STRENGTHENING SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EDUCATION CAPABILITIES

Anneline Keet
Lecturer, Department of Social Work,
University of the Free State
keetacs@ufs.ac.za

ABSTRACT

This research paper argues that universities can collaboratively generate productive spaces for social work students to develop as active citizens who can contribute to social transformation. For students to develop the ability to engage more inclusively with social reality, they need to engage with their own worldviews through a process of critical inquiry. Pedagogies that facilitate such critical investigations need to consider how such social realities, often characterised by challenging circumstances, shape students' identities through their intrinsic knowledge. This paper explores how these sets of knowledge resident within a cohort of 2013, second year social work students influence their understanding of social justice when engaging with diverse client populations and the influence of education to develop critical inquiry skills. A qualitative case-study design was used with thirty one participants selected through a purposive sampling method. Data were analysed through narrative analysis. The research findings can contribute towards deliberations around curriculum designs that facilitate non-discriminatory social work practice.

Key words: pedagogies, citizenship, graduate attributes, social work education, social justice, diversity, educational capabilities

INTRODUCTION

The university is a space where students' full human development through higher education should be an important pedagogical focus. Moir (2011) thus challenges universities about their role in shaping the social and cultural landscape through students who see themselves as global citizens through democratic discourses. For Moir (2011) and the South African White Paper on Higher Education (1997), universities should produce independent learners with analytical, problem-solving and communication skills facilitating their ability to critically engage with different views. This is also true for social workers who Dominelli (2002) argues must challenge the distorted images of poor people and display the strengths of those who struggle to transcend social exclusion. She is concerned that through social workers' expert-led practice and positioning within society, services to vulnerable groups can be paternalistic rather than empowering. This research is based on the notion that social work education should facilitate the development of critical thinkers who are world citizens, prepared to engage with and confront practices that fail to empower those it sets out to serve by investing in a set of educational capabilities.

The above argument influenced my preparation for a course on Diversity to undergraduate social work students. The course challenges students to engage with their worldviews, their socialised truths influencing this and their response to people different from themselves. Developing the skills for non-discriminatory and socially just practices requires students to engage on a personal journey where they have to confront themselves and those taken-for-granted truths that have been a part of their lives for a very long time. I observed a strong religious consciousness amongst the students in my classroom, contributing to a moralising discourse. This influences their views on service users as recipients of state support, potentially contributing to the establishment of unequal power relationships between them and service users. Students also find classroom conversations around racial diversity uncomfortable and view it as a painful past that they were not a part of. This limits their ability to see every-day poverty within its structural and historical context. Classroom practices that allow for self-learning as described by Moir (2011) could make students receptive for deeper forms of learning.

Davis and Steyn (2012) are of the impression that in order to redress entrenched inequalities and historical injustices in society, an educational system must engage with the pedagogical challenges of educating young people to develop subjectivities that embrace the principles of a just society. This article uses three educational capabilities as developed by Martha

Nussbaum to make an argument for a curriculum that can influence these pedagogical challenges. A cohort of 2013 second year students involved in a course on Diversity in Social Work participated in the study. The study was qualitative in nature and a qualitative narrative analysis as discussed by various authors (for example, Riessman, 2012; Riessman, 2008; Bernard, 2000) was used to trace the influence of socialisation and pedagogy on the students' worldviews.

The first two data sets used (a personal biography, describing who they were and why they tended to hold the views they did, and a transit walk where they observed different forms of diversity on campus and reflected on their own responses to these) gave students the opportunity to develop awareness of their own socialisation and how it influences their responses to people different from themselves. The module focuses on social identity theory, different forms of diversity significant to social work practice, and different theories guiding society's response to these forms of diversity. Classroom activities include formal lectures, group-based research and classroom presentations, discussions, debating around different views on issues and discussion blogs outside of classroom time. Students also complete a course evaluation that requires them to reflect on their worldview after completion, possible shifts and what components of the course played a role in bringing about shifts in their views. I argue that curriculum plays an essential role in developing critical reasoning skills in students, a capability needed for responsive citizenship.

The need for critical thinkers in Social Work

The Global Agenda for Social Workers and Social Development Commit-ment to Action (2012) expresses the need for social work practitioners and educators to work towards social change, social justice and human rights. In addition, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) respectively require role-players that can contribute to sustainable development. Social work plays a key role in the move towards the eradication of social inequalities, both locally and globally. The latest definition of social work by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) General Assembly in 2014 refers to a "practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work". The views set out in these documents/statements are progressive as they place social problems in the context of its societal drivers. They further indicate the focus social

workers should have to address these. This raises questions as to what attributes are needed for social workers to be key role-players towards social change, stimulating thoughts about the attributes of the social work graduate that needs to emerge from our higher education systems. Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell and Watts (2000) describe graduate attributes as the qualities, skills and understanding that a university community agrees their students should develop during their time with the institution. Graduate attributes are believed to include and go beyond disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge. These qualities prepare graduates as agents of social good in complex environments. Van Schalkwyk, Herman and Muller (2012) see this development as a process taking place over time as the student moves from first year to graduation. In social work these attributes could include a deep understanding of the social order - an understanding of how political, economic and cultural practices create levels of inequality through which vast groups of people suffer, and how this contributes to world poverty.

Walker, McLean, Dison and Vaughan (2010) investigated the contribution of professional education in universities to reduce poverty in South Africa. Their study included a Social Work Department as research site. A participant made it clear that for social workers to work towards the empowerment of people, they need a holistic understanding of the environment they work in, how historical inequalities influence people's lives today, the critical development challenges society is facing currently, and understand the forces at play within a global economy that either influence people positively or negatively. Without such an understanding, social workers risk reinforcing oppressive practices in society. Howard (2010) and Karger and Hermandez (2004) are of the impression that social work as a profession is absent largely from the public avenues where debates on social issues take place. As a result they have little influence on public policy and public opinion, referring to what they call a lack of public intellectuals within the discipline. Social welfare issues in the public domain are predominantly addressed by economists, political scientists, attorneys and professional analysts. Howard (2010) as well as Karger and Hermandez (2004) see the working conditions of social workers (high caseloads and long hours) as limiting to their ability to participate in public debate. In addition, funding arrangements through government structures may limit social workers' ability to speak the truth in unbalanced power relationships. The focus on micro-practice that fosters a commitment to the social work profession, rather than to social justice issues, is also regarded as a limitation. While working conditions can negatively influence social workers independent and intellectually rigorous contributions, education can be a key contributor to this challenge. Karger and Hermandez (2004), United State-based social work academics, make

reference to the training of social workers as contributing to this lack of public intellectualism. For them contemporary social work education often lacks analytical rigor with didactic materials containing predictable presentations of pre-digested formulations. Social work graduates are then often limited in their ability to engage in discussions of complex social problems. Brown and Rutter (2006) are of the impression that the ability to develop critical thinking skills will result in social workers that are confident and committed to well-informed, rational points of view, supported by material evidence. Without these skills they may not be able to identify social justice violations embedded in their own views of the world or within the structural arrangements of the local and global landscape. These concerns necessitate a focus on curriculum for specific social work attribute development.

Van Soest (2012:98) claims that there is a gross underestimation of how much socio-economic inequalities a political system can produce. Instead, the concern becomes the financial burden that unemployment benefits and social security create for the government, blaming the unemployed and poorest of the poor for being what she terms "welfare queens". This criticism of the poor as dependent on and thus a burden to the state is not unfamiliar to the South African situation. Humphreys (2012) suggests that social justice education must first create knowledge competencies of the historical context and dynamics of oppression and the socio-economic impact thereof. Secondly, it should develop self-awareness competencies that allow students to accept their own socio-cultural identities and how their status relates to power and privilege in the social context. Finally, their competencies must enable them to assess the impact of oppressive conditions, intervene and change unjust social conditions and evaluate interventions that relate to empowerment outcomes. In this way social work students can focus on real solutions and avoid interventions that merely adjust clients to oppressive conditions or reinforce their sense of helplessness.

The above view of social justice education for social workers ties in with the views of Walker (2009) who argues that universities, and in particular the humanities, must co-create with students a space where they can develop an enquiring mind, can allow themselves to be in doubt, critically engage in dialogue and enquiry, moderate their own judgement based on "socialised truths" and appreciate the complexity of the world they live and work in. The humanities, and in this context social work, plays an important role in "cultivating humanity by fostering students' capabilities for examining themselves, their narrative imagination and their sense of themselves as world citizens with obligations to others beyond national boundaries in a global world" (Walker, 2009:231).

Curriculum as a tool for development of critical thinkers

Wilson (2011), looking at reflective practice as a tool to equip social work decision-making in complex situations founds that the over-reliance on rules and procedures in social work practice in the United Kingdom present obstacles for learning and the development of critical reasoning skills. He argues that because social workers need to minimise the risks of vulnerable groups such as children, the demands for accountability and compliance are extraordinarily high. This is also true for the South African social welfare system. The managerialist tendencies within the profession, the discipline and the broader higher education system that follow the dictates of the contemporary logics of neoliberalism, all lead to the domination of disciplinary skills of a bureaucratic-instrumental nature and a strong reliance on proceduralised forms of practice. This is a necessary attribute of the discipline, but this reliance results in the absolute value of competence-based approaches in social work education and practice, which may impede good practice and decision making in complex situations. There is, in various forms, a connection between our modern-day obsession with proceduralised practices, and the Habermasian analysis of knowledge-constitutive interest. In *Knowledge and Human Interest,* Habermas (1972) argues that knowledge creation is guided by sets of rules justifying intentions and theories expressive of three anthropological interests of humans, the need to control, to understand and to free the self from dogma. These interests guide our thinking about education theory and practice. The technical interest correlates with a need to control, the practical with a need to understand and the emancipatory interest with a need to critically engage with knowledge and free ourselves from dogma. It seems that social justice education for social workers, according to Humphreys (2012) as discussed earlier in this text, is emancipatory in nature.

McLean (2006), however, argues that in a commodified higher education system it is often the technical interest presenting itself as competence-based approaches that receives preference above the hermeneutic and emancipatory interests. It, therefore, commoditises some forms of knowledge and marginal-ises others with students as consumers. In this context, the ability of students and educators to think about teaching and learning in ways which incorporate all three cognitive levels is limited with direct implications also for social work education and practice. Nussbaum (2011) thinks along the same lines and refers to three capabilities that are needed in education for democratic citizenship (also see Walker, 2012). Leaning on Socratic teaching and using thoughts by the Indian teachers Tagore and Nehru, the first capability she refers to is the capacity for **critical examination of oneself and one's**

traditions, or, in Socratic terms, "the examined life". This means a life that accepts no belief as authoritative simply because it has been handed down by tradition or became familiar through habit. It is a life that questions beliefs, statements and arguments and accepts those that can be justified through consistent reasoning. Developing this capacity requires the capacity to reason logically, to test what one reads or says for consistency of reasoning, correctness of fact, and accuracy of judgement. Nussbaum (2011) argues that critical thinking is particularly crucial for good citizenship in a society that needs to come to grips with the presence of people different from us, whether by virtue of religion, ethnicity, class, race, sexual orientation and many others. If we hope to develop dialogue across cultural boundaries, we need to teach students to engage in real dialogue with others first. They will only be able to do this if they are taught to engage in self-examination and to think about the reasons why they are inclined to support one thing rather than another. When Jansen (2009:171) uses the term "knowledge in the blood", he refers to knowledge so embedded in us, a psychological, emotional, social, spiritual, political and economic embeddedness, that to question its truth-value may initially sound absurd. However, classrooms where students are given the opportunity to provide arguments even for those aspects they are opposed to, help them to develop an understanding for positions opposite from those embedded in them. It is in these classrooms that students develop what Nussbaum (2007) also supports as the ability to confront tough questions with confidence, a development of the whole person for the purpose of responsive citizenship. The second capacity Nussbaum (2011) refers to is the **ability of citizens to not only see themselves as part of a local region or group, but as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern**. They have to understand both the differences that make understanding between groups and nations difficult, and the shared human needs and interests that make understanding essential, if common problems are to be solved. This requires people to learn about other nations as well as the different groups within their own nations. Awareness of the history of cultural, economic, religious and gender-based differences helps promote respect for others and are an essential underpinning for dialogue.

The third capacity Nussbaum (2011) refers to is what is termed the **narrative imagination.** This means the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story and to understand the emotions, wishes and desires of that other person. This implies an empathic understanding of another person's life experiences, and is a key value of social work. At the heart of these Tagorean capacities expressed by Nussbaum (2011) is the idea

of freedom. This includes the freedom to engage critically with tradition, the freedom to imagine citizenship in both national and world terms and to negotiate multiple allegiances with knowledge and confidence, and the freedom to reach out in the imagination, allowing another person's experience into oneself. To be able to develop these capacities, a curriculum that deals with facts in a balanced and accurate way will give all narratives their due. A curriculum is never without an agenda. Jansen (2009) refers to curriculum as an institution, explaining it as knowledge encoded in the dominant value and beliefs system, and therefore behaviours operating in an institution. In the context of this paper I would like to add that it can also be described as knowledge encoded in the discipline of social work. Curriculum is, therefore, essential to the development of particular types of graduate attributes.

Howard's (2010) concerns about social work textbooks as rudimentary raises the concern that knowledge deeply embedded in the discipline and the society of which the student is part, is transmitted without any critical engagement about its implications. It would, therefore, be useful in the design of a curriculum to clarify how much of the content and pedagogical presentation is geared towards what Habermas (1972) refers to as the anthro-pological interest of control, understanding and emancipation. Nussbaum's (2011) three educational capabilities and Humphreys's (2012) three goals for social justice education is located in the emancipatory interest, and it is my view that a curriculum designed to develop responsive citizenship must be well-balanced to incorporate emancipation, as it must set the students' minds free from restrictions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used for this project is a qualitative case study design using a 2013 cohort of students doing a module on Diversity in Social Work Practice, (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997). Purposive sampling was used where the selection of the sample was based on the judgement of the researcher, seeking participants with the characteristics to serve the purpose of the study (Strydom and Delport, 2011). The phenomena studied are an investigation into the intrinsic knowledge sets of a cohort of 2013 second year social work students, and how these may influence their social justice framework. The influence of critical inquiry as a pedagogical process to develop critical reasoning capabilities in students is investigated as a means to enhance their social justice practice lenses. Students are, therefore, able to examine themselves and their traditions critically, as indicated by Nussbaum, (2007:2011) as the first educational capability. This insight into their own

worldviews can enhance their recognition of and concern for all human beings, including those different from themselves. With the development of these two capabilities, genuine empathy, referred to by Nussbaum (2011) as an intelligent reading of other people's life stories, can develop.

Data were analysed through a narrative analysis (Riessman, 2012; 2008; Bernard, 2000), discovering similarities in participants' stories as they emerge from the different data sets. Three sets of data, serving as a narrated journey of the group of undergraduate social work students before and after exposure to the course, were obtained and analysed. The first is a personal biography done at the onset of the module. Participants engage with their views of themselves, their close personal relationships, and how these influence their value systems and their worldviews. They also reflect on their understanding of diversity at the time, and their perception of the module. The second dataset is an assignment on a transit walk participants do across the campus. They observe and reflect on various forms of diversity. They reflect on their reactions towards the different forms of diversity and what informs these responses. The third dataset is a reflective evaluation where participants provide insights into their views on different forms of diversity after completion of the module. In this research I tried to answer the following questions: Who are my students (participants) and what are those trusted foundations they emerged from? How do their trusted foundations influence their responses to various forms of diversity? Can they, through engagement with the module, develop some of these educational capabilities as indicated by Nussbaum (2011)?

The focus of the module (Diversity in Social Work) is useful for the studying of the phenomena investigated. It focuses on a broad frame of diversity areas such as gender, sexuality, race and class, disability, older people and religion. Because the participants as graduates will work with diverse groups of people, it is essential that they understand why they hold the worldviews they currently have. They, furthermore, need to understand social divisions and social structures, and understand how the social order establishes and maintains inequalities along racial, ethnic, ability and class lines. It means that they need to engage with their own thinking. In this course I make use of a Social Identity Development theory as pedagogical framework (Adams, Bell and Griffin, 2007). Social Identity Development theories describe people's awareness and understanding of oppression in the social environment (and within each person) as a developmental process. These theories also describe differences in the ways that students may incorporate, resist or redefine specific manifestations of social oppression in the context of their own identity development. Students and lecturers bring to the

classroom a range of unexamined and implicit worldviews affirmed through their everyday interactions with family, peers and communities. These established worldviews are aspects of identities that help assist them in interpreting the world and affirming their position within it. The literature suggests that as human beings we vigorously defend these interpretations against discordant information or experiences. I also use Thompson's PCS model of socialisation (2012) to provide students with a structure to under-stand the process through which their own worldviews develop. This helps them to develop an understanding of how their personal views (P) of people different from them are influenced by the cultural views (C) dominant in the communities they grow up in, and how these are institutionalised in the social structures (S) of society, resulting in the normalisation of certain practices.

Demographics

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2013) indicated that, since 1993 there has been a steady increase in the participation of black and female students in higher education. In 1993 black students represented 52% of higher education enrolments despite blacks being 89% of the population. White students made up 48% of enrolments despite being only 11% of the national population. Females in higher education were still under-represented at 43%. By 2011 these figures had changed, with black students making up 81% of higher education enrolment and females 58%. Lund (2010) reiterates the general notion that social work, together with other care professions, remains largely female dominated.

The following tables provide an overview of the demographics of the partici-pants. It focused on two aspects, namely, language of instruction and gender. The higher institution where this study was conducted has a duel medium of instruction with Afrikaans and English classes running parallel. Thirty one students (74%) out of a class of 42 students participated in the study.

Table 1: Language of instruction

English	Afrikaans
25 participants	6 participants

Table 2: Gender

Male	Female
6 participants	25 participants

FINDINGS

The data will be presented through addressing the three questions mapped out above. **The first question** "Who are my students (participants)? What are those trusted foundations that they emerge from?" yielded the following results:

Different family structures are presented (nuclear, single mother/father families, grandparents, extended family). What is important to consider is the role these groups play in the socialisation of the participant. The roles of family, religion and culture are often intertwined and participants closely attach their value systems to one or a combination of these foundations. The following quotes express some of their views:

Participant 18: *"I have many people that have a huge impact on my life. The most important three is my mother, my father and my sister....These three people are my driving force in life, my pillars of strength and my confidants."*

Participant 26: *"Family is everything I have ... They open their arms and welcome me. In the good and bad times they make sure that they avail themselves to be the shoulders to lean on. I would like to share the beauty of the united family through the difficult circumstances with others but without forgetting God's grace because we believe that through prayer everything is possible..."*

Participant 23: *"As an African, culture plays a big role in my life...I mostly value the family gatherings where some traditional and cultural issues are being discussed. In these gatherings, norms and values are being shared and the younger generation are taught how to behave. These practices and beliefs are passed on from generation to generation".*

With this understanding in mind, I had to consider the following (as expressed by Adams et al., 2007:18): "From a cognitive development point of view, factors like values, beliefs and biases that students and teachers bring to the classroom, our entrenched ways of thinking and our unexpected emotional attachments to beliefs and thought processes rooted in trusted homes, schools and religious communities, can pose cognitive development challenges." When moving students towards the emancipatory interest of education (Habermas, 1972) and the first educational capability of Nussbaum (2011), the critical examination of self and one's traditions, this inner conflict must be dealt with respectfully. Habermas's first two anthropological interests, the need to control and to understand may not pose the same challenges.

The **second research question** allowed me to explore how these trusted foundations that participants emerge from, influence their responses to various forms of diversity. Participants had to engage with and reflect on their responses to various forms of diversity. Because the various diversities confront different historical foundations of cognitive development, participant responses also vary from pain, anger and avoidance towards race, sympathy and discomfort towards people with disabilities, and an emotional/ pious engagement on issues of religion and sexuality. It is this awareness that provide insight for the student and educator to why we hold the views that we do. For the sake of clarity I will separate the different diversities and provide supporting quotes from participants for each before moving to the next. Participants engaged with racial diversity in different ways. Some experienced it as less significant to their daily lives while others acknowledged that being exposed to homogeneous environments influenced their prejudices. A few participants expressed that issues of race continue to play a significant role in their daily experiences. The following quotes are some reflections of participants' thoughts and actual experiences:

Participant (22): *"...wat my soms kwaad maak van ons land is die alewige gehammer op rassisme en mense wat benadeel word. Ek is in die jare gebore toe apartheid amper verby is, maar dit het nie my toekoms bepaal of beinvloed nie."* (*What really makes me angry sometimes is our country's constant focus on racism and people being negatively affected. I was born during the time when apartheid was almost over, but it did not influence my future.*)

Participant (8): *"Because from primary until high school I was at public schools, I was only amongst black people, so I feel uncomfortable around other races, especially white people....I had a bad experience in my first year. My roommate was supposed to be a white girl, so she insisted that they should do something about it because she can't stay with a black person in the room."*

Participant (27): *"As I started making white friends in my 3rd year level, they made me realise that racism has not really been dealt with as most of them were scared that they will be killed by black people when Mandela dies ... a time earlier this year ... I walked out of the car park and next to us a white person parked. She looked at us and locked her door... I thought aggg that's being paranoid or maybe safety until I was driving with a white person and when we got to the robots she saw a black person and she locked her car. Then it clicked to me, it has nothing to do with safety or being paranoid, it was a racial issue to me."*

With older people and people with disabilities, there are various responses. Culture does play a role in how older people are viewed, creating an awareness with me that when dealing with this topic in the context of diversity, it is essential to take indigenous views and practices in consideration.

Participant (24): *"Ageism...in my society the aged are valued and seen as a blessing and there has never been a history of structural oppression and discrimination involved with ageism as has been the case with race".*

The university environment where the participants are studying has a significant focus on inclusion of people with disabilities in daily living. This to a large extent forces them to engage with their own pre-conceived ideas, with some participants still being unsure.

Participant (29): *"Disability...I do not know how to react and act around them."*

Participant (19): *"I still find the disability aspect challenging because my fear for disabled people has not changed as I have not yet confronted it."*

Participant (11): *"Disability, because I was always feeling sorry for them, not realising that they are very much capable of living their lives fully."*

A significant number of participants who hold very strong religious values showed levels of intolerance towards religions other than their own. A few expressed views of inclusion based on religious foundations.

Participant (30): *"onkunde van verskillende godsdienste het my weerhou of my laat twyfel om betrokke te raak in besprekings oor godsdiens" (Being ill-informed about different religions resulted in me avoiding or being unsure about getting involved in discussions about religion).*

Participant (16): *"Religion...it is such a sensitive topic due to the fact that most people are rigid in their faith and are often not open to seeing another perspective."*

Participant (12): *"Discussion on diversity in religion is most challenging because I believe that my religion is the one true one and I feel offended debating about it."*

Sexual diversity sparked various responses, from participants being indifferent, some expressing inclusive viewpoints, to views against diversity based on cultural and religious value systems.

Participant (8): *"I am from a very small town where sexual diversity is forbidden, in my town there are no gays or lesbians because they are scared to come out. If they are there, it is very few of them."*

Participant (23): *"The sexual orientation as part of the diversity because sometimes it is hard for me to understand the way people live their lives e.g. (gay and lesbian)."*

Participant (9): *"Amongst the diversities that I am uncomfortable with is that of sexual orientation, particularly gays and lesbians, and the reason for that is because of my socialisation and the way I was brought up, the influence of my religion…"*

Participant (2): *"The Bible or the teachings from church tells us that we are all made in the image of God and that it is not our place to judge others, it can either be by their physical qualities or sexual orientation."*

Only a few participants engaged with gender as a form of diversity but the few who did were able to identify areas of gender inequality.

Participant (34): *"Gender inequalities... Most of us agree that women are still seen as subordinate …it is a universal law though swept under the carpet..."*

The **third research question** investigates whether students, through engagement with the module, develop some of these educational capabilities as indicated by Nussbaum (2011). Having gained more insight into the research participants, I had to tailor my expectations of what can be achieved through their engagement with this single module within a larger curriculum. I do not believe that this exposure will result in graduates who are competent in anti-discriminatory practice. At best it can make participants aware of their thinking patterns. The following quotation by Tatum (1997:18) expresses what can realistically be expected: *"As a person ascends a spiral staircase, she may stop and look down at a spot below. When she reaches the next level, she may look down and see the same spot, but the vantage point has changed."* It is within the shift of perspective where the development of Nussbaum's educational capabilities become possible.

All participants expressed a sense of awareness into their own thinking and responses to various forms of diversity, and they recorded shifts towards more inclusivity. Only two participants overtly excluded sexuality from their newly developed more inclusive views, citing their religious beliefs as reason. Below are examples of some participants' responses.

Participant (7): *"It gave me a broader view. It made me realise how much what I thought I knew was based on opinion rather than fact"*.

Participant (25): *"Through the discussions I realised my views were somewhat uninformed and of a narrow-minded source. I had to step outside of my world and enter a world and look through the eyes of other people. It enhanced my views and broadened my understanding."*

Participant (22): *"I had an insufficient knowledge of myself and how I think before. The class developed my critical thinking."*

Participant (31): *"Yes and no. Yes because as people you tend to learn from others and interaction with others helps you see things in another light. No, because my beliefs are mine, whether you like it or not, especially when it comes to religion and sexuality."*

The development of Nussbaum's (2011) educational capabilities is evident through these responses, namely the critical engagement with the self and traditions, as well as the narrative imagination, in other words an ability to start seeing the world through the eyes of others. They can also begin to place themselves amongst other groups, bound together by ties of recognition and concern.

In conclusion, participants found discussions in the class extremely helpful, especially the opportunity to argue in favour of viewpoints different from their own. The opportunity to listen to the views of other students was also indicated as helpful. Brookfield and Preskill (2005) are of the impression that discussion is a powerful way to explore supposedly settled questions and to develop a fuller appreciation for the multiplicity of human experience. They further state that discussion and democracy are inseparable because both have the same root purpose, to nurture and promote human growth.

Independent learning, through group assignments, was also regarded as an activity that optimises learning.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicated that it is important to be aware of and sensitive towards the trusted foundations that shape the worldview of students in our classrooms. The participants in this study come from diverse backgrounds and in their reflection of their own experiences, different challenges as a result of their own diversity have been expressed. This often evokes a range of emotions, from frustration to pain. The results also

illustrate that participants' socialisation indeed influences how they respond to those different from themselves, and that forms of prejudice are often locked up in this socialisation process. Responses from the reflective evaluations of participants indicated that given the opportunity to do so, they are able to develop some of the educational capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011; 2007).

CONCLUSION

While it is evident through this study that the classroom is a space where graduate attributes for the public good can be developed, this study must also be viewed in terms of its limitations. It is my view that what transpired in this particular classroom needs to be supported by an extensive project weaved through the curriculum. This will allow social work students to actively engage with information rather than being consumers of pre-digested formulas as suggested by Karger and Hermandez (2004) or as Nussbaum (2007) suggests traders of statements and counterstatements from authoritive bodies. This will allow them to become agents of transformation rather than participants within unequal societal structures. Students' abilities to hold on to educational capabilities for democratic citizenship can only really be determined through a longitudinal study. This particular research is limited yet valuable in its ability to show that cognitive shifts are possible through the appropriate pedagogical tools.

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