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Learning through Experience: Making sense of students' learning
through service learning.

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award of the degree of Master of Education

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Abstract

This study asks how we can make sense of students' learning in service learning. I employed a qualitative research methodology to explore the learning experiences of four students as they journeyed through the UCT Global Citizenship course: *Thinking about volunteering: service, boundaries and power*. This is a service learning course which attracts students from all disciplines and years of study. The course has two learning components: the students' self-organised voluntary community service, which forms the primary learning text, and guided facilitation and reflection through face-to-face and online learning activities. I had access to students' coursework which provided two written reflective assignments and a number of online blogs. At a later stage I conducted small-scale in-depth interviews. I used two methods to organise and analyse the data. The first was an analytic framework made up of three interconnected learning domains of 'knowing', 'being' and 'acting' (adapted from Barnett and Coate, 2005); the second was qualitative thematic analysis. My data suggest that we can make sense of students' learning in service learning through an analysis of students' 'being' in relation to their 'knowing' and 'acting'. My data also show that 'being' is embedded in students' 'knowing' and 'doing' and therefore 'being' is a key component of student learning. Additionally, the concept of a 'learning journey' is useful in positioning learning as something that takes place over time and in space. Finally, my data show that context matters: students' "personal foundations of experience" (Boud and Walker, 1991) influence their learning, as does the more immediate context of the classroom and their community service work. This study ends by briefly pointing to two key 'enablers' of students' learning, critical reflection and peer learning.

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List of abbreviations:

CoP: Community/ies of Practice

CR: Critical reflection

EL: Experiential learning

GC: Global Citizenship programme

GC1: Global Citizenship course 1: *Global debates, local voices*

GC2: Global Citizenship course 2: *Thinking about volunteering: service, boundaries and power*

HE: Higher education

SL: Service learning

UCT: University of Cape Town

US: United States

University of Cape Town

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Chapter One: Preparing students for a ‘supercomplex’ world

Our campuses educate our citizens. This means learning a lot of facts, and mastering techniques of reasoning. But it means something more. It means learning how to be a human being capable of love and imagination....We need to produce citizens who have this education while they are still young, before their imaginations are shackled by the weight of daily duties and self-interested plans....Socratic citizens who are capable of thinking for themselves, arguing with tradition, and understanding with sympathy the conditions of lives different from their own....that is the cultivation of humanity. (Nussbaum 2002: 301-302)

Introduction

We are living in an age of ‘supercomplexity’ (Barnett, 2000) in which the world is increasingly unknowable, disruptive and disturbing. It is a fast-changing world in which we are constantly assailed by difficult questions, competing priorities and a multiplicity of choices and options. In South Africa, we see this daily in the urgent, complex, heated debates around poverty, inequality, democracy, justice, responsibility and restitution. These debates take place in the world ‘out there’, but they also resonate individually and personally, at the level of human ‘being’¹ (Barnett, 2000).

Over the past two decades a number of educational philosophers have called on universities to play a more active role in adequately preparing students for today’s complex world. Barnett (2000) for example argues that universities are both implicated in this complexity and have a role to play in preparing students to live with and prosper through it. To do this, he says, universities need to move beyond the ‘mantra’ of knowledge and skills and consider ways to equip students for ‘being’ in the world.

Palmer (2007) and Nussbaum (1997, 2002) insist higher education (HE) should ‘humanise’ students. Palmer (2007:np) urges universities to “uproot the myth of ‘value-free’ knowledge” so that graduates

recognize that our justice system often fails the poor, that corporate logic usually favors short-term profits over sustainability...that our approach to international relations is laced with arrogance about our culture and ignorance of others, that science and technology are not neutral but rather means to social ends.

¹ I have chosen to use single quotation marks throughout this thesis for the concepts ‘knowing’, ‘acting’, ‘being’ and ‘learning journey’. This is to indicate that I am drawing on a particular understanding of these notions in relation to my research question.

Nussbaum (2002) describes three capacities that education should nurture in order to ‘cultivate humanity’. The first is critical thinking: students need to be able to critically exam their own traditions and beliefs. Secondly, they need to recognise their community and fellowship with human beings around the world. And thirdly, students need to develop an ability to consider what it might be like walk in another person’s shoes. Together these capacities can develop students as active, critical, aware and caring citizens and human beings.

These debates have become of increasing interest and relevance in my own life over the past decade. In 2007, pursuing a more fulfilling career, I began part-time studies in counselling and life-coaching. I volunteered as a counsellor at LifeLine² and coached small groups of women entrepreneurs at The Clothing Bank³. As my interest in personal and social transformation grew I looked to deepen my involvement in learning and education. As a result, in 2010, I left the corporate world and returned to university to pursue my Masters.

Whilst at university I have taken on a variety roles to support my learning. As an Academic Development tutor I provide extra support to second-language English Literature students. In the Writing Centre I provide academic writing support to students at all levels of study. I have worked with mature post-graduate students providing structural support, and with young undergraduates struggling in the ‘new world’ of the university. In all these roles I facilitate student learning and also often provide emotional support. University can be a daunting space, especially if the student faces additional challenges, as many South Africans do, such as second- or third-language English, entering via recognition of prior learning⁴, or working fulltime whilst studying part-time.

Through my work I have become increasingly aware that learning is about more than gaining knowledge and acquiring skills. Learning often requires courage, tenacity and perseverance. It calls on, can disrupt and develop a student’s self-confidence, self-awareness, values and identity. Learning in HE often provokes emotion. These are all part of student ‘being’. Barnett (2007, 2009) and Barnett and Coate (2005) demonstrate that although ‘being’ is continually called on in HE, its role in learning is often ignored in curricula. They argue that paying attention student ‘being’ is important if students are to survive and thrive at the modern university, and to prepare them for life beyond it.

² <http://www.lifelinewc.org.za/>

³ <http://www.theclothingbank.org.za/>

⁴ “Recognition of Prior Learning is a process whereby people’s prior learning can be formally recognised in terms of registered qualifications and unit standards, regardless of where and how the learning was attained. RPL acknowledges **that** people never stop learning, whether it takes place formally at an educational institution, or whether it happens informally.” (<http://www.saqa.org.za/show.asp?include=focus/rpl.htm>)

In thinking about this thesis, then, I was interested in exploring students' learning within HE, particularly their learning outside of acquiring 'knowledge' and 'skills'. My starting point was an interest in understanding learning that affected or influenced the 'whole person' – their 'being'. I found a programme that aims to offer students a different learning experience, one which focuses explicitly on 'self' and values, and as such provided me with a useful site for my research into student learning.

The rest of this introductory chapter provides context and background to my thesis. I touch on debates in South African higher education, provide context to the University of Cape Town (UCT), and introduce the site for my research, the UCT Global Citizenship programme that piloted in 2010. This chapter ends with the rationale and purpose for this study and my research question, and lays out the structure for the rest of this thesis.

Local context

South African HE is not untouched by the challenges to the modern university, and is increasingly shaped by global pressures and national priorities (Thomson, Smith-Tolken, Naidoo, Bringle, 2008). These are reflected in the Education White Paper of 1997 which outlines the framework for the transformation of HE in South Africa. The White Paper mandates HE institutions to support

a democratic ethos and a culture of human rights through educational programmes and practices conducive to critical discourse and creative thinking, cultural tolerance, and a common commitment to a humane, non-racist and non-sexist social order. (Department of Education, 1997:1.14)

More specifically, universities are called on to promote and develop students as socially responsible and aware citizens through their involvement in community service programmes.

UCT's mission and strategic plan, revised in 2009, speak to this directive. The mission states the university's aspiration to educate students for local and global contexts, and "produce graduates whose qualifications are internationally recognised and locally applicable, underpinned by values of engaged citizenship and social justice" (UCT, 2009)⁵.

However, organisational vision and mission are often difficult to realise in practice. At UCT, following discussions in the Senate Academic Planning Committee and the University Social Responsiveness Committee, ex-Deputy Vice Chancellor Jo Beall together with the Centre for Higher

⁵ From the UCT mission statement: www.uct.ac.za/about/intro/

Education Development submitted a proposal to the Vice Chancellor's Strategic Fund for a pilot 'global citizen' programme. This resulted in the creation of the UCT *Global Citizenship: Leading for Social Justice* (GC) programme, sponsored by the University leadership and run through a cross-faculty structure. GC set out to expose UCT students to global issues and debates, raise their awareness of social justice issues, and recognise learning from community engagement activities (GC Programme Review Report, 2010)⁶.

GC Programme

Programme overview

GC launched in 2010 with two modules: *Global debates, local voices* (GC1) and *Thinking about volunteering: service, boundaries and power* (GC2)⁷. The programme is situated outside of the formal curriculum. It is voluntary and non-credit bearing although is recognised on students' academic transcripts as a UCT Short Course.

The programme intentionally situates graduate attributes at the core of learning, and in particular speaks to three of UCT's six strategic goals⁸. It looks to develop students' understanding of continental and international contexts, and contribute to resolving global problems through socially responsive activities (strategic goal 1); give students a broad foundational knowledge beyond the requirements of their degree, and instil in them a spirit of critical enquiry and understanding of the role they can play in addressing social justice issues (goal 5); and provide opportunities for students to become involved in community-engaged socially-responsive education programmes to develop civic literacy, knowledge and skills to build a more just, equitable, and unified South African society (goal 6).

Emerging from these strategic goals, the broad objectives of the GC Programme are defined as, one, to expose students to knowledge on issues relating to global citizenship and social justice; two, to develop students' capacity for leadership on contemporary global-political and social justice issues through improving their active listening, critical thinking and logical argument skills; and, three, to promote students' awareness of themselves as future citizens of the world who are motivated to work

⁶ The information on the UCT Global Citizenship Programme that follows comes primarily from documents that emerged from the GC Programme, namely two review reports (2010 and 2011), a paper presented at the Community Engagement Conference at Fort Hare University (McMillan, van Heerden and Small, 2011), and additionally from the programme overview documents that can be found online:

<http://www.ched.uct.ac.za/departments/col/gc/>.

⁷ In 2012 a third course was added to the GC Programme, but this falls outside the remit of this study.

⁸ http://www.uct.ac.za/downloads/uct.ac.za/about/goals/uct_strategic_goals.pdf.

for social justice through involvement in community service. Below I introduce the two GC courses, focusing on GC2 which is where I chose to site my research.

GC1: Global debates, local voices

GC1 has two broad aims. Firstly, to “challenge students who are privileged as full-time students and future leaders and graduates to reflect critically on their own role as global citizens”. Secondly, students are asked to “consider their own responsibilities in the face of increasing social injustice and inequalities” (GC Review Report, 2010).

GC1 is structured around a series of workshops and online learning exercises debating issues of global citizenship. The course comprises four ‘themes’, each taking place over two weeks, the emphasis being on active learning through online activities and face-to-face sessions. In 2010 and 2011 the themes were Debating Development, War and Peace, Climate Change, and Africa in a Globalised World. Through lectures, discussions and face-to-face and online learning activities, students are encouraged to ‘find their voice’ in response to these debates.

GC2: Thinking about volunteering: service, boundaries and power

GC2 is a service learning (SL) course. SL takes many forms (which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Two), but one widely used definition describes it as:

a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning. (Jacoby, 1996:5)

GC2 recognises that many UCT students are involved in various forms of voluntary community service but seldom get chance to reflect on the challenges they face when working in contexts of poverty and inequality. The course therefore aims to provide volunteers – viewed as ‘active citizens’ - with the space and structure to reflect on key issues arising in their own volunteer work: to “stop to think about what we are doing, why we are doing it, and what impact or result our volunteering might have for our community partners” (GC2 course overview).

According to Heffernan’s (2001) six types, GC2 is most clearly a form of “pure” service learning (SL)⁹. In this approach to SL, the intellectual project is an understanding of service itself, and the course is not located within any particular discipline. GC2 does have some key differences to this typology, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Two. Here I want to provide an overview of key aspects of GC2 curriculum and pedagogy.

Curriculum and Pedagogy¹⁰

Course content

The GC programme aims to provide students with skills whilst also acknowledging that learning is underpinned by values. It attempts to do this by working across three learning domains. Represented in figure 1.1 below, these are ‘self’, ‘organisations and systems’ and broader ‘context and community’.

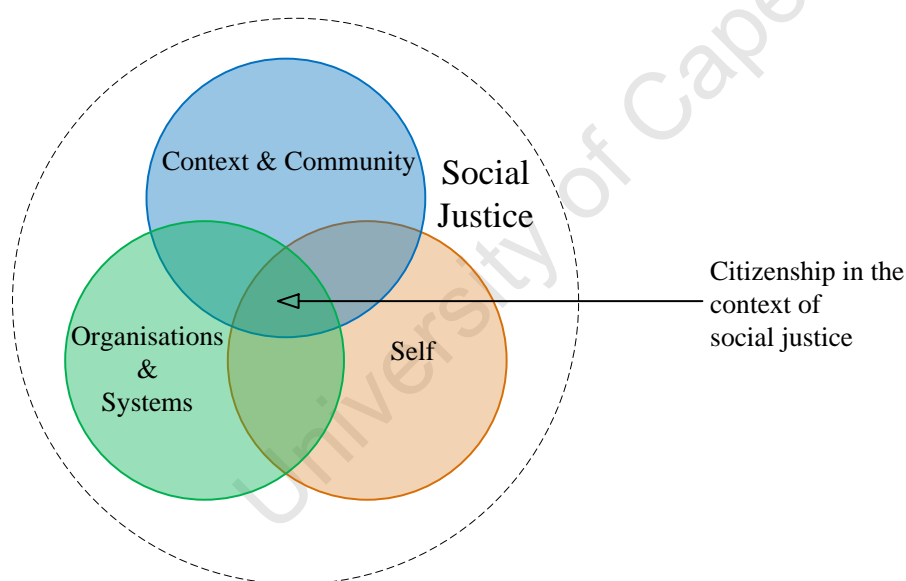


Figure 1.1: Framing GC curriculum and pedagogy (McMillan, forthcoming). GC2 used this diagram as a tool in its curriculum and pedagogy, to facilitate students’ reflections on their learning and their service.

⁹ Heffernan (2001) argues that there are six broad approaches of service learning: “Pure” service-learning, discipline-based service learning, problem-based service learning, capstone courses, service internships, and community-based action research.

¹⁰ Information contained in this section comes primarily from four documents which outline the GC programme curriculum design and pedagogical intentions: GC Review Reports 2010 and 2011; McMillan, van Heerden and Small, 2012; and McMillan, forthcoming.

Throughout the programme students are encouraged to locate themselves in the domains and through this they can start to think about some of the opportunities and constraints they face as individuals who are organisationally and institutionally located, within a broader structural context. The intersections between the domains is envisaged as ‘citizenship in the context of social justice’.

In developing the curriculum for the GC2 course, the facilitators worked with student volunteers and asked them about the questions they face in their community service. These discussions raised issues including questions around power relationships and insider/outsider identities; whether students can really ‘serve’ or are they just perpetuating inequality; how can students work with very different/unequal communities; rethinking community assets and needs; the impact of service work on identity and citizenship; service and social justice; developing capacities for critical reflection (CR); and understanding ‘service paradigms’, e.g. charity versus social change.

These issues helped to shape the course design. In 2010 GC2 contained five themes designed to address various aspects of students’ community service work: *Self and service*, *Service in contexts of inequality*, *Paradigms and ethics of service*, *Development: understanding relationships and processes* and *Sustaining new insights*. In 2011, feedback on 2010 resulted in a sixth theme being added, *Understanding Organisations*.

Each theme takes place through one class session supported by recommended readings and ongoing online discussions through blogs. Face-to-face sessions include skills-based activities which aim to offer students opportunities to practice active listening, cooperation and debating. The sessions are designed to move students from a self-orientated examination to community, organisation and social justice perspectives on and about service. The final theme gives students a space to think about ways to sustain their learnings.

GC2 has two core learning components: the students’ self-organised voluntary community service, which forms the primary learning text, and guided facilitation and reflection through face-to-face and online learning activities. Students are asked to draw on their own experiences in service through the reflection exercises. Students therefore use their own experience to generate knowledge about community service work, communities, and to make sense of their volunteering experiences.

To complete the course, students are required to complete 15 hours of self-organised service, attend the six face-to-face sessions, post at least three blogs and comment on others’ blogs, and submit two 1000-word reflection pieces. I discuss each of these in more detail under ‘data collection’ in Chapter Three.

Pedagogical approach

One of the key intentions of the GC programme is to make visible the unspoken values that underpin all learning programmes. It does this through using the notion of ‘social justice’ as a lens for students to consider their responsiveness to and responsibility for the world around them (McMillan, forthcoming). Given this intended social justice orientation, and the facilitators’ own teaching backgrounds, the programme pedagogy was influenced by the work of Paulo Freire and Jack Mezirow, in particular Freire’s notions of ‘critical consciousness’ and of ‘naming the world’ in order to change it, and Mezirow’s notion of ‘perspective transformation’. These are also important to my conceptual framework for this study and I discuss them in more detail in the next chapter.

Being a service learning course, GC2 draws on experiential learning (EL) and CR to encourage students to examine and learn from their volunteering experiences. It is also deliberately set up as a site that encourages peer learning¹¹: students learn in collaboration with their peers, through interactions online and in class-based activities.

GC aims to recognise that university is often the first educational space where students will interact with peers from different race and class backgrounds, and may be the first space in which they discuss and debate social inequalities with people who may have very different positionalities. The pedagogy therefore tries to encourage “intersections” of different views rather than students watching “one another from parallel worlds” (McMillan, van Heerden and Small, 2011).

Because the learning on GC2 is linked to practice (the students’ volunteering), context (most noticeably, post-Apartheid South Africa) and values (like social justice), the facilitators’ roles are seen as crucial in linking course content with students’ voices and experiences.

Profile of students

Students are recruited from all faculties at all levels of study, although the aim is to focus primarily on students in their second, third or fourth years of study. The demographics are diverse across disciplines and race although generally more women than men take part in GC2 (which is reflective of many service learning courses). In terms of overall numbers in 2010, 44 students registered for GC2 of whom 22 completed all requirements and graduated. In 2011, 67 students registered for the course,

¹¹ Discussion with course convener, 2011.

36 remained active for the duration of the course and 30 of these students completed all the course requirements and graduated.

Rationale and purpose

The call is being made for HE to pay attention to ‘being’, to play a more active role in cultivating students’ humanity; to prepare them for the fast-changing, globalised, ‘super-complex’ twenty-first century. A difficulty lies in these concepts of ‘being’, ‘care’, ‘humanity’ and ‘values’. They are often not acknowledged within HE, which traditionally focuses on knowledge and skills. How, then, can we teach for ‘being’?

One way HE is responding to this challenge is through SL courses. SL can offer opportunities for students to examine themselves – their roles and positioning – in the contexts of inequality in which they volunteer. As such, SL courses can be spaces which develop students’ empathy and an ethic of care, which challenge privilege and power, and allow new ways of ‘being’ to emerge in addition to imparting knowledge and skills. However, as I show in Chapter Two, SL does not inherently offer students a space to explore their personal responses to the challenges of service work. In fact, most SL courses are oriented towards enhancing students’ discipline-specific knowledge and skills (Heffernan, 2001).

I was fortunate in being introduced to GC2 as a SL course at UCT¹² which argues that it is trying to do something different. By explicitly teaching in response to inequality and poverty, GC2 encourages students to reflect on their own values and personal responses to these challenges. In an early conversation with the GC2 course convener¹³ (2011), she noted that the intention of GC2 is to concentrate on the ontological aspect of student education as a basis for supporting the epistemological and the practical. This course, therefore, intentionally works to foreground student ‘being’ in their learning to support the development of their knowledge and skills.

GC2 has deliberately been set up as a different kind of learning experience for university students (GC2 course overview, 2011). GC2 is situated within HE, but it is also situated in the ‘world out there’; in communities in and around Cape Town. Students learn about themselves and the communities in which they volunteer through their own practice of volunteering.

¹² I was introduced to the GC programme, and GC2, through my Masters programme convener, Dr. Linda Cooper

¹³ The GC2 course convener, Dr. Janice McMillan, is also my supervisor for this thesis. I discuss this dual role further in a ‘self-reflection’ in Chapter Three.

Additionally, the course makes use of innovative teaching and learning practices, for example extensively using online discussion forums, and classes are co-taught by tutors who were themselves students on the course. Student learning is encouraged through debate and discussion of their practice with their peers so that they develop and refine their own theories.

It is also worth noting that the course is extracurricular and taken in addition to students' other university commitments and their volunteering. The extra effort it takes to fully participate in GC2 implies self-directed students who are committed to the learning process.

For these reasons, the course is an interesting and perhaps even important site of learning and development. It seemed to me that the students might be undergoing the kind of learning that encourages self-reflection, personal growth, care and empathy towards others. As such, GC2 offered me an interesting site for exploring student learning.

I was particularly interested in exploring individual students' learning journeys and wanted to focus on a few students in some depth. I realised few studies presented this sort of data, and so I might have something slightly different to offer to the field of HE studies, and SL more specifically. This study, therefore, does not intend to offer a comprehensive analysis of learning or definitive ways forward for HE. Rather, it looks to tease out some of the complexities of four individual students' learning experiences through a service learning course.

Research question

This study has a primary research question which is elaborated through a number of sub-questions. My primary research question is:

How can we make sense of students' learning in service learning?

This can be divided into a number of sub-questions:

- What is service learning?
- How can we conceive of learning?
- What does the learning look like for different students?
- What are some of the implications for HE?

This dissertation is structured as follows:

Chapter Two sets out the literature and theoretical debates which helped to build my understanding of learning within service learning. I draw on a range of frameworks from the EL tradition as these provide the basis for understanding the experiential nature of learning within service learning. I then look more closely at some important debates within service learning research. Through this survey, and through my data analysis I came to realise that ‘learning journey’ and student ‘being’ are key concepts for this study, each of which I then unpack in more detail.

Chapter Three presents my research methodology, my data collection methods, introduces my participants, and introduces the analytic framework I used to organise my data. I also discuss ethics, validity, and present a self-reflection and possible limitations.

Chapter Four presents and analyses the data from my four participants. The first part of the chapter consists of vignettes and the ‘learning journey diagrams’ described in Chapter Three. The second part of the chapter looks at transformations across the data. Throughout I link the data analysis to the theoretical issues from Chapter Two.

Given that this is an exploratory study which aims to illuminate the learning in service learning, Chapter Five presents some of the ‘enablers’ of learning which emerged strongly through the data. These offer possible ways forward for teachers in HE to incorporate aspects of student ‘being’ into their pedagogy.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter presents my conceptual framework which emerged as I explored students' learning through GC2. A conceptual framework can be defined as "the current version of the researcher's map of the territory being investigated" (Miles and Huberman, 1994:20). Implicit in this statement is the understanding that the conceptual framework emerges inductively during research, which was the case in my research journey: as I gathered and analysed the data my conceptual framework evolved.

This study began with my interest in understanding learning that seemed to be transformative for learners. In conceptualising what 'transformative' means, I first turned to EL theory. This proved a useful and necessary start point, and through this literature I saw the difficulties in reaching a comprehensive understanding of learning. Fenwick's (2001) monograph, for example, outlines a range of debates over the nature of EL and notes the many influences on and critiques of EL theory from fields including psychology, sociology, linguistics, philosophy and feminist studies.

I realised I would need a deeper understanding of the field of service learning (SL), a type of EL. SL is itself a complex and contested field. As I reviewed more recent SL theory I came to a new appreciation of the role of context on learning and the necessity of paying attention to power and privilege in service relationships. Additionally my data pointed to the interconnectedness of context, self and practice when learning through service. Analysing my data brought these complexities to life, but still did not help me to understand how I could analyse individual students' learning. I realised my analysis would benefit from a conceptual framework that attended to the processes of learning, and I found this in Barnett (2007, 2009; and Coate, 2005).

Although Barnett's earlier work considers curriculum design in HE, his later work (2007, 2009) shifts focus to student learning. Barnett's framework comprises three interconnected learning domains: 'knowing', 'being' and 'acting'. He describes 'knowing' and 'acting' as more active and 'willed' (by the student) concepts than 'knowledge' and 'skills'. Barnett sees 'being' (i.e. the student's 'will to learn' and persevere, and her¹⁴ dispositions and personal characteristics which enable learning) as embedded within 'knowing' and 'acting'. This framework came to provide a useful way for me think about the processes of individual students' learning, and to track changes for students over time. I

¹⁴ I have chosen to alternate between feminine and masculine personal pronouns throughout this paper to avoid clumsy sentence and grammatical construction.

have used it as a conceptual framework, detailed later in this chapter, and to map my participants' learning journeys, explained in Chapter Three.

This chapter appears in four parts. Part 1 covers the EL tradition, focusing on those theories within this broad field most useful in thinking about student learning. Particularly pertinent is the critical radical pedagogical tradition of Freire (2001, 2005) and Mezirow (1978, 1990, 1991, 1998) and their concepts of 'critical consciousness', 'praxis', 'transformational learning', and 'critical reflection'. The final piece of Part 1 presents 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 2003; Wenger, 1999), useful for providing the concept of the 'learning journey' and for arguing that social practice is fundamental to learning.

Part 2 provides background to the field of SL. SL emerges from the experiential tradition as students learn through their practice of community service. As noted in Chapter One and elaborated hereunder, there are many ways to approach SL. In this overview of the field I highlight some of the key debates in the field and locate GC2 in terms of the course's pedagogical aims.

In Part 3 I discuss Barnett and his framework of 'knowing', 'being' and 'acting'. Through exploring Barnett's work in relation to this study, I realised the usefulness of his theorising around 'being' in understanding student learning. Many of the EL and SL theorists do not speak of 'being' as such. However, in questioning whether it is possible to talk about student learning without referring to 'being', I realised 'being' is implicit in concepts like self-actualisation, self-awareness, self-belief, authenticity, wholeness, personal transformation, praxis and communities of practice. Part 4 therefore illuminates these sometimes apparent and sometimes less so aspects of 'being' as they appear in EL and SL literature.

Part 1: Experiential learning

EL covers a broad range of formal and informal education philosophies, practices and assessments of learning, all of which see learning as coming about as individuals reflect on their experience. Fenwick (2001:2) notes the "definitional problems" in delineating a complex field covering a multitude of theories and practices. A decade earlier Warner-Weil and McGill (1990:245-246) made a similar point when they described EL as: "*simultaneously an educational philosophy, a range of methodologies, and a framework for being, seeing, thinking and acting, on individual and collective levels*".

They also note that EL involves the active transformation and integration of experience. As such, we could ask what kind of learning is not “experiential” in some way. Nevertheless, the term is useful in this thesis to, firstly, describe the theorists who are seen to fall within the tradition, and secondly to introduce the framework from which SL emerges.

EL originates in the progressive educational tradition of Dewey who foregrounded teaching and learning as active, experiential and student-centred. For these reasons, and for his philosophical deliberations on society, citizenship and community involvement, Dewey is also considered a founding father of SL (Deans, 1999; Meyers, 2009). Building on Dewey’s learner-centred approach, the humanist tradition rose in the 1960s and 1970s, foregrounding learners’ personal growth and development (Warner-Weil and McGill, 1990). Within this tradition, Knowles’ theory of “andragogy” or adult learning was prominent. He saw educators as “facilitators of dialogue”, and encouraged learners to become active participants in their learning, to draw on their own experiences and exercise agency in their learning (Fenwick, 2001:4).

Models of EL

From this humanistic learner-centred approach emerged theorists who spent time analysing the details of how people learn from and through experience. Schön (1983), Kolb (1984) and Boud and Walker (1990, 1991) developed frameworks widely used by SL practitioners. Schön (1983) offers the useful concept of the “reflective practitioner” which recognises the learning that takes place during and through practice. Practice is recognised as often messy, complex and inherently full of unknown and unknowable outcomes, echoing the service situations in which the GC2 learners were immersed. Schön distinguishes between reflection-in- and on-action. *Reflection-in-action* involves reflecting in-the-moment whilst in challenging situations, and then thinking up and testing out new theories. *Reflection-on-action* takes place at some point after the action, thinking through what was done, and how, and what the alternatives might have been (Fenwick, 2001).

Kolb’s (1984) model of EL comprises four key processes of learning: ‘concrete experience’, ‘reflective observation’, ‘abstract conceptualization’ and ‘active experimentation’. It is widely used by SL educators for its simplicity and accessibility, providing a practical means for students to reflect on their experiences in service (Kiely, 2005).

Whilst these EL models have proved useful for educators, they are also critiqued for their lack of attention to the influence of context on learning. Boud and Walker (1991) insist that context matters. Their model adds an understanding of the impact of the “learning milieu” (1990, 1991) on learning.

This refers to the “social-psychological and material environment in which students and teachers work together...a complex network of cultural, social, institutional and psychological variables [which] interact in complicated ways” (Parlett and Hamilton 1972, in Boud and Walker, 1990:65). They argue that context, including the learner’s own context (including history, language, culture, learning strategies and emotions) plays an important role in shaping experience and learning:

Learners possess a *personal foundation of experience*, a way of being present in the world, which profoundly influences the way in which that world is experienced and which particularly influences the intellectual and emotional context of the experience and the meanings that are attributed to it. (p.13; my emphasis)

Through highlighting the importance of the learning environment, Boud and his associates move closer to understanding the individual as intricately bound up in, shaped by and shaping their social context. This is an important consideration in my study as the evidence suggested that the students’ learning milieu (the classroom and online forums, the pedagogical approach, their service settings, and their “personal foundations of experience”) played a key role in their learning, and they in turn shaped their contexts. I return to developing the understanding of the impact of the context of learning when I discuss peer learning (Lave and Wenger, 2003) at the end of Part 1.

Critical pedagogy

Within the EL tradition there are those who take a more critical approach to pedagogy, so whereas humanists emphasise “freedom to learn”, critical theorists like Freire and Mezirow argue for “freedom through learning” (Boud, 1989). Whilst Freire (2001, 2005) like Boud and Walker after him, insisted the individual cannot be separated from social context, he also argued for consciousness-raising education – *conscientização* – which would enable learners to confront and challenge accepted norms, overturn systems of oppression and bring about social transformation. Freire’s pedagogical approach is important for my study for this emphasis on social transformation and his notion of naming the world in order to change the world. It was also a key pedagogical approach used in the GC2 classroom.

Freire argued that enabling learners’ agency can move them from reflection to social action, one of the key outcomes of consciousness-raising education. The learning emphasis, therefore, is for learners to recognise and challenge social injustice by addressing its fundamental causes, which can allow people to take control of their lives and free themselves from oppression (Foley, 1993). Learning, therefore, is conceived of as a political act rather than a neutral process (Foley, 1993). Freire (2005) called this linking of personal reflection and social/political action *praxis*. Praxis is of particular

interest in this study because of the course pedagogy which asks students to learn through reflecting on their own volunteer practice in order to think about ways in which to better their practice¹⁵.

As noted in Chapter One, the GC programme pedagogy was significantly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire and in particular his notion of *critical consciousness*. The GC2 course facilitators highlight four aspects of Freire's critical consciousness which were particularly useful in their pedagogy: an awareness of historical power relations; analysing texts within social context; desocialisation through examining the myths and values of mass culture to uncover internalised prejudices; and self-organisation to enact social change through active participation in transformative projects (McMillan, van Heerden and Small, 2011). These concepts were drawn on to enable personal and social transformation, to "prepare students not only for an uncertain future, but a future in which they have a role to play to further social justice" (p.9).

Another critical theory useful for understanding the EL approach of GC2 is Mezirow's transformative learning theory, particularly the concepts of *critical reflection* and *perspective transformation*, both of which informed GC2 pedagogy (McMillan, van Heerden and Small, 2011). *Critical reflection* involves reflecting on, assessing and problematising experiences previously taken for granted. Through self-examination and critical assessment we can uncover assumptions, "habits of mind" and "distorted views of reality" (Mezirow, 1998). This can lead us to explore new ways of being and acting in the world, which can result in a changed person in the world. This is *perspective transformation*, from which significant personal and social transformation can result (Mezirow, 1998).

In transformative learning theory, the process of perspective transformation begins with a "disorienting dilemma" which can be triggered by new information, a different situation or behaviour, or a new way of thinking or feeling (Mezirow, 2000). The disorienting dilemma, for which past experience and knowledge does not provide a clear solution (Fenwick, 2001) is the initial step in a multi-step process which includes self-examination and a critical assessment of assumptions; exploring new options; planning a course of action; acquiring new knowledge and skills for implementing plans; provisionally trying out new roles and relationships; and ultimately reintegrating the learnings into everyday life based on the new perspective (Mezirow, 2000). Whilst GC2 does not claim to intentionally lead students through each step of Mezirow's 'transformative learning' process, the course pedagogy was by influenced the notion of perspective transformation (McMillan, van Heerden and Small, 2011).

¹⁵ McMillan, personal communication, 2011.

There are some who have had some “mutinous thoughts” about labelling learning “transformative” (Newman, 2012). Newman (2012) argues persuasively against the notion of transformative learning arguing the theory has become bewilderingly complex and is applied too widely and indiscriminately. The meaning of transformative, he says further, is being leeched of meaning through overuse and corrupted through inappropriate use. Transformation, therefore, “begins to refer to any kind of change or process at all” (Kegan 2000 in Newman, 2012:14). Newman (2012:51) goes “back to basics” in detailing nine aspects of “good learning”¹⁶. This framework, which draws widely on EL theory, provides another useful lens through which to view my data

Learning as social practice

The final useful concept in Part 1 is ‘communities of practice’ (CoP) which emerges from Lave’s (1996) and Lave and Wenger’s (2003) situated learning theory. This theory resists the experiential tradition’s understanding of learning as primarily about individual reflection, cognitive problem-solving and acquiring knowledge, beliefs and skills (Fenwick, 2001). Instead, Lave (1996) argues, the nature of existence is collective and people are inextricably social beings, situated in history and current context. Learning is therefore understood as a fundamentally social phenomenon and learning takes place, whether intentionally or not, as members of the CoP interact regularly over time through sharing a common interest or activity.

Wenger (1999) describes three elements that make up a CoP. The ‘domain’ is the space which draws members together, whether or not they describe it as a learning space. The ‘community’ is the bond that develops over time through collective learning. It is experienced in various ways by each member and is thus not homogeneous. The ‘practice’ refers to the members’ interactions which produce resources that in turn affect their practice, whether they are engaged in practice together or separately.

These three elements usefully provide a framework for understanding learning as a process taking place across time and space. Lave (1996) refers to this as a “learning journey” (“*telos*”) which involves the whole learner “becoming” as they construct their identity in and through experience and practice. This theory helps us to understand some of the complexities of learning, showing us that it is more complicated than a learning ‘moment’ fixed in space and time. I found this notion of a ‘learning journey’ tallied with my data, which pointed to learning taking place over time and in different spaces. As such the concept of a ‘learning journey’ became a useful way of thinking about my

¹⁶ These aspects are outlined in Newman’s (2012) paper and presented in detail in an earlier book (1999). I found the aspects a useful lens in my data analysis, but due to space constraints cannot detail them all here. I discuss some in more detail in Part 4 below.

participants' learning through GC2. Additionally, few SL studies use CoP as a tool to make sense of student learning, which makes it a potentially interesting new approach.

Part 2: Service learning

What is (the value of) SL?

SL encompasses a diverse range of theories and practices which to varying degrees emphasise the 'service' component, or the 'learning' component, and the relationship between the two (Eyler and Giles, 1999). It is a type of EL in which students engage in community service which they then reflect on in the classroom. As noted earlier, the intended outcomes of SL courses are varied (Heffernan, 2001). SL is often a way for students to learn about or practice something beyond the immediate service, for example, learning disciplinary subject matter, practicing skills, gaining civic dispositions and questioning inequality and privilege (Boyle-Baise *et al.*, 2006).

A key component of all SL pedagogy, including GC2, is reflection. Service is not inevitably a learning experience and reflection is essential to help students connect classroom theory to their volunteer experiences in order to learn from both (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Bringle and Hatcher, 1999; Hatcher, Bringle and Muthiah, 2004; Schwartz, 2011). Educators use structured reflection activities to direct student

attention to new interpretations of events and provide a means through which the community service can be studied and interpreted, much as a text is read and studied for deeper understanding. (Bringle and Hatcher, 1999:112)

In a seminal study in the United States¹⁷ (US) into the value of SL for students, Eyler and Giles (1999) found that most students describe community service as a powerful learning experience, almost regardless of the type, intensity or duration of their service. Eyler and Giles (1999:129) suggest that through SL students can gain "a new set of lenses for seeing the world", which influences how students see themselves and others around them. For Eyler and Giles these shifts in perspective are not merely about accumulating new knowledge "but about seeing the world in a profoundly different way, one that calls for personal commitment and action" (p.129).

SL is intended to be mutually beneficial for students and the communities in which they work; combining service and learning is seen to add value to each and transform both (Honnet and Poulsen

¹⁷ Almost all of the SL studies referred to here are US-based studies. This reflects the dominance of US research in SL literature.

1989, in Eyler and Giles, 1999). SL can provide ways of connecting students and their institutions to “communities and the larger social good, while at the same time instilling in students values of community and social responsibility” (Neururer and Rhoads, 1998:321). However, such mutually beneficial outcomes are not easily achieved nor uncontested, and debates are on-going as to where the value lies, and for whom, in SL.

Debates in SL¹⁸

Interrogating power and privilege

Many studies support Eyler and Giles’ (1999) findings that SL programmes can provide transformative learning opportunities for students (e.g. Feinstein 2004; Kiely 2004, 2005; McBrien, 2008; Deeley, 2010). However, there are debates as to who benefits, in what ways and to what degree. If not done with care, SL can embed hierarchy, difference and a sense of otherness (Ver Beek, nd; Neururer and Rhoads, 1998; Eyler and Giles, 1999; Pompa, 2002; Camacho, 2004; Prins and Webster, 2010).

One of the key debates is around issues of power and the privileges and inequalities which permeate community service settings and relationships. The term “service” is itself loaded with ambiguity, setting up hierarchies between ‘server’ and ‘served’ (Camacho, 2004). Pompa (2002) asserts that the very language used – of ‘doing for’, ‘giving to’ and ‘serving’ – further entrenches unequal power dynamics between those who ‘have’ – resources, power and the ability ‘to serve’ – and those who are ‘served’. As a result of these debates and to assist students in moving from a space of ‘doing for’ to ‘being with’, a group of theorists has looked critically at reciprocity and mutuality in SL relationships (Pompa, 2002; Camacho, 2004; Boyle-Baise *et al.*, 2006; Henry and Breyfogle, 2006).

Mutuality and reciprocity are key intentions within SL, the aim being that students and communities work together, “collaboratively, responsibly, and responsively” (Boyle-Baise *et al.*, 2006:24). Neururer and Rhoads (1998) describe this as ‘walking with’: everyone gives and receives; everyone teaches and learns. Pompa (2002) shows that problematising mutuality through SL can breakdown hierarchies and power and build mutually beneficial learning experiences. However, Camacho (2004:33) asks whether power relations inherent in SL are “masked under the guise of mutuality”.

¹⁸ I first encountered this debate in McMillan, van Heerden and Small (2011), a conference paper presented by the GC course conveners, which reflects on alternative ways of envisioning service learning within the academy. This provided the starting point for developing my ideas in this section.

GC2 draws on this debate to encourage students to reflect on power dynamics in their own service settings, and it was a debate that fed into the students' learning.

Crossing borders

The metaphor of “crossing borders” provides another way of viewing students' learning through SL (Hayes and Cuban, 1997; Skilton-Sylvester and Erwin, 2000). Camacho (2004:41) found students are able to explore and cross “metaphoric borders of identity” through service, but notes this will only happen through sustained interactions and conscious, CR if students are “to move beyond the ‘tourist gaze’”. Skilton-Sylvester and Erwin (2000:73) found that “only through the development of caring relationships and reflection on those relationships” can students and community members “navigate their way across borders”. Butin (2006:2) cautions that “border crossing” can become “border inspections” of the other, and calls on SL practitioners to “carefully revisit how and why we do what we do and think what we think”.

Interrogating mutuality and reciprocity in service, and re/considering the metaphor of border-crossing, can offer starting points to discussing uncomfortable issues around power and privilege in service. One key issue for South African learners is the continued inequalities structured around race – inequalities which Green's (2001) findings show are too often glossed over in SL settings. Many white South Africans are reluctant to talk about race (Chisholm, 2008) with various “narratives of whiteness” (Steyn, 2001) continuing to maintain what Ratele and Laubscher (2010:231) label its “defining weight”. Despite the discomfort many of us feel when talking about race, the theorising around the complexities of race are particularly relevant to this study, precisely because racial and ethnic divisions remain salient and continue to “shape inequality and experiences of exclusion and marginality” in South Africa (Chisholm, 2008:231).

There is potential for SL to perpetuate and even reinforce hierarchies and paternalism (Mitchell, 2008), and reproduce “unquestioned norms of whiteness” (Butin, 2003:1682). Endres and Gould (2009) show how SL can provide a context for students to rehearse and affirm white privilege even though students were exposed to critical theories around whiteness before engaging in SL. In an attempt to counteract this, Green (2003:276) examines questions of race through exploring students' discomforts, disconnections, anger and frustrations and argues this can allow SL to “more effectively negotiate the divide between the university and the community and work toward social change”.

Community service paradigms

The community service in SL takes many forms, but students often think of charity first and as what they feel most comfortable doing (Boyle-Baise *et al.*, 2006; Morton, 1995). Some SL theorists denigrate charity as “weakly civic” and not able to bring about social or personal change (Mitchell, 2008). Morton (1995) and Boyle-Baise *et al.* (2006) argue for a more nuanced approach and make a case for recognising different paradigms of service: ‘charity’, ‘project’ and ‘social change’. Each has strengths and limitations, “thin” versions that can be “disempowering and hollow” and “thick” versions that can be “sustaining and potentially revolutionary” (Morton, 1995:24). These were debates provide a useful lens through which to view my data.

“Learning service”

An interesting study by Boyle-Baise *et al.* (2006) subverts some of the previous SL arguments. She and a group of her students question what it means to learn and do service. They ask,

What might happen if [instead of learning about something else through service] an exploration of service itself grounded classroom studies and field work, fostering explicit consideration and critique of ethics, standards, and distinctive forms of learning through work with others? (p.17)

The students’ own service therefore becomes the key text in the course, to be read, examined, analysed and critiqued as “person, place and thing” (p.22). Through directing their “whole attention to making meaning of service”, the students said they were able to step back from their service and study “its distinctive forms, underlying ethics, and different qualities” (2006:22). The students reported that in “learning service” they unsettled their preconceived notions of service, interrogated their positionality, practiced a distinctive approach to service, were able to change their service project in-progress to better meet local aims, and continually criticised their own perceptions and actions (p.21).

The GC2 course conveners drew on the notion of “learning service” in their pedagogical approach (McMillan, van Heerden and Small, 2011; McMillan, 2012). Shifting the focus to “learning service” provides a way for students to interrogate themselves within their service, and as such, this concept is useful in thinking about the learning journeys of the GC2 students.

Part 3: Barnett and pedagogical being in HE

Barnett (2007) argues that ‘being’ must play a role in any serious thinking about HE, and my data showed me that student ‘being’ played a role in their learning through GC2. In Part 3 I outline

Barnett's theorising around 'being', what it is and why it is important in thinking about student learning.

Being is what matters. The student has to open herself to possibilities for deep-reaching personal change. Seeing the world in new ways, living with confidence amid cognitive turbulence...and being willing to venture into new situations...may call for new ways of living: these are changes in the student's capacities for *knowing* and *acting* that may persist through life. But these are changes in capacities: they will not be taken up by the individual concerned and will not come to structure her – “transform” her – as a new human being unless the student's will and being have been transformed at the same time (Barnett and Coate 2005:145; emphasis in original).

In contemplating 'being', Barnett (2007:38) says it “has to be claimed as a key concept in any serious reflection on HE, especially any thinking concerned with students and their experience”. Barnett (2007) asks how it is that students persist in HE - what he refers to as a student's “will to learn” - despite the many challenges they face. He sees this as an enquiry into 'being', and turns to modern western existentialist philosophers' efforts to understand human 'being' and what it is to 'be' in the world.

Barnett (2000, 2007, 2009, 2011; and Coate, 2005) describes 'being' as the way the student is in the world, both as a person and student. 'Being' is about ways of knowing and acting, self-identity, self-reflexivity, self-monitoring and critical capacity. The language of 'being', therefore, “attempts to do justice to the inner lives of students” (Barnett and Coate, 2005:64). It is implicit in HE in references to student 'self-identity', 'self-awareness' and 'self-confidence'. Additionally, traits like courage, tenacity, resilience and openness are all aspects of 'being' that are developed and called on in a journey through HE. We can see then that a student's 'being' is recognised as her own, unique and different in every situation. This, Barnett (2007:28) says, points to the complexity of 'being': “It is both specific and general; both enduring and even fragile; both barely felt and fully conscious”.

Barnett's (2007:51) consideration of the “elusive concept” of authenticity speaks directly to 'being' in the learning journey. Barnett (2007:51) describes the authentic student as “taking hold” of her educational experience and her resources (epistemological, practical, psychological), and using them creatively to “break free” as her own person. In being authentic, the student “leaps into the unknown”, “disencumbered” (2007:51) by other voices and messages. Authenticity is about the student's “state of commitment” to her studies, her writing, her actions, and in being committed she “infuses” herself into these (2007:51). Both her 'knowing' and practices therefore have an “ontological substrate” (2007:51): 'being' is embedded in 'knowing' and 'acting'.

Thus, Barnett (2007:6) asserts, “ontology trumps epistemology”, and “the student’s being in the world is more important for her learning than...developing knowledge and understanding a particular field”. In order to better prepare students for an uncertain world, knowledge and skills should be reconceptualised as ‘knowing’ and ‘acting’. Whilst *knowledge* refers to the “collectively attested set of understandings in the world” (Barnett, 2009:432), *knowing* is the student’s “personal hold on the world”. *Knowing* is experiential and takes place as students consider and apply knowledge to real world situations. Likewise, *acting* is less about learning practical skills and more about ‘learning how to learn’ – the ability to act in the moment – for a world in a state of flux (Barnett and Coate, 2005). In reconceptualising knowledge as ‘knowing’ and skills as ‘acting’, Barnett aims to foreground ‘being’ in all aspects of learning so that the student – as person – is no longer artificially divided from his learning.

Both ‘knowing’ and ‘acting’ speak to the concept of a ‘learning journey’, encapsulated in terms like ‘coming-to-know’ and ‘becoming’. Barnett (2009:433) argues that the “processes of attaining knowledge” (i.e. ‘coming-to-know’), have “desirable and profound effects” on ‘being’. He highlights several dispositions and qualities which play a role in a student’s ‘coming-to-know’. *Dispositions*, he says, are foundational; they are “propensities for action” (2007:111). They are “forms of energy” (2009:433) that are evident in the student’s “will to learn” and engage, preparedness to listen and explore and “determination to keep going forward” (2007:102). *Qualities* give “colour and definition” to dispositions” (Barnett, 2009:433); they are part of the student’s character and, he argues, can be engendered through her efforts to know the world. Qualities include aspects of ‘being’ like courage, resilience, carefulness, integrity, self-discipline, restraint, respect for others, openness, generosity and authenticity (p.434). These provide another useful lens through which to view my data.

Barnett argues that dispositions and qualities are both aspects of ‘being’, and as such are part of student ‘knowing’ and ‘acting’. Further, he says, they are already part of HE because without them “[l]earning is not possible, the acquisition of skills is not possible, and nor is any independence of action or thought possible” (2007:101).

Barnett describes the “key problem” of supercomplexity as ‘being’, not knowledge. Universities, he says, must displace the centrality of knowledge because:

it is not knowledge that will carry [students] forward but their capacity to embrace multiple and conflicting frameworks and to offer their own positive interventions in that milieu. What counts is not their knowledge but their mode of ‘being’. (Barnett, 2000: 167)

In preparing students for the twenty-first century, therefore, knowledge and skills are not redundant but they need to be augmented through developing students' dispositions and qualities – aspects of 'being'.

Part 4: 'Being' in learning journeys'

Whilst Barnett builds his theorising around the concept of 'being', 'being' is often less apparent in experiential and service learning literature. However, the concept is threaded through most if not all of the theorists discussed in Parts 1 and 2 above. Whilst they may not use the term itself, they all mention aspects of human 'being' in their understandings of human learning. 'Being' is evident in the humanists' thoughts about wholeness, self-awareness and self-actualisation, in Freire's concepts of praxis and critical consciousness, in Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation, and in CoP, which speaks to constructing identity through social practice.

I came to see 'being' as encompassing all these facets of learning as the learner grows and takes action in her life as a student. It is about the learner's 'self' emerging, being 'freed' or 'unlocked' so that the human being can *be*: be more herself, be more effective in the world, be more active in the world. As such, the concept is akin to authenticity (Morton, 1995; Barnett, 2007; Mitchell, 2008). Additionally the SL literature helped me to understand the importance of context on 'being'; that 'being' cannot be separated from context. I discuss these aspects of 'being' in more detail below.

'Being' in EL

As we saw in Part 1, the field of EL encompasses a wide range of views around learning and educational practice all of which speak to 'being' in some way. The progressive tradition of Dewey focuses on the person's responsibility in creating a democratic society. An 'educated person' in this tradition values democracy and will work towards social and political reform (Fenwick, 2001). Developing knowledge is about developing the person's judgment and the ability to act, both of which require the mobilisation of human 'being'.

The humanists' person-centred approach highlights aspects of the 'self' moving towards a greater wholeness through learning. The learner goes through a process of self-discovery and self-actualisation, in a drive towards personal meaningfulness, integration and psychological development (Fenwick, 2001). Humanists see personal transformation as the primary outcome of learning, and this shows up through an individual's increased autonomy, choice, self-fulfillment and interpersonal

effectiveness (Warner-Weil and McGill, 1990); all I would argue are aspects of being and therefore key considerations in this study.

Within the humanist tradition, social change – that is, the human ‘being’ in action – is a potential, and desirable, outcome of personal transformation. As individuals become more self-aware, congruent, understanding of others’ perspectives and experiences, and attuned to interpersonal and group dynamics, this can translate into social action (Warner-Weil and McGill, 1990). Here we see aspects of ‘knowing’, ‘being’ and ‘acting’ in learning although not named as such.

The critical radical tradition positions education as a tool for liberating people from oppression. Freire foregrounds the importance of mobilising ‘being’ for social action. Mezirow’s transformative learning theory regards the transformational learning process as a movement towards authenticity and “a greater integrity of identity” (Poutiatine, 2009). Both see transformation as enabled through “questioning and reinterpreting the very cultural assumptions of experience” (Fenwick, 2001).

Some of Newman’s (2012) aspects of “good learning” speak clearly to learners’ deepening understandings of ‘self’ in relation to the world. The *affective aspect* explains how people react to people and events, and understand and manage their emotions. Linking feelings with thinking means a more balanced response to the world. The *interpretive aspect* involves identifying prejudices, preferences, doubts and certainties, and weaknesses and potential; it is to do with “interpreting the human experience in all its pettiness and all its magnificence” (p.51). The *moral aspect* of learning is about understanding our convictions and judgments, and “coming to know what is right and wrong, good and bad, wise and unwise” (p.52).

Finally, situated learning theory speaks to ‘being’ in its understanding of learning as central to creating human identity (Lave and Wenger, 2003). The primary focus of learning is on “ways of becoming a participant”, “ways of participating”, and “ways in which participants and practices change” (Lave, 2006:157), thus speaking clearly to the metaphor of a learning journey. Learning comes about as the ‘self’ participates in a community of practice, and through this the identity of the self – of ‘being’ – is constructed and reconstructed.

‘Being’ in SL

In the SL literature I encountered aspects of ‘being’ in the many studies which investigated personal transformation (Eyler and Giles, 1999; Feinstein, 2004; Kiely, 2004; 2005; McBrien, 2008; Engberg and Fox, 2011), and in theorising around ‘values’, ‘meaning’, ‘authenticity’ and ‘citizenship’,

concepts integral to SL (Morton, 1995; Rhoads 1998; Eyler and Giles, 1999; Boyle-Baise *et al.*, 2006; Mitchell, 2008). Rhoads (1997:2) insists that HE must actively develop the student's "caring self" and that SL is one "activity that lends itself to identity clarification and exploration of the self".

In Eyler and Giles' (1999) study, various aspects of 'being' emerged for students through their SL experiences. Students reported personal growth in terms of increased self-awareness, spiritual growth and finding reward in helping others. Students also thought they developed better interpersonal relationships and greater connectedness with peers and communities. In terms of their academic learning, Eyler and Giles describe students as deepening their understanding of the complexities of social issues, valuing being able to apply material in class to real problems, and developing more realistic and detailed personal political views. This academic learning speaks to aspects of student 'being' in 'knowing'.

Kiely (2005) has references to 'being' in his transformational learning framework, although again not named as such. *Personalizing*, for example, is learning that is "visceral and emotional, and compels students to assess internal strengths and weaknesses" (p.8). *Connecting* involves learning through modes such as "sensing, sharing, feeling, caring, participating, relating, listening, comforting, empathizing, [and] intuiting" (p.8) – aspects which call on the student's 'being'.

However, as noted in Part 2, service is not inherently 'transformative' for students or communities. Mitchell (2008) argues students need pedagogical spaces which confront and disrupt 'being', where they can wrestle with identity and privilege. To do this, Mitchell argues, SL needs to take a critical approach that foregrounds students' biases, unearned privilege and power. She agrees with Hayes and Cuban (1997:75) in finding the metaphor of 'crossing borders' - of knowledge, relationships and identity – useful for rethinking 'knowing' and 'being', providing opportunities for "creative and oppositional reconstructions of self, knowledge, and culture". Morton (1995) argues that for students to be more authentic, and therefore better, in their service they need to self-consciously evaluate their approach to service – i.e. their paradigm – and then learn it in order to do it well.

In constructing a "learning service" course, Boyle-Baise *et al.* (2006) challenged themselves to make meaning of service itself. In doing this, they grappled with values, ethics and authenticity in service. They interrogated their own socio-cultural positionalities – those things which make up 'being' – and how these influenced their views and practice. Some students asserted that these reflections "spurred new understandings" (p.20) of the 'self' in service; others said they reconsidered their knowledge and values. "Learning service" for these students, therefore, foregrounded aspects of 'being'.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the development of my conceptual framework which emerged through exploring participants' 'learning journeys' through GC2. This chapter began with an overview of the broad field of EL, from which SL emerges. Drawing on Lave and Wenger I introduced the concept of a 'learning journey', and I highlighted Barnett's argument for the significance of 'being' in student learning. Neither of these frameworks pays sufficient attention to context, but Boud and Walker show that context matters. I pointed out some of the complexities of understanding context, which encompasses the student's socio-psychological and material learning environment which interacts in complex ways with their personal 'personal foundation of experience'. The SL theorists who question power and privilege provide an additional lens through which to view the influence of context on students' learning.

In Parts 3 and 4 I honed in on the concept of 'being'. I noted those EL and SL theorists who have given us pointers as to what 'being' is. 'Being' speaks to aspects of the person's 'inner self', and is reflected in qualities and dispositions like self-identity and self-confidence, courage, tenacity and openness. It encompasses personal growth and self-actualisation; it is about a person's humanity, values, identity, authenticity, and relations with others in the world. And, as I have shown, 'being' is also to be found in ways of 'knowing' and 'acting'; it cannot be divorced from what a person knows and what she does in the world.

In the next chapter I outline my methodological approach and data collection methods, introduce my participants, present the analytic framework I used in my data analysis, and illuminate issues of validity and ethical concerns.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework I used to explore the learning journeys of four students who participated in the GC2 course in 2010 and 2011. The chapter starts with a discussion of qualitative and quantitative research, the advantages and disadvantages of each, and why I chose a qualitative approach for this study. I outline my data collection methods, the sampling procedures I used in choosing my four participants, and provide a brief introduction to my participants. I present my approach to my data analysis, detailing the analytic framework of ‘knowing’, ‘being’ and ‘acting’ which I introduced in Chapter Two. This framework became increasingly important to my study as it provided a way for me to explore students’ ‘learning journeys’. Finally, I discuss the ethical considerations I reflected on throughout my research.

Methodological framework

My methodological framework is guided by my research question:

How can we make sense of students’ learning in service learning?

The nature of my question suggested a qualitative research strategy; small-scale, in-depth and seeking rich data. However, as O’Leary (2010) notes, the divide between qualitative and quantitative methodologies is not always clear-cut and researchers will choose a quantitative or qualitative approach, or a mix of the two, depending on the aims of the study. She therefore argues against calling individuals quantitative or qualitative researchers. Instead, quantitative and qualitative are particular approaches chosen when conducting research.

In this study, I decided against a quantitative approach due to the nature of my research aims. Quantitative research adopts a scientific approach to conducting research, namely hypothesis testing, deductive logic, the need for and value of objectivity, and the value of quantification (O’Leary, 2010). When used in the social sciences, this approach assumes human society can be studied in the same way as scientists study the non-human elements of society, whether atoms or animals, biology or biomechanics (O’Leary, 2010).

The scientific approach starts with adapting, adopting or generating theory (O’Leary, 2010). Researchers draw from this theory and through a process of deductive reasoning generate one or more specific hypotheses to be tested. Data is then gathered through experiments or large-scale surveys and analysed using statistical processes. Ultimately researchers aim to draw conclusions which then are tested against the hypotheses. While there are advantages to this methodology, in terms of generalisability for instance, it does not provide the kind of deeper understanding of individual experience I was interested in exploring.

Qualitative research moves away from the quantitative tradition in a number of ways. Qualitative research is often inductive rather than deductive, meaning theory is generated from data rather than starting out with a theory and hypothesis (O’Leary, 2010). It allows individual subjectivities to be heard in a way quantitative research does not, and is accepting of multiple perspectives and realities (O’Leary, 2010). Qualitative research recognises the power inherent in the role of researcher, and the inevitable power dynamics within research settings. Furthermore, it is often overtly political in its intentions and approach (O’Leary, 2010). It values depth and richness of data over quantity and aims to delve into social complexities to get in-depth understandings of people’s lived experiences (O’Leary, 2010). Qualitative methodology therefore accepts and values the search for holistic meaning, emergent methodological design, small numbers, rich qualitative data, inductive analysis, and idiographic interpretation (O’Leary, 2010). For these reasons, it was the appropriate methodology for my study.

The nature of my research question indicated to me I was looking to gather rich data from a small group of students to tease out the details of each students’ learning journey through GC2. I was interested in how the students made sense of their thoughts, feelings, actions and behaviour, and how this meaning-making in turn influenced their learning and practice. My study therefore was of necessity going to be small-scale, qualitative and interpretive. As Maxwell (2008) notes, qualitative research is helpful in understanding how participants make meaning of their own experiences, and how this influences their behaviour; this was, therefore, the right approach for my study.

Some of the main critiques of qualitative research relate to issues around generalisability and credibility. The insights gained from qualitative research, which is in its nature small-scale and context-bound, are difficult to generalise from the few to the many. However, I was not aiming to generalise my study; I was interested in getting in-depth data from a few participants who were making meaning of their experiences within a specific context. Through this in-depth exploration of individual learning journeys I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how my participants

interpreted their experiences, what meaning they attributed to their experiences, and how they constructed their worlds (Merriam, 2009).

In terms of credibility, a qualitative approach to research has to prove itself as scientifically rigorous as the quantitative approach. Issues of reliability, validity, authenticity, neutrality and auditability are therefore key considerations (O'Leary, 2010). Credibility in qualitative research is synonymous with trustworthiness and authenticity, rigour and reflexive practice, and adherence to these values and practices can ensure conclusions are justified, credible and trustworthy even when truth is dependent on multiple perspectives of reality (O'Leary, 2010). I discuss issues of credibility that arose in this study throughout this chapter, and especially when considering 'ethics and validity' and 'limitations/self-reflexivity' towards the end of the chapter.

Data collection process

The next section elaborates on the data collection process used in this study. I was fortunate in being able to gather data from a range of sources over the six months of the GC2 course, from online blogs to assignments and later in-depth one-to-one interviews. Having access to a range of spoken and written data gathered at different points in time was useful in adding depth and richness to my data. This can be viewed as triangulation of time and methods (Denzin 1970 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), which is one way of confirming the authenticity and credibility of methods, sources and theories (O'Leary, 2010; Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

However, there is some debate in the literature about triangulation in qualitative research. Maree and van der Westhuizen (2009) note it is critical in facilitating interpretive validity and establishing data trustworthiness, but also that in qualitative research triangulation is more accurately termed 'crystallisation'. Crystallisation refers to the practice of validating results by using multiple methods of data collection and analysis, which this study has done (discussed further in the sections that follow).

Class sessions

My first connection with the GC2 students was through attending the class sessions. I attended most of the 2011 classes as an observer, using them to orient me to the course and as a platform to introduce myself to the students so that I could ask for access to their blogs and reflective assignments. The ethical considerations of this process are discussed more fully below. Initially I planned to focus my research on the 2011 class only; however, through observing the tutors my

interest in their learning through GC2 was piqued and I decided towards the end of the course to approach them for interviews too.

Attending classes enabled me to get a sense of the content and context of the curriculum and the students' learning 'in action'. In attending the classes I was looking for students who seemed deeply engaged in the learning process and seemed to be undergoing interesting learning experiences. The class observations were not a primary source of data, but were useful in giving me insights into student learning through observing their engagement with one another and their service. Additionally attending classes allowed me to get to know students so that I could put 'names to faces' when reading the blogs and assignments. This was useful when approaching 2011 students for interviews.

Written data

I had access to two sources of written data: online blogs and reflective assignments. I also had access to the GC Programme and GC2 course documents from 2010 and 2011 including course outlines, session structures, required readings, the 2010 and 2011 review reports, and a conference paper written by the teaching team.

During GC2 students are required to post a minimum of three online blogs and hand in two reflective assignments. In terms of the blogs, students are required to engage online regularly, sharing their reflections informally. Blog prompts are provided for those who needed the extra support, but students can write on anything important or interesting to them. They are also encouraged to read and respond to their peers' postings.

Students in 2010 and 2011 blogged about a wide variety of issues. They wrote about their service; they reflected some of the knotty questions raised through the class sessions; they responded to challenging and thought-provoking papers, websites and articles. Students contemplated a range of personal and university-related issues. They reflected on their relationships and interactions with their friends, family, colleagues and peers, and issues from their wider university lives, often making connections between GC2 and their other studies.

Students are required to submit two reflective essays of approximately 1000 words, one midway through the course and the other at the end. The essays were more formal than the blogs although still require a personal response from students. The requirements in 2010 and 2011 were similar. Reflection paper 1 asked students to reflect on a 'critical incident' in their community service, or on relationships, roles and power in service, or their own service paradigm. They were asked if any

assumptions or misconceptions had been challenged through the course and whether they had had insights about service, themselves, their organisations and the wider context in which their service takes place.

Reflection paper 2 asked students to think back over the course and consider how the course impacted on their community service work, or on their thinking about service, including issues of social justice. The prompt questions asked students to reflect on their learnings through GC2, any new insights, and what impact these might have made on their practice. Additionally they were asked to 'look forward', consider possible new service experiences, and think about how they could sustain their insights.

Both papers provided a caveat about the practice of reflective writing:

Reflective writing is supposed to assist you in your own learning so write about something meaningful for you. If none of the prompts above seem helpful, develop your own question. However it would be useful either way to try to look back over your learning on the course or recent service experience, and forwards to new possible service opportunities.

The prompts were therefore more of a guide to assist students' in their thinking and response, and there was leeway to go outside of this.

The interview process

The interview process took place in two phases. Towards the beginning of my research I focused on the 2011 students. I read most of their blogs and first assignments which gave me a feel for the sorts of issues that were coming up for students. I was looking for writing that displayed thoughtfulness and insight into the issues raised by the course; a questioning and reflective approach to the self, and the self in service; and application of the theories learnt in class to their volunteer work and other settings, like other university studies. These are the sort of things that made me want to know more about a particular student's learning journey. I then narrowed my list of potential interviewees and midway through the course began approaching these students for interviews.

Towards the end of the course I decided to interview the 2011 tutors, all of whom were GC2 students in 2010. I asked for and was given access to their blogs and assignments. All agreed to be interviewed.

Ultimately I interviewed 12 students (six from GC2 2010 and six from GC2 2011). Due to the rich data I obtained from these interviews and the written work, I narrowed my focus to four participants (two 2010 students and two 2011 students).

Sampling procedures

As the interview process outlined above indicates, I handpicked my students using theoretical or purposive sampling (Silverman, 2000; O’Leary, 2010). This is a non-random sampling technique, used to construct a sample theoretically meaningful to the research. My sample does not aim for generalisability, rather, I chose those participants who seemed to be undergoing interesting learning through the course. I identified these students through my class observations together with reading their online blogs and first reflection papers.

Additionally, I wanted to interview a relatively diverse group of participants in terms of race, gender, faculty and types of service. My participant selection was therefore “deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:115). I specifically wanted to include ‘black’¹⁹ students to give me some insight into young black South Africans’ experiences of service. Most of the service learning research I had come across had been conducted in the US, and the demographic was often privileged white women (Eyler and Giles, 1999; Green, 2001, 2003; Kiely, 2004, 2005).

Introducing my participants

Table 3.1 below provides initial demographic details of my four participants. As was my intention, the four students are relatively diverse in terms of gender, race, degrees and types of service. I provide detailed vignettes of each student at the beginning of Chapter Four. At this stage it is pertinent to note that three of my participants are women, which is representative of many service learning courses. Both Kim and Leigh are from relatively privileged ‘white’ South African backgrounds whilst Sizwe and Zanele are ‘black’ South Africans from poorer upbringings in townships in KwaZulu Natal. All had been in service for a number of years, but in different kinds of roles. Their degrees and duration of study to date were also different.

¹⁹ Whilst classification according to race is for me an uncomfortable construct, it is still used within South Africa (and globally) as a social and racial marker and classification tool. I have used it for its usefulness in helping me to understand the service learning experiences of previously disadvantaged students (as understood within the particular South African post-apartheid context).

<i>Names</i> ²⁰	Kim	Leigh	Sizwe	Zanele
<i>Gender</i>	female	female	male	female
<i>Race</i>	'white'	'white'	'black'	'black'
<i>Home language</i>	English	English	Zulu	Zulu
<i>Faculty</i>	Humanities	Health Sciences	Humanities	Engineering
<i>Degree</i>	Second year Bachelors degree	Final year Occupational Therapy (OT)	Final year Bachelors degree	Masters in Engineering
<i>Type of service</i>	Primary school tutor	OT practice - mobile clinics	High school tutor	Sports coach
<i>GC2 participation</i> ²¹	Student in 2011	Student in 2011	Student in 2010; tutor in 2011	Student in 2010; tutor in 2011

Table 3.1: Names and demographics of my four participants

The interviews

Because my research was qualitative in nature, and I was looking for depth and richness of data, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. My questions were open-ended and therefore often led in unexpected directions. I used this structure purposefully as my initial research interest was a broad interest in exploring students' learning experiences. Through the interviews I asked students to reflect on their family, educational and volunteering backgrounds and their reasons for choosing GC2. I asked questions about their learnings through the course and whether this had resulted in any changes in their lives, and what their future plans were, in terms of, for example, their studies and careers.

The interviews took place over two months. Throughout this time I reflected on the interview questions and pondered the direction of my research. As new queries arose for me these further influenced my interviews (Maxwell, 2008). For example, one of my initial aims was to ask students whether they found GC2 a 'transformative' learning experience, which I thought of, broadly, as a learning experience that might have changed the student in some way. However, I found it very difficult to ask students whether they thought their learning was 'transformative'. To me this seemed assumptive about the value of their learning; if it did not seem 'transformative' to them, I worried this would negate their learning. I therefore instead asked students about their experiences and what might have changed for them during the course. Additionally I found I was more interested in exploring

²⁰ Pseudonyms have been used for the participants.

²¹ Although here I provide detail on what GC2 cohort the students belong to – i.e. GC2 2010 or GC2 2011 – I did not set out in this study to compare/contrast the two years. I am providing the information only for clarity in my sampling procedures and data collection process more broadly.

learning ‘experiences’, through learning journeys, whether or not we would label it ‘transformative learning’.

Data analysis

The process of analysing the data was complex and reiterative and took place over many months. Initially, I re-read each student’s data many times. As I did so, I was looking for learning moments, for example new insights, changes in thinking and behaviour, uncovered assumptions and misconceptions, and expressions of emotion. These to me were potential indicators of growth and change.

I first experimented with mapping the data across an analytic framework (explained in detail below). Later in the process I organised the data into themes using qualitative thematic analysis. This involves breaking down data into categories enabling it to be analysed, compared and contrasted (Maxwell, 2008). I did not start out with clear themes but rather my themes emerged inductively over time as I immersed myself in the data (O’Leary, 2010). O’Leary (2010) calls this reflective qualitative data analysis and notes it is a complex process involving a number of interlinked stages.

Creating the analytic framework

Initially I worked with each student’s data separately and later looked for similarities and differences across the data. To assist me in the complex task of organising the data I experimented with using an analytic framework. Initially I grouped the emerging themes under the three learning domains that were used in GC2 pedagogy and curriculum, namely ‘context’, ‘self’ and ‘organisations’, as per Figure 3.1 over the page.

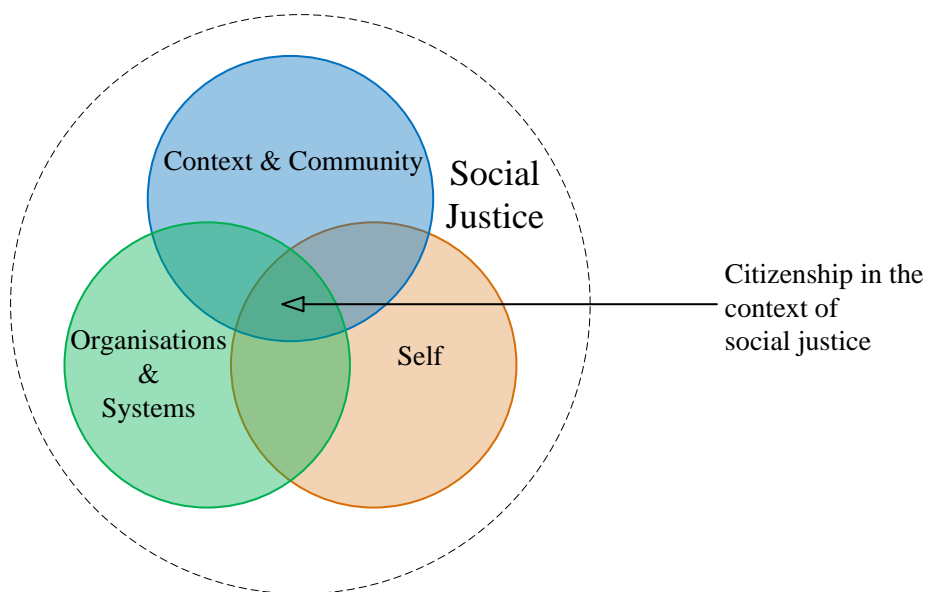


Figure 3.1: GC2 curriculum framework (McMillan, van Heerden and Small, 2011).

This diagram proved a useful starting point in organising my data, but it had some limitations. Firstly, whilst the students did talk about their organisations, this was not a prominent theme in understanding their learning journeys. Secondly, I needed a domain that spoke to the changes in practice evident in my data.

In the meantime I had also been reading Barnett's work (2001, 2007; Barnett and Coate, 2005). I realised their conceptual framework of 'knowing', 'being' and 'acting' would be a useful way of conceptualising and mapping the learning journeys in my data. Represented in Figure 3.2 below, this framework consists of three distinct but interrelated domains.

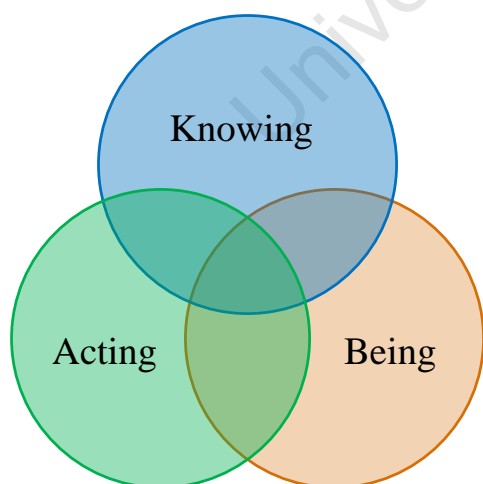


Figure 3.2: General schema of curricula learning domains of 'knowing', 'being' and 'acting' (adapted from Barnett and Coate, 2005).

Barnett and Coate (2005) use this framework to examine curricula in different disciplines in HE. They conceive of three building blocks of curricula, which they label 'knowing', 'being' and 'acting'. Each domain is distinct but, ideally, integrated. They developed this framework through empirical research in HE, and position it as a "curriculum of engagement" (p.59). By doing this they foreground the student's *personal engagement* in and with the curriculum. They argue that by foregrounding engagement and 'being', curricula can be constructed that better prepare students for an uncertain world.

In a curriculum framework as per Figure 3.2 above, the overlapping learning domains indicate that the student – their 'being' – should not be separated from their knowledge and their action or skills. Instead, 'being' is embedded within knowledge and skills, leading to a more personal and active 'knowing' and 'acting'. Additionally, the domains are deliberately not represented as fully overlapping which would indicate the student has a lack of critical space in which to think about their learning (Barnett and Coate, 2005). Finally, Barnett and Coate (2005) see the space around the domains as the curriculum, which links the learning between domains.

'Knowing', 'acting' and 'being': framing curricula in HE

'Knowing'

As noted above, Barnett and Coate (2005) deliberately use '*knowing*' instead of *knowledge*. Knowledge is a more static concept, referring to a body of theories, laws, rules or concepts students are taught and must learn. The use of 'knowing' refers to the active part of knowledge: knowing in action, which is always changing, always in a state of flux (Barnett and Coate, 2005). The active form, '*knowing*', recognises that knowledge is created socially, through collaborative effort. Further, an act of 'knowing' is an act of identity; it involves positioning the self in relation to knowledge. The self, one's 'being', is thus connected to knowledge in a personal way; 'knowing' is the personal relationship between the self and knowledge.

'Acting'

'*Acting*' versus *action* also highlights the 'self' embedded in the process. Whereas action refers to acquisition and practice of skills and is often modelled on the actions of others, 'acting' moves beyond this in referring to the moments when a student puts their own stamp on the action. 'Acting'

therefore implies agency and authorship, as a student moves beyond skills and modelling in becoming the engaged author of his own actions. Barnett and Coate (2005:62) refer to this as “authentic action”.

‘Being’

“Being”, Barnett and Coate (2005:164) argue, “is the most significant of the three dimensions in that without it the others cannot take off”. Whilst “active knowing” and “willed acting” are crucial components of a student’s engagement with curricula, they are insufficient for a world of uncertainty: “in such a world, one’s knowledge is liable to turn out to be inadequate for a sufficient understanding and one’s skills are liable to have no point of application” (Barnett and Coate, 2005:63). They argue therefore for a language that draws on concepts which encompass notions of self, being, becoming, capability, self-realisation, self-confidence, self-understanding and self-reliance: this is the language of ‘being’. It speaks to a student’s developing inner self, which should be nurtured to prepare students to flourish in a world that is significantly unknowable.

In Figure 3.2 above we see the domains are interlinked – that is, ‘knowing’, ‘acting’ and ‘being’ are all connected – indicating an engaged and committed learning experience. However, in reality curricula are not as neatly enacted. Barnett and Coate (2005) found that different disciplines had different learning aims and emphases and this meant the domains were of varying size and degrees of interconnectedness. For example, as represented in Figure 3.3 below, they found that in the sciences often knowledge is foregrounded at the expense of skills and self, and there is therefore little overlap between the domains of ‘knowing’ and ‘being’, and none between ‘acting’ and ‘being’. This indicates a fragmented learning experience, one in which the students’ ‘being’ is not present.

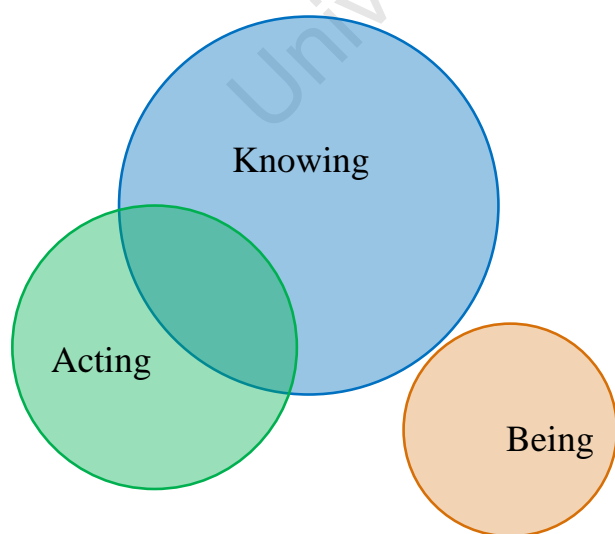


Figure 3.3: Curricula in sciences and technology subjects (adapted from Barnett and Coate, 2005:75).

Adapting the framework

I had a few concerns about using Barnett and Coate's (2005) framework for my study. One, their focus is primarily curriculum transformation and I was looking at student transformation. Secondly, the context of their framework is 'traditional' HE. My context while HE was a SL course, with the particular contextual issues inherent in service work. An additional reason for adapting the framework was that it lacks deep consideration of students' learning contexts, and as context was a vital component of my students' learning, I needed to make it more explicit. I therefore adapted their framework to make it more suitable for my analysis. I did this by drawing on questions raised by GC2, in particular the pre- and post-session reflection prompts, and used them to help me develop a deeper sense of what 'being', 'knowing' and 'acting' meant for this study.

Rethinking 'knowing', 'acting' and 'being'

'Knowing' / Context – 'What you know'

In terms of how '*knowing*' is used in this thesis, I drew on questions raised through GC2 which asked students to reflect on, and think about their *own* response to, issues of poverty and inequality, language issues, power relations, community assets, and the structural issues faced by communities. Students were asked to reflect on what knowledge is held by communities; how to treat somebody from less fortunate circumstances as an equal without being patronizing; whether they as volunteers perpetuate or challenge inequalities; what the costs of their volunteer work might be to the community; and who benefits most. These questions informed my understanding of 'knowing' in terms of my analysis.

Using these questions, and drawing on Barnett (2000, 2007; and Coate, 2005), I came to define 'knowing' as 'knowledge in action', and this encompassed aspects of both *context* and *content*²². In mapping my data within this domain I was looking for evidence of students reviewing their thinking, assumptions, understandings and meaning-making of the contexts in which they volunteered, for example revisions or changes in thinking around issues of power, language and race. I saw learning taking place within this domain as students revised their previous thinking around their own intentions and assumptions, and applied this to their experiences within contexts of extreme poverty and inequality. Through the new knowledge gained on GC2, and thinking about how it applied to the

²² Context refers to the setting – of community service and university practice. Content refers to new knowledge and new 'ways of knowing' gained through GC2.

contexts in which they were volunteering, students were able to make new meanings of their knowledge, and the contexts in which they served.

‘Acting’ / Practice – ‘What you do’

Learning in the *‘acting’ / practice* domain showed up as changes in students’ practice, or evidence of intention to change their own practice. This emerged as participants began to apply their new ‘knowing’, and through their changing ‘being’. I came to see practice quite broadly as their community service work and also changes in their practice as university students. Again, I drew on questions raised through GC2 to elaborate on Barnett’s framework. The questions I found useful in conceptualising this domain included those asking students to think about the difference between charity and social justice, and whether one is inherently good and the other inherently bad; whether it is better to work in a project with wide social reach but little personal impact, or for a project with limited social reach but powerful personal impact; whether practice can be destructive; and what kind of service they wanted to provide. Additionally, the final GC2 class session asked students how they planned to sustain their insights once they had left the programme, and to consider the challenges they might face and how they might overcome them. These questions informed my understanding of ‘acting’ in terms of my analysis.

In mapping my data within this domain I looked for evidence of a student taking charge of their practice, being an active creator of their actions, putting the self – and new self-awareness and new knowledge and ‘knowing’ about context – into practice.

‘Being’ – ‘Who you are’

The domain of *‘being’* encompasses all those factors that relate to a student’s ‘being in the world’. Learnings within this domain showed up as a new, renewed or deepened understanding of motivation, identity, values, beliefs, self-awareness and self-confidence. I was looking for evidence of new and transformed ways of ‘being’ in the world. My conceptualisation of this learning domain was again deepened by questions raised during the GC2 course. In particular I drew on those questions which asked students to think about: why they volunteer; what it means to them; what challenges they face; how do these challenges and experiences influence their feelings about self, community, and voluntary work; issues of power and identity that come up in service; how their practice shapes their identity; and the role of experience in learning. These questions informed my understanding of ‘being’ in terms of my analysis.

Figure 3.4 below represents my starting point for mapping and analysing my participant’s learning journeys. Outside of the domains, playing an active role in learning, is the context of the course:

namely the curriculum and pedagogy of GC2 as a service learning / “learning service” (Boyle-Baise *et al.*, 2006) course (as outlined in Chapter Two). I started out unsure of what lay in the centre of my learning domains. For Barnett and Coate it was curriculum engagement, but I was exploring students’ learning experiences. This was something that I grappled with as I worked through my data over a period of months.

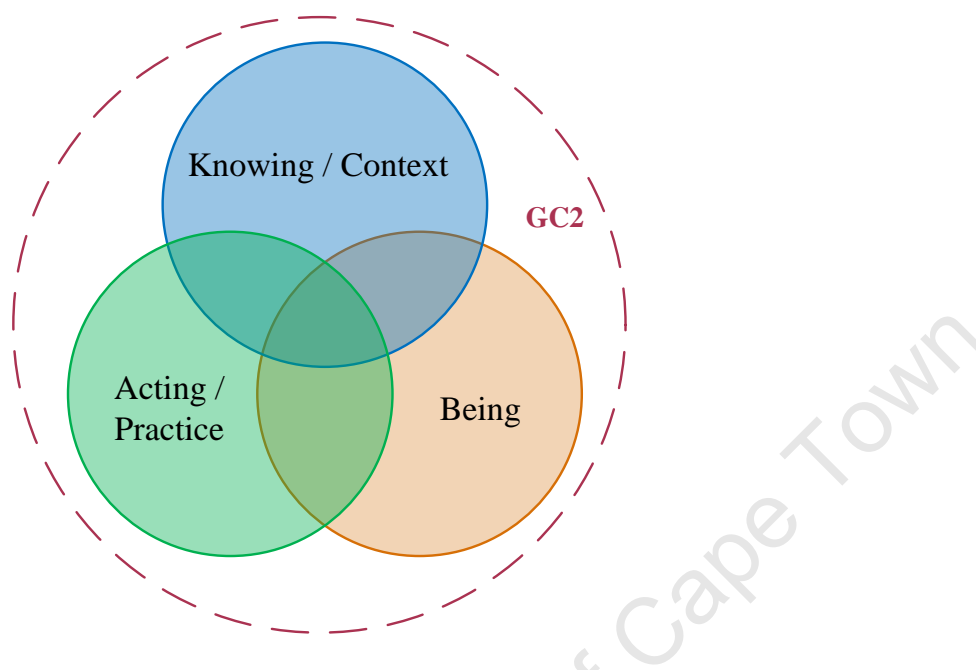


Figure 3.4: The analytic framework used in this thesis for mapping students’ learning journeys through GC2.

Mapping the students’ learning journeys

In analysing the data, I began mapping changes in my participants’ ‘knowing’, ‘acting’ and ‘being’ within and across the domains. As I found evidence of learning, I decided whether it was most clearly a change in ‘knowing’, ‘being’ or ‘acting’. This was a complex process because, as noted in the descriptions above, each domain contains elements of the other domains (‘knowing’, for example, is partly about ‘being’ actively making sense of and using knowledge.) It was therefore often challenging deciding which domain best represented a participant’s learning as changes almost always contained all three elements of ‘knowing’, ‘being’ and ‘acting’. It took me many months and reiterations of this process, rethinking and reorganising the data, to come to the final diagrams I present in Chapter Four.

I realise that despite my efforts to be systematic in my analysis and consistent in representing the participants’ diagrams, the diagrams are inevitably my own interpretation of my participants’ learning journeys. Given the complexity of understanding learning, together with the unavoidability of my

seeing the world through a subjective lens, these are also inevitably partial representations of the learning journeys. Nevertheless, I have tried to represent each students' learning as accurately and thoroughly as possible.

Having separated the data into learning domains, I saw that in many cases learning in one domain led to changes in another. For example, changed 'knowing' usually preceded – and led to – changed 'practice' or 'being'. I realised it would be helpful to illustrate the most important directional relationships using arrows (as per Figure 3.5 below). The arrows represent the stages within the learning journey (and the numbers on the arrows indicate which changes happened first²³).

As an example²⁴, in figure 3.5 Sizwe's first apparent changes were in 'knowing', and this first impacted on his 'acting' (arrow 1), and at a later stage evidence of changed 'knowing' affecting his 'being' became clear (arrow 3). Changes in Sizwe's practice in turn affected his 'knowing' (arrow 2), indicating an ongoing and reciprocal relationship between 'acting' and 'knowing'. Later in the course, the influence of new 'being' on his ways of doing practice (arrow 4) were evident. The arrows therefore show changes over time through GC2; they represent the stages in Sizwe's learning journey.

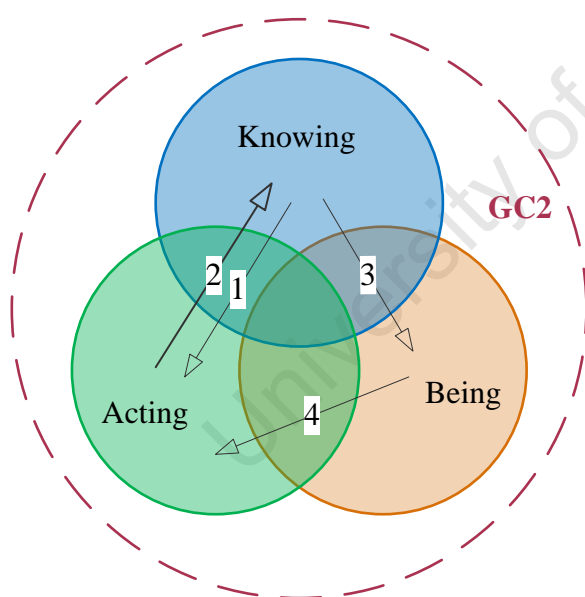


Figure 3.5: Sizwe's learning journey through GC2.

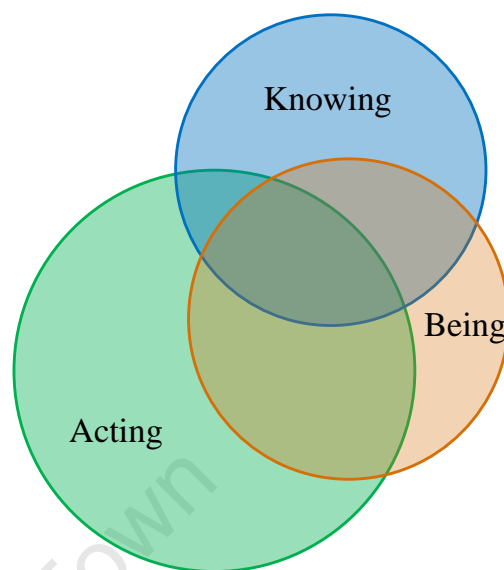
As my data analysis progressed, it became clear that each participant ended up with more significant, or more evident, learning within one or two of the three domains. For Sizwe, for example, it was transformed practice. I decided to represent this using a simplified second diagram, as per figure 3.6 below, which illustrates the endpoint of the student's learning through GC2. The different sizes of the circles represent more or less evident learning. The overlaps between the circles show

²³ Note, the length of the arrow is not relevant; rather, it is the direction that signals change.

²⁴ This is Sizwe's learning journey through GC2, used here for demonstration purposes and to clarify how I have used the diagrams in Chapter Four.

interconnectedness or ‘embeddedness’. So, in figure 3.6, ‘being’ is shown as deeply embedded within ‘knowing’ and ‘acting’ because ‘being’ was not only evident within but inseparable from understanding Sizwe’s learnings in the other domains. As we will see in Chapter Four, each student’s diagram looks different, reflecting each student’s unique learning journey.

Figure 3.6: The end point of Sizwe’s learning journey through GC2.



Validity

There is a long history of debate over issues of validity as they relate to the legitimacy of qualitative research (Maxwell, 1992). Creswell and Miller (2000:124) note the challenge of writing about validity in qualitative research and list a “confusing array of terms for validity” including authenticity, goodness, verisimilitude, adequacy, trustworthiness, plausibility, validation and credibility. However, they note, there is general consensus that qualitative researchers must demonstrate the credibility of their studies.

Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that qualitative researchers approach studies with different paradigm assumptions or worldviews which will impact on their choice of validity procedures. My own worldview is perhaps most closely ‘constructivist’: pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended and sensitive to context (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Maxwell (1992) notes that this approach is less concerned with objective descriptions and more concerned with how people, or participants, engage with and interpret objects, events and behaviours. One way of providing validity in this approach is through having rich data, which is what I endeavoured to do.

However, in this study I have also used triangulation (as noted under ‘data collection’ above), a more postpositivist approach. I’ve used triangulation in two ways. One, I collected data at different times and from multiple different sources (interviews and different written texts). Two, I have made use of different theoretical approaches in analysing my data. I have also included a section on self-reflexivity

(see below), a validity procedure that falls more clearly within the critical paradigm (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

Finally (following McMillan, 1997), I recognise that the validity of this study is influenced by my own understanding of what was valid for my participants as I made sense of their learning through GC2. As Thesen (1994 in McMillan, 1997:34) eloquently argues, if we understand reality, knowledge and experience as largely social constructs, then I as researcher must “construct the reality of this research by making it persuasive”. If my study is persuasive, this can be seen as contributing to its validity.

Ethics of the research process

In order to conduct this research, the ethics of the study had to be cleared by the UCT School of Humanities. My first ethical consideration was getting GC2 students’ permission to join their classes and view their data. As noted earlier, my original focus was the 2011 cohort. In the first class the course facilitator introduced me to students and described my researcher role. She also explained her role as my supervisor. I then exited the room while the facilitator asked students whether I could attend classes and see their written data. Students were given an opportunity to raise any questions or discomforts. None were raised then or subsequently with me or any of the facilitators.

At this first session I handed out informed consent forms which I asked students to sign²⁵. These were to gain access to the classes and their writing. Then, after the one-on-one interviews I put an additional step in place to ensure I had the interviewees’ consent to use their data. After each interview I asked the interviewee to complete a short, anonymous online questionnaire. In this I asked whether they felt free to participate in the study, whether they had any reservations, considering the course facilitator was also my thesis supervisor, and whether I could use their data. I was able to know whether an individual had responded, but not the contents of an individual’s response. Only data from those students who answered each question was used in this study. All but one of the participants filled in the questionnaire, and all of those who did said I could use their data.

Towards the end of GC2 I approached the tutors (who were students in 2010). I obtained similar signed informed consent forms from them²⁶, and required that they complete the online questionnaire. They all did, and all agreed to me using their written and interview data.

²⁵ See Appendix A.

²⁶ See Appendix B.

Limitations / Self-reflection

I recognise that my study has a number of actual and potential limitations, some of which I have already touched on in this chapter. Firstly, as in all research but perhaps more so in qualitative research, my reading of the data is subjective and coloured by my own “personal foundation of experience” (Boud and Walker, 1991). So, whilst I have aimed for objectivity, I recognise that the data is presented through my own lenses and worldview (Harding, 1993). Similarly the kind of data I collected was subjectively informed. For example, I realised after the interviews and during my data analysis that I had been reluctant to talk about race in the interviews. I realised I did not feel the same reticence in talking about gender. I discuss this further in Chapter Four.

Secondly, the size of my sample means that this study is not generalisable, however as noted previously if I had aimed for generalisability I would have sacrificed richness and depth of data. Instead, I have opted to tell a few stories in some detail. I have struggled with deciding which of this rich data to leave out, which has made me aware of my power to tell my participants’ stories. However, due to space constraints I have had to present data that speak most to my understanding of students’ learning journeys through service learning. Therefore inevitably this is a partial account of the participants’ stories.

Thirdly, as I mentioned in Chapter One, the GC2 course convener is also my thesis supervisor. This was helpful in gaining me access to unpublished programme documents that might otherwise have been difficult to find. I was also fortunate in having informal conversations about the programme and course development, aims and pedagogy, which helped me with context and background. Given her inevitable closeness to both GC2 and this thesis, it is worth noting that we both worked hard throughout this study to remain aware of her dual interest. Also worth noting is that my focus was not on evaluating the programme but rather on GC2 as a site of student learning.

Chapter Four: Learning journeys

Introduction

The first step in my data analysis was to capture each student's learning journey across the three domains of 'knowing', 'being' and 'acting' using the analytic framework outlined Chapter Three. I present this analysis in Part 1 of this chapter, "Learning Journeys". I start each learning journey with a short vignette introducing the participant, then present the student's key learnings through GC2, illustrated through arrows in the learning diagrams. I reflect the endpoint of each participant's learning journey through GC2 using a diagram showing which domain was most changed over the duration of the course, and how the domains overlap.

In the vignettes I present each student's home, family, school and university lives, their "personal foundations of experience" (Boud and Walker, 1990, 1991), to show some of the structural constraints and enablers in their lives. I identify their reasons for volunteering, the type and length of their service, provide background to their service organisation, and relate their thoughts and feelings about their own service. I outline their reasons for choosing GC2 and some of the questions, misconceptions, assumptions and affirmations that arose for each student through the course. I then illustrate each student's learning journey through the analytic frameworks, or learning journey diagrams, highlighting where learning took place.

In Part 2, I present themes across the data which show key moments in the students' learning journeys. I discuss new 'knowing' first, as this was the first evident change for each student. New 'knowing' showed up in students 'taking a stand', understanding concepts in new ways and when they grappled with issues of power, privilege and inequality. I then explore new 'acting' which involved new ways of thinking about and 'doing' practice, whether that be service, university studies and thoughts about future practice. Through these themes I show how 'being' is embedded within 'knowing' and 'acting'.

The chapter ends with a concluding discussion which speaks to my research question, namely, how can we make sense of student learning in service learning.

Part I: Learning journeys²⁷

Zanele

Introducing Zanele

Zanele was in the first year of her masters in engineering degree when I met her. She grew up in a traditional Zulu household in a township in KwaZulu Natal and talked about *“having been raised under similar circumstances that many in these communities find themselves in”*. Shy and softly spoken, in her first blog she described herself as cautious about forming emotional bonds: *“Yes, I am a shy person, and only get really deeply personal [with] a close friend”*.

Zanele was passionate about uplifting society through sport, believing that *“sports are a great mechanism through which transformation can occur”*. She started volunteering for a sports organisation in her first year at UCT, going out to poor communities and coaching school children. In her five years with the organisation she had been involved in both hands-on committee work and leadership roles. Zanele believed in being *“the change you want to see in the world”*, and this found expression in her changed approach to service during GC2.

Zanele’s learning journey: the emerging activist

there were things that I knew and that I valued...and then having done GC actually made me realise that, no, wait a minute this is actually important, you need to take this serious, it’s a serious matter; it added to my value system...I knew it was important but not actually that important.

Figure 4.1 over the page represents Zanele’s learning journey through GC2. Her changes in ‘knowing’ were the first evident changes, and had a clear and ongoing influence on her practice (arrow 1). For example, Zanele said one of her *“greatest aha”* moments on GC2 was around power (new ‘knowing’). Through new understandings of power she began questioning her volunteering, her service organisation and their roles and responsibilities:

²⁷ When presenting students’ written work I have silently edited it for minor language errors. In presenting direct spoken quotes I have aimed for clarity whilst allowing the student’s voice to be heard. Where there is emphasis within quotations, that is always the participant’s own emphasis.

Five years later, these issues with [poor facilities], curriculum and communication with our kids still not resolved? I mean really now! Seems simple, but this is one of our biggest challenges.

Zanele decided her organisation was unable to provide sustainable interventions, and that to bring about lasting social transformation, the community and local government needed to be more involved in their projects. However, her attempts at community consultation showed her the difficulty of new ‘acting’ in practice:

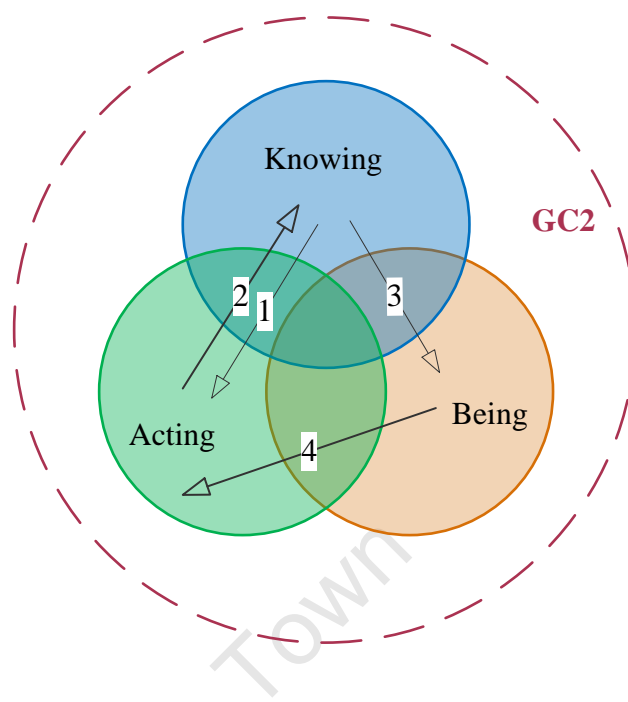


Figure 4.1: Zanele’s learning journey diagram

it doesn't quite work, cos...we didn't really consult the parents and the teachers, cos we didn't really deal much with them; we consulted just with the participants, and they just wanna have fun! When I asked them so what would you like to change about this project for next year [they said] 'no nothing, it's fine!' So it makes it very difficult for you to actually say, yes, I did consult, and yes, they said this and that, and yes, I took it into consideration.

Zanele then tried a radically different approach. She looked to find local government representatives who could assist her with resources and embedding resilience into her projects. It was, she said, a “long, tedious process; ooh it was such a mission!” Along the way, she learnt much about the workings of government and people in power, that there are good, interested people and lazy, uncaring people:

you'd have one person who is very passionate about what he was doing, he wants things to happen, but the people that he works with don't really care.

Through this changed ‘acting’, her ‘knowing’ about the contexts in which she served was further deepened (arrow 2). She said she realised that

firstly we have a long way to go as a country, and secondly the government isn't held accountable enough, and thirdly, we are just treating the surface of the problem, we're not treating the root with our volunteer work. And that for me was the biggest thing and that's what I've tried to do this year, I've tried to address those roots issues.

Through all of this, Zanele learnt the difficulty of service in practice:

GC in practice is difficult! You can try a lot of things that can actually work, but some things don't quite work as well as you want them to.

Despite these challenges, Zanele persevered, showing a “will to learn” (Barnett, 2007) from her challenges. Her ‘actions’ became a more personal and active ‘acting’ through her determination, courage, perseverance and commitment. These are evidence of ‘being’ in ‘acting’.

‘Being’ is also evident in Zanele’s new ways of ‘knowing’. For example, having encountered the concept of social justice, “*which I didn't know about before GC*” (new ‘knowing’), she realised it was deeply meaningful to her now and going-forward (arrow 3). Through reflecting on questions about the role of service in her life, Zanele clarified her values, strengthened her beliefs, and became a more self-aware and self-confident person in the world.

As a result of this new ‘being’, Zanele was re-evaluating her future career, wondering whether and how she could incorporate her passion for service into her career path (arrow 4: new ‘being’ resulting in new ways of ‘acting’).

I always think my parents would kill me! “You spent six years studying, you got a masters in engineering, and you not using it! What?!” That's what I always think at the back of my head, but then I also think to myself, would I rather do something that I really really love, or would I rather do something I got a degree in, just cos I got a degree?

GC2 had provided Zanele with the space in which she could step back and examine her ‘being’ in her ‘acting’ and she had seen service was an integral part of her life:

I'm definitely not going to let go of this sort of me, cos I've just realised this is just such a big part of me, and I actually didn't think that before GC, so losing that would be so sad.

In our interview Zanele told me she had been approached by a new cross-campus sports development organisation. This role would allow her to use her experience to help UCT clubs access external resources. She had also been asked by a provincial sports organisation to work with them on their development programmes, “to help them spend their lotto²⁸ money properly, cos they need to have had it spent by the end of next year!” Of these serendipitous requests for her involvement, Zanele said,

It's amazing, I don't look for these things, but they find me somehow! I said to [my service organisation] I'm letting go, but I keep coming across people who want to work with [me], who want to work with, well, sports especially...they just seem to always come and find me!

Final outcomes

Ultimately, Zanele's transformed 'acting' was her most evident change through GC2, represented by the biggest circle in diagram 4.2. 'Being' is shown as deeply embedded within 'knowing' and 'acting' to show the deep engagement of 'self' within 'knowledge' and 'action'. New ways of 'knowing' included understanding knowledge in new ways, better understanding the contexts of her service and knowing *herself* better. This, as we have seen, impacted on her practice and thoughts about future practice. Through her learnings on GC2 and through the arduous process of implementing a new approach to her service, Zanele moved from a shy and cautious GC2 student in 2010 to a GC2 tutor role in 2011, facilitating others' learning, and in 2012 she was looking towards a new cross-campus sports leadership role.

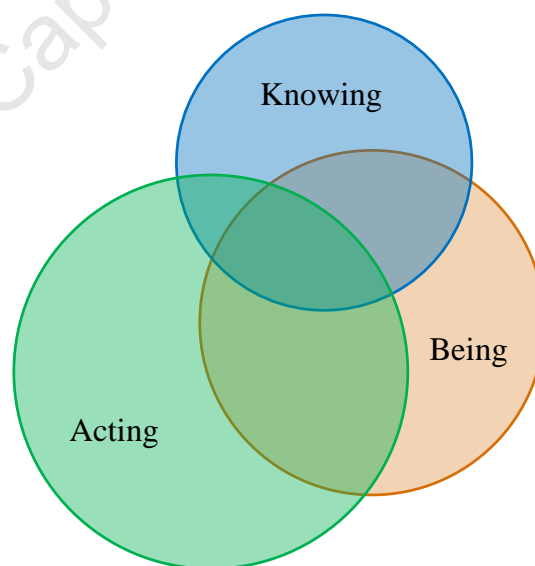


Figure 4.2 – Zanele's final outcomes

²⁸ Money allocated through the South African lottery

Sizwe

Introducing Sizwe

When I interviewed Sizwe he was in the final year of his undergraduate degree in politics and history. He grew up in a small township in KwaZulu Natal and went to a local school. While at high school he approached a group of ex-schoolmates to ask for tutoring assistance in mathematics and physics, and by the time he began his final school year, he had already finished most of these syllabuses. This enabled him to get a good matric pass which then translated into acceptance from his university of his choice, so tutoring was an experience he valued highly:

Then I realised, a peer-to-peer kind of learning is very very powerful, with teachers there are a lot of power dynamics involved, you might not ask anything you want to ask...

Sizwe was determined to replicate this ‘paying it forward’ philosophy and so in his first year at UCT he started tutoring on Saturdays at Thembelisha High School²⁹, and had been there for four years when I met him. Thembelisha High is situated close to UCT but it draws pupils from townships around Cape Town as far afield as Gugulethu and Khayelitsha³⁰. Sizwe chose to tutor history, a subject he sees as providing a crucial starting point for enabling a deeper understanding of the world: *“By studying history you are equipped with the capacity to predict the outcomes of events because history has a tendency of repeating itself”*.

Sizwe was thoroughly involved in university life, immersing himself in ongoing dialogue and debate with his fellow students. In one reflection paper he described how he would attend the Saturday morning GC2 classes *“after night-long sessions unpacking issues with my friends on campus”*. Sizwe’s enthusiasm for learning and volunteering was reflected in his choosing to do GC2:

I like involving myself in situations that are most likely to help me develop, especially academically, organisationally and leadership wise. When I registered for GC as a participant, I expected this development to happen, and indeed, there was so much transformation in these areas of my life.

²⁹ The name of the school has been changed.

³⁰ Gugulethu and Khayelitsha are historically disadvantaged, partially informal townships situated in Cape Town, 20-30kms from the city centre.

Sizwe's learning journey: teacher as facilitator

I think it's important to go to that effort where we interrogate what it is to learn. If one day you become one of the education ministers, you might want to have that cause at the fundamental level: what does it mean to learn?

Sizwe's learning journey followed a similar path to Zanele's, as we see in figure 4.3 below. Like Zanele, his learning journey started with his new ways of 'knowing'. When he reflected on his university studies he realised that his learning lacked personal engagement; i.e. his 'being' was not engaged with his knowledge:

Looking at my academic journey so far, I realise I engage the material thoroughly, which is good. However, and unfortunately, I missed engaging the work on the personal level. To me, this is a special ingredient GC has; it asks you 'where do you stand'? As I reflect on issues now, with a new approach, the one I picked up from GC, I am realising that I use to enjoy sitting on the fence a lot.

Re-evaluating his history tutoring, he had a similar revelation; he realised he needed to be more personally engaged and put more of himself into the classroom. In the interview Sizwe told me how different his tutoring approach was pre-GC2:

I'm not gonna lie, at the beginning I just went there in the traditional teaching way...stand at the front, arranging the classroom in a certain way, come as this person that is there to impose what I think, or to just dictate and tell students, this is it! This is how to do it!...I never really took some time to look around me and try to understand how these students would want this learning to go about.

Through GC2 he came to the uncomfortable realisation that this style of teaching was incongruous with the kind of teacher he wanted to be. Additionally, the student-centred, facilitative

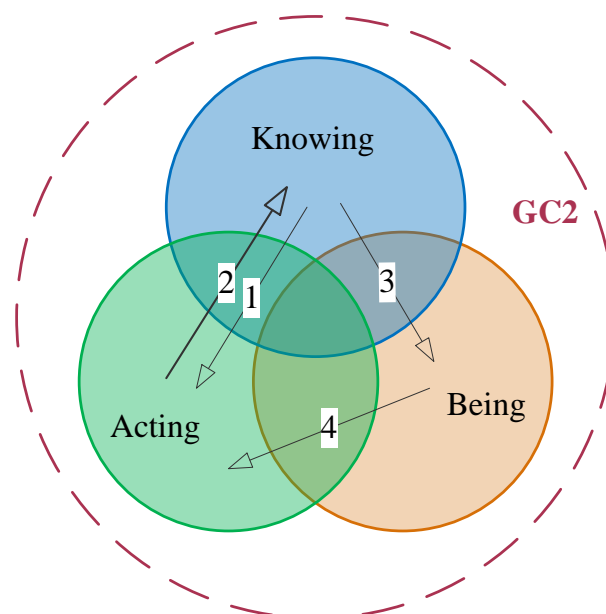


Figure 4.3: Sizwe's learning journey diagram

style of teaching on GC2 opened his eyes to the possibility of a different kind of pedagogy. These new ways of ‘knowing’ led Sizwe to radically transform his ‘acting’ (arrow 1). He “*decided to have a chat*” with his students, and realised some of the major barriers to their learning:

It's like they're working! They take a train to school, maybe get home around five already tired, try to do some homework, I mean you're exhausted! You also have household chores that you need to perform...then by the time you think you've finished you don't have that energy to engage your material ferociously.

Additionally, many struggled to comprehend history taught primarily in English. As a result, they learnt by rote and regurgitated facts without understanding history’s applicability beyond the classroom.

Having spoken to his students, Sizwe transformed his tutoring. He stopped trying to “deposit” knowledge (Freire, 1985) and instead mirrored GC2’s pedagogy. He rearranged the classroom so that he was a part of the class rather than standing in front. He drew on isiXhosa and isiZulu in his teaching. He asked for anonymous feedback, which resulted in some positive feedback and further information on challenges his students faced. Through all of this, Sizwe learnt the importance of paying attention, listening, being aware of potential power dynamics and adapting his practice:

now I go with my shorts and sit and engage with students, that's the fact! I think it's important if you're volunteering your services, I think it's important to understand the environment, the people that you'll be working with, it's very very important. It's useless actually, or, well, it would be fulfilling for yourself, but I think going there and thinking that they will have to adjust to you, I think really it's not gonna help. It's important to adapt, to understand the context, to understand all these dynamics that are involved.

These changes in ‘knowing’, which came about through transformed ‘acting’ (arrow 2), also shifted Sizwe’s ‘being’ (arrow 3). For example, as he personally connected to his university studies, he clarified where he stood on issues he had previously neglected:

to tell the truth I never interrogated myself or done any form of introspection, and asked myself, 'where do I stand?' 'What's my stance in this?'

Clarifying his values (‘being’) also played a role in his changing practice (‘acting’; arrow 4). When Sizwe questioned himself within service – his values, beliefs, attitudes – he was calling on his ‘being’.

This reflection deepened his self-awareness, which in turn gave him the courage to change his practice. When he received positive feedback from his students, it reaffirmed his changed practice, his belief in his service, and his love of teaching – all evidence of ‘being’ within ‘acting’. One of the outcomes of this was that he was considering postgraduate studies in education instead of public administration.

Final outcomes

Ultimately, Sizwe’s most significant transformation at the end of GC2 was, like Zanele, of his ‘acting’, represented by the largest circle in figure 4.4. Sizwe’s changes in ‘acting’ were deeply connected to changes in the other two learning domains, represented by the large overlaps of ‘knowing’ and ‘being’ with acting. Through changing his practice, Sizwe learnt more about the context in which he was tutoring (new ‘knowing’), and so he continued “*fine tuning*” his practice to meet his pupils’ needs. Therefore, a reciprocal and ongoing relationship was created between ‘knowing’ and ‘acting’.

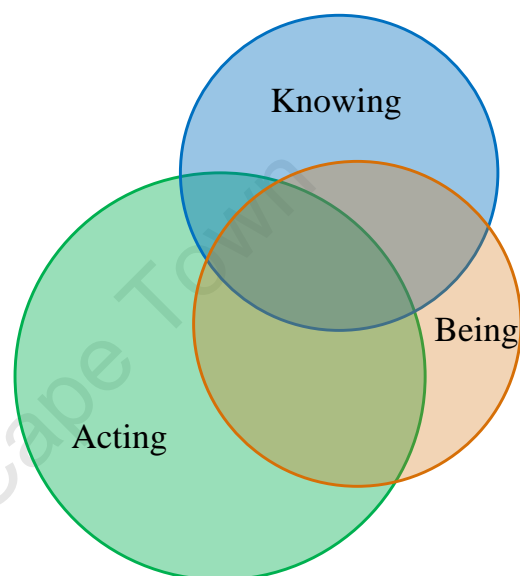


Figure 4.4. Sizwe’s final outcomes

Leigh

Introducing Leigh

When I interviewed Leigh she was nearing the end of a long journey through two four-year degrees, first architecture and then occupational therapy (OT). As an architecture student she was frustrated by the lack of real world application of their work: “*the designs never went anywhere, you build models and posters but that’s where it ends*”. While on her one-year internship she was involved in a pro-bono project because she was the “*cheapest labour in the company*”. This involved designing and building a home for disabled children in Khayelitsha. Seeing a project through from the design phase into “*an actual building*” gave her the satisfaction of practically implementing her learnings, but also showed her that while architecture could attend to basic human needs, too often it focused on “*the biggest and the best, building monuments to people’s wealth*”. At around the same time she had a leg operation and received months of painstaking physiotherapy which “*provided another turning*

point...I realised that this is an area where I can do something". These various experiences provided the impetus for her to return to university to study OT.

As a student the second time it was important to Leigh that her academic knowledge and skills would have practical expression through volunteer work. She had always considered herself a *"bit of a humanitarian"* and she wanted *"to be able to plough back in while I'm still at varsity"*, and so on starting her OT degree she volunteered with a student health organisation. To her disappointment she found the clinics were operated by medical students only, and auxiliary health services like OT were not represented. Nevertheless for two years she *"tagged along"* which was *"a bit of a waste...as a first year [OT student] you really learn nothing in any case"*. Still, she persevered, and ultimately those first two years proved valuable as she experienced first-hand where communities' needs lay.

As Leigh's OT knowledge and experience grew so did her frustration at not being able to implement her learning, and so towards the end of her second year, as the OT students moved into their practical modules, she and a fellow student set up an OT division within their service organisation. Two years later, when I met her, Leigh was heading up one of the mobile paediatric clinics. She was also in the process of handing over her duties and responsibilities as she neared the end of her degree, and was looking towards life beyond university to her one-year community service internship.

Leigh's learning journey: a return to critical thinking

I used to think a lot in architecture, and then somewhere in OT I think I just settled for second best, and just kind of plodded along, and it's reignited that very critical way of looking...it's sparked that all over again and it reminded me, this is who you are, so that has been a huge huge thing.

Leigh's approach to her learning through GC2 was highly intellectual. She enjoyed grappling with the theory and her own practice, and debated issues in class and through her writing. She welcomed the challenging thinking environment which she said reignited her critical thinking self. She was reminded *"this is who you are"* and said this was perhaps her most significant learning through GC2

Critically re-examining herself and her service removed *"the rose-coloured glasses to practice"* and showed her she had become someone who *"just accepts the way it's done"*. She saw a disconnect between her actions and her intentions – her 'being' and her 'acting'. She was not 'acting' in the world as the person she wanted to be - a challenging, questioning practitioner.

This was a deeply uncomfortable realisation which changed Leigh’s outlook on her service and her approach to her studies (arrow 1). She decided the OT curriculum lacked real-world world relevance and that “*the biggest impact of GC2*” was on her academics:

because it’s challenged what the department’s teaching us. They teach you one batch of theory, and then we got presented with this other batch [in GC2]. I’m sure I failed my block because of that cos I just argued left, right and centre, because I just don’t think that the way the department is teaching us is relevant – based on my experience, and then based on this course. So that’s been really good. It’s challenged me to think critically about the theory we’re learning.

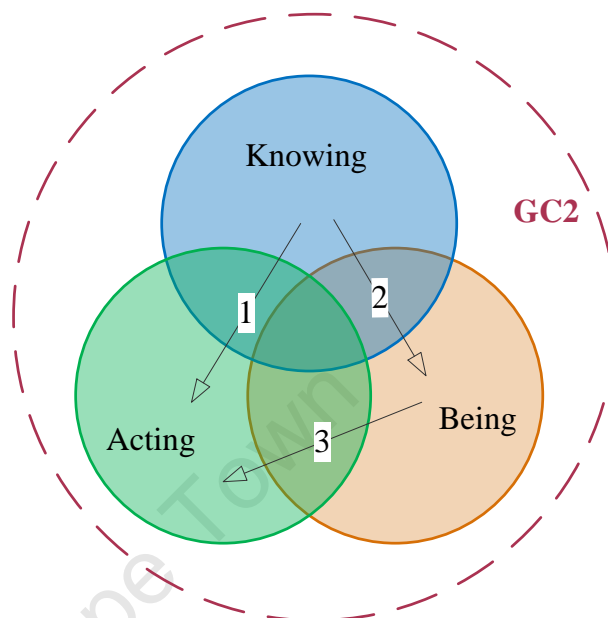


Figure 4.5: Leigh’s learning journey diagram

This CR also transformed her thinking about her volunteering and the communities in which they served. She questioned the logic of mobile clinics that were not mobile; she wondered whether they were in fact disempowering communities by providing health services; she reflected on the use of jargon-filled English with second-language speakers. She came to see multiple ways in which their service was imbued with power, and how difficult it would be to overcome.

Changes in ‘being’ for Leigh were found in her increased self-awareness of her beliefs and values. Through ‘coming to know’ in new ways, she came to know herself better, and says she came to a “*startling self-awareness and clarity around my own motivations for volunteering, and beyond that, for entering into the health sciences and shifting away from architecture*” (arrow 2).

She also reflected on her “*humanitarianism*”, why she felt the need to be “*the humanitarian*” and how this part of her ‘being’ would play out in her future practice (arrow 3). In reviewing her service she saw that to some extent it perpetuated hierarchies and inequalities. She remembered one disconcerting question as a “*highlight*”: “*what is it costing our moms who are coming to our clinics?*” This reconsideration of the potential cost of their service to the community was for Leigh

“brilliant, it was a real eye-opener”. Being encouraged to reflect critically on her reasons for volunteering led her to the unexpected conclusion that her service stemmed from selfish needs:

the realisation that a lot of this is totally selfish, you’re “saving the world”, you’re “giving of yourself”, actually, it satisfies very selfish undercurrents, that was a real eye opener for me.

Some of these challenging questions were new, but Leigh saw she had already been applying – in service and in discussions about service – many of the theories, paradigms and questions raised through GC2. What she found useful was being given the space to re-evaluate her ‘self’ in service:

Facing myself for a little while and examining population “me” has allowed me to re-evaluate what it is that I value, what I stand for and how I will choose, every day, to have this reflected in my practice as a therapist, advocate, designer, volunteer and person.

Final outcomes

Leigh’s major learning through GC2 was new ways of ‘knowing’ – about the context of her service and the content of her university studies. As with Sizwe and Zanele, this changed ‘knowing’ was the starting point for her learning journey; unlike them, it was also her most significant transformation through GC2. Her changed ‘being’ was reflected in increased self-understanding of her values, motivations, beliefs, and increased confidence in voicing these, both in her academics and in thinking about her future service. In terms of ‘acting’, there were significant changes to Leigh’s university studies, but less evidence of changes to her community service practice. This is primarily due to the timing of GC2 which took place in her final year at university and towards the end of her community service involvement.

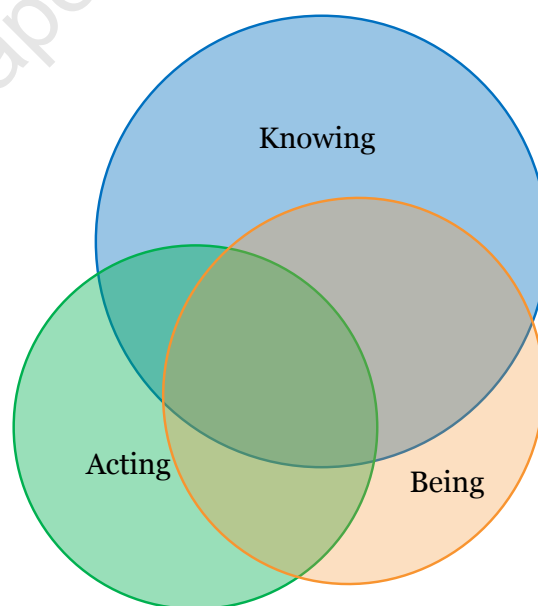


Figure 4.6: Leigh’s final outcomes

Kim

Introducing Kim

When I met Kim she was nearing the end of her second year at UCT. She was older than most of her peers as she finished her schooling with a post-matric qualification, followed by a gap year in which she tutored mathematics. She grew up in a privileged, middle-class environment where community involvement was encouraged:

it's something that I've felt a lot from my family and in general that we should give back to the community all the stuff we've been given and the opportunities we've had...we should transmit.

Kim's family valued education highly – her mother was a teacher and “*always says education is the most important thing you can give to a child*”. During Kim's school years and in her gap year she worked as a mathematics tutor, and when she arrived at UCT she immediately signed up as a volunteer tutor. Her volunteer organisation works in poorly resourced schools around Cape Town, supplementing the school curriculum with extra lessons.

Initially Kim found the tutoring “*so badly organised*” and “*completely disappointing*” and felt she was making little difference. Most of her friends dropped out within the first few weeks. Kim persevered despite feeling inadequate and that her impact was limited. She found herself having to “*constantly revise my expectations and I suppose constantly lower them*”, but recognised that “*just to be there*” as a leader figure seemed to make a difference to the children.

At the end of her first year of tutoring Kim joined the project leadership committee thinking she could “*change a couple of things*”. However, being in a leadership role brought its own challenges. Kim felt as if she was “*running into a lot walls*”. Keen to find a solution or new ways to approach these issues, she signed up for GC2, which “*seemed to be exactly something that would give me answers or different ways of thinking*”. However, she realised there were no simple answers and quick-fix solutions. Instead, GC2 showed her “*how much even more complex it is than I appreciated*”.

Kim's learning journey: the inner journey

My most important insights from GC2 are not about volunteering but about understanding myself and others in the context of this world and of how to use this understanding to promote social justice.

As with the other participants, Kim's learning started with new 'knowing' which came about through committed CR on herself and her service, especially the roles and relationships she encountered through her service. Kim said that she always knew the context of service was influential, but through GC2 she decided that:

it is in fact the very foundation. Only in truly understanding the context can we offer service which is suitable and beneficial to the community – and only then can we achieve social change.

She realised she had been an 'unthinking volunteer': *"I just sort of went there and didn't really think that much about the community I was going into"*. Through reflection she came to see that she had had misconceptions about what her role in service should be and could achieve. In her efforts to create and implement a new curriculum in her schools, she realised just how little she knew about the community she was volunteering in:

HELP! Through GC2, I've realised how little I really know. I don't know what changes would be best, I don't possess any knowledge of the community and I don't know how to acquire it. I certainly don't feel safe jumping into my car, driving to Kensington and knocking on someone's door. I don't want to make the wrong decision because I don't want to be perpetuating inequality which I feel our project might be doing at the moment because it is not addressing the problems at its roots. I had moved from a feeling of power to one of complete

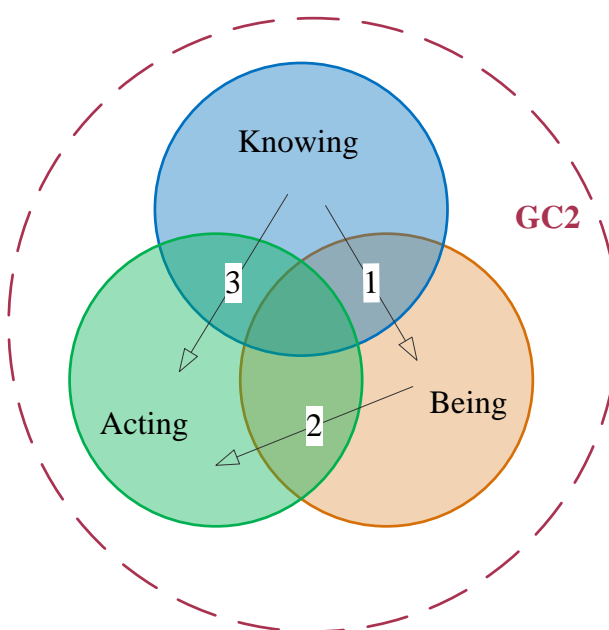


Figure 4.7: Kim's learning journey diagram

powerlessness.

This new understanding – new ‘knowing’ – affected her ‘being’ and how she showed up in the world (arrow 1). So for example, the failure of her first effort at constructing and implementing a curriculum initially led her to feelings of anxiety and powerlessness: *“What a disappointment! All the hard work for nothing?!”*

Kim persevered in trying to better understand her service. Ongoing critical self-awareness allowed her to think about her practice in new ways (arrow 2). She realised that volunteers are *“merely the support...it is only the community that can fix itself”*. Kim learned that service in theory and service in practice are very different, and that while changing service in practice can be daunting, it is important to persevere.

Of all the participants, Kim spoke most clearly about aspects of ‘being’. She said that increased self-awareness – to be more conscious in her everyday life – was one of her greatest learnings:

GC2 increased my self-awareness. It made me aware of how my assumptions influence my actions and perceptions. It made me aware of how my actions and perceptions influence other people and how I am influenced by others’ actions and perceptions.

She said she had always considered herself *“quite tolerant, you know, [I thought I] didn’t have anything against anyone”*, but through GC she saw she could be intolerant of others’ ideas and opinions, that *“maybe I do sort of have my or have had unconscious or subconscious sort of boundaries”*. This was an uncomfortable acknowledgment, reflected in her awkward articulation. Through deepened self-awareness, and of her ‘self’ in her interactions with others, she was making an effort to listen more, and more carefully. At the same time, she noted the challenge of constant self-awareness:

I think really [GC2] is teaching me to be more aware of what I’m doing, and I feel like so little people are really aware of what they do all the time, and it’s hard, you know, to constantly be, to have this conscious mind about what you’re doing.

Having been offered the critically reflective space on GC2, Kim felt this is *“what learning should be”*. The course provided a space in which she could connect her ‘self’ with her knowledge: *“learning about other things while always also learning about yourself”*.

The course provided a useful space for Kim to reflect on her service, but not in the way she had originally envisioned:

I have learnt volunteering can and should be difficult and challenging. I have learnt the importance of frequently asking oneself questions. I have learnt that there is no quick fix and that I will never get any answers laid out for me on a silver platter.

Kim described her experience of GC as coming to see herself as part of a complex puzzle. She thought GC would give her “a definition and a checklist” of how to do service, but instead she gained a deeper understanding of the complexity of practice, and the ways in which her own thinking and behaviour influences and is influenced by others. She described this intricate complexity as being like a puzzle, and saw herself as inextricably bound up in it:

My most important insight by far is that my puzzle was fundamentally lacking. I imagined that one day I would step back from my puzzle and somehow it would all make sense. My biggest insight from GC2 is that I can't step away from the puzzle; I am a part of it. Every person's puzzle of the world will look different as we are all an integral part of our own puzzles. And our puzzles are not constant representations of the world. They are continuously changing and evolving in a complex and interlinked fashion.

This new ‘knowing’ about the interconnectedness of context, service and ‘self’ changed her approach to service (arrow 3) as she rethought her approach to curriculum construction for her students.

Final outcomes

Kim’s most evident change at the end of GC2 was in her ‘being’, which started with critical self-reflection on the contexts of her service, her ‘self’ in service and herself in the world. Through this she was able to access inner tools, like perseverance and courage, to assist her on her learning journey. She was able to reflect on and clarify her values, opinions, beliefs, ideals, aspects of ‘being’ she realised she would need to draw on in constructing a curriculum for a school located in a context so different to her own.

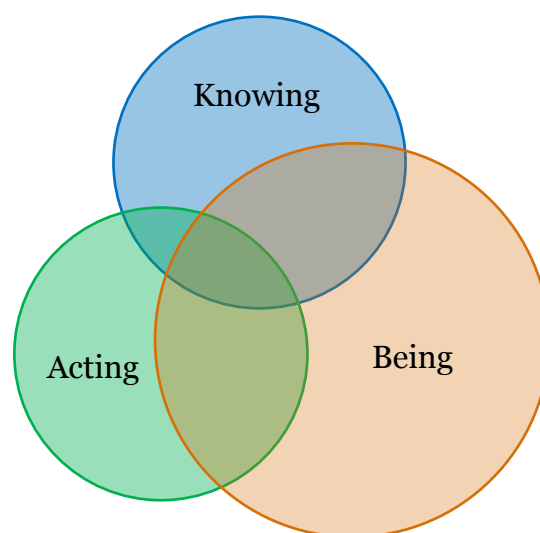


Figure 4.8: Kim’s final outcomes

Part 2: Transformations

As we have seen, each student had a different learning journey through GC2, and the diagrams make these differences visible through the differing domain sizes, degrees of overlap and directional arrows. Leigh's changes were very strongly within 'knowing' as her 'self' within knowledge was activated. Kim's new ways of 'knowing' took her deeply into 'being', and then transformed her practice. Sizwe's and Zanele's changed practice was most evident, which came about as new ways of 'being' transformed their 'knowing' and their 'acting'.

We have also begun to see how for these students transformed 'acting' and 'knowing' do not take place without transformations in 'being'. Part 2 illuminates the role of 'being' in learning through presenting themes across the data. In the first section I explore *being in knowing*. Here, I found students infusing 'knowledge' with 'self' when they were asked to 'take a stand', in their understanding concepts in new ways, and when they grappled with issues of power and privilege. In the second section I explore *being in acting*: how changing 'being' informed changing practice.

'Being' in 'knowing'

There were many examples across the data of new 'being' shaping and energising new ways of 'knowing'. I have chosen to focus on three of these: 'taking a stand', 'new understandings of concepts' and 'grappling with issues of power and privilege'.

"Taking a stand"

Sizwe and Leigh both mentioned the difficulties in being forced to 'take a stand' on key issues in service, and this resulted in important changes to the way they saw the world around them. 'Taking a stand' highlights 'being' in 'knowing': it is about choosing where to situate the self in relation to one's knowledge, which leads to an experiential, personal knowing. Although Barnett describes this in detail in his work, Warner-Weil and McGill's (1990) earlier description of EL notes this complex relationship between 'being' and 'knowing' when learning from experience:

Experiential learning enables us to engage with the interrelatedness of self and the social context, inner experience and outer experience, content and process, and different ways of knowing.

For Leigh, 'taking a stand' required her to think critically about her beliefs and values:

[GC2] forced me to say, right, on poverty, this is what I believe, cos you know you can kind of get away with not really knowing where you stand...It's challenged me above anything else to think critically about the community and the organisation, about where is it I stand and from what perspective am I looking at those things.

Sizwe wondered how he had managed to get through four years of university without knowing his stance on “*issues of the day*” like race, development and globalisation:

As a student of politics, I've realised that I know different debates about development, but to tell the truth I never interrogated myself or done any form of introspection and asked myself where do I stand, what's my stance in this, and if I were to try to implement this, how would I implement that thing?

Sizwe realised that he had been engaging with theory from a purely intellectual point of view. He had missed the connection between self and knowledge. As Polanyi (1962, in Jarvis, 2009:113) explains: “into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known, and [this is] a vital component of his knowledge”. Sizwe he realised he needed to “*personalise*” these concepts:

getting where you stand about all these “fancy issues” and these “fancy terms”, I think that's what GC2 went down to. You're not just being taught. It's about you, you try to personalise it and say, yes, there's a concept of globalisation, but how in my world, in my thinking, in my day-to-day interaction, does globalisation impact or affect me?

Newman (2012) provides a useful way of identifying this learning in his description of the ‘moral aspect’ of learning in which learners discover what is right and wrong, good and bad, wise and unwise through ongoing debate within ‘self’ and with others. Zanele neatly summed up the difficult choices that are part of this ‘moral aspect’ of learning, which were part of her GC2 experience:

No! You're never given the answers! We discussed a lot of things, and then you leave the session thinking, hmmm, ok, I've learnt about this and I've learnt about that, and then you start to ask yourself further questions, maybe there were questions that you asked that you don't feel were answered, and at the end of it you actually have more questions than answers!...And some of those things you actually you can't get an answer for unless you do it yourself or unless you figure it out yourself or maybe there's just no answer for it.

New understandings of concepts

As Sizwe notes above, taking a stand often involves seeing or ‘knowing’ concepts in a new way. This resulted in him reinterpreting terms like race, empowerment, development and power. He realised these words, which he had been using “*loosely*” in his every-day and academic life, “*in general harbour more conundrums*”. Kim spoke about coming to see the relevance of politics and economics in her life, noting that:

it's not my thing at all, but through this course suddenly to realise how important an understanding of that is in the world even though I might not like certain aspects of politics, it's actually so interesting cos it helps you get this bigger picture of the world in your head...it's made me want to piece together this thing.

Kim and Zanele both noted their limited understanding of the concept of social justice prior to GC2. Having had it brought to life, both realised its important to them in their volunteering and career paths. For Zanele, an understanding of social justice “*actually sparked something in me*”. It changed the way she saw her practice and ultimately led to changes in her practice. She realised her organisation was more “charity” than “project” (Morton, 1995) and that this had negative consequences for the community:

Critical reflection has allowed for me to clearly see the role I have played in the communities we work in as merely perpetuating the inequalities and allowing for learners to just “get by”...This allowed for me to recognise that our impact is minute, temporary and lacks sustainability.

Through “learning service” (Boyle-Baise *et al.*, 2006) Zanele realised the incongruence between her current and preferred approach to service. She could then begin to make changes to her service; new ‘knowing’ therefore impacted on her ‘acting’. Kiely (2005:8) describes these learning moments as coming about through “dissonance”, when there is “incongruence between participants’ prior frame of reference and aspects of the contextual factors that shape the service-learning experience”. For Sizwe, Zanele and Kim this led to “personalizing” as they viscerally and emotionally responded to and learnt from their dissonance. We also see that for each of these students, through “learning service” (Boyle-Baise *et al.*, 2006) they came to a deeper understanding of what service means to them.

Grappling with issues of power and privilege

For all the participants the process of CR led them to think about power and inequality in new ways. In this next section I look at three aspects of this new way of 'being' in 'knowing': 'self' and 'other', talking about race, and thinking about language.

Self and Other: relationships in service

The relationship between 'self' and 'other', 'server' and 'served' was a concern for all my participants, and it became a concern through reflections on power. Through CR students reevaluated their assumptions; for example Leigh questioned relationships in her clinics and realised she had unconsciously accepted the unequal dynamics:

So often, we fail to introduce ourselves by name...By leaving ourselves anonymous we perpetuate the perception of us and them; 'us' being the (soon-to-be) health professional holding the knowledge and power in this relationship and 'them' as the recipient of our service.

As Leigh considered the complexities of the power dynamics between student-practitioner and patient, she became aware of her own tendency to remain removed from patients, and noted the difficulty in breaking down these hierarchies. She saw how easy it was for students to fall into the role of 'knowledge provider' instead of "*acknowledging that parents know more about raising a child, particularly one with a disability, within their impoverished context than a bunch of idealistic twenty-something year olds*".

When Leigh considered her complicity in perpetuating the divide between self and other she noted with irony that despite her service being an extension of her "*humanitarian ethic of sympathy*" it involved making a "*distinction between us and them; I and the other*". Kim similarly recognised that despite "*consciously trying*" to treat her students with respect, she had failed them by assuming a position of power: "*underneath these good beliefs, the underlying assumption (that I was happily unaware of) was that I held more power*". She saw this power enacted in her "*deep underlying assumption that...we would be able to fix something*". For both Kim and Leigh, like Camacho's (2004) students, their reflections on power gave them insights into the some of the complexities of power relations in community settings. This engaged their 'being' within 'knowing', and ultimately led to changing practice.

Sizwe had similar insights, seeing that he had unthinkingly set up a self/other relationship in his classroom. Through new understandings of power, he saw that although he had seen himself as being like his students – i.e. from similar class, race and education backgrounds – he was carrying his (previously unacknowledged) power into the classroom:

[There's] that dynamic, stop thinking as if that thing doesn't exist, so when you gonna go there and teach those kids and you're in your suit, for example, there are different dynamics [they're] not gonna ask questions as freely.

He realised that through his role of authority in the classroom, in his use of English, in the way he organised the class space, these were all ways he assumed power. He also saw how coming from UCT he carried the power of the institution into the classroom. Sizwe questioned why he was not drawing on his own experiences, as someone from similar circumstances, in order to break down hierarchy in the classroom:

You know I don't know why but the moment you step into a university, you most likely to forget where you come from. Most of the students that go to Thembelisha High School are from townships, they are from very humble backgrounds, and I'm from that kind of background myself. However now you have assimilated UCT, UCT culture...

Through “learning service”, Sizwe was able to make meaning of his own service. He saw that his ‘new context’ (i.e., as UCT student) played a role in distancing him from his students. But, as with Camacho’s (2004) students, by drawing on their shared context he was able to break down the self/other relationship and remove barriers to their learning.

Zanele’s contemplations on power took her down a different path. As she re-evaluated her involvement in the community she questioned the community’s lack of self-involvement. She saw that volunteers were often ill-equipped, both in terms of resources and in their lack of understanding of the consequences of their service. She saw that many volunteers despite their good intentions had trouble relating to community members. As a result Zanele became increasingly critical of their role: “we need to stop thinking we know what’s best, especially for communities and people some volunteers can barely identify with”. Zanele, interestingly, was the only student critical of communities that neglected to ‘help themselves’. Perhaps she felt more ‘able’ to be critical, coming from a similar background:

I just wish that many more people would give back to the communities from which they arose, instead of expecting 'outsiders' with no clue of the circumstances people within these communities face, to do something to uplift their own people.

It is interesting to note how the two black students both used aspects of commonality with their communities to change their practice, in very different ways. I discuss this further below, and when analysing transformed 'acting'.

Talking about race

Race is an important indicator of inequality, especially in post-Apartheid South Africa. Many of the poor black majority still live in townships often situated on the outskirts of towns and cities. The divide between black/poor and rich/white is extremely noticeable in Cape Town where racial inequalities are geographically visible. GC2 students encounter these stark divisions in their service. However, only Zanele spoke at any length about race, although even this was contained within one specific incident:

I went to black township schools, I went to coloured 'ok' schools, I went to an Indian school and I went to a white school...I compared the differences in those schools, and it was shocking, so so shocking, there're such big differences, and then you think to yourself, why?! Why isn't something happening, why isn't something changing?...There's just so much inequality in this country still...it was very very eye-opening.

Sizwe touched briefly on his blackness at various points through the interview, although often used more general terms like 'power' or 'inequality'. Following Steyn (2001), unsurprisingly neither of my white participants spoke about race although they would have been one of few 'white faces' in their service settings. Both Leigh and Kim frequently used words like inequality, power and disempowerment, poverty and disadvantage, and I would not describe them as unaware of their own privilege. However, they did not connect their privilege, and feelings of discomfort at this inherent power, to their whiteness.

Sizwe and Zanele both talked about coming from similar communities to those they volunteered in, which they realised could be an advantage in service. However, Sizwe realised he had initially overlooked shared race, language, culture and home background, and argued that volunteers should be taught the dynamics of race:

I think it's important to be conscious of, and you know, stop thinking as if that thing [race] doesn't exist, no, it exists, that's the fact...I think it's important if you're volunteering your services, I think it's important to understand the environment, the people that you'll be working with, it's very very important.

Part of the reason for the lack of data around race is that I did not explicitly ask about it. However, this in itself is interesting. Like many white South Africans who lived through Apartheid (I grew up in the 1970s and 1980s) there is a legacy of guilt and levels of discomfort in talking about race (Steyn, 2001). Steyn (2001:162) tells us that whiteness is seen as the racial norm, “the invisible center that deflects attention from itself”. She found white South Africans generally unaware of their own racialisation; several of her respondents did “not want to own up to being white” and avoided “any real reflection about the issue” (2001:101). Green (2001, 2003) found her students in service could not name their whiteness as a source of privilege. Perhaps Kim and Leigh were engaged in this form of denial. However, as Green (2001) notes, talking about race is usually uncomfortable, especially for white people (which I noted self-referentially in Chapter Three). Green (2003:25) says “learning to talk about race takes practice and time” and that when race is discussed in SL, attention should be paid to whiteness so that it does not remain invisible.

A new look at language

Both Sizwe and Leigh talked about the almost exclusive use of English in their service settings. They noticed the power inherent in using English, the difficulties of teaching, learning and conveying ideas in another language, and the ways in which language can help or hinder comprehension. Sizwe realised that being a confident English speaker was a powerful tool:

There's so much power that you can have just by, in a context of South Africa, being an eloquent speaker of English. When someone like myself go there, I'll tell you this, I am powerful, but not as powerful as for example as you [Susan].

For Sizwe, this new ‘knowing’ directly affected his service as he shifted to using isiXhosa so students could more easily understand the subject of history. For Leigh, disrupted notions of language led to a number of reflections. She noticed students neglected to use patient-friendly language and reverted to medical jargon. She was frustrated at the inability of most students, herself included, to consult in Afrikaans and isiXhosa. She decided this was another way in which their paediatric clinics were failing patients and perpetuating power imbalances and inequality:

We stand faced by a mom and her infant with our inability and frustration in being able to communicate with her, to establish rapport and trust to take a comprehensive history, to do therapy, to educate. We fumble along with short phrases and single instructions and think we ask all the right questions like, “do you understand English?” in the vain hope that the answer will be yes. Despite the yes...this may in fact be just to ‘please’ the health professional, not to disappoint or risk not being able to access the much-needed service.

Few of the SL studies I read mention language, although as I noted earlier these are primarily US studies. Camacho (2004) in talking about Mexican-US border-crossing (metaphoric and literal) only mentions it briefly. Kiely (2005:11) describes the difficulties his students faced in communicating in another language as “low-intensity dissonance” which “does not lead to profound shifts in students’ frame of reference”. However I would argue that for Sizwe and Leigh their reflections on the power of English were complex and more aligned to Kiely’s (2005:11) description of “high-intensity dissonance” which led his participants to “reexamine their existing knowledge and assumptions regarding the causes and solutions to ambiguous and ill-structured problems”. Perhaps this is because in the South African context, where there are 11 official languages, language is a formidable marker of power and privilege.

‘Being’ in ‘acting’

As we saw in the vignettes, all four participants changed their practice through GC2, and this changing ‘acting’ was influenced by changes in ‘being’. Barnett and Coate (2005) describe new ‘acting’ as coming about as students engage in ‘knowing’ and take on a new identity (‘being’), thereby highlighting the interconnectedness of the three learning domains. Sizwe took on a new identity as facilitator of learning. Zanele became a ‘change agent’, making contacts, building relationships, accessing resources. Leigh’s major transformation was in ‘recovering’ her critical thinker which led her to reassess the value and relevance of the OT curriculum. Kim realised she was responsible for unthinkingly perpetuating inequality through trying to impose a new curriculum and vowed to “*listen more*” going forward.

In each case, the students, through CR and praxis, moved towards a place of greater authenticity in their practice. Barnett (2007:51) describes authentic students as ‘taking hold’ of their educational experiences and resources (epistemological, practical and psychological), and using them, creatively, to “break free”, take risks, and become their own authors. We have seen this in Sizwe’s changing practice. Through interrogating his own teaching he knew it was not an authentic approach; he realised he had “*never really [taken] some time to look around me and try to understand how these*

students would want this learning to go about". Reconsidering his approach was, he said, life-changing:

I think GC2...it changed my life, cos I remember when midway in the programme I decided not to give them any lessons, just to talk to them. I asked them what are the difficulties in terms of their studies, and I've realised that I was working with very very intelligent students, very very intelligent kids, but there were a couple of barriers that had to be overcome to facilitate the learning.

Thus, in moving towards becoming author of his own actions, Sizwe was able to change his practice, and move himself closer to the kind of teacher he wanted to be. He modelled his new practice on the discursive, learner-centred style of GC2, but as Barnett & Coate (2005:62) note, "[s]ooner or later modelling has to give way to an authentic and first-hand action that bears the student's own stamp".

Zanele's transformed 'knowing' also led her to a place of more authentic 'acting'. Looking at her future practice, she had a "defining moment" in which she realised she was not content with her carefully constructed career path. Her 'knowing' had been disrupted, an anxiety-causing process that led her to question her 'being' in the world:

What now? Because in as much as many would consider me a 'success story', I thought – what does this mean? All my life, I have had everything nicely planned and always had answers for everything [but] I was suddenly clueless. I have found myself constantly questioning this life plan that I have worked out so nicely and come to the realisation that I have a bigger purpose...I am now left with the challenge of finding exactly what this is. All I know is that I want to do more. This is my defining moment. My 'aha' moment.

Sizwe's and Zanele's transformations in practice are clearly evident; for Kim and Leigh, their changes are more apparent in their intentions to change. As we have seen, Leigh's most evident new 'acting' was in her approach to her studies, as she "argued left, right and centre" as to the relevance of her OT curriculum. Kim realised how little she knew about the contexts of her service, and this initially led to her feeling anxious and powerless. Through reflection though she was able to move forward:

For next semester, we are exploring options of creating greater flexibility within our curriculum and also for letting the learners have more input...[to] have more opportunities to share their own knowledge and to help each other (this is one of those things which sounds great in practice but is hard to implement). This will hopefully be a small step to challenging

rather than perpetuating inequality and also to providing a project...that is more suited to our learner's needs.

Towards the end of GC2, she could look more hopefully towards her next year of service:

I am once again in the process of constructing a curriculum. This time, I will listen more. I will try to promote mutuality and respect. I will attempt to give volunteers a greater awareness of the context they are engaging in and their role in this context. I will try to be a role model. It won't fix anything but maybe it will be a valuable support. It won't be perfect but maybe it will be better and I will be able to gain more insights...

Here we see Kim drawing on new ways of 'being' to change her practice. Through active, committed engagement with her experience, she starts to 'own' her own practice. In trying out new ways of 'acting', she shows courage, determination, sincerity and integrity; these point to the presence of authenticity (Barnett, 2007). We see these characteristics in each participant's learning journey: "ideas of agency, of ownership of one's experiences, of self-meaning, of being free of undue restrictions" (Barnett, 2007:41). Each participant's learning through GC2 was therefore partly a journey towards becoming a more authentic 'self'. A process, notes Barnett (2007:60), that is never finally accomplished – the "journey is never over", the student is always "becoming".

Learning journeys, being and becoming

That the student's learning journey is 'never over', and students are always 'becoming', points us to the complexity of learning and the difficulties that lie in trying to understand the learning process. My study asked how we can make sense of students' learning in service learning. To answer this question, I have employed a number of conceptual frameworks to help me better understand learning for individual students.

Barnett (2007, 2009) and Barnett and Coate (2005) provide the useful conceptualisation of 'knowing', 'acting' and 'being'. They highlight the interconnectedness of these learning domains and that 'being' is always present in student learning. Through the data analysis we have seen aspects of 'being' like courage, resilience, integrity, tenacity, respect, openness and authenticity. We have seen increased self-awareness and increased self-confidence in the world. We have seen the students' "will to learn" and engage, preparedness to listen and explore and their determination to keep moving forward.

My data also show the embeddeness of 'being' in new 'knowing' and new 'acting': for each student new ways of 'being' influenced what they know and changed their practice. Through transformed 'being' my participants began to move towards a more authentic way of 'being themselves' and 'being in the world'. And as new 'being' transformed their knowledge and practice, they moved to new 'knowing' and 'acting'. Leigh returned to a 'comfortable' place of vigilant critical thinking. Zanele's changed approach to service more accurately reflected her passion for social justice. Sizwe went back into his history class a changed tutor, knowing what kind of 'facilitator of learning' he wanted to be. Kim decided she needed to be constantly self-aware, despite the challenges this would present.

Barnett and Coates' framework allowed me to conceptualise students' learning as taking place within and across the learning domains over time. In this way it links to the second framework I used to make sense of student learning, namely the metaphor of a 'learning journey'. This signifies learning as a process that has a beginning and a destination, and takes place in time and space. So, each of my participants learnt through GC2: we saw the changes happening over time. They also learned in different spaces, including the classroom, online, and through their ongoing experiences in service. 'Learning journey' is also a reminder that students' learning started before GC2 and continued afterwards. We see this clearly with Leigh. She drew on her years of experience on the mobile clinics, supplemented this with new 'knowing', and challenged the OT curriculum. Looking forward, Leigh was wondering how to incorporate these new learnings into her community-service internship.

Neither of the two previous frameworks explore context to any significant extent. However, as we have seen, context is an important consideration in community service work. Through Chapter Four we have seen that many factors (epistemological, ontological and practical; psychological, social and contextual) impact on learning. In this respect, Boud and Walker's (1990, 1991) model was useful. Understanding that my participants came to GC2 with their own 'personal foundation of experience' (Boud and Walker, 1990, 1991) shows further the complexity of making sense of their learning. Because this framework pays attention to context (personal and social), it enriches our understanding of the student's learning. Sizwe, for example, comes from a context similar to that of his pupils. However, he realised he had not drawn on this shared background to support his teaching. When he recognised the shared connections between himself and his students, he could change his practice and move into a more authentic teaching space.

Using these frameworks provides a means to make sense of students' learning in service learning. We have seen that student 'being' is important, and its relationship to 'knowing' and 'acting'. The

metaphor of the ‘learning journey’ has showed how learning takes place continuously over time and in space. Considering students’ ‘personal foundations of experience’ reminds us that context matters.

My research question, *How can we make sense of students’ learning in service learning?*, and the data that derived from this question also help us to think about curriculum and pedagogy in new ways. Paying attention to student ‘being’, understanding learning as a ‘journey’ different for each student; considering context – these have implications for pedagogy. Whilst I did not set out in this thesis to evaluate or analyse ‘the “how”’ of my participants’ learning, my participants spoke of a number of learning ‘enablers’ in their learning journeys. Two of these learning ‘enablers’ stand out as particularly important in shaping their learning: CR and peer learning. I touch on each of these in the final part of this thesis as potential ways forward for pedagogy in HE.

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Chapter 5: Conclusion and ways forward

This final chapter provides a summary of my thesis and an overview of my research journey. It also considers some of the implications for HE that have emerged from this study.

I started this thesis broadly, noting the ‘supercomplexity’ of the world today. The unique challenges we face in the twenty-first century requires an education that that HE reconsiders its approach to teaching and learning. Nussbaum (1997, 2002) argues for ‘cultivating humanity’ by instilling in students faculties of critical thinking, active local and global citizenship, and care and empathy. Palmer (2007) insists that knowledge is not value-free and HE must teach students to recognise and take responsibility for what they know. Barnett (2007, 2009) argues for recognising students’ ‘being’, through which ‘knowledge’ can become a more personal, experiential, responsible and responsive ‘knowing’ and acquiring skills can become a more about ‘learning how to learn’ new skills and practices. In doing this, he argues, HE can more ably rise to the challenge of preparing students for an uncertain world.

These philosopher’s arguments are similar: universities need to move beyond the epistemological and the practical and pay attention to the ontological aspects of student learning. These debates link to my interest in the potential for education to lead to personal and social transformation. I found a research site, GC2, which connected with my research aims. GC2 makes use of innovative, learner-centred, Freirean pedagogy. The course aims to foreground values – and therefore student ‘being’ – by challenging students with difficult questions about the poverty and inequalities they confront through their volunteer work.

In working towards my conceptual framework I came to see the complexity of understanding learning. Traditional experiential learning understands adult learning as a primarily individual and cognitive process that takes place through reflections on experience. Boud and Walker (1991) later showed the influence of the learner’s ‘personal foundation of experience’ and the ‘learning milieu’ on their learning. CoP (Lave and Wenger, 2003) goes even further in positioning learning as a fundamentally social phenomenon which comes about as people interact over a particular practice. Lave (2006) explains the concept of learning as a ‘journey’ which I saw was a useful way of understanding my participants’ learning.

SL literature and research draws heavily on the EL tradition, particularly in asking students to reflect on their own experiences in community service. Mitchell (2008) however argues strongly for a more critical approach to SL that is not depoliticised, which recognises that service can be patronising to

communities and embed difference and hierarchy. A critical approach challenges students to confront stereotypes which can promote the growth of their self-identity, prepare them for active and critical citizenship and develop social awareness and responsibility.

Rhoads (1997, 1998) asks why we should be concerned with nurturing the student's "caring self". His answer, not unlike Palmer, Nussbaum and Barnett, is that in an increasingly diverse and fragmented world, a "postmodern society characterized by difference" (Rhoads, 1997:2), fostering an ethic of care can build community and citizenship. But how can we teach for citizenship, empathy, care and 'being'? Rhoads (1997) offers SL as one way HE can meet this challenge, and we have seen that for my participants these aspects of 'being' were nurtured through GC2, a service learning / "learning service" course.

In Chapter Four I showed how I used my conceptual framework to analyse student learning, in particular Barnett's notions of 'knowing', 'being' and 'doing', the notion of learning as a journey, and the learner's 'personal foundation of experience'. In thinking about the relevance and appropriateness of these frameworks for HE education more broadly, this study illuminates some implications for teachers. Educators need to be aware that students come to HE with different personal and social backgrounds and contexts. These will affect their learning journeys. Each student will therefore have a different trajectory through HE. Finally, the learning domains – knowing, being, acting – may be useful ways to guide curriculum and pedagogy going forward.

The final part of my thesis poses the question, what implications might these understandings have for HE more broadly? I did not set out to evaluate pedagogy in my thesis, however my data point strongly to a number of 'enablers' of my participants' learning. I briefly discuss two of these pedagogies – CR and peer learning – as they provide a potentially useful way of thinking about ways of teaching for 'being' in HE.

CR emerged strongly through the data as playing a role in my participants' learning, helping to move them to new 'knowing', 'being' and 'acting'. Eylar and Giles (1999:198) describe CR as being "about pushing students to explore the assumptions that underlie their own perceptions and the way that society is organized". Structured reflection exercises took place in class, online and in the two reflective assignments. As we saw in Chapter Four, the exercises, at times uncomfortable and frustrating, led students to question their assumptions and misconceptions. They led to moments of anxiety, and caused further deep and ongoing reflection on the 'self' in service. In applying these questions to their lives, students often ended up with "more questions than answers". They also frequently indicated that it was through CR that they came to see the world in a new way.

For Kim, CR was initially an anxiety-causing process which led to a longer period of soul-searching, angst and personal critique. As she put it, she came to realise how little she knew about her service contexts. Sizwe on the other hand seemed to move quite quickly from discomfort to a more comfortable space in which he ‘relaxed’ into his service and became a more authentic tutor. For Leigh, CR was a disruptive process but also in a sense a homecoming. GC2 reignited her critical thinking self; she recognised she had become complacent in her thinking and practice, and this discomfort became a catalyst that radically changed her approach to her studies. Zanele also moved to a space of deep questioning and like Leigh and Kim showed intense frustration at the status quo. However whereas Leigh looked more to her context - community, organisation and university - and Kim to her ‘self’, Zanele turned her focus to the ‘powers-that-be’ and was angered and frustrated at the lack of government involvement.

Peer learning showed up as another a key enabler of my participants’ learning. GC2 pedagogy was intentionally student-centred and encouraged peer learning. The participants talked about a number of ways in which learning from their peers benefitted their own learning. Sizwe valued sharing experiences in an open, non-judgmental space and said that this made him more able and willing to listen to others. Kim and Zanele said that discussions about volunteering in their service organisations usually centred on technical and practical issues. Kim noted that service was “*not the sort of thing*” you discussed with friends, and even if talking to a friend “*it’s not really the same*”. Having a CoP through GC2 supported her through her intensely disappointing curriculum failure as she was able to talk it through in class and through blogging. Leigh spoke about a CoP outside GC2. She and a colleague, both of whom were on GC2, used their new ‘knowing’ to push for changes in their service: “*between the two of us we shifted and pushed and pulled and morphed our paedics thing because of the changed way of looking at things*”.

Towards the end of my interview with Kim, she commented on the different pedagogical strategy she had encountered through GC2. She had at first found it unsettling, but came to feel that it was the way teaching should be:

I feel like a lot of [university] is very textbooky...you could be studying film or something and being very creative, but it still might not really...change how you see yourself in the world and who you are in the world...[I] think that’s really the most important learning that anyone can go through because...how could you ever make the world a better place...you can’t do that through teaching someone just a whole lot of theory...but only through, maybe through...them gaining greater awareness.

CR and peer learning are two examples of ‘enablers’ that activated and engaged student ‘being’ in learning on GC2. My data show that these tools can develop a student’s sense of self-identity, their self-awareness and self-confidence. They can also provide a sense of community for students from which they can draw strength and courage in persevering in their service work. Based on this study, therefore, it seems that students can benefit from pedagogical spaces that allow CR and peer learning. Although these may not be appropriate for every educational setting, I would argue that most university courses could benefit from using these tools to some extent in their pedagogy. Together with the three conceptual frameworks outlined above, CR and peer learning provide possible ways forward for pedagogy in HE that nurtures ‘being’ and ‘cultivates humanity’. In so doing, HE can better prepare students for the world beyond university.

University of Cape Town

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Appendix A: Informed consent form: 2011 Cohort



Faculty of Humanities Informed Consent Form

Initial title of research project: An exploration of students' learning experiences through the UCT Global Citizenship 2 course.

Name of researcher: Susan Gredley

Email address:

Faculty:

Department:

Name of participant:

Email address:

Nature of the research: Qualitative social sciences research

Participant's involvement:

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and have had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree to my responses being used for education and research on condition my privacy is respected, subject to the following:
 - I understand that the project cannot always offer anonymity but there will be complete confidentiality in the research findings.
 - I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.
 - I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any stage.

Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Signature of researcher:

Date:

Appendix B: Informed consent form: 2010 Cohort



Faculty of Humanities -
Centre for Higher Education Development
(CHED)

Informed Consent Form

Initial Title of research project: An exploration of students' learning experiences through the UCT Global Citizenship 2 course.

Name of researcher: Susan Gredley

Email address:

Faculty:

Department:

Name of participant:

Email address:

Nature of the research: Qualitative social sciences research

Participant's involvement:

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and have had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree to be interviewed and allow the researcher access to my GC2 blogs and written assignments.
- I agree to my responses being used for education and research on condition my privacy is respected, subject to the following:
 - I understand that the project cannot always offer anonymity but there will be complete confidentiality in the research findings.
 - I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project.
 - I understand I have the right to withdraw at any stage.

Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Signature of researcher:

Date: