Colloquium: Engagement
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Community Engagement: A Conversation on Socially Engaged Scholarship

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CIPSET

- CIPSET – A NMMU-wide Centre of engagement, research and social action;

- CIPSET works in different parts of the Post-School Education & Training Sector

- TVET (FET) Colleges, Community Learning Centres (Community Colleges), Civil Society Organisations -- (CSOs), trade union and workers' education.

Engagement: Six considerations

1. The University as a public institution needs to be accountable to communities and ensure that its responds to the needs of communities.

2. We need to consider alternative conceptions of the university – conceptions that locate the university as an integral part of community rather than an outside agent "working in" or "working with" community.

3. The university needs to embrace and adopt the principles of social justice and social change as fundamental to a transformative agenda

4. It should consider and encourage alternative research and service learning approaches drawn from Community-based Research (CBR)

5. It should reconfigure its internal organisation by placing civic engagement at the core of its mission.

6. The university should reorient its curricula, teaching and learning in support of the pressing societal demands

A point of concern…

The fact that a large number of well-educated people continue to make decisions that are blatantly counterproductive in the present situation indicates that somehow, education has failed. This failure of higher education manifests itself in two ways. Education results in the transmission of harmful or counterproductive values, beliefs and attitudes … education also fails to widely elicit alternatives, more productive learning outcomes, mainly ecological concepts in the values, beliefs and attitudes that would provide the basis for sustainable living.

(Lautensach & Lautensach, 2010)

A point of concern…

… higher education has failed on behalf of the majority of people. When the most damage is being done by those with the highest levels of education, we should be concerned. Those who have advanced degrees are often the only ones with access to formal research channels, funding and publications. Yet this group seems to side with power time and again… It should be clear by now that the existing system of research cannot be changed from within… We have to begin to confront the monolith of research in service of the empire and face the uncomfortable fact that we are all part of the system. We can either continue to participate willingly or attempt to resist where we can … Our complicity has to be examined without excuses.

(Agostinone-Wilson, 2013)

CIPSET Orientation to Engagement

- A University is an integral *part* of the local, social, political, cultural and economic life of the communities in which it is located. *Socially engaged scholarship engages with important social problems and political issues and to communicate with a larger public, upholding public values, while engaging in scholarship that is available to the communities of the university.*

CIPSET: Orientation to Engagement

- A conception of universities as institutions that are more firmly and deeply embedded within society; and

- A university that is beyond and above the social and political system of the society where it exists, is unfeasible.

(Swartz, 2006; Freire, 1994)

Civic Engagement for Social Justice

Matters of justice should take priority in our reflections on society. We need to take into account how each and every person flourishes (through these educational opportunities). But we need more, while individuals may benefit, engagement should also be for collective solidarities, the one with the other.

(Nussbaum, 2000)

1) Transforming the university with community/civic engagement at the center with the purpose of improving society
2) Make a distinction between charity and social justice in our programmes/teaching
3) Most CE/SL is an act of charity that reproduces the status quo ("students as migrant workers")
4) How to use participatory research to challenge the status quo

What is Engaged Scholarship?

- Requires fundamentally reshaping the university as it enters collaborative partnerships with community – (because of structures/incentives rewarding individuals- its business as usual)
- Asking broader political questions about how society ought to be improved and changed with university
- University-based research should have a more explicit role in addressing pressing moral, social, political and economic issues
- In an unequal, stratified society widening participation in the "university community" is justice. It speaks to the ethical, social and economic responsibilities and purposes of HE.

How can CE be socially just?

- "From charity to justice" means not that we just ask students to show up and do things, but to ask critical questions and think of ways to do things together that will make *a difference* over the long run.
- This knowledge requires thinking and action *and judgment* about not only what needs to be done now, but what does this mean for the future.
- Community-based Research (PAR; PR; AR)

CIPSETs Work: TVET Colleges

Curriculum Innovation Hub: Developing/Revision and diversification of curricula;
Educator development: Building transformative TVET Educator practices;
Institutional Support: Governance, Institutional Culture, Organizational Development, etc.;
Student Support: NSFAS, Housing, Student leadership, Counseling and wellness

CIPSETs Work: Community Education (CPAR Programme)

Community Colleges: Working with community activists and agents in building a community education programme

Curriculum development: Renewable Energy, Citizenship and Environmental Justice

Educator development: Training of Community Investigators, Educators, Researchers. Etc.

Partners

- Faculties (Curriculum Innovation Hub);
- CANRAD (and CCS in future);
- DHET (VCET Branch);
- TVET Colleges (Port Elizabeth; Uitenhage & South Cape College)
- ECSECC and ECPC;
- Education Policy Consortium (CERT; REAL; CEPD & NMI); and
- CSOs (CBOs, social movements & unions)

CIPSETs Approach: Building CCs

- Concerned with the problems of prejudice and injustice for marginalized voices;
- Research as critical inquiry - a tool for social change (Using Community-based Research approaches)
- Asserts **participant knowledge as foundational to validity** and **democratic participatory research as foundational to social change**.
- Challenged borders separating theory, research and action- "no action without research; no research without action"
- Like Freire-refused to separate thought from action, insistence on the integration of science and practice
- Recognition that social processes could be best understood as they begin to change.

CPAR: Basic Principles

- Recognition that knowledge is produced through participation and collaboration **in action**
- CPAR not a method but draws on multiple methods- surveys, logistic regressions, ethnography, polls, life stories, testimonies, performance, focus groups etc.
- Qualitative and quantitative
- Epistemological challenge to conventional traditions on where knowledge resides
- Establishing and developing relationships of trust and mutual respect

Methods for Community Engagement

- CIPSET works with Community Investigators doing Community Mapping (transect walks)
- Work with Community Investigators using Popular Education Methods
- Data is presented at community meetings and discussion over actions to be taken
- Outcomes from the research develop into curricula
- Curricula are shared through Community Learning Events (and later introduced as part of Community College programme)

Identify and interrogate the problem --- study and investigate the problem --- derive solutions to the problem --- embark of actions to solve the problem – reflect on the actions and act again and again

Once a person discovers capacity to effect change, oppressive systems and subjugating discourses no longer persuade that the deep social and economic problems faced results from his/her own violation. Rather, the discovery humanizes the individual, allowing him or her to realize the equal capabilities and universal intelligence in all humans, while acknowledging the existence of problems as the result of social forces beyond his or her own doing.

- Research is transparent (all matters related to);
- Research questions are co-constructed;
- Project design and research methods are collaboratively negotiated and co-constructed;
- Analysis is collective and co-constructed;
- The products of the research are dynamic, interactive and are collectively prepared and disseminated

CPAR and Human Rights

"The ability to do research on one's social surround should be considered a basic human right (Arjun Appadurai, 2006) – the right to research; or the right to the tools through which any citizen can systematically increase that stock of knowledge which they consider most vital to their survival as human beings and to their claims as citizens."

I. Full citizenship demands the ability to make "strategic" and "continuous" inquiries on a range of issues ;

II. The tools of research should be handed to/or sharpened in order to make them more universal, elementary and improvable – PAR should create space for a critical, multigenerational dialogue about research beyond the rarified university walls;

III. PAR treats people/communities as agents in ongoing, critical struggles – bearers of knowledge and creators of social meaning;

IV. PAR blur's the lines between pedagogy, research and politics. It is a long-term struggle that forces us to operate in these "in-between" spaces – sites of intense possibility and uncertainty – linking collective problems and issues to broader sets of social, political and economic forces and pressures – and to work to transform them.

CPAR as a pedagogy of HE transformation and social justice

Practices which provide "the epistemic conditions for the collective knowledge of which proposals are most likely to promote results that are wise and just". (Iris Young, 2000)

- resistance to normalization of systematic oppression through engaged **praxis** – (critical and collective inquiry, reflection and action focused on "reading" and speaking back to reality of the world);
- providing people with opportunities to investigate social problems affecting their lives and then determine actions to rectify these problems;
- enabling people to see reality of experiences while understanding capacities to and for resistance;
- learning through research (praxis) about complex power relations, histories of struggles and the consequences of oppression;
- re-visioning the realities of the social world and then undertaking forms of collective challenge based on knowledge gained through critical inquiry;
- contesting and transforming systems and institutions to produce greater justice – distributive justice, procedural justice, justice for recognition, justice for respect, etc.
- strengthening resistance that leads to transformation – systematic and institutional change to promote social justice;
- highlighting the fact that conditions of injustice are produced and are not natural; designed to privilege and oppress; challengeable and changeable;
- pointing out multigenerational collective analysis of power – that critical enquiry and resistance provoke ripples of social change

Conclusion

By placing larger questions of social, political and moral purpose at the center of higher education's historical missions of teaching, scholarship and service, CBR addresses in a direct way higher education's public mandate to serve some larger public purpose as a citizen within a civil society (Strand et al 2003).

Conclusion

Service learning using a Community-based Research (CBR) approach means that students must engage in critical analysis of the causes of social problems and must consider possibilities and strategies for change. This makes CBR a particularly effective pedagogy for aiding students in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes for active citizenship and democratic participation.

Suggestion: Expanding Socially engaged scholarship (SES)

- Greater involvement of academic staff in SES;
- Encouraging CBR-approaches to service learning
- Strengthening of the current SESF Forum (CIPSET & CANRAD);
- Establishing a multidisciplinary SES programme;
- Developing funding mechanisms to support annual SES work.

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