

AN AUTO ETHNOGRAPHIC REFLECTION OF SERVICE-LEARNING: A HIGHER EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

J. Ramdhani

Commerce Education Department

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Durban, South Africa

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1401-6463>

ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions recognize the importance of committing, assimilating, and applying education for sustainable development (ESD) into their curriculum to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. The intention of such a commitment assists in creating a culture of students who are actively engaged. Committed to the notion of teaching and teacher education for social change, in this article, I discuss my conceptualization of service-learning through my experience in higher education. Service-learning has been defined as a mode of “experiential education that integrates meaningful community service into the curriculum” (Nives 2015, 1). My perception is that by adopting service-learning for pre-service commerce teachers, there will be a shift in how social justice issues (Frederick, Cave, and Perencevich 2010) can be infused as a meaningful community service approach within the curriculum. In undertaking such steps, I highlight the nuances of power in these programs in this article. Service-learning is adopted through constructive and cooperative strategies to address the engagement questions that underpin the modules. In the academic and method module, these approaches allow pre-service students to be aware and reflect on their prior encounters and experiences of social justice issues, such as poverty, to mention but one. Drawing on both Dewey and Gwele, this article highlights the lecturer’s experience of assisting students to deliberate service-learning and participate as democratic citizens. In this article, I unpack my notions of service-learning as a subjective experience of the processes and product of service-learning as a didactic approach. This article introduces a platform to re-think and reconnoitre service-learning in higher education through this complex story. The discussion and recommendations of engineering and reengineering the concept, process, and urgency of incorporating service-learning in Higher Education curricula are discussed, and recommendations for future research are made.

Keywords: higher education, service learning, power critical theory

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I draw on the qualitative research inquiry of autoethnography. When I decided to embark on auto-ethnography to unmask my understanding of service-learning, I was mindful of questioning the worthiness of this form of inquiry. Autoethnography is mainly placed within

the confines of “humanist thought and phenomenological inquiry” (Gale and Wyatt 2018, 2). Autoethnography was most suitable as service-learning looks at how individuals can be best placed to take responsibility for promoting and developing individuals and the community. In conceptualizing service-learning, I note the notions of power and acknowledge apparent emphasis on the concern for humans in relation to the world.

Through my critical self-reflection, I explore my conceptualization of the social meaning and understanding of service learning. Service-learning (SL) has been a personal and professional initiative for me. I start this article with my journey into service-learning with reflection to unpack my understanding of service-learning. I was introduced to a community effort in a soup kitchen as a child. This introduction took the form of observation and very minimal assistance. This service to the community is theorized as the first level of service-learning known as charity. However, not much engagement with the community is noticeable at the charity level, and the approach is a top-down one, with one party having power over the other. Operating at this level at an institution for higher education creates the impression that knowledge resides with the university and is bestowed on the poor in the communities (Mahlomaholo and Matobako 2006). As a student, I was fortunate to gain an opportunity to work at a shelter that houses street children. This service form was part of the independent research project with a supervisor while reading as a B.Ed. Honours student. This is the second level of service-learning known as the project level (Mahlomaholo and Matobako 2006). The project level is placed between charity and a genuine level of community engagement. More preparation takes place at the project level. Academics and the students may really and honestly want to operate on an equal footing with the community. The community is not included during the preparation stages of engagement, and service-learning is seen as doing for the community but perceived as working with the community. My journey then led me into Higher Education as an academic in commerce education. It is here that my expedition into service learning took on full meaning. My involvement and commitment in this journey are theorized as the third level of service-learning in the community, otherwise referred to as genuinely committed engagement (Mahlomaholo and Matobako 2006). At this level, service learning is seen as a genuine engagement, and this requires exceptionally high quality and a very intensive critical introspection. Therefore, built into the service-learning is a truly shared endeavour, or reciprocity, to avoid power relations apparent within the community service-learning initiatives within higher education.

CONCEPTUALIZING SERVICE-LEARNING

To continue this service-learning journey, I had to establish my meaning of this concept. The

notion of service-learning has taken various dimensions.

I noticed that service-learning was introduced in South Africa in the late 1990s. It was initiated into the higher education (HE) curricular through the Department of Education (DOE) policies. SL gained popularity because it afforded opportunities for higher education to create partnerships with the communities to address issues collectively (Erasmus 2005). It was essential to study the relational practices of scholars to help the stakeholders and me understand this concept better. As a participant in the service-learning culture, I observed an increased awareness of the function and responsibility of Higher Education Institutions in South Africa to contribute to addressing the challenges prevalent in South Africa (Maistry and Ramdhani 2010). I noticed an increased awareness and responsibility to address social justice concerns at the higher education institution where I facilitated.

Various assumptions and practices of service-learning were noted, where service-learning is deemed a pedagogy based on the “principle of mutuality” (Pacho 2019, 232). When adopted as a teaching pedagogy, service-learning is suggested to incorporate working with the community with academic study to enrich learning and strengthen the surrounding communities. The notion of mutual respect is crucial as it has been observed that students may envision themselves as powerful but very quickly realize that they have to “unlearn taken for granted assumptions about who has power and who is powerful” (Maistry and Ramdhani 2010, 561).

Several authors have conceptualized Service-learning (SL) as a teaching pedagogy (Maistry and Ramdhani 2010; Meyers 2009; Wong 2008; Jensen 2006; Marullo and Edwards 2000). This pedagogy includes the three-way interface of learning, teaching, and culture (Livingston et al. 2017). Pedagogy also includes teachers’ philosophies and politics concerning how learners learn, how they ought to learn, how teachers should teach, and the context and background in which learning and teaching occur. In South Africa, despite the pedagogy followed, the pattern is that teachers teach and learners learn. Paulo Freire (1970) has long since called for a change in how teaching occurs at HEIs, from students passively receiving and memorizing facts considered necessary by academics to students becoming more actively involved in the learning process. As a pedagogical approach, service learning provides the space for students to be actively involved (Jensen 2006). The change in teaching style is evident, with students getting to practically apply the curriculum content in the community (Maistry and Ramdhani 2010). This incorporation of SL as a teaching pedagogy links education and social justice, with students engaging actively in the community (Alexander 2005; Meyer 2009). Engagement with communities and hence society through service-learning in teaching is arguably an effective means to challenge fixed cultural ideas (Wong 2008). My sense from this

foray was to consider SL to be a manner of what I call proactive reaction methodology.

Service-learning has come under scrutiny globally in teacher education (Anderson 2010). SL was incorporated in the Commerce Education modules. Students enrolled on the module were actively engaged in the communities through their involvement in children's orphanages/homes. Here, the students drew on the concepts of entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility and mentorship (Maistry and Ramdhani 2010). This engagement can be seen as a proactive reaction as knowledge and practical experience of business planning, and implementation may arguably benefit the students and the community as it creates a long-term opportunity for both recipients. Power embedded in the practice was the focus of the investigation of the program, despite the intention of community engagement.

Higher education institutions recognize the importance of committing, assimilating, and applying education for sustainable development (ESD) into their curriculum to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. The intention of such a commitment assists in creating a culture of students who are actively engaged. Such engagement includes skills that enable students to solve problems, be critical, strategize and act as "agents of change for sustainability" (Tejedor et al. 2019, 2). Despite this commitment, there was a dearth of research on the functioning and positioning of service-learning in Higher Education (Maimoona et al. 2019).

Research on the inclusion, worth, and power concerning service-learning in South Africa is still in the early stages of scholarship. Through critical reflection of the conceptualization of service-learning, this article addresses the issue that undergraduate students should be encouraged to consider service-learning issues that impact their lives and that of marginalized populations, both nationally and globally. It is essential to highlight the importance and rationale of service learning.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conceptualizing and reconceptualizing proactive reaction in service-learning

Service-learning entails a variety of approaches, which differ in their theoretical and methodological processes and applications. My work in this area has also, to some extent, changed from my previous engagements in service learning. Following this change was a re-thinking and reengineering of my meaning of service-learning. This reflection reveals why a proactive reaction in service learning is critical.

I recognize and accept that students attain better cognitive learning by incorporating communities and constructive pedagogies, such as service learning. Learning is more sustainable when teaching employs a pedagogy that draws on multiple methods that include

experiential learning and active participants. Adopting such an approach encourages the integration of the different disciplines and systemic and critical thinking (Tejedor et al. 2019). The following section (steps one to three) focuses on my reflection and reconceptualization of service learning.

Step One: Auditing in service-learning

The first step I worked with and believe I will continue with is to start with reflection or auditing how to proceed at the institution with service learning. I recognize that different colleagues practised different styles of teaching. I also realized that one could not expect a unified teaching approach in the institution. I believe a unified approach will not speak to teacher education that addresses social justice issues. However, I deemed it necessary to explore and reflect on my understanding of my worldview on social justice issues and the role of service-learning in my teaching. Such reflection entailed analyzing my discourse to assess the auditing results.

Critical reflection (auditing) clarifies how institutions influence how we see service learning. I saw, through research, that from a global perspective, service-learning is gaining ground as a movement. In the US, it is reported that fifty per cent of the colleges and universities incorporate service-learning in their curriculum. SL is given high praise by Faculty, administrators, students, parents, politicians and agents of community service. It is seen as “restoring relevance” for the academy and an approach whereby students can provide a community service and genuinely engage with community social problems. However, not all stakeholders in this group embrace service-learning without question. They suggest that service-learning does not speak to the real issues in the community because it is “not real learning and because it teaches students inadequate understandings of service and social issues” (Eby 1998, 1). However, it must be noted that while there is a valid criticism to be made of service-learning, there is likewise evidence of the noteworthy engagements. A case in point is the work at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas. This program referred to as the Service-learning Initiative for Community Engagement in Sociology (SLICES), uses research activities to engage students on racial justice issues (Smedley-Lopez, Johnson, and Amarante 2017).

Another case in point, this time specific to commerce education, is that in post-apartheid South Africa, there was increasing awareness and recognition of the need for HEIs to engage with communities. Responding to this need, many institutions of higher learning have highlighted their positions and approach. From 2007, we offered service-learning at the University of KwaZulu-Natal within the Business Management modules. Service-learning took the form of working with Children based at Children’s Homes (Maistry and Ramdhani 2010). Service-learning has been introduced into the new Economic and Management Sciences

modules, which fall under the new B.Ed. Degree for undergraduates at the University. In reconceptualizing service-learning, it is essential to ask why it is important. This critical reflection entails thinking and re-thinking the country's post-apartheid challenges, starting with education.

South Africa is healing after apartheid, but social injustice is still apparent in, for example, education, marked inequalities and poverty in communities. Black township schools lack resources, are underfunded, and the pupils are denied opportunities for quality education based on their race (Ndimande 2016). We need to come to terms with the fact that even post-apartheid, the markets transcend the labour market and the factor markets to enter the education sector. This is apparent in shifting resources to wealthy schools and away from the disenfranchised and poverty-stricken schools. This situation calls for urgent service-learning intervention that moves away from students' absorbing content without linking information taught with the skills and acumen they learn when engaging in the communities (Meyer 2009). A didactic strategy that links curriculum and communities provides a potential plan for a proactive reaction because it engages the students in social action. This proactive action has a social justice agenda while constituting a response from higher education institutions to the problems in society.

We may also know of the many other challenges or vulnerabilities within the communities in South Africa. After the emergence of democracy in South Africa, there was and continues to be an expectation of change, explicitly addressing the various needs of the marginalized communities in the country. The state and various institutions endeavour in their plans to address the community needs; however, the problems persist and bring to the fore how class domination "serves to establish and sustain" (Thompson 1990, 59) the disparity between the rich and the poor. The communities have serious service delivery issues, lack of housing, poor sanitation. We do not need to be reminded of the health issues present in South Africa. Significant advances in administering antiretroviral treatment have been noted, but HIV/AIDS was labelled as "the largest burden" in South Africa (Shisana 2009, 8). The literature cautions that the death toll could increase by 10 per cent from HIV and 20 per cent from tuberculosis, and 36 per cent from malaria over five years (Sands 2020). Covid 19 came with its own economic (discussed later in this section) and social and medical challenges.

I am suggesting and by no means prescribing; to colleagues interested in adopting service-learning in their modules to identify the challenges or issues to address and determine which level best suits the module. I argue that entry-level modules work with awareness and possibly operate at level one of service learning. Modules in the subsequent years can draw on initiatives under service-learning levels two and three.

Step Two: Reflecting on the process of service-learning

I quickly realized that choosing which challenge we could engage with via service learning was important. My research, which focused on critical discourse analysis of poverty in Economics textbooks for South African schools, unmasked the seriousness of poverty. I had noticed that the contemporary reporting on South Africa's poverty level shows a rise from 2006 to 2015 (Stoddard 2019). The indication that poverty in South Africa has shown a steady increase from 2011 to 2015 is reported as increasing from 53,2 per cent to 55,5 per cent (Statistics South Africa 2017). These numbers show 30.4 million people living in poverty in South Africa in 2015. With rising levels of poverty comes several serious questions. Firstly, these questions relate to ones' responsibility: the ability to respond to this complex challenge of poor people. Secondly, questions relating to one's teaching philosophy to respond to this social justice dilemma come to the fore. Lastly, questions arise about the paradigm shift that interrogates if teaching the basics is the most effective form of education.

Academics in all faculties are aware of the prevalence of social injustice in each sector of the economy. Pedagogues, economists, sociologists, psychologists, and other academics in all the different faculties/departments/schools or clusters may be aware of sustainable development goals (SDG) that address the challenges relating to poverty and hunger, both globally and nationally. We may be aware and troubled that poverty is appalling in South Africa – that the projected “food poverty line – R561 (in April 2019) per person per month” (Stats SA 2019, 0310.01) is now no longer applicable because of the pandemic (Covid 19). The number of people that can be classified as poor has increased. The different categories of poor can be classified as (1) Very poor prior to Covid 19 – those that were below the poverty line; (2) Covid 19, those people who lost their jobs due to the virus, including informal traders and (3) Covid 19, relatively poor – those who are now dependent on the support grant from the government. The statistics for poverty post-Covid 19 will include these groups of people diagnosed as Covid positive and stigmatized because of being affected and the connotations of being vaccinated or choosing not to be vaccinated in the workplace. The poor will include the elderly whom Covid may force to retire, people who have a backlog of debts due to Covid arrangements, and micro and small businesses that cannot recover from the Covid 19. We know that the unemployment rate of 52.9 per cent for the youth announced by Statistics South Africa (2013) has surpassed this figure due to Covid 19.

Here, Critical curriculum theory helps me show that in our teaching, we ought to enable students “to become transformers of society” (Uys and Gwele 2005, 10). This proactive reaction through service-learning could empower students to engage critically, make decisions, and seize opportunities that might advance the society in which they reside. For me, the relevance

of service-learning in teaching at the higher education level is significant today as it was in the past. For this reason, it is necessary to call for a proactive reaction. Incorporating service-learning, an alternative form of knowledge to students' passively learning, arguably creates a platform to teach effectively, bearing in mind the SDG. This form of education lends itself to recognizing the collaboration of the various stakeholders. It equips students with skills to proactively become society's change agents (Tejedor et al. 2019).

The harsh realities that communities face should not be noteworthy but should underline service learning. Simply put, merely educating students about this harsh reality without action may send the moral lesson that it is acceptable to know without having to act (Le Grange 2007). Of note is the difference in the schedule to act. When students passively absorb information through the traditional teaching methods in higher education, the opportunity to act and use the information in society may be delayed (Meyer 2009). I argue for a different scheduling of the student's responsibility to act. By adopting a didactic approach that incorporates constructive and cooperative learning with service-learning at the center, students receive the opportunity to be actively involved in the community while learning is taking place. Active learning is designed to take into account the principles and the context of South Africa as an emerging economy with issues such as engaging with poverty as a social justice issue.

The Business Management and EMS module have a teaching and learning approach underpinned by socio and critical constructivism principles. I acknowledge that commerce modules are modules that enable society towards "greed and competitive individualism, where market forces seem to override all other social ties" (Pillay and Yu 2010, 603). However, when drawing on the service-learning approach in these modules, we relied on critical curriculum theory, which advocates that the purpose of education is to provide opportunities for students to make changes that will improve their communities (Uys 2005). Le Grange (2007) notes that mere awareness does not imply action to address the issues that affect communities. However, I envision commerce modules to play a more empathetic role. Hence service-learning features very strongly in these modules. The service-learning approach in the past focuses on social responsibility (see Maistry and Ramdhani 2010) and now on entrepreneurship and problem-solving techniques, with a spotlight on food responsibility and food security, using person-to-person and online platforms as methods of instruction.

The livelihood of more than half of the economically active population in the developing world, according to Todaro and Smith (2012), is reliant entirely for survival on the environment through agriculture, fishing, forestry and other means. A further rationale for service-learning focusing on agriculture is to possibly address not only the current but future food responsibility and food security of vulnerable communities arising from apartheid, its aftermath, as well as

the advent of Covid 19 in South Africa.

During methodology modules, the process followed for service-learning was designed to provide students with a resource kit and information on how to source their kits for future use. The kit consisted of an empty egg tray, a packet of seeds, and a packet containing sand. These fourth-year students involved in service-learning in this module were exiting after completing their undergraduate degree. These students were required to identify first and second-year students to mentor as service-learning. The mentorship at the university was students advocating for necessary funding, including a food allowance. The mentorship program was designed to create a means for sustaining responsibility and security of students' food. The two groups of students, through mentorship, started a support network for the creation of agricultural gardens at the university. The legacy of sourcing agricultural foods from the university gardens left by the fourth-year students was intended to sustain the first and second-year students. The intention was to roll out service-learning every year using this module.

With the onset of the pandemic, service-learning required a different approach. In 2020, SL continued on the online platform. I notice that this "e-service-learning" stance that draws on digital technologies was adopted in 2015 (Nives 2015).

Before moving onto Step Three, it is worth noting that involvement in service-learning is never impartial (Habermas 1973), where power relations mediate social problems identified as a service-learning initiative. Under Stage Two of one past service-learning initiative, I had a rude awakening of this. I incorporated a plenary session to reflect on their service-learning experience voluntarily. I recall having goosebumps during this reflection as one student recalled his discomfort in doing this service-learning engagement. His discomfort arose from his experience of growing up in a children's home. He chose to go back to the same home, and he explained how he debated three times on how difficult it was to revisit this place. He explained that he gathered the courage to go in and ask the difficult and sensitive questions he never got to ask while living at the home. His rendition of the answers he received, though heart-wrenching, provided him with the answers he had sought. As he explained this whole experience, the group and I listened in a deafening silence. After the lecture, when I had a private moment to reflect, I questioned my "power over" and "power to" (Gohler 2013, 28) embark on such a service-learning approach. I empathized with the student and understood the need to be mindful of the constructions of meaning in service learning. I believe that McGregor's (2003, 3) thinking on critical theory also relates to our involvement in service learning. I am accepting that our involvement in service-learning is shaped by our "professional culture, socialization, and member profile (social structure)" (McGregor 2003, 3).

Step Three: Reflecting on the process of re-reflecting on implementation and way forward in the service-learning process

The following step will be explained using Figure 1: Three steps sequence of service-learning illustrated below.

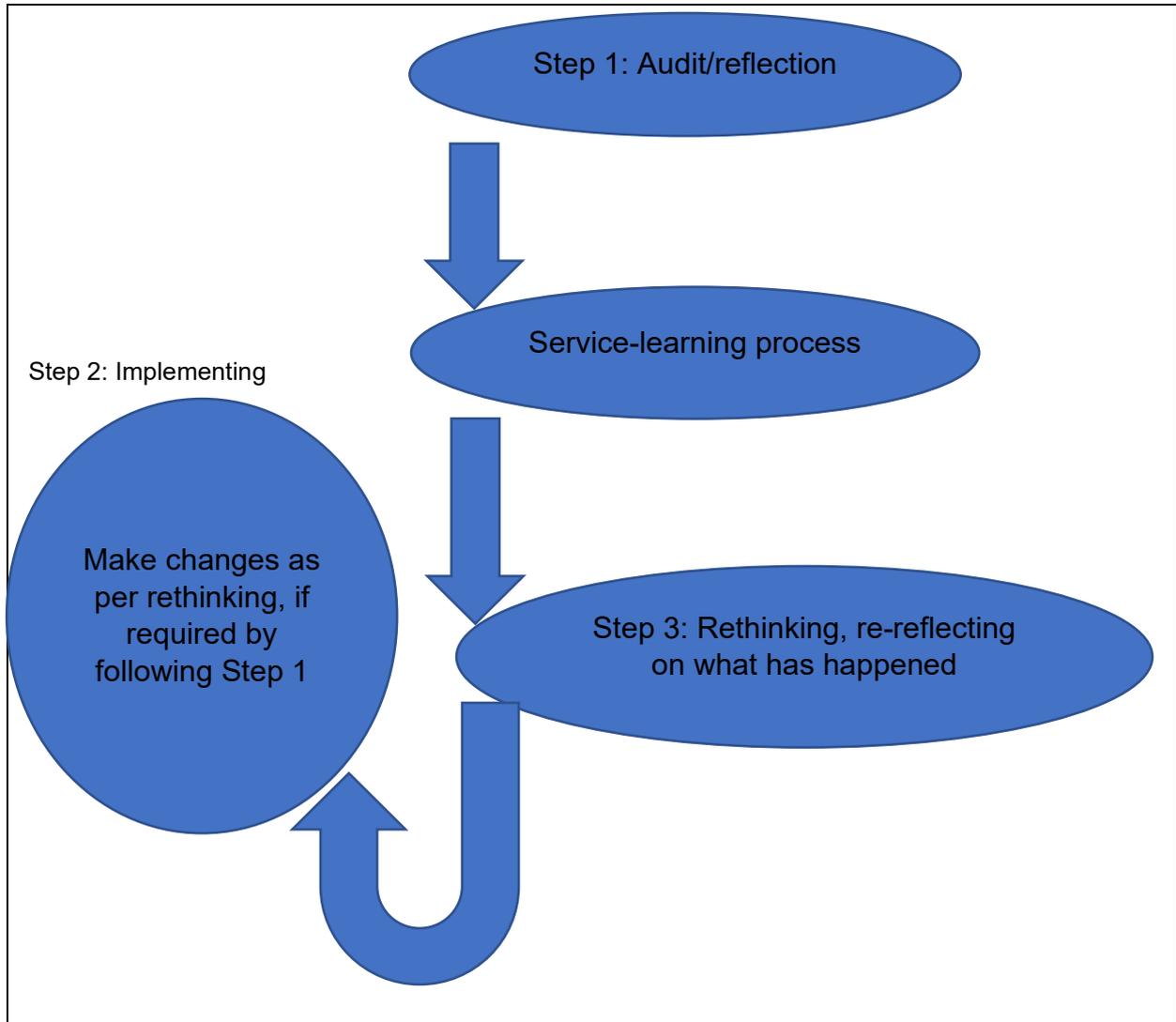


Figure 1: Three-step sequence of service-learning

Living in a country with the challenges identified as illustrated in Step One in Figure 1 above, I feel it is essential to think around or reflect on the knowledge and skills that students leave with at the end of their studies (O’Donnell 2002). While there is agreement that students need to be fully involved in social and economic life, we also need to accommodate individual versions of this knowledge and skills. I agree with O’Donnell (2002), who claims that adopting a pluralistic approach allows for active learning where students are introduced to multiple paradigms that allow for engagement and appropriate content coverage. The interrelatedness of

content and pedagogy is noted. However, this article is proposing a style of pedagogy (service-learning), as outlined in Step Two in Figure 1 above, that will provide a solid foundation for achieving the necessary content engineering and allow for students to gain a better understanding of how the world works, and for active participation. It is crucial to be knowledgeable and aware of and be active participants in society (Gregorova, Heinzova, and Chovancova 2016) to avoid the risk of alienation from society. This engagement constitutes Step Three in Figure 1. Drawing on traditional classrooms with orthodox didactic approaches to achieve these competencies may be challenging (Dorman 2002). The education system of Europe recognized the importance of active student participation in society and hence encouraged the adoption of a constructive approach to service-learning as one approach in their teaching (Gregorova et al. 2016). The introduction of learning communities (which include the wider society) extends the scope of the traditional classroom and enhances learning because ideas are shared and challenged.

Service-learning incorporated specific skills such as “service to the community, reflective practice, and learning from experience; ‘service-reflection-learning’” (Pacho 2019, 233). I argue for another approach, which promotes proactive reaction by reflecting on own knowledge of community and phenomenon, followed by service, then *re-reflecting* on the learning in terms of the process change if required as represented by the U-turn in Figure 1.

This *re-reflection*, in my opinion, should include re-thinking and reengineering, if necessary, the societal consequences resulting from action and further possibilities, policies and strategies of service-learning. I was mindful of what Fairclough has called “contemporary processes of social transformation”. Fairclough identified such terms as “neo-liberalism”, “globalization”, “transition”, “information society”, “knowledge-based economy” and “learning society” (Fairclough 2001, 1). The choice to draw on service-learning was intended to “serve as a powerful counterpoint to positivist educational trends that de-professionalize teaching through prescriptive curricula behaviourist outcomes an instrumental view of teaching and learning” (Butin 2003, 1675).

What are the implications of this article for higher education in Africa? Like every other institution in South Africa, Africa and globally, higher education was affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The epidemic forced governments to announce new measures such as “shelter-in-place and physical distancing policies” (Bargain and Aminjonov 2021, 1) pre- and post-vaccine introduction to contain the spread of the virus. The so-called request for containment brought to light how poor regions of the world are hurting from poverty. It was reported that in Africa (including South Africa), poor households have little or no savings and food supplies, experience difficulty working remotely, and often rely on day-to-day hands-on

labour income. Poverty levels exacerbated to extreme levels; nutrition levels dropped, the poor were sometimes forced to work, exposing themselves to the infection. (Bargain and Aminjonov 2021). This glaring problem has brought the need to reflect the practices institutionally and individually, and the role service-learning can play in this context. The implications for higher education in Africa are twofold. Firstly, the implications of this context highlight the need for higher education in Africa to envisage students as active participants using service-learning as a pedagogy. This service-learning activism will provide “space for resistance and freedom” (Mitchell 2020, 19) and possibly enable choosing the kinds of citizens they wish to become. Secondly, to acknowledge power relations between students, lecturers over students and students working in the community. I noticed that by creating a safe space in the university lecture room, the environment is inclusive, and one is eliminating the “excessive structure” (Waghid 2005, 20). Eliminating bureaucracy is essential because I recognized that such structures are underpinned by formal dialogue and logical thought guidelines and may exclude students unfamiliar with such formality. However, by creating a safe space, students can feel comfortable and share their reflections, thereby encouraging those in power and the powerless to engage in this dialogue (Waghid 2005).

How is higher education theory advanced? Service-learning is gaining ground in higher education institutions. Service-learning is thought to forefront a connection between theory and practice (Weschler and Fogel 1995). Kezar and Rhoads (2001, 2) question how “out of class” engagement such as service-learning have anything to do with theory. Another query focuses on how this connection takes place. It has been noted that higher education institutions traditionally functioned with doing being the focal point. Doing has connotations of charity and privilege attached to it. I recognized from the implementation that service-learning encourages active learning and recognition of the elation and test and trials of the theoretical application when working with communities. By adopting service-learning to bond or relate theory to practice, higher education is positioning itself to challenge social problems. Such positioning is important because higher education “cannot afford to remain as avenues of affluence, self-importance and horticultural beauty” (Bringle and Hatcher) in the face of such extreme poverty and challenges that prevail in society.

In this article, I have tried to do reexplore service learning. I offered a varied explanation of how I believe service-learning may be conceptualized by drawing on past scholars. In addition, by drawing on decolonial critiques, this article attempts to show that incorporating service-learning provides us with an opportunity to reshape our thinking of how we can be inclusive in our approach to teaching at the university. I have argued that addressing the challenges facing South Africa and the globe involves more than just relying on orthodox

delivery modes. I suggest that higher education in post-colonial Africa should include community involvement through service learning. The inclusion of service-learning means that students will be taught, as Waghid suggests, “what it means to act with compassion and imagination” because such actions may promote civic reciprocity if we want to build a country, continent and a global environment of “care, justice, and trust” in the university’s action (Waghid 2005, 21). Such an approach may increase action through engagement with communities and a more inclusive teaching environment in the long run. In a non-prescriptive manner, this article is humbly inviting to configure service-learning to possibly represent the lived reality of South Africa and the world at large.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude by stating that this article acknowledged scholars’ theoretical contribution to service-learning and added to the current theory through this conceptual and reflective journey being reported. This article also provides a platform for further thinking on how service-learning can be foregrounded through proactive reaction by pedagogues, particularly in Higher Education and is by no means prescriptive in nature. However, I argue that we explore and reflect on our understanding of our own and others’ worldviews. In this article, I draw on Meyer to argue that as an academic, the entry and rationale for SL is the “opportunity for personal and social transformation” (Meyer 2009, 380). Other scholars may state that one enters the service-learning arena for “human growth and purpose, a social vision” (Kendall 1990, 23). I propose a proactive reaction to implementing service-learning to fulfil these competencies better.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, G. and M. Khabanyane. 2013. “Service learning as a response to community/school engagement: Towards a pedagogy of engagement.” *Perspectives in Education* 31(2): 102–113.
- Anderson, J. B. and J. A. Erickson. 2003. “Service Learning in Pre-service Teacher Education.” *Academic Exchange Quarterly*: 111–115.
- Bargain, O. and U. Aminjonov. 2021. “Poverty and Covid-19 in Africa and Latin America.” *World Development* 142(2021)(105422): 1–11.
- Bringle, Robert G. and Julie A. Hatcher. 2007. “Civic Engagement and Service Learning: Implications for Higher Education in America and South Africa.” *Education as Change* 11(3): 79–89. DOI: 10.1080/16823200709487181.
- Butin, D. W. 2003. *Of What Use Is It? Multiple Conceptualizations of Service-Learning in Education*. Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Dorman, P. 2002. “Pedagogy and Political Economy.” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 24: 487–4921.
- Eby, J. 1998. “Why Service-Learning Is Bad.” *Service-learning, General*, Paper 27. <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slceslgen/27>.
- Erasmus, M. 2005. “Introduction: Community service learning and South African research agenda.”

Acta Academica Supplementum 2005(3): 1–23.

- Fairclough, N. 2001. “Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research.” In *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, ed. R. Wodak and M. Meyer, 121–138. London. Sage Publications.
- Frederick, R., A. Cave, and K. C. Perencevich. 2010. “Teacher Candidates’ transformative thinking on issues of social justice.” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26: 315–322.
- Freire, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Seabury Press.
- Gale, K. and J. Wyatt. 2018. “Autoethnography and Activism: Movement, Intensity, and Potential.” *Qualitative Inquiry*: 1–7.
- Gohler, G. 2013. “‘Power to’ and ‘Power over’.” In *The Sage Handbook of Power*, ed. S. R. Clegg and M. Haugaard. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Gregorova, A. B., Z. Heinzova, and K. Chovancova. 2016. “The Impact of Service-Learning on Students’ Key Competences.” *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement* 4(1): 367–376. https://www.researchgate.net/publications/318990680_The_Impact_of_Service=Learning_on_Students'_Key_Competences/citations/download.
- Habermas, J. 1973. *Theory and practice*. Boston: Beacon.
- Jensen, S. V. 2006. “Participation and Learning Relationships: A Service-Learning Case Study.” *Journal of Industrial Teacher Education* 43(3): 1–14. <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JITE/v43n3/jensen.html>. (Accessed 1 June 2009).
- Kendall, J. C. 1990. *Combining service and learning: A resource book for community and public service*. Volume 1. Raleigh, N.C., National Society for Experiential Learning.
- Kezar, A. and R Rhoads. 2001. “The dynamic tension of service learning: A philosophical perspective.” *Journal of Higher Education* 72(2): 125–148.
- Le Grange, L. 2007. “The ‘theoretical foundations’ of community service-learning from taproots to rhizomes.” *Education as change. Special issue: Community Service Learning* 11(3): 3–13.
- Livingston, K., Brace G. Schweisfurth, and M. Nash. 2017. “Policy Advice Paper / Why Pedagogy Matters. The role of pedagogy in Education 2030.” <https://www.unesco.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/pedagogy/pdf>.
- Mahlomaholo, W. and T. Matobako. 2006. “Service Learning in South Africa Held Terminally Captive by Legacies of the Past.” *Alternation Journal* 13(1).
- Maimoona, Salam., D. N. Awang Iskandar, D. H. A. Ibrahim, and Muhammad Shoaib Farooq. 2019. “Service-learning in higher education: A systemic literature review.” Education Research Institute. <https://search.proquest.com/openview/3ebf24c5e7950253843a353249d5e19f/1.pdf?accountid=11921&cbl=2034556/ip&pq-origsite=gscholar>.
- Maistry, S. M. and J. Ramdhani. 2010. “Managing tensions in a service-learning programme: Some reflections.” *South African Journal of Higher Education* 24(4): 555–567.
- McGregor, S. L. T. 2003. “Critical Discourse Analysis – A Primer.” *Kappa Omicron Nu forum* 15: 11–12. <http://www.kon.org/archives/forum/15-1mcgregorcd.html>.
- Meyer, S. A. 2009. “Service Learning as an Opportunity for Personal and Social Transformation.” *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 21(3): 373–381.
- Mitchell, C. 2020. “Making ‘Mini-Me’s’: Service-Learning as Governance of the Self in a South African Context.” *Education as Change* 24(May). <http://dx.doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/4229>.
- Ndimande, B. S. 2016. “School Choice and Inequalities in Post-Apartheid South Africa.” *Global Education Review* 3(2): 33–49.
- Nives, M. P. 2015. “Project: Europe Engage: Developing a culture of civic engagement through service-learning within higher education in Europe.” In *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. DOI: 10.1007/978-981-287-532-7_130-1.

- O'Donnell, R. 2002. "What Kind of Economics Graduates Do We Want? A Constructive Critique of Hansen's Proficiencies Approach". Working Paper No 203. Macquarie University, Department of Economics. http://www.econ.mq.edu.au/research/2002/3-2002_ODonnell.pdf. (Accessed 16 April 2010).
- Pacho, T. 2019. "Service-Learning: An innovative approach to education in Africa." In *The good education and Africa's future: Concepts, issues and options*, ed. J. K. Mugo, P. Namubiru-Ssentamu, and M. Njihia, 232–250. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.
- Pillay, V. and K. Yu. 2010. "The state of Humanities in post-apartheid South Africa – A quantitative story." *South African Journal of Higher Education* 24(4): 602–613.
- Sands, P. 2020. "HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria: How can the impact of COVID-19 be minimized?" *The Lancet Global Health* 8(9): e1102–e1132. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2214-109X\(20\)30317-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2214-109X(20)30317-X).
- Shisana, O., T. Rehle, L. C. Simbayi, K. Zuma, S. Jooste, V. Pillay-van Wyk, N. Mbelle, J. van Zyl, W. Parker, N. P. Zungu, S. Pezi, and the SABSSM III Implementation Team. 2009. *South African national HIV prevalence, incidence and communication survey 2008: A turning tide among teenagers?* <http://www.ngo.southafricannationalsurveyhiv/aids/2012>.
- Smedley-Lopez, A. C., H. R. Johnson, and A. Amarante. 2017. "Slices: Critical Theory as Praxis and Research-Based Service-learning." *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 1(39): 176–191.
- Statistics South Africa. 2017. *Poverty Trends in South Africa. An examination of absolute poverty between 2006 and 2015: Report No. 03-10-06*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Statistics South Africa. 2019. *National Poverty Lines*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Stoddard, E. 2019. "Stats SA poverty surveys derailed by cash crunch." *Business Maverick* 6 August.
- Tejedor, G., J. Segalas, A. Barron, M. Fernandez-Morilla, M. T. Fuertes, J. Ruiz-Morales, I. Gutierrez et al. 2019. "Didactic Strategies to Promote Competencies in Sustainability." *Sustainability* 11: 2086. DOI:103390/Su11072086.
- Thompson, J. B. 1990. *Ideology and Culture*. Oxford, UK: Polity Press.
- Todaro, M. P. and S. C. Smith. 2012. *Economic Development*. 11th Edition. Pearson, Boston: USA.
- Uys, I. R and N. S. Gwele. 2005. *Curriculum Development in Nursing Process and Development*. Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon.
- Waghid, Y. 200). "Action as an Educational Virtue: Toward A Different Understanding of Democratic Citizenship Education." *Educational Theory* 55(3): 323–342.
- Weschler, A. and J. Fogel. 1995. "The outcomes of a service learning program." *National Quarterly Society for Experiential Education* 20(4): 6–7, 25–26.
- Wong, P. 2008. "Transactions, Transformations and Transcendence; Multi-cultural service-learning experience of pre-service teachers." *Multicultural Education* 16(2): 31–36.