Committee In Response to Commission Recommendations (CIRCoRe)

Workstream 2: Curriculum offerings (CO) embedded in the process of teaching and learning renewal

Report on CIRCoRe Seminar:
Experiential Learning as Pedagogy Towards Institutional Transformation

Date: 17 October 2024
Location: Room 3008, Education Faculty, Stellenbosch University
Moderator: Dr. Ruth Andrews

1. Introduction

On 17 October 2024, the Committee In Response to Commission Recommendations (CIRCoRe) hosted a seminar titled *Experiential Learning as Pedagogy Towards Institutional Transformation* at Stellenbosch University. This event, part of CIRCoRe's Workstream 2, explored how experiential learning can be used as a strategic approach to advance the University's transformation agenda, aligning with the imperatives set forth by the Khampepe Report. The Seminar focused on integrating experiential learning into curricula to bridge theory and practice, fostering an inclusive university environment that promotes diversity, equity, and social justice. Three institutional partners shared evidence-based practices and strategic insights into the role of experiential learning in addressing systemic inequities and fostering a more inclusive, cohesive institutional culture.

2. Background and Context: The Khampepe Report

The Khampepe Report, released in 2022, highlighted several challenges at Stellenbosch University related to its transformation goals. The Report, commissioned in response to incidents of racial discrimination on campus, emphasised the need for more robust and practical approaches to diversity and inclusivity. Key findings relevant to the Seminar from the Khampepe Report include:

- **Disconnect Between Policy and Practice**: While the University has a well-developed framework for transformation, these policies often do not translate into meaningful change in students' daily experiences.

- **Fragmented Transformation Efforts**: The Report criticised the disjointed nature of transformation initiatives across departments, calling for a more cohesive strategy.

- **Role of Experiential Learning**: Experiential learning was identified as a critical area for improvement, offering the potential to foster inclusivity through hands-on, reflective learning that engages students with real-world social issues.

The Seminar explored the role of experiential learning at Stellenbosch University and its impact on inclusivity and transformation. It also explored strategies for enhancing experiential learning in response to the Khampepe Report's findings. The Seminar served as a platform for sharing insights through dialogue and identified actionable steps for integrating experiential learning more effectively across the University's curricula and student life.

3. Seminar Objectives and Structure

The Seminar's concept document (See Attached Addendum A) outlined several key objectives:

- To critically examine the Khampepe Report's findings concerning experiential learning.

- To explore how experiential learning can be integrated into the University's curricula to support its transformation goals.

- To identify actionable strategies for using experiential learning to foster inclusivity and bridge cultural and racial divides.

The Seminar was structured to include opening remarks, presentations from three speakers, a panel discussion, and a Q&A session. Each speaker addressed different aspects of experiential learning in relation to the Khampepe Report's recommendations, providing insights into how this pedagogical approach could foster transformation at Stellenbosch University.

4. Insights from the Speakers

The speakers provided diverse perspectives on how experiential learning can address the gaps identified in the Khampepe Report. Their presentations highlighted the importance of moving beyond theoretical discussions to implement practical changes in teaching and learning practices.

4.1. Dr. Jean Farmer: Programme Manager, Division: Transformation and Social Impact,
Seminar Focus: Experiential Learning as Transformative Education
Key Themes: Transformative Learning, Critical Consciousness, Policy-Action Gap

Dr. Jean Farmer's presentation focused on how experiential learning can serve as a vehicle for transformative education at Stellenbosch University. Drawing from the Khampepe Report's critique of the disconnect between policy and practice, she argued that transformation requires a shift in how educators approach teaching as follows:

- **Transformative Learning through Discomfort**: Dr. Farmer explained that genuine transformation often starts with discomfort, where students and faculty are challenged to confront their preconceived beliefs and biases. This discomfort is essential for developing

critical consciousness, enabling individuals to recognise systemic inequities and their roles in perpetuating or challenging these structures.

- **Bridging Policy and Practice**: She emphasised that while Stellenbosch University has a comprehensive transformation framework, the practical application of these policies has been lacking. Experiential learning, which involves direct engagement with social realities, offers a way to translate these policies into everyday student experiences. For example, incorporating service-learning projects into curricula can allow students to engage with communities directly affected by social injustices.

- **Faculty Engagement**: Dr Farmer highlighted the need for faculty members to reassess their teaching methods and embrace a learner-centred approach that integrates critical reflection into coursework. This approach aligns with the Seminar's objective of promoting faculty development as a means of embedding transformation across the University.

4.2. Dr. Itumeleng Moroenyane: Senior Lecturer, Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science
Seminar Focus: Multi-disciplinary Application of Experiential Learning
Key Themes: Practical Training, Inclusivity in STEM, Professional Readiness

Dr. Itumeleng Moroenyane discussed the integration of experiential learning in STEM, focusing on the importance of aligning academic programs with practical skills and industry needs:

- **Enhancing Practical Engagement in STEM**: Dr Moroenyane noted that many BSc programs at Stellenbosch University lack structured opportunities for practical engagement, unlike professional degrees in fields such as agriculture. This gap often leaves students unprepared for industry roles. He shared the example of the Science Ambassadors Programme, which provides leadership training and entrepreneurial skills for final-year students, enabling them to apply their scientific knowledge in community contexts.

- **Expanding Experiential Learning Beyond Traditional Fields**: He emphasised the need for experiential learning programs to be accessible to students in all disciplines, not just those traditionally associated with social impact work. By incorporating modules that require students to work on real-world projects, such as environmental conservation or community-based research, faculties can ensure that students develop the skills needed to address societal challenges.

- **Linking Theory with Professional Application**: Dr. Moroenyane's presentation highlighted the Khampepe Report's call for aligning academic content with practical experiences. This approach not only enhances student employability but also ensures that graduates are better equipped to contribute to social transformation. His example of using industry partnerships to provide mentorship opportunities for students is a practical application of this recommendation.

4.3. Zimbili Sibiya: PhD Candidate, Agri-Science Faculty
Seminar Focus: The Role of Experiential Learning in Promoting Inclusivity
Key Themes: Inclusivity, Storytelling, Personal Transformation

Zimbili Sibiya, a PhD candidate, offered a deeply personal, reflexive perspective on how experiential learning can enable transformation, promote inclusivity and challenge entrenched social attitudes:

- **Personal Transformation Through Engagement**: Sibiya shared her journey from holding exclusionary beliefs to becoming an advocate for inclusivity. Her transformation, which she attributed to her involvement in student leadership roles and programs like Toastmasters, illustrated the power of experiential learning to change mindsets, aligning with the Khampepe Report's emphasis on fostering a University culture that is more open and welcoming to diversity.

- **Storytelling as a Tool for Social Change**: Sibiya advocated for the use of storytelling as a way to foster empathy and understanding among students from different backgrounds. She modelled a way for the University create video narratives of student experiences, which could be used in workshops to facilitate discussions on diversity and inclusivity. This approach aligns with the Seminar's focus on using innovative strategies to support the University's transformation goals.

- **Broader Access to Experiential Learning**: Sibiya stressed the importance of ensuring that experiential learning opportunities are not limited to students already engaged in social justice work. Expanding access to these programs can help reach students who may not typically participate in transformation initiatives, thereby fostering a more inclusive university environment.

5. Analysis: Linking Seminar Insights to the Khampepe Report

The Seminar's discussions directly addressed several key recommendations from the Khampepe Report, particularly the need for a more integrated approach to transformation at Stellenbosch University:

- *Experiential Learning as a Bridge Between Theory and Practice*: All three speakers emphasised that experiential learning provides a mechanism to translate the University's theoretical commitments to diversity and equity into tangible outcomes. This approach aligns with the Khampepe Report's call for educational practices that directly engage students in addressing systemic inequalities.

- *Building Capacity for Inclusive Education*: The EL Seminar highlighted the importance of equipping faculty and student leaders with the skills needed to facilitate experiential learning programmes. This approach addresses the Report's critique of fragmented efforts and the need for consistent training to ensure that all members of the university community can contribute to transformation efforts.

- *Addressing Structural Barriers to Transformation*: The EL Seminar also acknowledged the challenges associated with implementing experiential learning at scale, such as limited resources and varying levels of faculty engagement. These barriers were identified in the Khampepe Report as significant obstacles to achieving meaningful transformation.

6. Recommendations and Practical Applications

Based on the insights from the Experiential Learning Seminar, the following recommendations are proposed, along with practical applications aligned with the speakers' insights:

Recommendation 1: Strengthen Faculty Development Programs
Application:
- Establish a series of workshops and training sessions for faculty focused on integrating experiential learning into their courses. These sessions could include methods for facilitating reflective discussions, using storytelling as a pedagogical tool, and designing service-learning projects that align with academic content.
- Dr. Farmer's emphasis on faculty engagement suggests that involving educators in co-designing experiential learning initiatives can foster greater buy-in and ensure that these programmes are tailored to the unique needs of each department.

Recommendation 2: Expand and Diversify Experiential Learning Programs
Application:
- Develop cross-disciplinary experiential learning modules that allow students from different faculties to collaborate on real-world projects, such as community-based research or environmental sustainability initiatives. Dr Moroenyane's example of the Science Ambassadors Programme could be adapted to other disciplines, ensuring that all students have access to practical learning opportunities.
- The University should promote pathways for recognising experiential learning on academic transcripts, making experiential learning opportunities more visible and valued within the academic framework. Examples of such initiatives include projects like Sibiya's Toastmasters program and Lead with Disability, which helps students develop public speaking and leadership skills.

Recommendation 3: Leverage Storytelling and Digital Media for Inclusivity
Application:
- Create a multimedia initiative featuring short videos that capture the diverse experiences of students at Stellenbosch University. These videos could be used as discussion starters in workshops, encouraging students to reflect on their perspectives and engage in dialogue about inclusivity and social justice.
- Sibiya's use of storytelling as a tool for building empathy aligns with the need for innovative approaches to transformation outlined in the Khampepe Report. By centring student voices, the University can create a more inclusive culture that acknowledges the lived experiences of all its members.

Recommendation 4: Address Structural Barriers to Implementation
Application:
- Secure additional funding for experiential learning programs through partnerships with industry and for-profit organisations. Funding could support initiatives like the Science Ambassadors Programme and expand access to experiential learning for students across all faculties.
- Develop a mentorship program where experienced faculty members guide newer staff in incorporating experiential learning into their teaching. This approach could help address the

inconsistency in faculty engagement noted by the Khampepe Report and ensure that all students benefit from enriched learning experiences.

7. Conclusion

The CIRCoRe seminar emphasised the transformative potential of experiential learning in supporting Stellenbosch University's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusivity. By bridging the gap between policy and practice, experiential learning can serve as a powerful tool for fostering a more inclusive and engaged campus community. Implementing the recommendations discussed during the Seminar can help the University overcome the challenges identified in the Khampepe Report, creating a more cohesive and equitable educational environment where all students can thrive.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

i.   Addendum A: Experiential Learning Seminar Concept Document

ii.   Addendum B: Seminar Flyer

iii. Addendum C: Experiential Learning Seminar Agenda

Committee In Response to Commission Recommendations (CIRCoRe)

Workstream 2: Curriculum offerings (CO) embedded in the process of teaching and learning renewal

Seminar Concept Document

CIRCoRE Seminar: Experiential Learning As Pedagogy Towards Institutional Transformation
Moderator: Dr Ruth Andrews

Date: 17 October 2024
Time: 12:30-14:00
Location: Room 3008 Education Building
Duration: 1,5 hours

1. Background and Context

The Khampepe Report, commissioned in 2022 following incidents of alleged racism at Stellenbosch University, examines the institution's environment, policies, and practices in relation to transformation, diversity, and inclusivity. The Report emphasises the importance of embedding transformation within every facet of the university environment. One of the significant areas the Report addresses is experiential learning as a transformative tool for fostering inclusivity and promoting a more integrated university culture. The findings highlight the potential of experiential learning to bridge cultural and racial divides, enhance student engagement, and support the University's transformation agenda.

Experiential learning involves hands-on, interactive methods of teaching that encourage students to engage actively with material in a manner that goes beyond traditional classroom instruction. By directly confronting real-world issues and contexts, experiential learning can foster deeper, more reflective understandings of social dynamics and power structures, contributing to an inclusive educational experience.

2. Purpose of Seminar

The seminar aims to explore the role of experiential learning at Stellenbosch University, discuss its potential impact on inclusivity and transformation, and present strategies for enhancing experiential learning in response to the Khampepe Report's findings. This seminar will also serve as a platform to share insights, engage in dialogue, and identify actionable steps for integrating experiential learning more effectively across the University's curricula and student life.

Relevant Findings from the Khampepe Report on Experiential Learning

- A disconnect between Policies and Practice: The Report points out that while Stellenbosch University has a comprehensive transformation framework, this has not translated effectively into the lived experiences of students, particularly Black students. Experiential learning is identified as a key area where more practical, impactful changes can be made.
- Fragmented Transformation Efforts: The University's transformation journey is criticised for being disjointed, which has led to inconsistencies in student experiences across various departments. Integrating experiential learning into curricula is seen as a way to create more cohesive and meaningful transformation.
- Lack of Inclusivity in existing programmes: The Report suggests that current learning programmes need to be more inclusive and relevant to the diverse student body. There is a call to redesign programmes so they address systemic issues related to race and inclusivity.
- Support for Faculty and Student Training: The Report emphasises the need for comprehensive training for staff and student leaders to engage with experiential learning programmes effectively, ensuring they are equipped to lead and facilitate inclusive dialogues on campus.
- Transformation in Theory and Practice: The Report highlighted that while Stellenbosch University has a robust framework for transformation, its application often fails to reach the lived experiences of students, particularly in areas such as racial inclusivity. Experiential learning was recognised as a critical pathway for turning theoretical commitments to diversity and inclusion into practical outcomes.
- Lack of Engagement Across Diverse Student Groups: The Report found that transformative initiatives like the Shared Humanity Module have predominantly attracted students already interested in transformation topics. Experiential learning, if applied more broadly, could engage a wider array of students, particularly those less inclined to participate in traditional academic discussions on inclusivity.
- Training and Development for Student Leaders: Experiential learning was identified as a tool that could be used to better prepare student leaders for managing issues related to racism and discrimination. However, the Report noted a significant gap in practical training for student leaders, which impacts their ability to facilitate inclusive and respectful dialogues within student communities.
- Structural and Resource Limitations: The Report pointed out resource and structural constraints that limit the reach and efficacy of the Transformation Office and Equality Unit. Enhancing experiential learning opportunities could alleviate some of these constraints by fostering more peer-led and self-directed learning environments that engage students directly in the transformation process.

[1]*Experiential Learning Definition*

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[1] Experiential learning is a process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. It involves active engagement, reflection, and application of learned skills in real-world contexts to enhance understanding and performance, Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development.

3. Objectives of the Seminar

- To critically explore the findings of the Khampepe Report concerning experiential learning and its role in transformation at Stellenbosch University.
- To explore how experiential learning can be positioned to address issues of social justice in academic and campus life.
- To explore actionable pathways for implementing experiential learning across various disciplines at Stellenbosch University.

4. Structure of the Seminar

The seminar will feature three speakers, each addressing different facets of experiential learning as a response to the Khampepe Report's findings. The structure will be as follows:

a. **Opening Remarks (10 minutes)**
A brief introduction by the Moderator outlining the purpose of the seminar and the key points from the Khampepe Report related to experiential learning.

b. **Speaker Presentations (15 minutes each)**

Panellist 1: Dr Jean Farmer: Programme Manager: Faculty Support; Monitoring & Evaluation
Experiential Learning as Pedagogy for Transformation

The first panellist will discuss the broader implications of experiential learning for transformative education, emphasising how practical engagement with issues like social justice, diversity, and historical contexts can reshape campus culture.

Content: This talk focuses on experiential learning as a pathway for transformation. It will analyse the need for experiential learning programmes to address historical divides and enhance the quality of student interactions. Examples of successful experiential learning initiatives in similar contexts will be highlighted.

Relevant Findings: The Khampepe Report notes that transformation efforts at the University have been fragmented and lack coherence. Experiential learning provides an opportunity to engage students in critical conversations about race, identity, and equality, helping to build a more cohesive campus culture.

Panellist 2: Dr Itumeleng Moroenyane: Senior Lecturer: Botany and Zoology Faculty of Science
Multi-disciplinary Implementation of Experiential Learning

The second panellist will provide insights into practical strategies for incorporating experiential learning into various academic disciplines. They will consider how faculty across fields can create impactful experiential learning opportunities that encourage all students, not just those predisposed to issues of transformation, to engage with these critical topics.

Content: This presentation will provide a strategic approach to integrating experiential learning into different academic disciplines, ensuring that these programmes are accessible to all students. It will also discuss methods for assessing the impact of experiential learning on student development and inclusivity.

Relevant Findings: The Report calls for a re-evaluation of how the University approaches experiential learning, suggesting a more coordinated and integrated approach across faculties. The potential for experiential learning to develop the student's critical thinking and empathy should be harnessed as part of a broader transformation agenda.

Panellist 3: Zimbili Sibiya: PhD Candidate: Faculty of Agri Science
The Role of Experiential Learning in Promoting Inclusivity at Stellenbosch University

This presentation will explore the current state of experiential learning at Stellenbosch University and how it can be enhanced to foster inclusivity. The speaker will delve into how experiential learning can bridge cultural and racial divides, reflecting on the Khampepe Report's recommendations to expand transformation beyond theoretical frameworks.
Content: This presentation will outline the Khampepe Report's recommendations related to experiential learning and discuss how these recommendations align with inclusivity goals. It will also touch on how experiential learning can be used to reduce prejudice and foster understanding among students from diverse backgrounds.
Relevant Findings: The Report highlights that, while transformation policies exist on paper, they often fail to translate into lived experiences for students and staff.
Experiential learning can serve as an intervention to encourage meaningful interactions among students of different racial and cultural backgrounds, promoting inclusivity and mutual respect.

c. Panel Discussion and Q&A (30 minutes)
The Moderator will provide an opportunity for all three speakers to discuss the potential of experiential learning to support transformation at Stellenbosch University. The Q&A portion will allow attendees to ask questions and contribute to the dialogue.

d. Closing Remarks (5 minutes)
The Moderator will summarise the seminar's key takeaways and propose potential next steps for implementing the recommendations.

5. Key Topics to Be Addressed

- What specific elements of experiential learning could be most impactful in promoting inclusivity?
- How can Stellenbosch University overcome structural and resource limitations to implement effective experiential learning practices?
- What role can faculty and student leaders play in advancing experiential learning as a tool for transformation?
- How can experiential learning engage students from all backgrounds and promote unity within the university community?

6. Expected Outcomes

By the end of the seminar, participants should have a clear understanding of how experiential learning can support the goals of transformation and inclusivity outlined in the Khampepe Report. Attendees will leave with actionable ideas for implementing experiential learning in their contexts, as well as strategies for engaging students and faculty in this ongoing work.

Additional Notes: The notion of Experiential Learning in relation to Co-curricular Activities

Distinctions between experiential learning and the co-curriculum lie in their focus and structure:

Experiential Learning

Involves learning through direct experience, where individuals engage actively in tasks and reflect on these experiences to draw knowledge. It's a holistic process where learning happens in various contexts, such as internships, fieldwork, or volunteer activities. The focus is on the learning process itself, often unstructured or semi-structured, with the goal of personal development and skill acquisition. Citation: Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development.

Co-curriculum

Refers to activities, programs, or learning opportunities that complement the academic curriculum but are typically not part of the formal coursework. Co-curricular activities are designed to support the broader educational experience, helping students develop leadership, teamwork, or social skills. The co-curriculum is often structured and institutionally guided, with activities such as student clubs, sports, or student leadership programmes intended to enhance the formal curriculum. Citation: Kezar, A., & Rhoads, R. A. (2001). The Dynamic Tensions of Service Learning in Higher Education: A Philosophical Perspective.

While experiential learning and co-curricular activities can overlap in certain contexts, they are not the same. They share similarities, such as both being forms of learning outside traditional classroom settings, but they differ in their purpose, structure, and relationship to formal education. Here's why they are distinct:

i. Purpose:

Experiential learning is focused on learning through experience, where students actively engage in the process of doing, reflecting, and applying new knowledge in practical contexts. It's centred around learning outcomes and is often closely tied to academic or professional development.

Co-curricular activities are designed to complement academic learning by developing broader skills (e.g., leadership, teamwork, social responsibility) that are often not directly tied to specific learning outcomes. They aim to provide a more well-rounded educational experience but aren't necessarily focused on direct learning through experience that is evidence-based with specific, measurable learning outcomes.

ii. Structure and Integration with Academics

Experiential learning can be formally integrated into academic programs as part of the curriculum, such as internships, practicums, service learning, or lab work, where there are clearly defined learning objectives and often formal assessments.

Co-curricular activities, while enriching and developmental, are usually voluntary and not tied to the academic credit system. Examples include joining student clubs, participating in sports teams, or engaging in leadership programs. They may contribute to personal growth, but they are not typically structured around academic content or assessment.

iii. Reflection and Assessment:

Experiential learning emphasises reflection as part of the learning cycle (e.g., through reflective essays, journals, or discussions) and often involves a formal assessment to evaluate how well students have integrated their experiences into academic or professional knowledge.

Co-curricular activities do not always require formal reflection or assessment, though they may be recognised on co-curricular transcripts or records. They are more about engagement in activities that build character, leadership, and social skills without necessarily being academically assessed.

Experiential Learning-Co-curricular Overlap

There is an overlap between the two, especially when co-curricular activities involve learning through experience (e.g., leading a student organisation, organising events, or doing volunteer work). In these cases, such activities could be viewed as experiential learning if they involve reflective and structured learning outcomes. Some institutions, such as SU, may include these experiences in transcripts to recognise their value formally.

While experiential learning and co-curricular activities are related and often complementary, experiential learning is a specific educational approach rooted in reflection and practical experience, usually tied to formal learning outcomes, whereas co-curricular activities focus on holistic student development through co-curricular engagement, not always tied to academic credit or formal reflection.

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Seminar on Experiential Learning
17 October 2024 | 12:30 - 14:00

CIRCoRE Seminar: Experiential Learning As Pedagogy Towards Institutional Transformation

The Committee for the Institutional Response to the Commission's Recommendations (CIRCoRe)'s curriculum workstream invites you to an exploration of how experiential learning can act as a conduit for fostering deeper intercultural understanding, engaging with complex social issues, and supporting the University's transformation agenda.

Panellists

Moderator: Dr Ruth Andrews
Dr Jean Farmer: Faculty Support, Monitoring & Evaluation
Dr Itumeleng Moroenyane: Dept of Botany and Zoology
Zimbili Sibiya: Faculty of Agri Science

Venue

GC Cillié Building: Room 3008
Stellenbosch University

Join on Microsoft Teams

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forward together
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Contact

Carol Goss

CIRCoRE Workstream 2 Seminar:

Experiential Learning As Pedagogy

Towards Institutional Transformation

GC Cillié Building: Room 3008

12:30 – 14:00 | 17 October 2024

Experiential Learning Seminar Programme		
Time	**Theme**	**Responsible person**
12:30 – 12:35	**Welcome and positioning comments**	**Dr Ruth Andrews - Moderator Unit for Experiential Learning (CSLL)**
12:35 – 12:50	**Panellist 1 Experiential learning as pedagogy for transformation**	**Dr Jean Farmer, Programme Manager: Faculty Support, Monitoring and Evaluation**
12:50 - 13:05	**Panellist 2 Multi-disciplinary implementation of experiential learning**	**Dr Itumeleng Moroenyane, Senior Lecturer Botany and Zoology, Faculty of Science**
13:05 – 13: 20	**Panellist 3 The Role of Experiential Learning in Promoting Inclusivity at Stellenbosch University**	**Zimbili Sibiya, PhD Candidate Faculty of Agri Science**
13 20– 13:50	**Panel Discussion and Q&A**	**Moderator; Panellists; Seminar Participants**
13:50 – 14:00	**Seminar Summation and Closing**	**Dr Sharman Wickham CIRCoRe Workstream 2 Coordinator**