COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: BUILDING PEDAGOGICAL PATHWAYS

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ABSTRACT

Momentum is growing steadily around community engagement, both locally and abroad, as an equal partner to the initial two missions in higher education: teaching and research. As attention grows towards community engagement, academics will have to consider how to advance this mission within their teaching and research functions. It is within this context that it becomes crucial to provide clarity on the terms "engagement" and "co-production of knowledge", more especially, how social work education can enable community engagement. This article provides a conceptual review of these terms and builds a rationale for engagement. It also reflects the natural synergy social work education has with engagement and highlights three important pedagogical pathways, namely community-based teaching, research, and outreach as a means to advancing engagement in social work education.

Keywords: community; engagement; education; pedagogy; outreach

INTRODUCTION

Attention has grown around the "third mission" of universities, namely community engagement and community-academic partnerships (Schuetze 2010, 13) both locally and abroad (Lazarus et al. 2008; Netshandama 2010; Oluwa 2012; Thelin 2004; Weerts 2014). In spite of this, universities and their various disciplinary homes have continued to perpetuate their image as privileged ivory towers, with a huge disconnect from the needs of their immediate communities (Albertyn et al. 2010; Duke 2009).

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Furthermore, local scholars have lamented that most academics did not understand what community engagement entailed and the most effective ways that universities and their respective disciplines could engage with their local communities (Albertyn and Daniels 2009; Lazarus et al. 2008; Slamat 2010). These could be possible reasons for the lack of "strategically planned and systematic endeavours," in relation to community engagement in higher education in South Africa (CHE 2010, 3).

Although teaching and research are regarded as the first two missions of higher education (Schuetze 2010), it has recently been argued that community engagement cannot really be separated from teaching and research, but rather it is integral to teaching and research in a community context (Hollander and Hartley 2000; Sax 2000). Engagement as the third mission, "conveys the idea of reciprocity of relationship … the shared and joint conceiving, creating, owning and using of research" (Duke 2009, 179). More importantly, it seeks to prepare students for participation in a democratic society, to be more socially responsive to meet the broader needs of society and to democratise the knowledge production process. The White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education, in particular, has emphasised that higher education institutions should "demonstrate social responsibility and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes" (Department of Education 1997, 10; Lazarus et al. 2008). This mandate coheres with the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997 cited in Department of Social Development 2013), which argued that social work should be based on a developmental approach and promote the involvement of all in their development and growth, through democratic participation and an emphasis on people-centeredness, sustainability and ubuntu.

In order to further entrench community engagement within the aforementioned mandates, the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF) was launched to:

- advocate, promote, support, monitor and strengthen community engagement at South African higher education institutions;
- further community engagement at higher education institutions in partnership with all stakeholders with a sustainable social and economic impact on South African society; and
- foster an understanding of community engagement as integral to the core business of higher education (Watson et al. 2011).

The Higher Education Quality Committee's Framework for Institutional Audits (CHE 2004, 15) expressed that community engagement could be seen as "initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied, to address issues relevant to its community." They acknowledged that community engagement takes a variety of forms, which range from informal and relatively unstructured activities such as volunteerism to more structured and formal academic programmes such as service learning and action research, designed

to focus on particular community needs (CHE 2004). The views of CHE (2004) are consistent with international literature, which supports student volunteerism, community outreach, service learning and action research (Beere, Votruba, and Wells 2011; Zuber-Skerritt 2015), but which also articulates the need for engaged scholarship. Viewed holistically, engaged scholarship then refers to "scholarly outreach and engagement activities that reflect a knowledge-based approach to teaching, research, and service for the direct benefit of external audiences" (McNall et al. 2009, 318). Moreover, engaged scholarship reorients traditional academic culture towards participatory epistemology which enables students and academics to become knowledge producers, and which shifts the role of community groups to collaborators in knowledge generation (Saltmarsh 2017).

It is within this context and in response to the call made by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC 2004) to strengthen community engagement, that this paper will build a rationale for its consideration in social work and attempt to illuminate three pathways in which to embed it in education. Social work has a natural synergy with community engagement, more particularly for aligning its pedagogical strategies to drive engagement within higher education (Ishisaka et al. 2004; Lemieux and Allen 2007; Lucas 2000). Although attention to community engagement in other disciplinary milieus is growing steadily, little scholarly attention exists in relation to social work in South Africa except for the work of two authors (Green 2009; Maistry 2012). Maistry (2012) unpacked notions of social responsibility and how it could be inculcated in students through community engagement service learning, in social work education. Green (2009) concretised this by describing how practice education modules could be redesigned as service learning modules, for a more development conscious South Africa at Stellenbosch University. She argued for a more deliberate effort to "indigenise and shape the requirements of the practice-education modules to make them appropriate to the demands of social work practice and thus enable students to make a decisive contribution to social development" (Green 2009, 92).

This article focuses on the scholarly gap in the literature by shedding light on how community engagement is conceptualised, the principles underpinning engaged work, its synergy with social work education, and how social work can advance social responsibility and societal well-being through its teaching, research and service efforts. The latter three approaches are elucidated as pedagogical pathways for consideration in social work education, towards the end of this article. The following subsection details the methodology used to guide the development of this article.

METHODOLOGY

This article emerged from a review of pertinent literature in this field and was largely descriptive. The purpose of a literature review is to develop "theoretical sensitivity" in an emerging area and to provide a deeper understanding and awareness of the topic under

review (Morris 2006, 82). A preliminary database search for literature pertaining to the main themes of this article was undertaken using the keywords "university-community engagement South Africa" and "community engagement South Africa social work". The search yielded 10 articles with only one article that was written in a social work journal. The search engines used for this purpose included SA ePublications. The book chapter written by another social work scholar (Green 2009) was identified independently of this search. An international search was done using the following engines: Google Scholar, EBSCOhost and ScienceDirect, which yielded 4 032 publications using the keywords "community engagement" and "community engagement and social work".

The scope of the search was based on the objectives of the article, namely conceptual clarity around community engagement, the values and principles undergirding engagement, and engagement activities of relevance to social work education. Hence the themes and sub-headings. There was limited availability of literature related to social work at the interface of community engagement in South Africa as compared to international literature which is growing exponentially across varied disciplines in higher education (Calleson, Jordan, and Seifer 2005; Fitzgerald, Burak, and Seifer 2010; Peters et al. 2005). Hence scholarly work related to community engagement in higher education, internationally across disciplines was reviewed with a particular focus on the sub-themes that related to university community engagement. From the returned articles, those having direct relevance to the objectives of this article were selected by both the principal author and her research assistants. Those which reflected definitional aspects and could contribute to advancing community engagement within social work were selected. These articles together with those located in international literature on social work were used to illuminate the pedagogical pathways identified. Eventually the following themes emerged: 1) conceptualisations of community engagement, 2) rationale for community engagement, 3) values and principles that undergird community engagement, 4) relevance to social work and community engagement activities that interface with social work education, and 5) building pedagogical pathways in education.

FINDINGS: THEMES EMERGING FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEWED

Theme 1: Conceptualising Community Engagement

Given the conceptual challenges around community engagement, many South African universities and those abroad have been adopting their own definition of community engagement, depending on the nature of their engagement activities. As a starting point a community is defined as both in geographic terms such as a neighbourhood or town or any other place-based context or in social terms such as a group of people (Phillips and Pitman 2015). International scholar Boland (2012, 42) noted that as community

engagement gathers support it has become "more diverse because the idea of engagement embraces not just a wide breadth of activities but, more significantly a diversity of goals. It now comprehends a diversity of activities ranging from community-based/ service learning (CB/SL), community engaged research, scholarship of engagement, public engagement, advocacy and intellectual leadership." Community engagement is an emerging area in higher education in South Africa and while the purpose of community engagement has been articulated by the Council on Higher Education, universities have struggled to conceptualise and implement community engagement (HEQC/CHESP 2006). The Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET), however, created a space for the aforementioned activities, by offering the following comprehensive definition of community engagement as being "a systematic relationship between Higher Education (HE) and its environment that is characterised by mutually beneficial interaction, in a way that it enriches learning, teaching and research and simultaneously addresses societal problems, issues and challenges" (CHET 2003 cited in Mtawa, Fongwa, and Wangenge-Ouma 2016, 126). This definition emphasises then that community engagement practices should benefit both the university's teaching and research and the external communities.

Internationally the engaged university has been conceptualised as a university that harnesses its intellectual, disciplined-based resources to deal with community issues and concerns and as an institution where community issues and concerns are incorporated as a legitimate part of the scholarly, academic work of all departments, academics and students (Bringle and Hatcher 2002; Weerts and Sandmann 2010). The fully engaged university therefore serves the public and provides outreach to the community by honouring the value of community partners and incorporating this partnership in ways that advances the institution's teaching and research goals. It "views its direct engagement with the public as a vehicle for conducting more significant research, more effective teaching and more impactful outreach and service" (Furco 2010, 388). This interaction "enriches and expands the learning and discovery functions of the academic institution while also enhancing community capacity" (Holland 2005 cited in Bridger and Alter 2006, 170).

Recently, the Carnegie Foundation in the United States, offered the most comprehensive definition of community engagement as being the "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Carnegie Foundation cited in Gleeson 2010, 124). The emphasis on the concept of reciprocity creates a profoundly different notion of the mission of the university. Equally important has been the shift in the literature from the terms research, teaching and service to the terms "discovery, learning and engagement" (Hall 2009, 16) which suggests how engagement is positioning itself within the traditional teaching and research roles. While notions of community service and outreach have previously used a one-way path to delivering knowledge and service to communities, scholars have recently conceptualised the term engagement to describe a two-way approach to

collaborating with community partners to deal with societal needs (Boyer 1996). As Boyer (1997, 92) said then engaged scholarship meant "connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civil and ethical problems." This new philosophy of engagement distances itself from the notion of the university as the expert in the production of knowledge, and moves towards a more collaborative model where communities play an enhanced role in creating and sharing knowledge for the mutual benefit of both the academic sector and society (Beere, Votruba, and Wells 2011). This lends itself to a more symbiotic co-production of knowledge, which will be discussed in the final subsection.

Theme 2: Rationale for Community Engagement

Hall (2009, 13) argued that the collective intellectual resources of universities represent the largest accessible, available, and "underutilised resource for community change and sustainability." He added that academics need to embrace their roles as "citizen and expert" simultaneously in order to foster a synergistic relationship between scholarly achievement and public good. Furthermore, academics need to encourage graduate students to develop a greater awareness of how their discipline can contribute to solving real-world problems, as well as how disciplinary knowledge can be transformed through interaction with real-world settings. Academics therefore offer "to his or her local culture the intellectual power derived from an academic discipline", while "the locality in return offers to the academic the particularity, the concreteness, of lived experience in time and place. The language and thought of each, academic intellect and public life" are thus transformed through "civic conversation" (Bender 1993, 145).

In addition, both local and international scholars have also begun to document the significant contributions that community partnerships have brought to improve student learning, innovative teaching practices and scholarship that have positive benefits for communities (Fitzgerald, Burak, and Seifer 2010; Oldfield 2008; Osman and Castle 2006; Peters et al. 2005; Reddy 2004, 38). The growing empirical evidence which attests to the multiple benefits for students, academics and communities to be part of mutually beneficial engaged relationships (Ishimaru 2014; Marullo and Edwards 2000; O'Meara et al. 2011) strengthens the need for a more deeper consideration of community engagement in teaching and research in social work.

Theme 3: Values and Principles Underpinning Engagement

Graduate education has in most instances been perceived to be individualistic by virtue of its sole focus on the transmission of knowledge. This is antithetical to the collaborative nature of engagement, which seeks to engage with societal challenges and to develop graduate attributes for civic good (Beere, Votruba, and Wells 2011). The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC 2006) in fact called upon universities to produce graduates that are well rounded and grounded, with a strong sense of social and

civic responsibility. Despite this, Bain-Selbo (2010 cited in Beere, Votruba, and Wells 2011) lamented the failure of academics to inculcate values of citizenship and social justice and asked whether it was appropriate for higher education to assume that the values crisis would resolve itself. He spoke out about the loss of social connectedness with welfare and argued the need to educate students to become better citizens who adopt democratic values.

The principles undergirding engagement are in keeping with the call to develop graduates who are more socially responsible (Kruss, Haupt, and Visser 2016; Maistry 2012; Strier 2011). Scholars have articulated social responsibility, respect for community partners, academic neutrality, accessibility, integration, coordination, and resource partnership as key guiding principles for engagement (Ahmed and Palermo 2010; Holland 2005; Kellogg Commission 1999; Maistry 2012; O'Meara 2008; O'Meara et al. 2011). Others have articulated them as values and norms that involve interactive, collaborative, and respectful community-university partnerships that result in mutually beneficial outcomes and are dedicated to learning with an emphasis on the "community, responsibility, and stewardship" (Beere, Votruba, and Wells 2011; Kellogg Commission 1999; Sandmann 2009, 81). These values and principles are crucial to driving the transformation of higher education in South Africa. They are also salient in terms of "redressing past inequalities, in order to transform the higher education system, to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities … [to] lay the foundations for the development of a learning society which stimulates, directs and mobilises the creative and intellectual energies of all people towards meeting the challenge of reconstruction and development" (Department of Education 1997, 7).

In terms of social work it can "give meaning to people's experiences … to look at the context of social problems and question the relations of power, domination, and inequality that shape the way knowledge of the world is produced … [and to] envision ourselves and the people with whom we work as active participants and co-learners in the process of change" (Finn and Jacobson 2003, 73). This is clearly articulated within the global definition of social work which supports principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities as central to shaping the values of social work students (IFSW 2014). Local scholar Maistry (2012, 142) rightly asserted that it was incorrect to assume "that the discipline of social work pedagogically and/or epistemologically inculcates social responsibility in students." She concluded that there is a need for social work to develop and promote social and civic responsibilities in students, who can become agents and beneficiaries through service learning.

Theme 4: Social Work and Community Engagement

In South Africa social inequality became entrenched in all domains of life, including higher education through the systemic exclusion of certain groups of people under

colonialism and apartheid. Contemporary higher education is still characterised by social, political and economic inequalities, hence how community engagement responds to social justice challenges and how this is integrated into teaching, learning and curricula is crucial. Social work education was influenced by these inequalities and the current era of neo-liberalism has to some degree silenced social work's mandate of working for social justice and social change (Smith and Ferguson 2016).

The global definition of the social work profession is clear that "social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people (IFSW 2014). Despite this, Reisch and Jarman-Rohde (2000, 210) questioned whether social work schools were "educating students for the changing practice environment or to 'change' the changing practice environment." Reisch (2013, 718) in particular expressed disappointment over social work's inattentiveness to social justice and "structural transformation," saying that "the learning experiences of students have been depoliticised."

Pelton (2001) described social justice as an individual rights issue, categorised by basic human needs, diversity, non-discrimination, equality, and universal social policies, and a group or community issue characterised by historical discrimination, oppression, marginalisation, and selective social policies. Community engagement enables opportunities to advance interaction with societal issues, social justice and empowerment. It does so by allowing social work to recognise the partiality of its knowledge and embrace alternative paradigms, but moreover to reconsider its processes, roles and relationships with others. For too long, universities have functioned within the confines of neo-liberalism, seeking to transmit knowledge quantitatively without encouraging social work progressive critical thinkers (Sewpaul 2013). Reisch (2013, 724) asserted that "reawakening curiosity" and "deconstructing discourse" can be transformed into learning practice techniques for social change. More importantly, he argued that the increasing complexity of community and social problems require alternative approaches to pedagogy that demand learning through dialogue, participation, critical and innovative thinking as well as interdisciplinary collaboration. Engaged scholarship creates this pathway within social work education and should be harnessed to strengthen social work's mandate for social change and development.

In keeping with social works' mandate, issues of social equity and justice should be interweaved into social work curricula, as students will ultimately be confronted with these issues in the communities they engage (Maistry 2012; Smith 2014; Smith and Ferguson 2016). Freire (1974, 2000), a Brazilian educator and author, wrote passionately about the philosophy of pedagogy and the salience of teaching students to respond to oppression through societal institutions and policies. His philosophy has direct relevance to both community engagement and social work education, as his notion of education for liberation reflects a process whereby students are supported, as they reflect on their knowledge either to maintain current conditions or to challenge them to become agents

of progressive social change. Education for liberation creates a distinct pathway for community organising and social change which resonates with community engagement scholarship. Critical pedagogy which is interrelated with Freire's (1974) work also resonates with engagement, as it focuses on transformation through the educational process as opposed to the linear transmission of knowledge. This is precisely what the new philosophy of engagement speaks to as student empowerment is facilitated. Hence through collaborative work educators and students become both knowledge creators and mobilisers (Ife 2008; Weick 1993).

Hence rather than mechanistically producing graduates to follow a predetermined pattern, educators prepare students to deal with unknown situations and empower them to have knowledge about social justice issues. Social works' mandate can thus be actualised through the pursuit of community engagement, as it can educate and develop social work students to become social change agents who work to improve social conditions. While community engagement is not overtly expressed within the four-year Bachelor of Social Work degree in South Africa, several of the exit level outcomes present opportunities to pursue engaged scholarship. One of the purposes of the Degree indicates "competence to empower communities to enhance their social functioning" and the "ability to promote, restore, maintain and enhance the functioning of communities" (Lombard, Grobbelaar, and Pruis 2013, 9). Moreover, the exit level outcomes indicate the planning of social work research and the use of various methods to raise awareness, develop "critical consciousness about the structural forces of oppression, exclusion and disempowerment, and use such awareness to engage people as change agents" (Smith 2014, 323).

Hong and Hodge (2011) proposed ways to integrate social justice into education, saying that it was important for academics to teach students, and to develop tools for the analysis of political, economic and social structures of society and how these structures perpetuate oppression. This is done by acquiring a vision of a just society that provides for the basic needs of all members of society, the realisation of the full potential of society's people and developing an understanding of the power of people, to change unjust structures and to develop the skills for empowerment of people to work towards a just society. In addition, diversity related and social justice related courses provide insight into multiple perspectives, and can promote respect for diverse groups and alternative forms of knowledge. Despite these potential opportunities, little discourse or empirical work, related to engagement which focuses on volunteerism, community-based outreach and how participatory research is evident in social work literature locally.

In contemporary social work most students are being prepared for neo-liberal social work practice contexts (Sewpaul 2013). Given that the new Degree articulates the need to integrate content on oppression, inequality and injustice, educators need to endeavour more strongly to create opportunities which enable students to respond to structural conditions in marginalised communities. Thus while traditional placements in child welfare organisations and both government and non-government organisations

may expose students to issues of criminal justice, substance abuse, and family life, and may offer them some opportunity for community work, there is little opportunity for placements in the more progressive social justice organisations and community spaces that can offer social work students opportunities to learn about empowerment, mobilisation and social change. Social work can only be transformed into social justice work, through the democratisation of the processes of knowledge development and the promotion of new forms of community partnership and participation, which calls for a fundamental rethinking of the nature and direction of social work practice (Finn and Jacobson 2003). This can be achieved through practice learning that is more relevant in unconventional practice settings of activism, social justice advocacy work and political and social organisations which will allow for a reconceptualisation of social work (Smith and Ferguson 2016). Contemporary models of community engagement resonate with the objectives of social development and social justice work so as to enhance social and economic development, to include socially excluded communities, to promote human rights and to work towards the well-being of people.

The birth of the new democracy two decades ago challenged social work education to reconceptualise education, so as to meet a developmental approach. This required that education reposition itself at the nexus between university and society, and to develop a new cadre of graduates who could apply social work knowledge and skills in real-world contexts that could enhance societal well-being. In addition to rendering traditional therapeutic services, the developmental welfare policy called for envisaged interventions that could support and empower local community initiatives through community development. Although more relevant social work knowledge appears to have been infused into contemporary social work curricula, "practice learning which would provide the experiential learning and praxis for social work students is not always adequately provided (Smith and Ferguson 2016, 197). Green (2009) supported this idea that the redesign of practice education modules into service learning modules at the University of Stellenbosch required that students had a stronger presence in the community and were charged with a body of work that added value to the community. While this process required greater collaboration with social work practitioners in community settings, she supported the need for other academic departments to revisit alternative practice contexts. This requires greater innovation in ways to educate social work students for engagement with social justice and social change practice, through greater exposure to more progressive, radical, politicised practice contexts (Smith and Ferguson 2016, 197).

It is in these contexts that enhanced learning regarding locally contextualised and indigenous knowledge can be enhanced (Gray, Coates, and Yellowbird 2008; Thabede 2008). One of the ways community engagement may influence social work education is through embedding community-based service activities, which are linked explicitly to civic learning objectives within the current traditional academic learning objectives. At its best academics may create opportunities for projects on community service that

will enable students and community members to have the opportunity to become co-educators, co-learners, and co-generators of knowledge. Dialogue in the classroom context should consider what is happening in communities and therefore fieldwork placements and community projects should strengthen opportunities to engage and mutually solve problems. Fieldwork practicum enables for insights into learning the history and development of communities and how communities organise themselves. However, fieldwork must move beyond itself to service learning as will be discussed in the subsection that follows. Student learning should move beyond classroom spaces to community spaces through assignments and other projects. Community members can be regarded as "experts" and "their wisdom is central to informing organising" that will make a difference in their communities (Mizrahi et al. 2016, 61). The pedagogy in community engagement is reflective of the parallel social work processes as both cultivate empathetic connections with communities, which is paramount to social work practice.

Theme 5: Building Pedagogical Pathways in Education

The aim of community-engaged scholarship differs from traditional scholarship because it can be likened to a productive architecture wherein community participants act as "co-architects and co-researchers" (Sandmann 2006, 80). "The emergence of this new philosophy challenges the traditional view of community engagement where community-engaged work is no longer seen as merely public service and outreach, but rather to facilitate the institutions' achievement of their research/discovery and teaching/education goals" (Furco 2010, 381). Engagement is achieved therefore through optimising opportunities for "community-engaged research, community-engaged teaching and community-engaged outreach/public service" (Furco 2010, 381). These are highlighted so that social work academics may reconsider bringing them more strongly into education.

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED TEACHING

Albertyn and Daniels (2009, 420) argued the importance of recognising "community settings for learning." Other scholars called on academics to reflect more on how knowledge taught in classrooms can be responsibly applied to problems in society (Sandmann, Saltmarsh, and O'Meara 2008). Teaching civic mindedness to social work students then should include teaching within community settings, creating awareness of contemporary social issues in local societies, promoting respect for diversity, enabling multicultural competence, and most importantly, encouraging a commitment to engage in community service. Community-engaged teaching should therefore incorporate pedagogies in courses that engage students in community-based learning activities. Service learning is one pedagogical tool which provides a means for connecting

students' academic study with community and society with the intent to promote active and responsible citizenship (Zlotkowski 2007). In an international and local context, social work scholars have acknowledged the importance of community-based learning and service learning (Green 2009; King 2003; Lucas 2000; Maistry 2012). As Hood (2002) wrote, learning should take place in the context and place in which learning is applied.

Service learning is underpinned by three critical components that are interrelated, namely service to the community, learning that is linked to course content, and reflection (Bringle and Hatcher 2002). The common characteristics of this include experiences that are meaningful, bear academic credit, deal with societal issues, enhance academic knowledge, develop critical thinking, and embed reflective practice (McIlrath 2012). Students engage in service activities that deal with social issues in the community and in a way that the community may serve as an "authentic learning laboratory" in which students study complex societal issues, and "develop and implement action plans in the context of the course curriculum" (Furco 2010, 385). Like community-based research, in service learning the objective is to increase community capacity and social capital (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2000).

Recently, service learning has also begun to emphasise social change and social justice which suggests that educators consider how to more vociferously integrate social change and social justice into the outcomes. Service learning, however, is only being embraced by some social work departments. Maistry (2012) noted that while service learning creates opportunities for social responsibility, it is challenging for those social work departments that are entrenched in fieldwork practice. Social work scholars Lemieux and Allen (2007) noted that not all community-based learning can be construed as service learning. They made the important distinction between service learning and required field practice, saying that the latter emphasises developing students' knowledge and skills and emphasises learning over community service. Service learning in contrast is determined by the needs of the community being served and not solely the learning outcomes (Williams, King, and Koob 2002). Maistry (2012) added that service learning should explicitly intend to advance student development and inculcate social responsibility among students.

Service learning enables reflexivity, which leads to praxis and engagement with oppressive dynamics and structural injustice (Freire in Smith and Ferguson 2016, 200). The process of reflexivity helps to deal with "multiple interrelations between power and knowledge, and acknowledges the inclusion of self in the process of knowledge creation in social work practice" (Lam, Wong, and Leung 2007, 91). More earnest consideration should therefore be given to the reconfiguration of practice education modules into service learning modules in social work. They should be firmly grounded in service learning theory and pedagogical principles in a social work context (Williams and Reeves 2004). Green (2009) provided useful guidelines for same for other social work academic departments to consider.

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED RESEARCH

Another important activity associated with community engagement is community-based research, which focuses research not "on" but "with" communities (Calleson, Jordan, and Seifer 2005; Schuetze 2012). It emphasises participatory research, which recognises the socially constructed nature of knowledge and the asymmetric relationship between socio-economic and cultural positions of participants (Schuetze 2012). In community-engaged research initiatives, the difference is that members of the community need to participate in the research enterprise not as research subjects, but rather as "valued research advisors, partners or co-investigators" (Furco 2010, 383).

Community-based participatory research has gained attention in work with marginalised communities, making it an important pedagogical tool to advance the social justice mandate of social work. In this model, research questions are approached in a collaborative way, where "the community of interest" and not individual participants is the research focus. Academics and students are therefore not objective investigators but "active learners" in this process (Ferreira and Gendron 2011). Furthermore, it is premised on co-learning about issues of concern and is characterised by the reciprocal transfer of expertise, shared decision-making and mutual ownership of power. Hence there is a two-way process of building authentic partnerships, inclusive participation, power sharing and equity and working collaboratively with communities to find solutions and generate contextually relevant knowledge (Netshandama 2010). This mirrors developmental social work that uses an assets-based community development approach, which begins with engaging the community, so that the community worker is a facilitator and partner in helping the community unleash its collective potential (Gray 2002).

Moreover community engagement is predicated on the co-production of knowledge. The challenge for South African higher education institutions is "to produce knowledge through research and teaching and learning programmes" (HESA 2007, 15). Community-based knowledge is critical for social work education because the latter can only be strengthened through engaging with communities, to have a deeper understanding of the realities that social work must respond to. In this vein, Gray (2002) called for a reconceptualisation of social work and the need to rediscover its indigenous roots away from the brand of professionalised academic social work that comes from the industrialised West. She added that African traditional models of helping in the community, which were family-based and drew on African culture, prevailed before being replaced by individualistic Western models of helping which failed to incorporate collective interests that characterise traditional practices. In a social work context knowledge and practice are dynamic and fluid and find themselves frequently reconceptualised, as they are influenced by the context in which they are practiced (Gray and Webb 2013). The salience of social work knowledge responding to the context within which it is located is particularly important, given that it requires very different knowledge and practice forms in comparison to the neo-liberal individualised

and linear forms of social work that maintain the status quo in contemporary social work (Smith and Ferguson 2016).

Social work education in South Africa was initially predicated on Western theoretical hegemony. As Thabede (2008) argued, this has created problems because African clients may be compelled to adopt the Western world view and its healing methodologies to the exclusion of their own world view. Although Seepe (2004) believed that one of the most important instruments for socio-cultural decolonisation is Africanisation, others differ. Botha (2007), for example, pointed out the need to interrogate the balance between African and non-African in the curriculum, interrogate the "add-on" and the "integrated Africanised curriculum", which refers to identifying other relevant models and interrogate this as well and to use these insights holistically "to create a content and process model for Africanising the curriculum in a specific context" (Botha 2009, 173). Decolonisation and the creation of contextually relevant local knowledge should therefore be a combination of culturally relevant social work education and training, theoretical and methodological knowledge derived from local epistemology and that draws liberally on Western social work theory and practice methods. Thabede (2008) supported this by urging a move away from foreign frameworks calling for Afrocentric perspectives to become a significant part of the local social work base alongside other relevant Eurocentric interventions. This leaves social work with a huge task of developing and imparting such relevant knowledge but more importantly to endeavour to consider how teaching, research and community engagement can develop more contextually relevant local knowledge.

In a contemporary context, engaged scholarship creates opportunities to learn more about community perspectives and practices and to be more aware of salient community needs and issues. Engagement which enables the co-production of knowledge allows for the reclaiming of culturally more relevant knowledge, and for community voices to be expressed, acknowledges community ways of knowing, and draws on local ways of healing. In this milieu local social work educators must act as role models who can challenge issues of oppression and internalised colonisation, reclaim and contextualise African history, but yet acquire Western theoretical knowledge and engage in the reconstruction of African epistemology and pedagogical forms within higher education's mandate for engagement. Engagement with socially marginalised communities can position social work students and academics to undertake same.

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED SERVICE AND OUTREACH

Community-engaged service and outreach differ from teaching and research in that they focus on the engagement of students, faculty and staff in community-based activities that are designed intentionally to provide a genuine service to the community. "Student community service experiences, staff volunteer programmes and the engagement of faculty as expert consultants who serve the needs of the community" (Furco 2010, 386),

are examples of community service, volunteerism and outreach programmes. Cronin and Perold (2008) wrote that volunteering and social activism are similar in that both bring about potential for change, a mechanism for participation, shared values of empowerment, social inclusion, and finally, personal transformation. Volunteering encourages students to become more socially responsible, more committed to serving their communities, more empowered and more committed to education (Tansey 2012). While there is no documented literature on volunteering in social work in South Africa campus-based student volunteering initiatives are growing across other disciplines abroad (McDonald and Warburton 2001; Perry and Imperial 2001; Wilson 2000), which suggests the potential for volunteer projects to be considered in social work education.

CONCLUSION

Social work must "respond to its call to be a social justice profession and resist status quo maintenance and oppressive hegemonic discourse" (Smith 2014, 323). While academics continuously seek to strengthen their teaching and research, an equally deserving approach, namely to be productively engaged is deserving of consideration in social work education. The latter is acutely important to distilling contextually relevant knowledge and to achieving the social justice mandate of the profession through service learning. The current undergraduate qualification together with the emphasis on community creates a natural pathway to advance the co-production of knowledge in local communities and engagement in social work education. This article has highlighted the importance of academic research and teaching and learning not just in the community but "with" the community. The pathways presented create rich opportunities for ongoing community collaboration and transformation not only for community good but also for ensuring the relevance of education and the strengthening of graduate attributes that promote civic responsibility.

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