The value of service-learning in planning's educative processes: a case study of Johannesburg's street-based children

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Abstract

Not only is our country in search of a better paradigm of governance in the face of economic recession, urban migration, social movement, and new policies towards multicultural, race and gender equality, so too is the profession of planning in a state of dynamism. We, the academy, are thus responsible to equip our budding practitioners with the skills and know-how of working in environments of accelerated socio-economic change so that they may achieve active citizenship. To foster such know-how we need to embrace a social learning tradition by expanding our institutionalised definitions of knowledge practices to include a qualitative pedagogy of "experimental, intuitive, and local knowledges based on practices of talking, listening, seeing, contemplating, sharing; knowledges expressed in visual and other symbolic, ritual, and artistic ways ... learning by doing" (Sandercock 1999:172).

DIE WAARDE VAN DIENSLEER IN DIE OPVOEDINGSPROSES IN BEPLANNING: 'N GEVALLE STUDIE OOR JOHANNESBURG SE STRAATKINDERS

Ons land is nie net op soek na 'n beter paradigma vir staatsleiding met die oog op 'n ekonomiese resessie, verstedelikking, sosiale migrasie en nuwe beleidsrigtings met betrekking tot die multikulturele samelewing, ras en geslagsgelykheid nie, maar die beplanningsprofessie betree ook 'n dinamiese fase. Akademici is gevolglik verantwoordelik vir die voorsiening van die nodige kundigheid en vaardighede aan ontluikende praktisyns sodat hulle 'n positiewe bydrae kan maak. Om die nodige kundigheid te bekom is dit noodsaaklik om 'n sosiale leertradisie op te skerp deur die uitbouing van ons ingeburgerde definisies van kennisoordrag met die "toevoeging van kwalitatiewe pedagogie by wyse van eksperimentele, intuïtiewe en plaaslike kennis gebaseer op praktyke soos luister, sien, oordenking en mededeelsaamheid; kundigheid wat tot uiting kom in simboliek, rituele en op ander artistieke wyses ... want doen is leer" (Sandercock 1999:172).

1. Introduction

Prominent questions that continue to arise, even after three decades of inquiry[1] include, how may planning facilitators bridge that ominous gap between theory and practice and, how may students learn to effectively apply planning theories? One approach may be to integrating contemporary planning theory with service-learning pedagogy so that alternative methods of teaching and learning are experienced. Our case specific study, street-based children in the inner city of Johannesburg, will thus highlight the value of service-learning in planning's educative process towards integrating theory and practice. This integration in turn, strives towards Friedmann's (1987:181) "social learning tradition" of planning that "begins and ends with action".

It may be argued that contemporary planning theory is rooted in Communicative Action towards a pragmatic "practice movement" (Watson 2001, 2002). This paper seeks briefly to outline planning "practice movements" to specify how planning approaches and service-learning pedagogies can effectively be integrated. Lessons for service-learning, in turn, may be attained from the methodology employed by students to gain knowledge: A methodology derived from planning theory. At the outset a point should be made that the purpose of this paper is not to present final student proposals (neither their policy proposals nor their design resolutions), but rather to propose that service-learning holds enormous values for planning education, particularly because it is so compatible with contemporary planning approaches. Only the methodology of our case specific project will thus be discussed.

The applied methodology however, requires contextualisation, as "placement quality" is a vital component of service-learning. This context, or "placement" in service-learning language, promoted interactive, passionately motivated learning experiences that enabled students to learn from our homeless children who live under excruciating, and socially unjust conditions. As discussions unfold, an understanding of what an integrated service-learning approach may imply for planning education, or indeed, what service-learning actually is, will also become clearer. Finally, this paper concludes with lessons that were learned from our project specific experience: lessons that revealed often difficult, yet practical realities.

[1] In fact this inquiry is far older than my tentative deduction. Marx's "Theory and praxis", Gadamer's "Hermeneutical-pragmatism" and Dewey's "Philosophical pragmatism", to mention only a few 'modern' proposers, and the inquiry is still older than these.

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2. Setting the scene: contemporary planning approaches

The highly fluid nature of urban planning theory has prompted diverse attitudes regarding pedagogy of this applied discipline. One such attitude has been termed the "practice movement" (Liggett 1996:300). This movement focuses on planning as an activity, towards a better understanding of what planners do, and to reflect critically upon the practice of planning (Innes 1995:182). The focus of this paradigm has been to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Watson 2001; Innes 1995). Service-learning pedagogy is viewed in a similar vain, hence the appropriateness of marrying these two ideologies. Currently the "practice movement" employs Communicative Action towards this end.

Although Communicative Action has been criticised by planning theorists such as Harper and Stein (1995), Flyvbjerg (1998), Harrison (2002), Allmendlinger and Tedwyr-Jones (2002) for ignoring the positive elements of instrumental rationality; its lack of practical problem resolutions; for focusing on power rather than on outcome; and most importantly, for a bias that may occur due to existential interpretations, "communicative acts cannot therefore be taken at face value, but have to be interpreted to uncover the[ir] meanings, values and motives" (Watson 2001). It was at this juncture that service-learning principles provided a most valuable resolution to conflicting planning paradigms. Our community and service providers, as well as the street-based children themselves, thus became our interpreters, in search of a "collaborative planning approach" (Healey 1997). Stakeholders prompted pragmatic resolutions, and by the very nature of service-learning disciplines, outcomes were a prerequisite. Student planners, in turn, were encouraged to develop "a new type of critical, reflective practice which is both ethical and creative" (Innes 1995, 185).

"An important assumption underlying this thinking is that learning takes place on the basis of experience and, further, that experience can yield a more useful learning process than, for example, learning from general theories or rules" (Watson 2001). "Service-learning is particularly appropriate for applied disciplines, such as planning, because effective professional practice involves more than a conceptual understanding of the knowledge and skills; it also requires an operational understanding" (Roakes & Norris-Tirrell 2000:100). Complexities and uncertainties of the "real-world" are impossible to duplicate in traditional classroom-oriented environments (*Ibid* 101).

By combining planning theory with practice through a service-learning programme we facilitated a forum that reviewed existing teaching and learning methods. "Service-learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experiences"(Kolb 1984:38). Knowledge cannot be viewed as an independent entity to be acquired or transmitted; instead it is continually created and recreated. "Service-learning transforms experiences in both its objective and subjective forms, and to understand service-learning we must understand the nature of knowledge, and visa versa" (Kolb 1984:38).

The Dreyfus Learning Model (Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1986 in Watson 2001) is a phenomenological account of skills acquisition through "real-world" experiences. A five-step learning sequence, highlighting the transformation process of knowledge, is assumed: The novice; the advanced beginner; the competent [planner]; the proficient [planner] and finally, the experienced (planner). The first stage requires the novice to master a set of context-independent, generalised rules. These may be followed without any prior experience, and performance is evaluated on how well the rules have been followed. In order to progress to the advanced beginner stage, the novice will need to understand how rules may be applied under different conditions. As Flyvbjerg (cited in Watson 2001) points out, exposure to numerous case studies and practical experiences will allow students to recognise different issues and hence apply the rules accordingly, by means of adaptation where necessary. When problems become more complex, students learn to organise their information by adopting a 'perspective' and responding to the important aspects of their adopted perspective.

Expertise is achieved only on the basis of real-world and varying experiences. Finally, an expert's response becomes intuitive due to a great deal of experience (*Ibid* 2001). Planning theorist Donald Schon (1983 cited in Watson 2001) argued for the development of "an epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict" (*Ibid* 2001). He termed this intuitive process "reflection in action" (*Ibid* 2001).

Within the field of education, "experimental learning", that may be implemented through service-learning programmes, thus become valuable. "There would seem to be a general agreement from the experiential learning field, that direct, first hand, contact-with-reality kind of experience is very important in fostering learning" (Watson 2000).

The only critique left unmentioned as

yet relates to the type and quality of real-world experience that students get exposed to. The value of a learning experience often depends on case-specific projects, and as such, has intrinsic rather than generic lessons. Nonetheless, this paper will present a case-specific project in the hope to highlight both intrinsic and generic outcomes.

Furthermore, an appropriate context must be provided to nurture the transformation process of knowledge. According to Eyler and Giles (1999, 167) "placement quality" is an essential prerequisite to any successful service-learning project so that students may exercise their own initiatives, take responsibility, and work as peers with practitioners and community members to achieve active citizenship (Howard 1998:21). The focus of this paper will now shift to case-specific findings.

3. The context of the project

The Executive Director of Partnerships for Urban Regeneration (PUR) and the Central Johannesburg Partnership (CJP)[2] made the following bold comment a few months ago regarding our public sector's willingness to address the plight of street-based children living in downtown Johannesburg:

> "For at least the last year a group of street children, ages ranging from 15 to maybe 20, have been living on the pavement in Marshall Street near the "Irish Barracks" where many of the city's informal traders store their wares overnight. Numerous discussions with the authorities have elicited no reaction, *zilch, niks, nada*! These kids openly sniff glue and are known to be involved in criminal activities (in the last month they broke into an unoccupied building in Marshall Street and completely trashed it, estimating damage of R100 000.00!) An increasing number of motorists, especially woman, are afraid to travel down the street due to intimidation. For once, all levels of government are acting as a team because on this issue they pass the ball to each other as quickly as possible! No-one takes responsibility" (Fraser 2001).

Although homelessness amongst children is a worldwide phenomenon, in developing cities situations are exacerbated by extreme poverty; socio-economic and often political instability; pandemics such as HIV/ aids; natural disasters; and more often than not the lack of public sector know-how, management and devolution of funds and resources. Our National Ministers of Finance, Welfare and Population Development, Health, Education, Housing, and Correctional Services unanimously agree that the growing number of *intandane*[3] in our country is reaching critical proportions: There are at lest 3,8 million impoverished children, (Krafchik & Streak 2001) yet no one is actively taking responsibility to redress child homelessness!

But where there is bedlam alternative opportunities always arise: Our opportunity presented itself as a service-learning project inspired by the Children's Charter of South Africa that states "we, as a community, have the duty of protecting our children from becoming homeless" (1992). The goal was obvious: To address the plight of our homeless children. The physical context was the inner city of Johannesburg as it is here that most of our 'intandane' flee to from all over the country and beyond. The service and community context was provided by our service partner: The Central Johannesburg Partnership (CJP) and the community partner: The Johannesburg Alliance for Street Children (JASC). The alliance in turn exposed students to numerous NGOs including *Paballo ya Batho* out reach centre (who enabled us to access children living on the street), and formal shelters such as Twilight Children's Centre.

Through this "placement quality" a technique of "action research", as proposed by Kolb (1984:21) was explored. "Action research" started with a here-and-now experience.

Traditionally planners require accurate quantitative data at the 'here-and-now' stage. However, there was almost no reliable statistical data available with regard to homeless children who live on the streets in down town Johannesburg. So a diverse planning approach based on "communicative rationality, underlying an expanded definition of knowledge practices", termed "an epistemology of multiplicity", developed and proposed by Sandercock (1999:171), was employed.

Sandercock's "epistemology of multiplicity" embraces not only the "practice movement" paradigm within planning theory but also service-learning principles by encouraging social responsibility; integrating academic and experimental learning; accommodating both high and low levels of structure and direction; enabling the active participation of students with homeless children; and welcoming a subjective method of knowing (Howard 1998: 25). "Multiplicity" responds to the critiques of Communicative Action presented earlier in the paper. Such an approach was essential to our case-specific project, particularly in

[2] PUR and CJP are Section 21 companies broadly representing the inner city business community by devoting their energies to two main issues: influencing inner city policy and implementing private urban management.

[3] A Zulu word for an 'orphan' – colloquially referred to as street children.

[4] An obvious choice, considering the statement made by their Executive Director.

considering the "wickedness" of planning problems: A concept proposed three decades ago by planning theorist Rittel and Webber (1973). Planning problems are indeed "wicked" because "in a pluralistic society there is nothing like the indisputable public good" (*Ibid* 152). Problem solving relies upon evasive political judgment for resolution and thus seldom solves all the needs of all the role players. At best problems are resolved, over and over again. To therefore attain planning resolutions the process has to be cyclical and ongoing, emphasising reflection at all stages (*Ibid* 155). Planning as a discipline should in fact be a continual learning process and cannot simply follow a linear sequence of analysis → synthesis → and implementation (Bazjanac 1974:8). Service-learning pedagogy similarly promotes the cyclical process of learning, as discussed earlier. By its very nature, this pedagogy is a "tension and conflict-filled process because of concrete experiences and abstract conceptualisations at one extreme; and active experimentation and reflective observation at the other" (Kolb 1984:28, 31).

Resolutions to "wicked problems" are neither right-or-wrong, true-or-false but rather better-or-worse as each "wicked problem" is essentially unique (Rittel & Webber 1973:155). The nature of planning thus lends itself well to a service-learning approach as "wicked" problems are tackled and resolved by all parties: Community, service and academic providers. Problems identified by the students were therefore not merely presented as final outcomes, but planning resolutions were developed and re-developed, with the homeless, street-based children, the service provider (CJP) and the community provider (JASC). The students were exposed to long and difficult, but intellectually challenging sessions of "mutual learning" (Friedmann 1973).

4. Project specific findings: complexities of the practice movement

Contemporary urban planning debates furthermore encourages students, and theorists alike, not only to address 'wicked problems' through the practice movement, but also to search for what Manuel Castells (1997 in Sandercock 1999:171) refers to as "the power of identity" in an age where three major socio-cultural trends are shaping the future of our cities:

- The age of migration, and accompanying new politics of multicultural citizenship
- The age of post-colonialism, with its politics of reclaiming urban and regional space by formally colonized people, and
- The age of urban social movement, the rise of civil society mobilised around issues of place and identity, culture and history, voice and inclusion.

Although these three major trends relate to conditions in both developed and developing countries, our service-learning project discovered that their manifestation was rather unique when applied to the specific context of homeless children. "The age of migration" in South Africa, in spite of a desperate search to redress the ills of colonial and Apartheid governance, has resulted in children living in the inner city who have absolutely nowhere else to go. They migrate to the city not always as a matter of choice but often rather of necessity. Children are often forced or 'encouraged' to seek work in urban areas to supplement incomes in rural regions. Work is scarce, and in fact illegal for minors, resulting in penniless abandonment without the means to return home. Many are involved in unprotected labour, because our legislation deems it illegal for minors[5] to work. Children resort to begging, hawking, prostitution, child pornography, washing cars or petty crimes to survive, and have no legal 'voice' to stem the tide of physical, financial or emotional abuse. Likewise, "New politics of multicultural citizenship" has not promulgated an environment of tolerance nor respect, but constitutes survival mechanisms such as gangs and other informal networks to protect themselves from society at large as well as from each other. "Urban space" is "reclaimed" within the thresholds of public environments: sidewalks; doorways; parks; storm water gutters or in abandoned buildings. There are no public amenities for these children, and most are harassed, and/or victimised within their "re-claimed" urban space, on a daily basis, either by private sector security guards or public sector officials. "The age of urban social movement .. civil society ... identity ... voice and inclusion" has not been envisaged, as homeless children are denied basic human rights. Many are sexually exploited and most are discriminated against. This intolerance perpetuates physical and substance abuse, violence and delinquency. Their survival, protection and development are all placed at risk, while their "power of identity" is undermined.

To the service-learning projects dismay, regardless of the fact that there is formal legislation in place, by way of the "Gauteng Street Children's Shelters Act, of 1998" and the "Children's Charter of South Africa, of 1992", these formal policies do not protect the homeless and street-based children. The Charter emphasises that all children are entitled to basic human rights, deserve respect, special care and protection as they develop and grow. As previously stated, conditions are deteriorating and not improving. In an interview conducted by students

[5] A 'minor' according to South African legislation is soneone who is younger than 16 years.

with an official of the Provincial Department of Housing in February 2001, it was ascertained that due to a lack of money in the 2000 budget, he was forced to overlook issues relating to street children. An independent investigation by the students however revealed that R30 million was rolled over from the previous years budget (Masango, Khanye, Sibanda, May 2001:1). Yet, another wicked problem students were required to address.

5. The applied methodology: developing student perspectives

Questions that now need to be asked include:

- How did students employ the notion that knowledge is a transformation process to resolve wicked problems they encountered without statistical data?
- How did communicative planning theories assist in their skills development?
- How may street-based children achieve a power of identity?

Sandercock (1999, 172) promotes alternative learning methods in addition to scientific and technical skills that planning students gain in their formal courses: Alternatives that assisted with wicked problem resolutions. These methods include, "experimental, intuitive, and local knowledges; knowledges based on practices of talking, listening, seeing, contemplating, sharing; knowledges expressed in visual and other symbolic, ritual, and artistic ways" (*Ibid* 1999:172). There are many diverse ways of knowing, interpreting and understanding particularly with regard to each circumstance. As such an "epistemology of multiplicity" for planning, in this incidence, consisted of at lease five different ways of knowing[6]

[6] This methodology was applied with permission from Sanderock, 2001.

5.1 Knowing through dialogue

A valuable planning skill should be the ability to listen (Forester 1989:100). Social workers thus gently guided students in conducting a dialogue of knowing through listening techniques by preparing them for effective and democratic engagement (Pollack 1999:19).

For many homeless children English is not their home language[7], and living on the street is a traumatic experience, so we engaged in an interactive process of 'story telling' (... Jonnie the little bee who flew away from home ...) rather than presenting dull, long and laborious questionnaires. Through a process of respectful listening and story telling, students were able to gain a better understanding of life on the street; the kind of exploitation, victimization and harassment children ere exposed to on a daily basis; why they resorted to substance abuse for escape; whether they would like to be re-united with their families or community; and why most children concealed their true identity. This process presented a 'voice' for homeless children so that their experiences may be viewed as legitimate, and hence taken seriously (Eyler & Giles 1999:178): a much desired service-learning outcome.

5.2 Learning from experience-based local knowledge

"To know a city is to know its streets, and who knows those streets better than those who live in them?" (Sandercock 1999:174). Story telling wasn't the only method initiated to develop qualitative knowledge. Once confidence and trust had been established through dialogue, students returned, by invitation, to both the formal and informal shelters with blank sheets of paper and brightly coloured felt-tip pens to undertake Lynch's (1981:132) "mental-mapping" exercise. Children were encouraged to illustrate their city, as they perceived it. By analysing these maps students could deduce where children slept at night; where they went during the day; what spatial/physical facilities they required in the public realm; how mobile homeless children were; if they changed their base frequently; where they moved to; what their informal social networks and other survival tactics were; and what their social interaction with other "users" of the city was.

[7] We however had a wonderful advantage in that most students in the planning programme speaks Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho or Tswana.

5.3 Learning to read symbolic and non-verbal evidence

In addition to story telling and mental mapping, student had opportunities to explore symbolic forms. Non-verbal evidence was gathered through observation. Urban landscapes convey perceptible messages either through physical characteristics or artefacts; by relative location to desired areas; and by means of signs or clues (Crane 1960; Jacobs 1985). Street art/graffiti was use as a means of expression and territorial demarcation. Children informed us of these symbolic meanings and delineations', enabling us to gain insights of group dynamics, and how that dynamism was translated into physical territories or thresholds. Distinct symbols, tags and signatures defined one territory from another, clearly indicating "no-go" zones to informed members of 'other' territories.

Other non-verbal clues included discarded, but flammable, objects burned for warmth, old blankets or cardboard boxes used as make-shift shelters in abandoned buildings, external fire escapes, thresholds to pubic buildings or in storm-water culverts.

5.4 Learning through contemplative or appreciative knowledge

By constructing meaningful images from the stories that they were told, the maps that were generated and through observation, students gained what Sandercock terms "appreciative knowledge" (1999:177) by reflecting on their experiences (Howard & Rhoads 1998). Reflection is often described as the "hyphen" of a service-learning programme (Eyler & Giles 1999:171). "It is the link that ties student experience in the community to academic learning" (*Ibid* 172).

Learning through contemplative or appreciative knowledge enabled students to monitor their reaction, knowledge transformation and thinking processes. Students developed leadership and communication skills towards a deeper understanding and better application of planning theory. This application resulted from an increased knowledge of social complexities as they pertain to homeless, street-based children. Students reported that they had learned more, were intellectually challenged, and were motivated. It could thus be argued that students harnessed an epistemology of "reflection-in-action", as proposed by Schon (1983).

5.5 Learning by doing, or, action planning

Friedmann (1987) defines urban planning as "the translation of knowledge to action in the public domain". Knowledge and action should continually inform each other (Sandercock 1999:178). Thus, in accordance with a service-learning ethos, knowledge is gained through practice constituting what Friedmann terms a "social learning tradition" (1987).

This tradition may be strongest among practitioners whose goal is community empowerment. A community based approach, from the homeless children's perspective, rather than only from the public/private-sector directed or expert-centred perspective may lead to "action planning" (Sandercock 1999:178). I am however not proposing relativism at this point. Rather, as professionals, we should be aware of multidimensional facets of community-based approaches. Furthermore, it must be noted that critical thinking, problem solving and perspective transformation can not depend merely on service experience, but must also depend on how well theory and practice are integrated through application and reflection (Eyther & Giles 1999:166).

An overriding aim of our service-learning project was to promote a "social learning tradition" of theory and practice so that homeless children may be given a voice. With regard to action and doing, this aim was achieved. Students furthermore developed goals, policies and design proposals with the children. However, at this juncture our "doing/ action planning" was hampered by formal planning procedures. Nonetheless, programme delays may be perceived as a lesson to be learned.

Sandercock's (1999:178) epistemology of multiplicity" recognises at least five different ways of gaining qualitative knowledge about the world in addition to scientific and technical rationality. Exploring alternative ways of knowing enables a more culturally pluralist and democratic planning methodology.

6. Project evaluation and outcomes

The aim of our case-specific project was to develop a qualitative approach of knowing towards wicked problem resolutions. Both the community (JASC) and service (CJP) providers evaluated student findings during lengthy presentation sessions. These sessions provided a platform for interactive mutual learning, not only between the students and the two providers, but also between CJP and the JASC.

Regarding outcomes: CJP is now in the process of compiling recommendations for Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, and the JASC is implementing an extension to an existing school (New Nations) for improved residential, education and out-reach facilities, based on student findings. Furthermore, diverse educational programmes that deal with skills training and rehabilitation are being debated. For the planning students another positive outcome was a raised awareness of the issues at hand by publicising their findings.

Regarding academic pedagogy, this project was run as a pilot for a future academic programme: An integrated, service-learning project between the School of Architecture and Planning in conjunction with the School of Construction Management. Findings from, and relationships made during this pilot project will thus assist us in developing an inter-disciplinary, service-learning based curriculum.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

Not only is our country in search of a better paradigm of governance in the face of economic recession, urban migration, social movement, and new policies towards multicultural, race and gender equality, so too is the

[8] Please refer to the discussions on "Contemporary planning approach" (2).

profession of planning in a state of dynamism. We, the academy, are thus responsible to equip our budding practitioners with the skills and know-how of working in environments of accelerated socio-economic change so that they may achieve active citizenship. To foster such know-how we need to embrace a social learning tradition by expanding our institutionalised definitions of knowledge practices to include a qualitative pedagogy of experimental, intuitive, and local knowledges based on practices of talking, listening, seeing, contemplating, sharing; knowledges expressed in visual and other symbolic, ritual, and artistic ways ... learning by doing" (Sandercock 1999:172).

Service-learning programmes provide a forum for alternative knowledge practices. Though the uniqueness of each service-learning project should be cherished, nonetheless, generic lessons and theoretical strides may be developed in an attempt to advance future knowledge experiences. Firstly, as obvious as this may seem, "placement quality" is essential for a successful project. Planning programmes not only desire a carefully selected physical environment, but also unequivocally require the committed and dependable involvement of all role-players and stakeholders (in the form of community and service providers). These role-players facilitate essential student research access. Community and service providers are the link between diverse communities and academic programmes.

Secondly, the three providers of a service-learning programme (community, service and academic) need to work as a team. As exhilarating and successful as we perceived our pilot project to be, a realistic lesson learned was that community expectations were raised amongst children to such a level, that we now fear disillusionment by the children and a loss of established relationships because we could not deliver our proposals timeously.

The nature of planning implementation is that it requires time, and is hindered by formal procedures. As a team we should have informed our community of what may be delivered. In the future we will address this problem by communicating formal planning procedures with our community from the start, and if possible (with the support of local authorities), involve them in these planning formalities. This realisation highlights a third recommendation. Service-learning programmes, within the discipline of planning, need to be on-going exercises that cannot be programmed into a one semester academic calendar. Formal planning procedures may result in delays that could hamper "action planning" if service-learning programmes are inflexibly timetabled.

Finally, many of the students involved in the programme had never come face-to-face with such hardship and suffering, and required counselling by professionals working in similar fields to reflect on their experiences. It was suggested that regular discussion forums be held and that journals be kept. Furthermore, most students felt a need to contribute over and above their formal academic requirements by initiating weekly homework-helping sessions at one of the shelters.

These homework sessions were encouraged and welcomed. Sessions are however slowly evolving into more than simply homework exercises; they are also becoming an opportunity for many of the children to engage in personal discussions. Relationships should be nurtured and enabled, however a request now arises form participating students to approach other disciplines within the University, such as the Departments of Psychology and Education to assist in their endeavours. This request highlights one further value of a service-learning programme, its ability to promote student appreciation for a multi-disciplinary approach (beyond built environment only approaches) in addressing urban problems.

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