EDITORIAL

Education as Change: Community Service Learning (CSL) theory and epistemology

This special issue of *Education as Change* focusing on service learning emerged from the commitment of the CHESP[1] research team in the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) to disseminating research in the field. We wish to encourage scholarly enquiry into CSL, such as publishing the work emanating from the research project in the Faculty in 2004-2006, and the conference of April 2005. In a sense, then, this special issue is not an attempt to showcase examples of best practice in community service learning but about the search towards 'becoming' or 'emerging' scholarship in CSL; it is about the search for a theoretical base, an underpinning ethic and an epistemic position for CSL in South Africa. This process of 'becoming' in the discourse of Giles DeLeuze, is aptly captured in the first article by Le Grange, who proposes the (DeLeuzian) metaphor of a rhizome for alternate ways of theorising about service learning. His arguments for conceptualising service learning rhizomatically, instead of opting for a singular taproot system, come at a timeous point in the evolution of service learning and its research in South Africa. Although there were a few publications on research in this field in SA since the early 1990's, it is only in the last five to eight years that both the professional and the scholarly practice have seen significant change.

Le Grange's choice of metaphor from botany, the rhizome, also sets the tone for and provides an appropriate organising tool for the editors' arrangement and categorisation of articles in this issue. Firstly, one of the lines of inquiry of the CSL rhizome that has not been addressed sufficiently in the past is that of power and privilege in service and learning, and Osman and Attwood theoretically engage with this issue in their article. This theme is extended on a more practical level by Daniels who addresses ideas about critical citizenship in an academic service learning module in ABET. It is also a thread that is picked up by Berman, who describes both the enabling and disabling factors associated with CSL as engaged pedagogy, which calls for alternative research methodologies in higher education.

An additional rhizomic line of thinking in CSL is that of community experiences of CSL and ways of 'capturing' these, which has largely been neglected in the CSL literature. Mitchell and Humphries introduce this theme by juxtaposing notions of charity with social justice in detailing the complexity of communities' experiences of CSL and recommend participatory methods for researching this juxtaposition. Two other authors who, although not using participatory methodology, also expand on the views of communities in CSL. Alperstein explores how and to what extent communities are able to contribute to the design of CSL curricula, while Nduna uses the 'voice' of the community to provide suggestions for improvement in a specific CSL programme.

In yet a further rhizomic theme, Bringle and Hatcher examine how civic engagement and service learning provide a mechanism for re-examining the public purpose of higher education and how such engagement can become a basis for institutional change. This line of thinking is extended

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[1] Community Higher Education Service Partnerships

by Lazarus, who details the overall policy framework for community engagement and the catalytic role of the CHESP initiative in embedding service learning in the South African higher education sector. Then the often contentious aspect of recognising and rewarding service learning as a legitimate academic undertaking by higher education (HE) teachers is taken up by Erasmus by way of an example in one HE institution. Bender too, addresses an aspect of this theme, by examining the pathways of change for the integration of CSL into the curriculum.

Following this trend, a closely connected theme in the CSL rhizome, is the conceptual and curricular difficulties associated with the move from forms of community-based and/or experiential learning to CSL. This is suitably illustrated in the article by Karekezi, Wrench, Quinn, Belluigi and Srinivas, who provide an example of community-based learning in transition towards CSL in the healthcare sector. This is followed by Bheekie, Adonis and Daniels who present the development of a pharmacotherapy CSL module and the experiences of students.

Then the article by Petersen shows how, through multiple methods of analysis, teacher education students in CSL do not make meaning and cultivate a discursive practice in the manner envisaged by the course teacher, but remain in an epistemic position that 'others' the community partners – depicting a frightening reality of how students do not change. Van Rensburg, on the other hand, reflects on the attainment of academic literacy by teacher education students who engage in a CSL project, focusing on writing *for*, *with* and *about* the community. He argues that apart from the notion of student teachers' awareness of the need for social action in communities, they also realise the need for social critique of community work.

The notion of 'becoming' - of searching for knowledge expansion and for an ethic for CSL, is indeed a theoretically complex one, and this issue mirrors some of the complexity of the rhizomic venture of this educational move(ment).

We invite readers to forward more articles on this topic to the regular issues of our journal so that we can continue the search for a Southern African lens on CSL.

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