at the institutional level in a mission statement, leadership, policy, publicity, budget allocations, administration and staff members' understanding and support of Service-Learning, infrastructure, academic staff members' roles and rewards, and the integration of Service-Learning with other aspects of institutional work. Secondly, academic staff should have information about course and curriculum development, academic staff development activities, expectations for recognition such as rewards, and an understanding and support of activities related to Service-Learning. Thirdly, students would find institutionalisation demonstrated through service and Service-Learning scholarships, modules or courses, credit options, the student culture and co-curricular transcripts which document service. Finally, community relationships would provide evidence of institutionalisation when community agency resources are coupled with the academic institution to build reciprocal, enduring and diverse partnerships which mutually support community interests and academic goals (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000:275). Students are therefore regarded as stakeholders in Community Service-Learning and should accordingly be given an opportunity to reflect on and be represented in the institutionalisation of such learning. In this article we focus on the students as stakeholders and the need to know their perceptions of and attitudes to Community Service-Learning before integrating this module into the teacher training curriculum.

A number of different terms (in many cases, confusing to students) are used to describe or refer to Community Service-Learning. Some often-used terms are: community-based learning/education, Service-Learning, academic Service-Learning and curriculum-based Service-Learning. For the purposes of this study, 'Community Service-Learning' is the term used to refer to the concept in question.

Bringle and Hatcher (1995:112) state that Service-Learning is a module- or course-based, credit-bearing educational experience which links academic study with community service, where students

- participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs;
- reflect on the service activity as a means of gaining
  - a deeper understanding of module or course content,
  - a broader appreciation of the discipline, and
  - an enhanced sense of personal values and social responsibility.

In a South African context, Bender (2005b) and other experts in the field of Service-Learning (Bender, Daniels, Lazarus, Node & Sattar, 2006; Erasmus, 2005; Michell, Trotter & Gelmon, 2005) define Service-Learning as a type of experiential education which forms the basis for the teaching and learning

(pedagogy) whereby students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organised service that

- is integrated into and enhances academic curricular learning;
- is conducted in and meets the needs of the community (as identified by the community by means of a needs assessment);
- is co-ordinated with an institution of higher education and service agency(ies) (and, if possible, community partners);
- includes structured time and guidelines for students to reflect in written and oral format on the service experience and gain a deeper understanding of the module content;
- gives a broader appreciation of the discipline; and
- helps foster social responsibility (Bender, 2005b; Erasmus, 2005).

#### Redefining teacher training and the role of teachers

Castle and Osman (2003:105) claim that interest in Community Service-Learning is growing at a time of curriculum change in teacher education and institutional change in higher education in South Africa. The reason might be that Community Service-Learning is viewed as "an avenue for universities to promote social engagement, responsibility and democratic awareness" (Castle & Osman, 2003:105). In South Africa this can be seen as a response to the government's call for a more socially responsive education system, and the suggestion that universities in particular should be more responsive to local and national needs by forming partnerships with other agencies in an attempt to address social problems such as poverty, unemployment, crime, and the lack of health facilities and associated facilities.

The range of demands placed on teachers, evident in the seven roles set out for them in the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000:7), is also quite impressive and is expected to have a significant impact on curriculum development in teacher education. The seven roles include the following: learning mediator; interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials; leader, administrator and lifelong learner; community, citizenship and pastoral role; assessor; learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist (Department of Education, 2000:7).

#### The student's role in curriculum development

The voice of the student has been identified as an essential element of Community Service-Learning programmes (Eyler, Giles & Schmiede, 1996; Myers & Bellner, 2000; Sigmon, 1996) coinciding with the role the student has to play in curriculum development. Carl (2000:51) states:

Personal feelings, inclinations, values and experiences are regarded as necessary curriculum content and the active involvement of the pupil is regarded as necessary in order to obtain maximal learning outcomes.

Carl (2000:52) adds that people only learn what has meaning for them personally, and therefore they create their own learning through selective perception. Students who are given the opportunity to participate in decision-

making become more deeply involved. This in turn improves the students' motivation, participation and learning outcomes (Myers & Bellner, 2000).

Briggs and Sommeveldt (2002) regard the student as a valuable resource in curriculum evaluation when making the necessary adjustments and improvements. Briggs and Sommeveldt (2002:101) cite many reasons for including students in this process, such as:

- They are the intended beneficiaries of the programme
- Only they can tell us about the received curriculum
- They can give helpful and constructive feedback
- There is a strong democratic and moral case for including them
- Seeking students' views encourages students' ownership of the norms and values of the institution: this is particularly important in the case of disaffected students
- Students' skills in reflection and evaluation are developed during the process of consultation.

As the student is described as the most influential stakeholder in a curriculum, room should be created for the student's voice in curriculum development so that students can engage in and transform a curriculum in authentic and relevant ways. Buchy (2004:38) comments that this "voice" concerns recognising and fostering the emergence of the students' responses and the presence of multiple voices, also recognising the connection between the students' education and their personal experience as well as the presence of different identities.

### **Conceptual and theoretical framework for Community Service-Learning**

Community Service-Learning is a form of experiential education and is a collaborative teaching and learning strategy designed to promote academic enhancement, personal growth and social responsibility. Students render relevant and meaningful service at service agencies and in community settings, which provide experiences related to academic content. Through structured reflection, students examine their experiences critically and determine whether they have attained the learning outcomes, thus enhancing the quality of both their learning and their service, and helping to foster social responsibility (Bender *et al.*, 2006).

Community Service-Learning is distinguished from other kinds of curricular community engagement by the intention to benefit equally the provider and the recipient of the service, and by placing equal focus on the service being provided and the learning that will take place (Furco, 2000:12). According to Bender *et al.* (2006:23), modules or courses with service-learning engage students in activities where the community and student are the primary beneficiaries and where the primary goals are to provide a service to the community and, equally, to enhance student learning by rendering the service. Reciprocity is the central feature of Service-Learning. "While many definitions of service-learning appear in the literature, an emphasis on active learning, reciprocity, and reflection is common to all" (Bender, 2004:10).

The criteria needed to make Community Service-Learning possible and a reality in an academic institution as part of an academic programme are identified and described as follows:

- Relevant and meaningful service with the community — service with the community must be meaningful and relevant to all stakeholders (needs and assets identified by the community).
- Enhanced academic leaning — enhanced academic learning must take place while serving the community. There must be a clear connection between the expected learning outcomes and the service activities, i.e. curriculum-based credit-bearing educational experiences.
- Structured opportunities for reflection should be provided to students.
- Purposeful civic learning — it must intentionally prepare students for active community participation in a diverse and democratic society (inculcating, for example, social responsibility).
- A scholarship of engagement should be promoted (see Bender, 2004; Bender, 2006a).

#### Community Service-Learning versus student teaching practice and internships

Community Service-Learning is not the same as student teaching practice and internships. The distinction between these forms of student community engaged teaching and learning can be illustrated by means of two questions, namely:

- The primary beneficiary of the service — who will benefit from the activities?
- The primary goal of the service — will it be community service or student learning? (Furco, 2000:12-13).

When preparing to become a teacher, a student will be required to gain foundational knowledge about the discipline of teaching. This mainly implies theoretical knowledge. Following this, these students will be expected to do a period of teaching practice at a school, applying their newly acquired theoretical knowledge and, in the process, assisting them to gain professional knowledge. Student teaching practice therefore is merely putting into practice, in a formal school environment, the theory that is taught without any socially responsive intentions. Boyle-Baise (2002) refers to the role of a student teacher at a school during teaching practice as a "teacher-helper" and comments that although the pre-service teacher will be learning, it is more like a field experience for a teacher training course and students are there mainly to learn more about the role of a teacher.

The Department of Education (2000:6) views teaching practice as a period of time during which student teachers are placed in a school to gain experience, develop and be assessed in the different roles and competencies needed for successful teachers.

Furco (2000:11) defines internship as an activity that engages students in service activities primarily for the purpose of providing students with hands-on experience which enhances their learning or understanding of the

issues relevant to a particular area of study. The students are therefore the primary intended beneficiaries and the primary goal is student learning. Academic learning and vocational development during internship are at the core of the activity, which will normally be undertaken after completing a series of modules, and can be a paid or unpaid activity in a profit-driven or a non-profit organisation. Internships are generally fully integrated with the student's curriculum.

Teaching Internships will, for example, take place at a school designated by the academic institution and with which a partnership may have been established for the purpose of gaining vocational development and practical experience by student teachers (Bender *et al.*, 2006:22).

### The theory of Service-Learning

According to Myers-Lipton (1996:660), the theoretical roots of Service-Learning are found in the critical social theories and the academic discipline, Sociology of Education. In this regard, Giles and Eyler (1997:3) turn to John Dewey's philosophies as a "legitimate source" for developing a theory of Service-Learning by recognising "Dewey's experimentalism with an emphasis on the principles of experience, inquiry, and reflection as the key elements of a theory of knowing in service-learning" (Giles & Eyler, 1997:3).

The foundations of Community Service-Learning, found in experiential education as described by Dewey (1963) and Kolb (1984), are noted as the basis of one of the most important learning theories for Community Service-Learning. Learning from experience gives students the opportunity to put theory into practice and also gain an insight into the expected tasks and community issues they could face in the workplace. Dewey's approach to education links the theory to practice; he regards educational experiences and community service as both playing an interacting role in social construction (Hironimus-Wendt & Lovell-Troy, 1999:364). Dewey views experience as what occurs when a transaction is carried out with the environment. Dewey proposes two principles to ensure that an experience becomes educative: the Principle of Continuity and the Principle of Interaction. An experience would therefore become educational when the interaction becomes a continuous experience exemplifying growth and learning, keeping in mind that the aim of education is growth (Hickman, 1998). Reflection on an experience is also noted as important by Dewey (cited in Hickman, 1998) and forms the basis of experiential education, implying that learning from experience in an appropriate way achieves far more than theoretical or technical knowledge.

The Experiential Learning Theory of David Kolb (1984), built on the foundation of Dewey's work, is also noted as a conceptual framework for the theory underlying Service-Learning (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997:12). Kolb's theory is demonstrated in his proposed learning cycle which includes four aspects, namely, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Kolb's theories link up with Community Service-Learning when he describes experiential education as a way many educators see as revitalising the university curriculum and coping with

the changes facing higher education (Kolb, 1984:4).

The theories about citizen education are also relevant to Community Service-Learning. Citizen education embraces the skills and political behaviour required for effective participation in a democracy, where citizens should be taught to think for themselves (Parker, 1998:111).

With reference to the theories of curriculum, Carl (2000) mentions four approaches to the process of curriculum development, which may serve as theoretical foundations: academic approach, experiential approach, technological approach and pragmatic approach. For the purposes of this study, the focus was on the experiential approach for which Carl (2000:51) gives credit to Dewey as the father of the experiential model for curriculum development. This approach is described as subjective, personal, heuristic and transactional. It focuses on the role of the teacher and pupils in co-operative curriculum decisions. The basis of this model is that "people only learn what has meaning for them personally and they create their own learning through selective perception" (Carl, 2000:52).

### **Problem statement and aim of study**

Previous research and surveys have examined the effects of Community Service-Learning on outcomes and learning experiences (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer & Ilustre, 2002; Myers-Lipton, 1996) but little has been written about students' attitudes to and perceptions of Community Service-Learning before it is incorporated into the curriculum of, for example, a module or course of an academic learning programme. Black (1999:215) states that investigating what attitudes, beliefs and opinions groups of subjects with common traits hold, is of value because these attitudes will influence behaviour.

Uninformed students who participate in Community Service-Learning programmes may develop negative attitudes and participate unwillingly. Information about preconceived ideas gained by surveying the attitudes and perceptions students have concerning Community Service-Learning and community service could shed light on how best to integrate Community Service-Learning into learning programmes, so as to ensure successful integration. Kraft (1996:131) notes the possible meaning of and views people have of community service:

Those familiar with the criminal justice system recognise the punitive aspects of its current meaning, whereby thousands of adolescent and adult offenders are sentenced each year to picking up trash or doing other menial tasks in the community in exchange for jail time.

This negative interpretation could have extremely detrimental effects on Community Service-Learning, which should by rights be a highly positive pedagogical practice instead. For this reason, this study could add value by giving an insight into the students' understanding of the concept of Community Service-Learning.

The importance of knowing students' attitudes and perceptions is also reiterated by Marzano (1992), in that several studies have revealed that the

perceived value of a task will greatly influence a learner's attitude to that task and accordingly have a strong influence on the outcome of the task. A study measuring first-year students' perceptions of and attitudes to their educational experiences revealed that attitudes and perceptions also affect the number of students retained in undergraduate courses (Graham & Caso, 2002).

Furthermore, no study of this kind has as yet been done specifically for and among South African higher education institutions and students. Although there is international literature on the topic of Community Service-Learning, the South African educational environment has yet to explore its possibilities and benefits in formal academic programmes and studies.

The research problem to be investigated was the following: *What are the attitudes and perceptions among third-year teacher training students about Community Service-Learning and its integration into the curriculum of a teacher training programme?*

The main aim of the study was to provide information to lecturers about student teachers in teacher training programmes regarding the attitudes and perceptions students have about Community Service-Learning, which could be of value for curriculum development and the inclusion of Community Service-Learning in teacher training programmes

### **Research design and methodology**

The research was of a quantitative nature and followed a descriptive design, using a survey to collect the data. The survey instrument was in the form of a questionnaire on perceptions and attitudes regarding Community Service-Learning. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: Section 1: demographic information; Section 2: factual items about previous experience and knowledge of community service and Community Service-Learning, and Section 3: attitudinal and perception items. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the responses to the items on the questionnaire in Section 3. The responses varied from *I strongly agree* — (1) to *I strongly disagree* — (5).

A purposeful or non-probability sampling strategy was used whereby all teacher training students currently in their third year of study at a research university were selected for the study. Students enrolled for the module OPV 352 (Multi-cultural Education) were selected. The selection was based on the following facts: that the module OPV 352 is a compulsory module for all students enrolled for any of the undergraduate teacher training courses/modules and would therefore be a good reflection of the teacher training student population at the university; that the module OPV352 was recommended as a possible and appropriate module for integrating Service-Learning into the curriculum, and that more time is available in the third year of the teacher training programme. The size of the sample was 168 students (n = 168).

The study was conducted on a relatively small group (n = 168) over a limited time and in a limited context and consequently the generalisation value of the study was limited.

## Results

The information derived from Sections A and B, demographic and factual information, of the questionnaire: Student survey on perceptions and attitudes regarding Community Service-Learning, was coded and recorded on the SAS® (SAS Institute Inc., 2004) database. All statistical calculations were done with the aid of SAS® (SAS Institute Inc., 2004). A frequency analysis was done using the data obtained from Sections A and B to obtain a demographic profile of the student sample.

### Demographic profile

The demographic profile of the respondents included their age, gender, race and the academic programmes for which they had registered. The demographic profile of the student sample (n = 168) is shown as frequencies and percentages in Table 1.

**Table 1** Demographic profile of third-year teacher training students (n=168)

Characteristic	Group	N*	%
Age	24 years and older	10	6
	23 years	11	7
	22 years	36	22
	21 years	98	59
	20 years	10	6
	Total	165	100
Gender	Male	25	15
	Female	143	85
	Total	168	100
Race	Black	15	9
	White	150	89
	Other	3	2
	Total	168	100
BEd programme	Early Childhood Development and Foundation phase	71	42
	Intermediate and Senior phase	26	15
	Further Education and Training	71	43
	Total	168	100

\* Frequencies may not sum to 168 because of non-responses

### Previous experience and knowledge of Community Service-Learning

Meaningful and important results were derived from Section B (previous experience and knowledge of Community Service-Learning) and C (attitudes to and perceptions of Community Service-Learning) of the questionnaire, with the significant information being that a majority of 73% of the students indicated that they would like to do community service related to their teacher training programme and with 67% of students indicating that they would enrol for a module which included community service (curricular). Only 21% of the students had been previously enrolled in a course/module that included community service and 53% had not heard of Community Service-Learning before the survey. On being asked for the primary reason that would motivate them to enrol for a course/module which included community service, the majority indicated career/future plans (33%) (see Table 2.)

### Respondents' attitudes to and perceptions of Community Service-Learning and its integration into the teacher training curriculum

Section C of the questionnaire measured responses to the questions on a five-point Likert-scale. Responses were coded accordingly and recorded on the same database as those from Sections A and B. A factor analysis was done on the responses to this section of the questionnaire, with the data collected from a larger group of teacher training students in another similar study on 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th-year teacher training students ( $n = 883$ ), using the same questionnaire. The reason for using the second data set was that insufficient data were collected from the third-year teacher training group alone, owing to the limited number of respondents, and this would have affected the validity of this study (Bender, 2005a; 2005b; 2006).

The following four factors were identified from the items in this section:

- Factor 1: Self: personal and social development (Intra- and interpersonal development)
- Factor 2: Career development (Teacher training for social responsibility)
- Factor 3: Attitude to the integration of Service-Learning in teacher training
- Factor 4: Commitment to social responsibility

Based on these factors, the Community Service-Learning Attitudes and Perception Scale (CSLAPS) was developed and used for further investigation of the data (Bender, 2005a; 2005b; 2006).

The variables of gender, course enrolled for, community service experience, previous enrolment in a Community Service-Learning course and knowledge of Community Service-Learning, were selected from Sections A and B of the questionnaire and used with the Community Service-Learning Attitudes and Perception Scale (CSLAPS), comparing the interactions of the latter. The statistical technique ANOVA (analysis of variance) was used in this case. ANOVA is a univariate procedure used to assess group differences on a single metric dependent variable (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998:327).

Significant results were obtained by using the CSLAPS (Community Service-Learning Attitudes and Perception Scale) (Bender, 2006) for the data from Section C: Attitudes to and perceptions of Community Service-Learning.

**Table 2** Third-year teacher training students' responses to previous community service experience and participation (n = 168)

Experience and participation	Response	N*	%
Previous community service experience	Yes	90	53
	No	78	47
	Total	168	100
Current participation in community service (co-curricular)	Yes	21	12
	No	147	88
	Total	168	100
Would you like to do community service related to teacher training programme? (curricular)	Yes	122	73
	No	46	27
	Total	168	100
Would you like to do community service for academic credit? (curricular)	Yes	68	41
	No	39	23
	It does not matter	61	36
	Total	168	100
Would you like to enrol for course/module with community service?	Yes	113	67
	No	55	33
	Total	168	100
Have you been enrolled for a course/module with community service?	Yes	36	21
	No	132	79
	Total	168	100
Have you heard of Service-Learning before?	Yes	79	47
	No	88	53
	Total	167	100
Primary reason that would motivate enrolment for a course/module which includes community service	Academic credit	26	16
	Module/course requirements	15	9
	Interest in module	39	24
	Community service component	15	9
	Career/future plans	54	33
	Other	4	9
	Total	163	100

\* Frequencies may not sum to 168 because of non-responses

**Table 3** Results of ANOVA comparing interactions with demographic and other variables using the Community Service-Learning Attitudes and Perception Scale (CSLAPS)

Demographic and other variables	Community Service-Learning Attitudes and Perception Scale			
	1	2	3	4
	Self: Personal and social development (Intra- and Interpersonal development)	Career development (Teacher training and social responsibility)	Attitude to the integration of Service-Learning in teacher training	Commitment to social responsibility
	<i>p</i> value	<i>p</i> value	<i>p</i> value	<i>p</i> value
Gender	0.3117	0.5023	0.7095	0.2404
Experience	0.1384	0.2562	0.1813	0.4454
Gender + Experience	0.8884	0.4295	0.6661	0.5645
BEd programme	0.7073	0.7077	0.7739	0.6994
Previous enrolment for course/ module including Community Service-Learning	0.1288	0.4793	0.6966	0.4203
Experience + previous enrolment for course/ module including Community Service-Learning	0.1009	0.3666	0.7083	0.4093
Prior knowledge about Community Service-Learning	0.8391	0.9489	0.9283	0.8445
Previous enrolment in Community Service-Learning course / module + Prior knowledge about Community Service-Learning	0.0543*	0.0364*	0.7021	0.0807

\* Significant or almost significant ( $p \leq 0.05$ )

Subsequent to this, the interactions with variables from Section B: Previous experience and knowledge of Community Service-Learning, using the CSLAPS, were compared. The only significant results ( $p < 0.05$ ) derived were found in the comparisons between previous enrolment and knowledge of Community Service-Learning with Factor 1 Self: Personal and social development ( $p = 0.0543$ ) and Factor 2 Career development of the CSLAPS ( $p = 0.0364$ ) (see Table 3).

These significant results indicated that the students, who had previously enrolled for a course which included Community Service-Learning and who also had knowledge about it, had a more positive attitude toward doing Community Service-Learning because they felt they would benefit from it in terms of personal and social development and that it would also be of value for their career development.

These results highlighted the fact that students are career-oriented and would like to take part in activities that would benefit them personally and socially and also benefit their career development. The results also showed that previous knowledge or experience regarding community service would be of value in terms of positive student attitudes towards enrolling for a course/module which included Community Service-Learning in the curriculum of their teacher training programme.

Further specific differences were identified when using the statistical technique LSMEANS, a multiple comparisons technique (SAS Institute Inc., 2004: 1820-1823) of the variables (Factors 1 and 2) and previous enrolment and prior knowledge about Community Service-Learning. These results are displayed in Table 4 and indicated that previous enrolment and prior knowledge influenced the students' attitude to doing Community Service-Learning for personal and social development and career development, respectively.

After obtaining the above results showing that students had a greater focus on the factor Self: personal and social development with career development, a decision was taken to investigate two other variables, using the Community Service-Learning Attitude and Perception Scale (CSLAPS). The two variables taken from Section 2 of the questionnaire probed whether the students would like to take part in Community Service-Learning related to their current teacher training programme and whether they would like to do community service for academic credit. Previous experience was again taken into consideration and also used in the comparison (Table 5).

The results indicated that the students had a more positive attitude to Community Service-Learning, indicating a greater willingness to do community service related to their current teacher-training programme ( $p < 0.0001$ ) and for academic credit ( $p = 0.0005$ ), if it would add value to their teacher training and enhance their career development. It was also clear that these two variables had a far greater significance than Factor 2 as regards enhancing their career development or teacher training for social responsibility on the Community Service-Learning Attitude and Perception Scale (CSLAPS).

Based on the findings indicated in Table 5, multiple comparisons were employed by way of contrasts to identify specific differences, using Factor 2:

**Table 4** Results of ANOVA using multiple comparisons (LSMEANS) to distinguish between the levels of significance of factors

Previous enrolment for course/ module including Community Service-Learning	Prior knowledge about Community Service-Learning	CSLAPS			
		Self: personal and social development (Intra- and interpersonal development)		Career development (Teacher training for social responsibility)	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
1 (Yes)	1 (Yes)	1.98 <sup>a</sup>	0.75	2.20 <sup>a</sup>	0.73
	2 (No)	2.13 <sup>b</sup>	0.57	2.25 <sup>ab</sup>	0.96
2 (No)	1 (Yes)	2.38 <sup>ab</sup>	0.92	2.40 <sup>b</sup>	0.91
	2 (No)	2.10 <sup>a</sup>	0.75	2.04 <sup>a</sup>	0.66

**a,b** Means with common characters do not differ significantly (interpret column-wise)

Career development and willingness to take part in community service related to current teacher training programme and wanting to do community service for academic credit. These results are displayed in Table 6 and indicate that the students wanting to take part in Community Service-Learning related to their current academic programme and wanting to do it for academic credit were in favour of it because of the value it might hold for their career development. By contrast, there were no significant differences among the students who indicated that they did not want to take part in Community Service-Learning, did not want to do it for academic credit, or that it did not matter whether they did it.

## Discussion

The literature review of previous research on Community Service-Learning in different disciplines revealed that there has not yet been a study on students' attitudes to and perceptions of Community Service-Learning before this component is integrated into the curriculum of an academic programme at higher education institutions. This has a definite bearing on future research in that the field has not yet been explored. All the existing studies have focused on students' attitudes to and perceptions of Community Service-Learning after it had been integrated into the curriculum, or on the value of Community Service-Learning for teaching and learning (Abourzek & Patterson, 2003, Cepello, Davis & Hill-Ward, 2003, Erickson & Anderson, 1997, Swick, 1999).

Research on Community Service-Learning in South Africa is also still at an early stage and little subject-specific research has been done. The Joint

**Table 5** Results of ANOVA comparing interactions with demographic and other variables using the Community Service-Learning Attitudes and Perception Scale (CSLAPS)

Demographic and other variables	Community Service-Learning Attitudes and Perception Scale			
	1	2	3	4
	Self: Personal and social development (Intra- and Interpersonal development)	Career development (Teacher training and social responsibility)	Attitude to the integration of Service-Learning in teacher training	Commitment to social responsibility
	<i>p</i> value	<i>p</i> value	<i>p</i> value	<i>p</i> value
Would like to take part in community service related to current teacher training programme?	<0.0001*	<0.0001*	0.0086	<0.0001*
Would like to do community service for academic credit?	0.0018*	0.0005*	0.7174	0.0014*
Would like to take part in community service related to current teacher training programme + Would like to do community service for academic credit?	0.1048	0.0329*	0.6954	0.2959
Experience	0.8032	0.9408	0.7037	0.6291
Experience + Would like to take part in community service related to current teacher training programme?	0.5352	0.3790	0.1909	0.8732
Experience + Would like to do community service for academic credit?	0.6265	0.1669	0.1872	0.3996

\* Significant ( $p \leq 0.33$ )

**Table 6** Results of ANOVA, using multiple comparisons to distinguish between levels of significance of factors

		CSLAPS	
		Career development (Teacher training for social responsibility)	
Would like to take part in community service related to current teacher training programme?	Would like to do community service for academic credit?	Mean	Standard deviation
		1 (Yes)	1 (Yes)
2 (No)	2.11 <b>ab</b>		0.78
3 (Does not matter)	1.84 <b>a</b>		0.50
2 (No)	1 (Yes)	2.34 <b>ab</b>	0.77
	2 (No)	3.47 <b>c</b>	0.69
	3 (Does not matter)	2.71 <b>bc</b>	0.79

**a,b,c** Means with common characters do not differ significantly (interpret column-wise)

Education Trust currently supports numerous research projects on community engagement in higher education. These projects include specific areas, such as the role of the community, faculty and service agencies in community Higher Education; student assessment in community engagement; organisational structures conducive to community engagement; and quality assurance of community engagement and Service-Learning (Lazarus, 2005).

It is therefore believed that the current study filled a gap in the existing research, as it was the first study of its kind and will probably lead to further studies on attitudes to and perceptions of Community Service-Learning, and its integration into a curriculum.

The findings of the study indicated that many of the students (slightly more than half — 53%) had gained previous experience of community service as part of volunteerism, but the majority (88%) were not currently participating in a volunteer community service project (non-curricular community engagement). The respondents did however indicate that they would like to enrol for a course/module which included community service, if it would be of value for their career development.

The findings also showed that teacher training students who knew about Community Service-Learning and/or had participated in a community project, had a better perception of what Community Service-Learning would entail. These students also displayed a more positive attitude to the integration of this component into their teacher training curriculum. This indicated that knowledge about Community Service-Learning or participation in a community project had a positive influence on students' attitudes to and perceptions

of the concept and its integration into their curriculum.

The students with knowledge of, and previous participation in, a community service programme also stated that they believed they had a commitment to social responsibility and would be prepared to do community service related to their teacher training programme for their personal and social development. The respondents also displayed a greater willingness to enrol for such a course/module if it would add value to their career development. These students also confirmed that they would require academic credits for doing such a course/module (curricular community engagement).

The CSLAPS (Community Service-Learning Attitude and Perception Scale) (Bender, 2005a; 2006) identifies four factors related directly to attitudes to and perceptions of Community Service-Learning. Results were generated by using the CSLAPS, showing that the students who participated in the survey were more focused on intra- and inter-personal development as well as on career development. As regards the students' attitudes to the integration of Service-Learning in teacher training and their commitment to social responsibility, the scale indicated no significant result. This was an indication that the students were more focused on personal gain than on a sense of commitment to social responsibility. Therefore, students would probably give a higher rating to a course/module which included Community Service-Learning if it gave students opportunities for personal growth and social development, and opportunities for career development that might emanate from it.

The results obtained from the use of the CSLAPS as part of the study, indicated three important conclusions about students' attitudes to and willingness to participate in Community Service-Learning:

- **First conclusion:** Students are career-oriented and would want credit for doing such a course/module.
- **Second conclusion:** Students have a desire to grow and develop personally and socially.
- **Third conclusion:** Prior knowledge about Community Service-Learning should be regarded as important when considering the integration of this component into a course/module, as it has an identifiable influence on students' attitudes to Community Service-Learning and their willingness to do Community Service-Learning as part of their teacher training.

### **Concluding remarks**

Community engagement is recognised as one of the core functions of Higher Education and Training in South Africa (Council on Higher Education, 2004: 24), along with teaching, learning and research. Community engagement finds expression in a variety of forms, ranging from informal and relatively unstructured activities to formal and structured academic programmes which address particular community needs. Community Service-Learning as part of curriculum-based community engagement deliberately involves the students in activities in a community environment, so that they will learn from the experience while also having an opportunity to gain first-hand information about community needs and how they, as prospective teachers, can help to make a

difference through their profession.

The foundation of Community Service-Learning, seen in theories of experiential education as described by Dewey (1963) and Kolb (1984), is regarded as one of the most important learning theories for Community Service-Learning. Learning from experience gives students the opportunity to put theory into practice and also gain insight into the expected tasks and community issues that they could face when entering the workplace.

The literature study brought to the fore the confusion that students may feel about what Community Service-Learning entails and how it can be distinguished from other forms of experiential education (Furco, 2000). Community Service-Learning is described in the literature as essentially a learning experience which is both personally meaningful to the students and beneficial to the community (Bringle, Phillips & Hudson, 2004; Furco & Billig, 2002; Howard, 1998; Stacey *et al.*, 2001; Stanton, 2000).

Community Service-Learning is of a reciprocal nature, since the student and the community both have to invest in, and simultaneously benefit from, the activities included in a Community Service-Learning module/course.

The structured reflection that the students do before, during and after performing the Community Service-Learning activities is also noted as an important feature of Community Service-Learning, as it gives the students an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and, in this way, determine their value for their learning. Stacey *et al.* (2001:26) state that

many students do not immediately see the connection between the vivid, complex experiences in their service and the importance in a university module. They need help making the link through structured reflection. The process of reflection is an ongoing one and should take place before, during and after the Community Service-Learning project, because it is a constant evaluation process whereby the experience is evaluated in terms of its value and meaning for the student. It is through this reflection process that a curriculum can be changed/planned/designed positively as the students have the opportunity to discuss the intended learning and the service experience that has taken place in terms of its relevance to the theory and importance for their life experience and career. Students should be able to think about and then articulate how the service clarified, reinforced, expanded or illustrated the course/module concepts and improved learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler *et al.*, 1996; Sigmon, 1996; Stacey *et al.*, 2001).

Citizenship is described in the relevant literature (Constitutional Assembly, 1996; Parker, 1996; Rhampele, 2001; Rhoads, 1998) as bringing with it not only democratic rights but also a responsibility to help solve problems in the community through active participation in community matters. Community Service-Learning offers students the opportunity to recognise the role they can play as responsible citizens while they are students and also after they have completed their studies, by bringing their future career to the community to help solve problems or add value (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

The literature review on Community Service-Learning in teacher training showed that skills could be developed and enhanced through a Service-

Learning experience, as Service-Learning provides an environment where pre-service teachers can actively practise their teaching, leadership and communication skills to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Abourzek & Patterson, 2003:126).

Community Service-Learning gives teacher training students a window through which to view their future working environment. This view is extremely important as it gives these students first-hand experience of their future work and an opportunity to develop the skills required to be successful teachers. Community Service-Learning gives student teachers the opportunity to grow personally and professionally, to get to know the diversity of social influences and their impact on the schoolchildren with whom they will work (Myers & Bellner, 2000; Franco, 2000; Erickson & Anderson, 1997).

Students are important participants in a curriculum and their voice ought to be recognised in curriculum development. Students should be familiarised with the concept and practice of Community Service-Learning before it is integrated into their curriculum. The following steps are recommended as important for orientation regarding Community Service-Learning.

- Introduce students by means of an orientation process to the concept and practice of Community Service-Learning before they embark on such a course/module.
- Address the uncertainties students have about expectations of and responsibilities for Community Service-Learning by explaining the what, where, when, and how much of what they will be doing.
- Issue a manual or some form of documentation on Service-Learning to students to give them a detailed description of expectations and the procedures to be followed.
- Allow students the opportunity to ask questions and discuss any uncertainties they may still have after the introduction and orientation.
- Allow students time to reflect on what they have been told.
- Arrange visits to the intended service agencies and community sites as part of the introduction and orientation.

Finally, ensure that students have a deep understanding that Community Service-Learning is a reciprocal pedagogy and although the community will benefit from their activities, the aim is for them to learn from the experience and that they and the community will be empowered by it. Ensure that students know what the benefits of Community Service-Learning are for students and specifically for teacher training students.

Research in this field is important and should aim continuously to add educational innovation for excellence in each new generation of teachers. Franco (2000:7) points out: "Through Service-Learning, tomorrow's teachers can be helped to value civic democracy and civil diversity and to have the human touch, learned and nurtured through service". This statement is reason enough to regard as a high priority the incorporation of Community Service-Learning programmes into teacher training.

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