

# MULTIDISCIPLINARITY, TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY-ENGAGEMENT: AN APPROACH TO ADDRESS SOCIO-ECONOMIC AILS AMONGST DAY LABOURERS IN POTCHEFSTROOM, SOUTH AFRICA

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## Abstract

*“No political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remain in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life. Attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the first priority of a democratic government.”* (RSA, 1994, para. 1.2.9).

For many years global leaders trusted that the socio-economic phenomena of poverty and inequality would resolve itself in the midst of growth and development. Regrettably, it has not! Poverty and inequality proved to be two of the most persistent global challenges that continue to infiltrate international discourse. The undeniable truth of these challenges is the global *impasse* of 1.2 billion people that remain in a relentlessly inflicted state of poverty and inequality.

The Republic of South Africa, as young democratic developmental state is not left unaffected by these phenomena. South Africa’s Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), (RSA, 1994), eloquently described the fact that “[O]ur history has been a bitter one dominated by colonialism, racism, *apartheid*, sexism and repressive labour policies. The result is that poverty and degradation exist side by side with modern cities and a developed mining, industrial and commercial infrastructure. Our income distribution is racially distorted and ranks as one of the most unequal in the world – lavish wealth and abject poverty characterise our society.” (para. 1.2.1).

Acting from the understanding of such a sombre reality, traces of corrective measures are visible in every strategic driver and programme, designed and introduced by the South African Government. But, despite diligent efforts, these challenges remain. A critical question that lingers is: could it be that extant societal systems and cultural associations literally add further fuel to a blazing fire?

Deep in the heartland of South Africa lays a city known as Potchefstroom. This City is home to a public university, recognised as the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. Two of the disciplines in the Social Sciences at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, Public Management and Governance and Social Anthropology, engaged in a multidisciplinary intervention to unravel the deep-rooted character of poverty and inequality to establish a micro solution to these ails, particularly in the lives of day labourers. A multidisciplinary approach and translational research, implemented amongst the students of these two disciplines, offered an opportunity to obtain two richly theoretical and praxis infused angles of incidence on the phenomena of poverty and inequality. In addition, the students from Public Management and Governance participated in community-engagement, which served as a preparative grounding to critical and analytical thinking and complex problem solving skills, prior to their entry into the South African Public Service. Students in Public Management and Governance were not only educated in the levels of complexity infused by poverty and inequality as socio-economic phenomena, but were also in a position to seek sustainable solutions to address these ails through the application of Programme and Project Management theory, principles and tools as part of their academic curriculum.

This article investigates the contribution that a multidisciplinary approach, translational research and community-engagement can instil into an extant academic curriculum of students in order to discover real-life solutions to socio-economic phenomena.

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**Keywords:** Multidisciplinarity; translational research; community-engagement; poverty; and inequality; day labourers.

### **Introduction:**

Marniesse and Peccoud (2004) explain that, for a prolonged period of time, the international arena did not regard poverty as an insurmountable challenge (p.11). It was rather seen as a temporary hindrance that would make its exit in the face of growth and development. Simultaneously, scholars and practitioners admit that under-employment and poverty remain far removed from disappearing in developing countries and is a serious reason for concern as it continues to take an increased place in international discourse (Naiya & Manap, 2013, p. 141) and (Marniesse & Peccoud, 2004, p. 11). This fact is strengthened in the statistics offered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in that 1.2 billion people around the globe continue to live in abject poverty (UN, 2015, online).

Bourguignon (2004) describes poverty as that it is measured by the Absolute Poverty Headcount Index (APHI), that is: “the proportion of the

population that lives below a particular poverty line of for example \$1 (US) per day (p. 75).” Bourguignon (2004) in addition, establishes the verity that poverty also has a relative definition which is commonly referred to as relative deprivation (p. 70). Relative deprivation is conceptualised as that “the poverty line is described, not in terms of some well-defined basic needs, but as a fixed proportion of the mean income of a population” (Bourguignon, 2004, p. 70). Inequality in turn, is explained as that it refers to disparities in relative income across a whole population (Bourguignon, 2004, p. 75).

Poverty and inequality are not 21<sup>st</sup> Century phenomena or exclusive socio-economic ails, prevalent to the Republic of South Africa as young democratic developmental state (Le Grange, 2007, pp.10, 11); and (Harmse, Blaauw & Schenck, 2008, p. 1). Naiya and Manap (2013), propound that poverty and inequality have been issues of global concern since the Industrial Revolution (p. 141). The persistence of these phenomena becomes evident when Marniesse and Peccoud (2004), argue that poverty and inequality became a subject of real concern during the 1970s and 1980s, and were henceforth noticed as serious issues that require constant, international contemplation, attention and action (p. 11).

In 2000, the international arena, in the form of the United Nations (UN) Summit, initiated the UNDP, and subsequently declared the eradication of poverty, extreme hunger and inequality as one of its primary goals. Eight ambitions were enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and were specifically identified for the earnest attention and achievement amongst member states, across the globe (UN, 2000, online).

South Africa, as a member of the UN, pledged its commitment to participate in the efforts towards the achievement of the MDGs, together with 188 other countries. Delving into the roots of the African National Congress (ANC), the ruling party in South Africa, it becomes evident that the ANC, in the adoption of the Freedom Charter, six decades ago, expressed distinct directives against poverty and inequality as such: “All National Groups Shall Have Equal Rights!; and, “The People Shall Share in the Country’s Wealth!” (ANC, 1955, online). In 1996, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, as supreme law, concretised these aspirations with regards to poverty and inequality in its Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996, p. 6). In 2011, the eradication of poverty and inequality found further expression in the National Development Plan: Vision 2030 (NDP), (RSA, 2011, p. 3). The Diagnostic Report of the NDP pointed to nine distinct challenges that are listed here as follows: too few jobs; divided communities; corruption; poor service delivery; high disease burden; poor education; spatial divides; a resource intense economy; and a crumbling infrastructure (RSA, 2011a). In response to the Diagnostic Report, the NDP suggests the following items as part of the corrective plan to address these challenges: create jobs; unite the

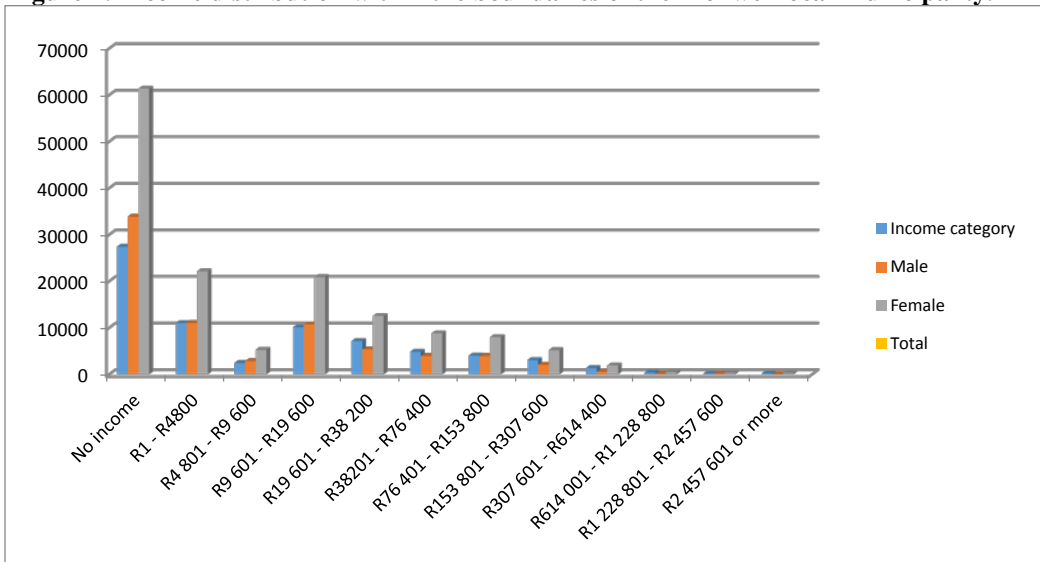
nation; fight corruption; build a capable state; quality health care; quality education; inclusive planning; use resources properly; and expand the infrastructure (RSA, 2011).

It is evident from the aforementioned paragraphs that the macro, national strategic drivers towards the eradication of poverty and inequality are firmly in place in the South African Government, yet, the active eradication of these challenges appear multi-dimensional in its complexity and thus prevail persistently.

### **Indicia of socio-economic afflictions amongst day labourers in Potchefstroom, South Africa**

On the banks of the *Moorivier* (translated as Beautiful river), in the North-West Province of South Africa, nestles a society that counts for 162 762 (RSA, 2014, online) of this nation's 54 million citizens (RSA, 2014, online). This society is widely known as the City of Potchefstroom, which is mostly an academic community. Stepping beyond the eye-pleasing scenery of picturesque Oak trees that rim many a street, one finds the lurking socio-economic phenomena of poverty and inequality that South Africa, as a nation, so desperately seeks to eradicate (ANC, 1955); (RSA, 1996); (UN, 2000); and (NDP, 2011). The Tlokwe City Council's Annual Report (RSA, 2010/11, online) informs that the Human Development Index for the City of Potchefstroom is rated at 0.6 which implies that citizens in the City of Potchefstroom has a lower life expectancy, a lower income and lower literacy levels. The Tlokwe City Council's Annual Report (RSA, 2010/11, online) furthermore indicates that at least 50 per cent of households earn R1 500.00 per month or less and are therefore classified as 'indigent households' (a euphemism for the very poor). The Tlokwe City Council's Annual Report (RSA, 2010/11, online) reveals that an estimate of 55 per cent of household income in the City of Potchefstroom derive from sources other than rentals, salaries and wages such as social grants and pensions, remittances and grants. **Figure 1** below provides a visual display of the income distribution as recorded in the Tlokwe Local Municipality's Annual Report 2012/13 (RSA, 2012/13, p. 11).

**Figure 1: Income distribution within the boundaries of the Tlokwe Local Municipality.**



(Source: RSA, 2012/13, p. 11)

The data, as recorded in **Figure 1** above, estimates that 61 367 citizens residing within the borders of the Tlokwe City Council live in abject poverty without any form of income. 22 115 Citizens have some form of income but remain below, on or barely above the poverty line. Unemployment in the city of Potchefstroom is averaged at 21.6 per cent in ratio to the national average of 24.3 per cent (RSA, 2014, online). In addition, the youth unemployment rate (ages 15 – 34) is calculated at 29.5 per cent (RSA, 2015, online). The sample statistics, extracted specifically for the topic under research in this article, translate into the callous reality that 61 367 citizens within the municipal borders of this City alone are without any sustained, regular form of income (RSA, 2014: online), and is subsequently classified as indigent or hopelessly poverty-stricken. Contemplating the value of a poverty line and to put matters into perspective, the exchange rate between the United States Dollar (\$) and a South African Rand (ZAR) implies that \$1.25 (US) equals R15.27 (ZAR), (UN, 2015:online). At the time of publication of this article, a single loaf of bread in South Africa is charged at an average of R12.00 which leaves the poverty stricken little room to negotiate proper medical care, housing, education and very little else.

The research sample applicable to this study represents individuals who are severely affected by poverty and inequality. A particular group within the classification of poverty-stricken citizens are described as day labourers whom are of particular interest to this study. Day labourers can be defined as individuals who are often low-skilled, young males who have no permanent form of employment in the formal sector and who then innovatively seek

employment in the informal sector (Blaauw, Louw & Schenck, 2006). Such workers are hired and paid, one day at a time, with no promise of further employment (Valenzuela, 2001, p. 348) and (Blaaw & Pretorius, 2007, p. 65). They are individuals who gather at a particular location on a daily basis in the often unfulfilled hope of being collected by prospective employers to perform trivial, once-off, daily tasks (Blaaw & Pretorius, 2007, p. 65).

The South African Government have a high regard for the concept of democracy and what it represents as it is a constant reminder that this nation is free from colonialist domination, racism, sexism and oppressive labour policies (RSA, 1994, para. 1.2.1). Citizen participation in governmental decision-making and actions, as one of the pillars of a thriving democracy, delivers abounding results such as unquestionable buy-in from stakeholders when it is put into practice. It is therefore that Dewey's four principles of democracy, as summarised by Westbrook (2014), epitomise in part, the motivation behind the engagement of Public Management and Governance (PM&G) and Social Anthropology students in the intervention under discussion. Westbrook (2014) describe Dewey's four principles of democracy as follows: democracy should promote ethical ideals rather than simply being a political arrangement; democracy requires participation rather than representation as its essence; there should be an accord between democracy and the scientific method that foster "ever-expanding and self-critical communities of inquiry" that operate on pragmatic principles which are continuously amended in its convictions as new evidence appear; and democracy should be observed as an "ethical project" that has transformed itself "from politics to industry and society" (p. 919). PM&G and Social Anthropology student's involvement in multidisciplinary, translational research and community-engagement were furthermore incited by the wisdom that came from Le Grange's (2007) pen. Le Grange (2007) heeds to the fact that, "[J]ust educating students about these problems can be dangerous because they learn the lessons of hypocrisy – they learn that it is enough just to learn about these problems without having to do anything to help address them.

In an attempt therefore, to not indulge in the comfort of hypocrisy but to understand the phenomena and earnestly seek and implement solutions to the dilemma at hand, the PM&G and Social Anthropology students investigated potential possibilities and approaches, to participate in the eradication of the socio-economic ails under investigation in this article.

### **Multidisciplinarity: the role of Public Management and Governance (PM&G) and Social Anthropology**

Choi and Pak (2006) and Alvargonzález (2011) define multidisciplinary as that it extracts knowledge from diverse disciplines to

establish solutions to, for example, complex socio-economic challenges but, in this process, none of the disciplines that engage with one another leave the boundaries of their own branches of learning (p. 359). In addition, Klein (1990) noted that in the process and application of multidisciplinary, “disciplinary perspectives are not changed, only contrasted.” (p. 56).

The macro context to this article becomes evident through scholarly contributions made by Leftwich (2007, p.63) and Fukuyama (2008, p. 25), in the fact that there exist three interactive, primary dimensions within a state namely a political, an economic and a social dimension. De Wet & Van Der Waldt (2013) furthermore direct to the political-economic, socio-political and socio-economic traverses as well as the political-administrative, economic-administrative and socio-administrative interfaces within which a government is configured at the centre of this landscape and thus play a fundamental coordinating, management and directing role (Loriaux, 1999, p. 235). Deliberating on this landscape, it is primarily essential to establish a divergence in the angle of incidence for both PM&G and Social Anthropology as social science disciplines.

The angle of incidence relevant to the students from PM&G and the role that they have played in the Potchefstroom Day Labourer Programme can be explained from the conceptualisation of the following concepts: Metcalfe and Richards (1987, pp. 73-5) defines Public Management as that “the field of Public Management is better defined analytically than institutionally. The critical area of Public Management is the management of organizational interdependence, for example in the delivery of services or in the management of the budgetary process. Public Management is concerned with the effective functioning of whole systems of organisations. What distinguishes Public Management is the explicit acknowledgement of the responsibility for dealing with structural problems at the level of the system as a whole.” Mohiddin (2002, p. 3), and Thornhill (2014, p. 4), delineate “Governance as “the convergence of all the structures and processes, bringing together government, private sector and civil society in an efficient, effective and meaningful decision-making framework. De Wet (2014, p. 27), describes the fundamental aspiration of public managers as follows: “The primary ambition of contemporary governments and therefore government officials within democratic developmental states is to determine, acknowledge and prioritise the developmental needs of a society within an inclusive democratic context and to ensure that those needs are addressed in the most efficient, effective and economic manner”.

To translate a theoretical understanding of the aforementioned theorist’s conceptualisation of Public Management and Governance into current practice, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) identified five core competencies for senior public officials in its Leadership

Development Management Strategic Framework (LDMSF), (RSA, 2007). These five core competencies are recognised as follows: Strategic capability and leadership; People management and empowerment; Programme and project management; Financial management; and Change Management. Of particular interest to this article is the core competency identified as Programme and Project Management that is a module in the curriculum of post-graduate students in PM&G at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. Letavec, Rollins and Altwies (2008) outline the Project Management Institute's definition of Programme Management as "the centralized coordinated management of a program to achieve the program's strategic objectives and benefits" (p. xviii). Lester (2014) defines project management as: "a unique process, consisting of a set of co-ordinated and controlled activities with start and finish dates, undertaken to achieve objectives conforming to specific requirements, including constraints of time, cost and resources." (p. 1). It is within the scope of the aforementioned conceptualisations that the PM&G students were required to:

- recognise the political-economic, socio-economic and socio-political context within which poverty and inequality are serious challenges within South Africa that requires critical thinking and problem solving in order to sustainably address these phenomena;
- recognise the positioning of government and the fundamental coordinating, management and directing role of a public service within the landscape under discussion, from which PM&G as science provides the theoretical basis through which developmental needs of a society can be determined, acknowledged, prioritised and addressed in an effective, efficient and economic manner;
- recognise how Programme and Project Management (PPM) as the vehicle through which national strategy such as the National Development Plan: Vision 2030's, objectives and priorities are addressed; and to
- recognise that PPM subsequently becomes the instrument through which controlled activities are performed to actively address poverty and inequality amongst day labourers in the City of Potchefstroom in a sustainable manner.

The angle of incidence for the Social Anthropology students on the social phenomena of poverty and inequality amongst day labourers in Potchefstroom is found in Rapport and Overing's (2000) explanation of Social Anthropology as that it is an investigation of humans across all of human history in order to obtain a holistic comprehension of cultural complexities. Evans-Pritchard (2013, p. 3) explain Social Anthropology as that it is the entire study of man from a number of aspects" as "it concerns itself with human cultures and societies." In order to gain insight into the



socio-economic complexities of day labourers as humans within a distinct culture and particular society a group of undergraduate, third year Social Anthropology students at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus offered a renewed meaning and a real-life example to the character of poverty and inequality as socio-economic ails in South Africa when they set out, during the first six months of 2014, to conduct comprehensive empirical research and field work that exposed the multi-layered facets of the lives of day labourers within the suburbs of Potchefstroom.

The research stretched over 240 hours, distributed over 6 weeks and left the often hidden truths bare. No impressive, politically infused expressions such as poverty and inequality can render hopelessness, fear, racial mistrust, hunger, unfed dependents, and a poverty inflicted inability to reach health care, social identity and social support from government, justified. In fact, the research data begged for the involvement of a larger community, far beyond multidisciplinary relationships to include a community of intergovernmental cooperation, industry, business and society in an attempt to address these unsolicited, prevalent socio-economic ails.

Bearing the basic ambition and scope of this field of study in mind, the following section gives insight into the findings of the research conducted by Social Anthropology students as it was summarised by Dr Andre Goodrich, and Ms Pia Bombardella, their lecturers.

In the course of these 240 hours over a six week period the Social Anthropology students have noted and learned the following, by studying the lives of day labourers:

- altering the day labour system in Potchefstroom may enable an array of solutions;
- initiating a pilot project will contribute to active change in their current dire circumstances;
- establishing a level of stability with regards to day labourers and their dependants' through access to food;
- securing and fencing off a central area;
- establishing a system through which “would-be” employers can access day labourers;
- establishing ways to address cultural associations;
- establishing a skills registry and investigate opportunities for skills development;
- strengthening circuits through which day labourers can find their way into more stable, longer term employment;
- establishing comfortable and convenient access to:
  - the social grant system;
  - the social identification system; and
  - the health care system.

- establish a business centre that can assist with:
  - typing, printing, copying and distributing of curricula vitae; and
  - business in general.
- Establish a community of participants between:
  - Government (national, provincial and local) – intergovernmental relations;
  - Business community;
  - Political parties;

It is evident from the two different roles that PM&G and Social Anthropology as fields of study play in the multidisciplinary approach adopted in this study that:

- multi-layered insight into the socio-economic challenges, experienced by day labourers in Potchefstroom are offered;
- knowledge had to be extracted from both PM&G and Social Anthropology to gain insight into the particular socio-economic phenomena of day labourers in Potchefstroom;
- in the process of extracting knowledge from both disciplines Social Anthropology was able to recognise the exact socio-cultural challenges of the day labourers in Potchefstroom and in extracting knowledge from PM&G, vehicles were established to address these ails in an efficient, effective and economic manner;
- neither PM&G nor Social Anthropology left the boundaries of their branches of learning; and
- disciplinary perspectives did not change but offered a contrasted insight into the phenomena of poverty and inequality amongst day labourers in Potchefstroom as well as suitable solutions to address these ails.

Considering the contributions of both PM&G and Social Anthropology in the Day Labourer Programme as diverse disciplines within the Social sciences, **Table 1** below explicate the interactive process of multidisciplinary between these two diverse fields of study:

**Table 1:** The application of Multidisciplinarity between Public Management and Governance and Social Anthropology to address socio-economic ails amongst day labourers in Potchefstroom, South Africa.

<b>Multidisciplinarity:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Extract knowledge from Social Anthropology and Public Management and Governance (diverse disciplines in the Social Sciences).</li> <li>▪ Establish solutions to e.g. socio-economic challenges</li> </ul> Neither Social Anthropology nor Public Management and Governance leave the boundaries of their own branches of learning (disciplinary perspectives are not changed, only contrasted)				
<b>The landscape:</b>	<b>Political dimension</b>	<b>Economic dimension</b>	<b>Social dimension</b>	<b>Academic curriculum</b>
<b>The challenge:</b>		<b>Socio-economic challenge:</b> Day labourers in Potchefstroom are severely affected by poverty and inequality.		
<b>Social Anthropology-</b>			Investigating the lives of day	Research.

<b>Multidisciplinarity:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Extract knowledge from Social Anthropology and Public Management and Governance (diverse disciplines in the Social Sciences).</li> <li>▪ Establish solutions to e.g. socio-economic challenges</li> </ul> <p>Neither Social Anthropology nor Public Management and Governance leave the boundaries of their own branches of learning (disciplinary perspectives are not changed, only contrasted)</p>				
<b>The landscape:</b>	<b>Political dimension</b>	<b>Economic dimension</b>	<b>Social dimension</b>	<b>Academic curriculum</b>
<p><b>Scope:</b> Investigation of humans across all of human history / the entire study of man – to obtain a holistic comprehension of cultural complexities within human cultures and societies.</p>			<p>labourers in Potchefstroom. (Cultural and societal complexities).</p>	
<p><b>Public Management and Governance-Scope:</b> It is the primary ambition of a government and government officials, within a particular form of state to determine, acknowledge and prioritise the developmental needs of society to ensure that these needs are addressed in an efficient, effective and economic manner.</p>	<p><b>Form of state:</b> democratic developmental state National priorities include the eradication of poverty and inequality. Considering legislation, policy frameworks and national programmes.</p>		<p>Determine, acknowledge and prioritise developmental needs of a society. Ensure that the needs are addressed in an efficient, effective and economic manner.</p>	<p>Research and Public Programme and Project Management.</p>

(Source: Researcher’s own)

**Table 1** above provides a brief overview of the key elements of Multidisciplinarity, the scope of Social Anthropology and the scope of PM&G against the three dimensions within a democratic developmental state as well as a brief description of the academic role of each of these disciplines. The following section establishes a multidisciplinary framework that measures the engagement between Social Anthropology and PM&G in addressing poverty and inequality amongst day labourers in Potchefstroom, South Africa.

## A multidisciplinary framework: Measuring the engagement between two branches of learning

Choi and Pak, (2006) suggests 13 critical elements of multidisciplinary that give impetus to the academic relationship between PM&G and Social Anthropology for the duration of the intervention under discussion (p. 356). **Table 2** provides a display of these elements against the different roles and functions performed by PM&G and Social Anthropology, respectively.

**Table 2: The roles and functions of Social Anthropology and Public Management and Governance students, measured against the elements of multidisciplinary according to Choi and Pak, (2006, p. 356).**

Elements of multidisciplinary	The role and function of Social Anthropology students (3 <sup>rd</sup> Year undergraduate)	The role and function of Public Management and Governance students (Honours students)
1. “Members from different disciplines working independently on different aspects of a project. Working in parallel or sequentially.”	6 Week (240 hours) research amongst day labourers in Potchefstroom to gather data on their daily lives.	1. Conduct independent and group research in terms of: 1.1 Translating International and National strategic drives into programmes; 1.2 Translating programmes into Projects; 1.3 Project Life Cycle; 1.4 The 10 Knowledge Areas of Project Management; 1.5 Tools in Project Management; 2. Interpret the raw data as gathered by Social Anthropology to establish a Programme and related Projects.
2. “Individual goals in different professions.”	Research amongst day labourers in Potchefstroom to establish their socio-economic circumstances and basic needs.	Translate the basic socio-economic needs into a <b>Programme:</b> The Potchefstroom Day Labourer Programme. <b>Projects:</b> The Micro Farming Unit Project; The Vendor Unit Project; The Social Security, Health and Home Affairs Support Project; The e-Management Systems Project; and The skills Development Project.
3. “Participants have separate but inter-related roles.”	The students from Social Anthropology’s researched data established the severe	The students from PM&G received the raw data through which they were

<b>Elements of multidisciplinary</b>	<b>The role and function of Social Anthropology students (3<sup>rd</sup> Year undergraduate)</b>	<b>The role and function of Public Management and Governance students (Honours students)</b>
	<p>circumstances and hardships that day labourers have to deal with on a daily basis. The data offered an untainted perspective on the socio-economic realities that day labourers encounter.</p>	<p>able to do theoretical research in Programme and Project Management and to apply this knowledge through a Service-learning methodology as the practical implementation of their research into the data that they have received in order to establish solutions to a critical socio-economic challenge.</p>
<p>4. <b>“Participants maintain own disciplinary roles.”</b></p>	<p>Social Anthropology students strictly maintained roles within the ambit of Social Anthropology and subsequently gathered the data without disturbing the environment within which the field work took place.</p>	<p>PM&amp;G students strictly maintained roles within the academic curriculum and ambit of PM&amp;G within which they, true to the nature of this discipline had to establish sustained solutions to the socio-economic phenomena unearthed by the Social Anthropology students. Their role focused on the application of critical and analytical thinking skills in order to conduct complex problem solving.</p>
<p>5. <b>“Does not challenge disciplinary boundaries.”</b></p>	<p>The intervention did at no stage challenge any of the disciplinary boundaries that were involved. In fact, the intervention instilled a mutual respect and insight amongst the students towards their different fields of study and the application of different angles of incidence to establish researched data and sustainable solution to socio-economic ails. The Social Anthropology students were impressed by how the Public Management and Governance students translated their raw, researched data into something meaningful towards a greater good and the Public Management and Governance students in turn were grateful to get such in-depth insight into the world of those they were about to serve – the citizen.</p>	
<p>6. <b>“Summation and juxtaposition of disciplines.”</b></p>	<p>The sum of the parts and the side-by-side contrasts of the two disciplines, working on different aspects of the project towards a common goal, largely enhanced and enriched the level of depth of the end result.</p>	
<p>7. <b>“Additive as opposed to integrative or collaborative.”</b></p>	<p>Both disciplines added to the level of academic and practice depth of the intervention independently. Both disciplines therefore played an additive role.</p>	
<p>8. <b>“Graphically analogous to</b></p>	<p>Each of the disciplines were graphically observed as</p>	

<b>Elements of multidisciplinary</b>	<b>The role and function of Social Anthropology students (3<sup>rd</sup> Year undergraduate)</b>	<b>The role and function of Public Management and Governance students (Honours students)</b>
<b>two totally separate circles.”</b>	specialising and functioning in a totally separate dimension which enabled different angles of incidence and an interesting array of solutions to the challenge of poverty and inequality.	
9. <b>“External coherence (i.e. motivated by a desire to focus on the citizen’s needs.)”</b>	Both disciplines had a shared desire to focus on the needs of day labourers and to suggest initiatives in the form of a programme and project to address their socio-economic needs.	
10. <b>“Participants learn about each other.”</b>	Unfortunately the participants, in this instance had very limited time to learn about each other as the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year students engaged in a 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester module and the Honours students in a 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester module.	
11. <b>“Separate methodologies.”</b>	Separate methodologies were definitely implemented. Social Anthropology conducted a pure research methodology that included an empirical study (field work) and PM&G conducted a literature research, related to their academic curriculum after which a Service-learning methodology produced the desired end results. Refer to Figure 1 to obtain more detail in the latter’s methodology.	
12. <b>“Instrumental use of complimentary knowledge or perspectives to address a question.”</b>	Complimentary knowledge and perspectives from both PM&G and Social Anthropology were implemented to establish solutions to socio-economic ails, observed in the Programme.	
13. <b>“The outcome is the sum of the individual parts.”</b>	The outcome of this intervention was certainly the sum of the individual parts as the students conducted scientific research and from there were able to establish a Programme and related project plans that have the potential to bring about positive socio-economic change in the community.	

It is evident from the observations noted in **Table 2** above, that extracts from the knowledge of both PM&G and Social Anthropology, were applied to firstly understand a micro sample of the human condition of poverty and inequality in Potchefstroom. Secondly, neither of these two disciplines left the boundaries of their own branches of learning in an attempt to understand and address socio-economic ails. It is lastly noted that, Klein’s (1990) observation stood its ground as both PM&G and Social Anthropology’s disciplinary perspectives were not altered but rather offered contrasted depth in reality, fact and solution.

In order for the unique, discipline based research conducted by PM&G and Social Anthropology to become meaningful in expression, it is critical to incorporate a translational research approach to transform research results in practice.

### **Public Management and Governance: Engaging in translational research**

“Traditionally, translational research emphasised the inter-relationship between biomedical studies and clinical practice (Byrne, 2011, p. 191) but

since the concept has expanded to include various sciences and many types of applications” (Wethington and Dunifon, 2012). Translational research offers a distinct research approach and is an alternative research paradigm to contend with the disunion of basic research and applied science (Wethington and Dunifon, 2012). Bearing this fact in mind, the Day Labourer Programme required that the PM&G students did not only understand the circumstances and complexities of poverty and inequality as socio-economic ails, they also had to establish practical solutions by means of an implementable programme and projects that would incrementally change the lives of the day labourers. Translational research is furthermore applied in practice and contains the approaches of participative science and participatory action research (Byrne, 2011). This meant that the PM&G students had to conduct extensive research in the theory of Programme and Project Management within the South African Public Service context, after which they had to apply such research in the context of the data that were gathered from the Social Anthropology students. According to (Woolf, 2008), the traditional categorisation of translational research includes two categories of research namely basic research and applied research. As the first category, basic research refers to fundamental or pure research (Woolf, 2012). Basic research is described as speculative and is lengthy and tedious in its application to the practical context (Woolf, 2008). A positive aspect of basic research is that it often bears major solutions or paradigm shifts in practice (Woolf, 2008). The second category, namely applied research, produces rapid solutions but such solutions are often incremental improvements to processes as opposed to drastic discoveries or developments (Woolf, 2008). Wethington and Dunifon (2012) assert that a cultural separation between different scientific disciplines often makes it complex to ascertain the multidisciplinary and multi-skilled teams that are required to be successful in translational research. Wethington and Dunifon (2012) explain that translational research is in essence: to translate fundamental research results into practical application; an iterative research style with low and permeable barriers; supportive a strong interaction between academic research and practice. It is noted that the essence of translational research, as described above, were extant during the entire intervention under discussion in this article. A fundamental element of translational research is that practitioners assist to shape the research agenda by posing complex challenges to which applied research would only offer incremental advances (Wethington and Dunifon, 2012). In the research under discussion in this article, it is evident that practitioners in the South African Government did shape the research agenda by posing the complex challenge of poverty and inequality in many of its policy and legislative documents such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RSA, 1994); the Constitution (1996); the

Millennium Development Goals (2000); and the National Development Plan (2011).

### **Programme and Project Management**

In order to give meaning to ambitious undertakings such as translating national priorities into action, a government translates strategy into programmes and programmes into implementable projects. Programme and Project Management, as conceptualised before in this article, is a typical and useful management tool, applied in PM&G, both as management theory and practice. As part of the PM&G student's learning methodology to the Public Project Management (PPM) module, the author initiated the post-graduate, Honours student's research to include the South African political, economic and social context as well as the theory of PPM that included: The political, economic and social context of South Africa within which the Programme is contextualised; legislature and governmental guidelines that provide a legal framework to the Programme; translating national strategy into programmes and projects; a project life cycle; a Work Breakdown Structure; the 10 knowledge areas of project management which includes: Scope Management; Time Management; Cost Management; Quality Management; Stakeholder Management; Human Resource Management; Communication Management; Risk Management; Procurement Management; and Integration Management. Each student in a project group had to be well acquainted with the models (i.e., project life cycle), templates (Work Breakdown Structure, communication and risk management), calculators (i.e., risk) and e-tools (i.e., Gantt Chart, MS Project) that accompany PPM theory.

Cognisant of the locus of this intervention, students had to translate PPM theory, strategic drivers and legislation into the context of the raw data, findings and recommendations received from Social Anthropology in order to establish a programme with related, workable projects and subsequent comprehensive project plans that would provide sustainable solutions to the socio-economic challenges of day labourers in Potchefstroom.

The PM&G students established the Potchefstroom Day Labourer Programme and simultaneously included five projects that were supported by five project leaders and their respective project teams. The five projects became known as: the Micro Urban Farming Project; the Vendor Unit Project; the Social Security, Health and Home Affairs Support Project; the e-Management System Project; and the Skills Development Project.

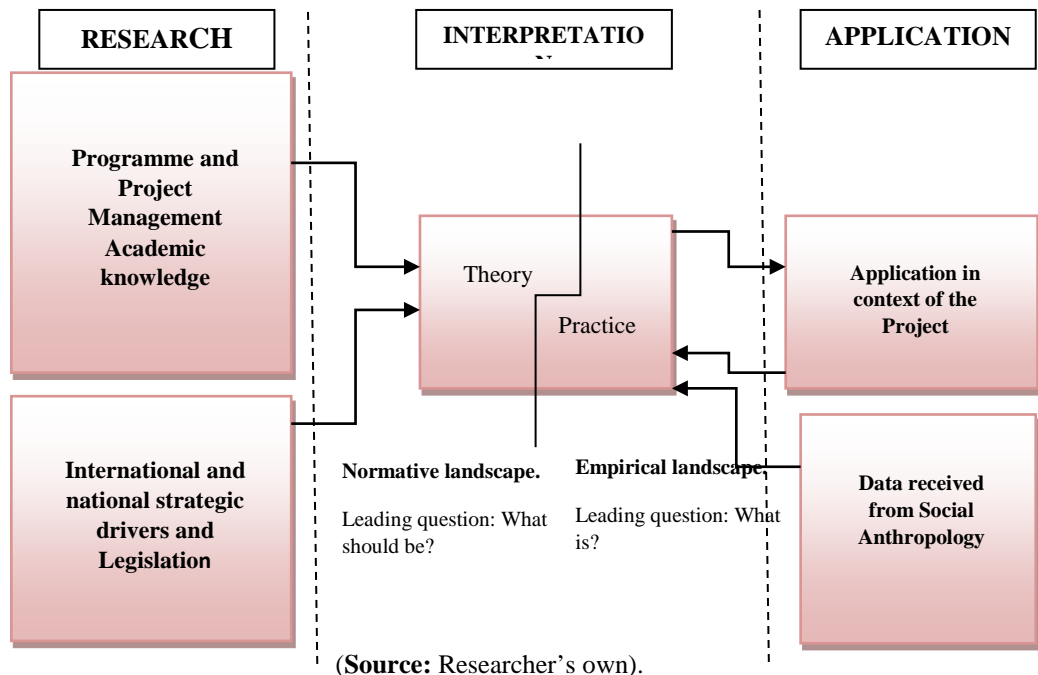
In order for the author to provide maximum support and monitor progress of the students, each team was requested to keep a weekly diary that had to display the development made by each of the project teams as well as their weekly challenges, triumphs and project team dynamics.



## Methodology

**Figure 2** is a visual display of the methodology followed by the PM&G, Honours students to complete the PPM module that is included in the curriculum of the Honours Programme. The methodological architecture of the PPM module included research, interpretation and application as major pillars to its design. In addition to a series of eight, three hour contact sessions, PM&G students were requested to conduct thorough research that enhanced their understanding of the contextual landscape, inclusive of the socio-political, socio-economic and political-economic spheres within South Africa, as well as academic theory that constructs the content of the PPM ambit. Furthermore, students had to interpret the academic theory and the contextual landscape in order to establish a fissure between the current state and the desired state of poverty and inequality amongst day labourers in Potchefstroom. Once the latter was established, students had to apply PPM theory, calculators and tools to design comprehensive project plans in the five projects to transform the extant state of what is? to a state of what should be? This resulted in the transformation of strategy to programme to projects that have an ability to alter the lives of day labourers in Potchefstroom. **Figure 2** is a visual display of the methodological approach followed by PM&G students to contribute to the solutions of addressing socio-economic ails by means of programme and Project management.

**Figure 2: Public Management and Governance: Programme and Project Management – Teaching methodology**



As part of the PPM module assessment, each of the five project teams had to present their completed project plans to a panel of academics from PM&G and Social Anthropology in which the panel assessed the contribution towards sustainable and implementable projects within the contextual landscape and legislative framework in order to alter the lives of day labourers.

It should be noted that every project within the Potchefstroom Day Labourer Programme presented numerous findings in all the knowledge areas related to Public Project Management, of which the author includes a few as follows:

- both intergovernmental relations and cooperative government are highly complex systems to orchestrate into partnership and action.
- the bureaucracy displays a sloth-like character of sluggish processes and decision taking mechanisms that have little, if any understanding of social ills such as poverty and inequality and by implication the myriad of challenges that citizens have to bare whilst being trapped in socio-economic constraints, even though individual public servants may be highly incited by such initiatives.
- altering community perceptions of poverty stricken citizens may require additional research and interventions that include other disciplines in the Social and Behavioural Sciences. Such interventions may reach far beyond the application of Programme and Project Management.
- Long term relations between the disciplines, inter-governmental communities and most importantly society may prove to hold concrete, sustainable solutions to socio-economic ills.
- Democracy should be promoted as participation and involvement rather than representation and subsequently transform from a political arrangement to a set of ethical ideals that are embraced by every citizen.
- Scholarly efforts should foster ever-expanding and self critical communities of inquiry in search of solutions to socio-economic ills.

None of the aforementioned efforts included in the multidisciplinary and translational research interventions would have carried any real transformational value if it was conducted with ignorance towards community engagement and thus, community engagement had to play a fundamental role in the process. The following section provides insight into the role that community engagement played during this intervention.

### **Community engagement**

Thompson and Kinne (1990) explain a community as an organised system that comprise of individual members and sectors that include a diversity of distinctive characteristics and interrelationships. The aforementioned sectors comprise of groups of individuals that signify

specialised functions, activities or interests within the community system where each sector functions within definite boundaries to address the needs of its members and of those whom the sector is intended to benefit (Thompson & Kinne, 1990). Fawcett et al. (1995) delineate community engagement as the process of functioning collaboratively with and through groups of people associated by geographic proximity, particular interests, or analogous conditions to address issues that affect the well-being of those people. It is an influential and robust instrument to bring about environmental and behavioural changes that will progress the circumstances of a community and its members and it often requires partnerships and coalitions to assist with the activation of resources and influence systems, change relationships amongst partners and serve as a catalyst for change.

In addition, McKnight & Kretzmann (1990) suggest primary, secondary and potential building blocks as a mapping technique to explain a community and its sectors. Primary building blocks are described as assets and capacities that are located within the community which are largely under community control such as: “personal income, home based expenditures, cultural organisations, associations of business, individual business, individual capacities, religious organisations, citizen associations, and gifts of labelled people”; Secondary building blocks are described as assets located within the community that are largely controlled by people external to the community such as: “parks, public schools, hospitals, public health agencies, police, vacant buildings and land, higher education institutions, energy and waste resources”; Potential building blocks are described as resources that are located outside of the community that are simultaneously controlled by people outside of the community such as: “Public information, capital improvement expenditures, and welfare expenditures”. The primary building blocks relevant to this article are identified as follows: “personal income, home based expenditures, associations of business, individual business, individual capacities, and gifts of labelled people”; The secondary building blocks relevant to this article are identified as follows: “parks, public health agencies, police, vacant land, higher education institutions, home affairs and social security”; The potential building blocks relevant to this article are identified as follows: “Public information, capital improvement expenditures, and welfare expenditures”. In discerning praxis at the intersection between theory, practice and reflection, it becomes evident that within the community of Potchefstroom as an organised system, individual members are found who display distinctive characteristics. Within this same organised system of a community, sectors such as the day labourer sector is found and display the following elements: the day labourer sector has distinctive characteristics such as that these individuals are mostly male who are in search of once-off tasks that offers immediate remuneration and

all of these men fall into the category of being severely poverty stricken; day labourers are simultaneously recognised as groups of individuals that signify special functions, activities or interests such as performing short term tasks, waiting on street corners for temporary employment earning a day's wage or finding food for themselves and their families; and each of these sectors function within definite boundaries to address the needs of its members and of those whom the sector intends to benefit. The latter is understood in the context of this article as that day labourers also function within definite boundaries either presented by the community or amongst themselves such as specific locations where the day labourers wait to find employment and a rotation system of employment. If the latter boundary is ignored or disregarded, such as at the end of the month, when desperation is high and work scarce, it often results in verbal and occasionally physical confrontation. Interrelations between the individual members of the community and interrelations between the various sectors in the community became evident through the research and when the research was translated into action by addressing the challenges that the day labourers as a sector within a community have. Through this intervention, both lecturers and students became critically aware of the fact that the day labourer programme had to be spearheaded by a process of collaborative functioning between lecturers, students, day labourers, public officials within the three spheres of government and the private sector, associated by the geographic proximity of Potchefstroom. It also became clear that all of the aforementioned stakeholders needed to have a vested interest and commitment in addressing the socio-economic ail of citizens in South Africa or at least to establish a point of departure from which to better the lives of poverty inflicted citizens.

With an understanding of the fact that the 2014 Day Labourer Programme was the first of its kind amongst academic disciplines within Social and Government Studies, it became evident that community-engagement is an influential and robust instrument to lay the foundation of environmental change in the sense that under-utilised park land could become useful as it offered the potential to house micro farms to supply food to the poverty inflicted. Community-engagement simultaneously displayed an ability to bring about behavioural change amongst members of the larger Potchefstroom community to establish inclusive solutions to poverty and inequality that will progress the circumstances as a collective rather than avoiding or typifying the poor. Community-engagement also implied that partnerships between the public and private sectors had to be negotiated in order for resources to be activated as a catalyst for change. McKnight & Kretzmann (1990) suggested primary, secondary and potential building blocks brought clarity in terms of mapping the larger Potchefstroom

community and its sectors that would engage in the process of addressing poverty and inequality amongst day labourers in Potchefstroom.

### **Recommendations**

Socio-economic ails in a society have proven itself to be stubborn phenomena that often leave its recipients in a desperate state. Observed through the lens of a democratic developmental form of state, the phenomena beseech deliberate action, not only from government but also from the nation as a whole.

Teaching a future generation of public servants therefore necessitate to learn students not only recognise the socio-economic ails within the ambit of legislation and policy frameworks, but to conduct scientific research in order to establish and action innovative, contemporary solutions in the eradication of these desperate realities. In order to do so, such an intervention requires meticulously planned components to guide students through the process of recognising the palpable issues at hand, from a variety of scientific perspectives. During this intervention, multidisciplinary, translational research and community engagement played a fundamental role in the success of the intervention. Considering the fact that this intervention is by nature a long term initiative, the following recommendations are made:

- The application of Choi & Pak's (2006) elements of multidisciplinary provides a firm basis and framework from which students in participating disciplines can obtain a multi-faceted insight into phenomena such as socio-economic ails in a society and is therefore a critical inclusion to establish an understanding amongst students of the various angles of incidence that such phenomena can include;
- Translational research, as distinct research approach, that guides students to grasp the significant importance of conducting thorough research in terms of phenomena and to action such research so that it benefits a society.
- Community engagement is one of the pillars of a successful democracy. Understanding the complex nature and compilation of a society is a decisive component of any community-based intervention.
- Programme and Project Management as modern transformational instrument that initiate and sustain change transform strategy into action and subsequently

The importance of the inclusion of the aforementioned approaches and methodologies are found in the fact that students were not only enabled to recognise the character of socio-economic phenomena, they were able to observe it as seen through the lenses of other disciplines as well. Students were not only enabled to conduct research on the phenomena, they were also empowered to initiate change. Simultaneously students were led to recognise

the tools through which they would initiate sustained change and address socio-economic ail in a community.

### **Conclusion:**

This article is not an end in itself and it needs to be stated that the possibilities of multidisciplinary, translational research and community engagement in the context of social sciences hold a myriad of possibilities to address a variety of socio-economic ails. In conclusion, a group of skilled students became change agents and a new working day filled with hope, freedom from fear, fed dependents, and an ability to reach health care and social support from government was about to dawn upon the day labourers of Potchefstroom.

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