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Ethical, Inclusive and Sustainable Frameworks for Knowledge Generation

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Lesley Wood
Editor

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Foreword

Post-Covid, decolonial, socially responsible, community-engaged, Indigenous centred, Afrocentric, inclusive. These are just some of the terms associated with higher education in contemporary times, when it is facing some of the most fundamental challenges in its history to its purpose and vision. Central to how higher education will respond to the challenges of our times will be the changing ways that we understand the role of knowledge at the centre of higher education. Whose knowledge counts? How is knowledge validated and used? What is the role of Indigenous knowledge systems? What does it mean to recognize and respect the knowledge created by those who experience poverty, exclusion or oppression? The discourses of community-based participatory research have much to contribute to the transformations which are ongoing in our higher education institutions.

We very much welcome this timely book brought together by one of the leading international scholars in the broad areas of action learning and engaged scholarship. Lesley Wood has made valuable contributions over the past years to help us to understand the complex relationships and transformative potential of learning, knowledge creation, ethics and action in the context of social justice. With this book, she brings considerable experience to the topic of community-based research within a higher education context. As Wood and Zuber-Skerritt, in Chap. 1 of this volume, point out, "The aim of this book is to provide an ethical,

inclusive and sustainable framework to guide university-based researchers to work *with* vulnerable populations."

In providing examples of how community-based research contributes to the overall aim of the book, Wood has brought together a diverse set of authors, a strong balance between those from the Global North and Majority World countries. They moreover provide a comprehensive review of the diversity of discourses associated with the concept of community-based research. Their focus on the provision of an ethical framework for community-based participatory research is much needed. Researchers, community leaders, higher education administrators, policy makers, and civil society workers will all find much of value in this book.

PRIA, New Delhi, India — Rajesh Tandon
University of Victoria, BC, Canada — Budd Hall

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I wish to thank the authors who contributed to this book, including Dr Rajesh Tandon and Prof Budd Hall who kindly agreed to write the foreword. The quality of this book was also assured through the work of the independent reviewers whose comments and insight were instrumental in improving each chapter: Prof Hendri Coetzee, Prof Pip-Bruce Ferguson, Prof Mariëtte. Koen, Prof Julialet Rens, Dr Carolina Botha, Dr Lettie Botha, Dr Avivit Cherrington, Dr Bruce Damons, Dr Luiza de Sousa, Dr Bob Dick, Dr Christine du Toit, Dr Stef Esterhuizen, Dr Meghna Guhathakurta, Dr Pateka Jama, Dr Samantha Kahts-Kramer, Dr Rubina Setlhare Kajee, Dr Kristin Kalsem, Dr Illasha Kok, Dr Darren Lortan, Dr Prosper Lunga, Dr Kathleen Mahon, Dr Mot'silisi Malebese, Dr Merna Meyer, Dr David Monk, Dr Irene Muller, Dr Marinda Neethling, Dr Sheryl Ramsay.

I am also grateful to Maureen Todhunter for her exceptional language editing of several of the chapters, and Dorothea du Plessis for her copy-editing work. In addition, I appreciate the help of Marijke Benson who assisted me with the logistics of putting the publication together. My former PhD candidates Dr Samantha Kahts-Kramer and Dr Maite Matikhitela, as well as Daryl MacLean and Prof Ansie Kitching for their ethical reflections in Chap. 2. All the community partners in the various projects, some of whom have been mentioned by name in the chapters concerned, made invaluable contributions to this research.

Finally, this work is partially based on research conducted with funding from the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF) (Grant number 116261). As grantholder, I acknowledge that opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the author, and that the NRF accepts no liability whatsoever in this regard.

About the Book and Research Justification

Community-based Research with Vulnerable Populations: Inclusive, Ethical and Sustainable Frameworks for Knowledge Generation is based on original research conducted by each of the contributing authors. This book offers a comprehensive argument for, and empirical examples of, community-based research (CBR) with vulnerable populations for the field of higher education. A major aim of the book is to explain how research can democratize knowledge generation to make it more socially relevant to society and to emphasize the value of lived and experiential knowledge of vulnerable or marginalized populations. All chapters are informed by empirical research or are based on scholarly arguments drawing on relevant literature studies and theoretical frameworks. Each chapter contributes original knowledge to enable universities to be more socially responsive through their research. The contribution of the book is in the fields of research methodology (community-based research (CBR)), knowledge democracy and community engagement. The book is based primarily on research conducted to answer three key questions identified from existing literature: (1) how can we build the capacity of academics to conduct CBR?, (2) how do we ensure the learning of the community is recognized and sustained?; and (3) how do we develop ethical processes especially suited to CBR? The book offers potential answers to these questions. The early chapters provide the rationale for the book and address the construction of ethical guidelines for CBR, as well as the development of

research capacity for conducting CBR. Case studies of CBR then offer varied perspectives on how university-based researchers should partner with vulnerable populations to make the university more socially responsive through engaging community partners in the co-construction of knowledge for change. The concluding chapters offer guidelines to inform university policy and practice for community-based research. Although largely focused on research in South Africa, with a few case studies from other parts of the world, the book is relevant for any context where universities partner with vulnerable populations to construct knowledge for ethical, inclusive and sustainable social change.

A call for contributions was issued by the editor to relevant networks of community-based researchers. Each chapter submitted was initially reviewed by the editor to ensure it complied to high academic standards and responded to the theme of the book. Some chapters were declined at this stage. All chapters that appear in this book were subject to double-blind, independent peer review, after which authors reworked the chapters to the reviewers' satisfaction. Each chapter was also subjected to an authentication report to ensure it was not plagiarized or previously published elsewhere. The target audience is novice and experienced researchers in any discipline who want to learn to conduct community-based research in ethical, inclusive and sustainable ways, as well as community-developers and other interested practitioners. The abstracts of each chapter in the book provide an outline of the problem, purpose, methodology, findings and significance of the research.

Lesley Wood
Editor

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Abbreviations

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AL	Action Learning
AR	Action Research
B Prof	Bachelor of Professional Studies
BIF	Burundian Francs
CBPR	Community Based Participatory Research
CBR	Community Based Research
CCF	Collective Change Facilitator
CCS	Centre for the Community School
CE	Community Engagement
CETC	Community Education and Training Colleges
CLC	Community Learning Centres
CNR	National Council for Reincorporation
COP	Community of Practice
CPAR	Critical Participatory Action Research
CREATE	Collaboration, Relationship-driven, Early in the Pathway, Accountability, Training, and Evidence-driven
CUP	Community-University Partnership(s)
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DCDE	Diploma in Civic and Development Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoH	Department of Health

ETCR	Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces
FARC-EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces-People's Army
GULL	Global University for Lifelong Learning
HCD	Holistic and Community-Led
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILK	Indigenous and Local Knowledge
IST	Institute of Social Transformation
IYN	Intsika (a pillar) Yokwabelana (for sharing)
K4C	Knowledge for Change
MCA	Member of County Assembly
NGO	Non-Governmental Agency
NMU	Nelson Mandela University
NPO	Non-Profit Organizations
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRF	National Research Foundation
PAAR	Participatory Action Learning and Action Research
PALAR	Participatory Action Learning and Action Research
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PARQ+	Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire
PAV	Peace Accord Verification
PEST	Political, economic, social, technological
PEV	Post-Election Violence
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PPI	Public Patient Involvement
PTSS	Prevention Translation and Support System
RUCE	Rhodes University Community Engagement
SAQA	South African National Qualification Authority
SBST	School-Based Support Team
SC	Site-Coordinator(s)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SENA	National Learning Service
SJG	San José del Guaviare
SLP	Short Learning Programme
SMT	School Management Team
SSA	Statistics South Africa
TfT	Training for Transformation
TL	Transformative Learning

TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UFS	University of the Free State
UNAL	Universidad Nacional de Colombia
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
VLSA	Village Loan and Saving Associations
WBST	Wellbeing Support Teams
WVB	World Vision Burundi
YPAR	Youth Participatory Action Research
ZVTN	Transitional Rural Normalization Zones

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Part I

Community-Based Research in Higher Education

The three chapters in this section provide the rationale for the book and address the construction of ethical guidelines for community-based research, as well as the development of research capacity for conducting community-based research. Chapter 1 sets out the context for the discussion of community-based research, explains the concept and provides a rationale as to why the time is ripe for universities worldwide to engage in this research. Chapter 2 analyzes the ethical issues in relation to community-based research by means of brief case studies. Chapter 3 provides an evidence-based discussion about how to capacitate academic researchers to conduct community-based research with vulnerable populations.

1

Community-Based Research in Higher Education: Research Partnerships for the Common Good

Lesley Wood and Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt

Introduction

Community-based research (CBR) refers to an approach to research where university researchers partner with those most affected by multifaceted problems in communities to enable them to collaboratively identify and address these problems. Through development of participants' ability in dialogue, negotiation, questioning and critical thinking, CBR is a means to promote positive social change for sustainable community well-being, as we discuss in more detail later in this chapter. CBR first emerged in the 1970s, in support of the 'ciencia popular' (popular

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science) movement in South America (Bonilla et al., 1972) and other movements in Tanzania (Swantz, 1982). It gradually spread to the United States and parts of England in the 1990s and continues to spread today as the participatory paradigm that underscores CBR gains ground inside and outside higher education institutions.

Scholars of those early times, arguably the most famous being Orlando Fals Borda in Colombia and Paulo Freire in Brazil, sought to develop an approach to research that would awaken the conscience of people about causes and consequences of human disempowerment. Exceptionally, this approach would attract those suffering under oppressive sociopolitical structures as participants in rather than 'subjects' of research, to emancipate their thinking, develop their ability to create sociopolitically conscious knowledge and therefore enable them to take action to improve their own circumstances and those of others similarly disadvantaged or disempowered. Experiments with participatory forms of research combined rigorous empirical research with activism, a paradigm not much appreciated in the traditional academy (Fals Borda, 2013), which has predominantly created knowledge to fortify the status quo. As Lomeli and Rappaport (2018) noted, the participatory forms of research that these pioneering scholars have developed are now appearing in universities and international agencies such as the World Bank, but these are watered-down versions, "alienated from their radical roots" (p. 598).

Nevertheless, the history of participatory research testifies to its sociopolitical intent to enable the emancipation and empowerment of marginalized and vulnerable communities. This is why the participatory research paradigm is central in CBR. Despite opposition from within the academy, the participatory research movement has gradually gained support, causing a steady paradigm shift towards recognizing that knowledge is socially constructed, and therefore has to be developed within specific contexts. This calls for methodologies that are participatory, involving the people most affected by the phenomenon under investigation (Hall, 2005). Today, a plethora of participatory research genres falls under the umbrella term of CBR. These include critical participatory action research (CPAR) (see Fine & Torre, 2019; Kemmis et al., 2014); participatory and appreciative action and reflection (PAAR) (see Ghaye et al., 2008); participatory reflection and action/participatory rural appraisal (PRA) (see

Chambers, 2012); community-based participatory research (CBPR) (see Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003); and participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) (see Wood, 2020a; Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). There are many more variations, where the process may be slightly different depending on the participants and context. Yet, they are all grounded in the same participatory paradigm and foundational principles, with the ultimate aim of enabling collective action for positive social change (Wood, 2020b).

Currently, in universities where CBR is undertaken, it is positioned mostly as a leg of community engagement. It calls for partnership between university-based academics and community partners for conducting research guided by the lived and experiential knowledge of the community. The process also promotes capacity building, to enable communities to take a leadership role within the larger society (Guta & Roche, 2014). In theory, the CBR process should involve collaboration between and among these stakeholders, from identifying what is to be researched to disseminating the knowledge generated (Hall & Tandon, 2017). As this approach to research challenges the traditional view of the academic as the all-knowing expert, the sole holder of valid knowledge, it is not surprising that CBR has not been embraced by academic researchers as a mainstream methodology. However, as the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) crisis has shown, traditional, *normal* ways of functioning in higher education can and must change to respond effectively to social problems and crises.

The aim of this book is to provide an ethical, inclusive and sustainable framework to guide university-based researchers to work *with* vulnerable populations. Vulnerability does not denote helplessness or fragility. It refers to the susceptibility of specific groups to the negative impact of economic, political, social, health, climate-change and related problems, due to lack of access to basic life support such as a stable income, quality educational opportunities and adequate housing. Such deprivations also curtail people's freedom to make choices that they believe will add value to their lives (Sen, 1999). As Sen (2008) advocated, the action to reduce social inequalities and injustices needs to be guided by the values and priorities of those whose lives are diminished, so that the change pursued and achieved is meaningful to their lives. As Wood (2020c) explained,

> many of the people researchers in developing countries work with possess various skills or functionings (they are able to 'do'), but endemic poverty has eroded their capability to use these skills to improve their lives as they would like to. People who have received inferior education and who lack the social capital associated with a higher socio-economic status face additional adversity in attaining a sense of wellbeing in this competitive world. They first have to develop their 'capabilities' before they can increase their agency to direct their own life in a way that they consider worthwhile and valuable. And once people experience a sense of dignity and agency, they are able to have hope for the future and a sense of purpose in life. (p. 2)

The life experiences of vulnerable populations are far removed from those who work in the academy, yet it is these privileged 'experts' who are tasked to conduct research *on* the social problems that beset marginalized sectors of society, harvesting *from* people their lived experiences and local knowledge to create recommendations and craft policies to improve their lives. Not unsurprisingly, such recommendations and policies often prove to be difficult to implement since they do not take into consideration the contextual barriers facing specific communities that impinge on the usefulness and/or sustainability of these so-called solutions. One recent example we have learned about is the South African government's move to pay unemployed youth in township settings to distribute personal protective equipment in their communities. Applicants had to apply for these positions online and provide scanned copies of their birth certificates, a curriculum vitae and proof of residential address. The circumstances of such youth were not taken into account—most had neither the skills nor the equipment to prepare an online application, and could not access or construct the required documents, let alone scan and upload them. The government had not pursued the necessary research, such as asking youth in targeted communities what they would need to enable them to apply, what help should be provided for intending applicants and how the system could be simplified to enable such applicants' full participation.

Although poverty is endemic, particularly in the global South and in certain populations in the global North, it takes a crisis like COVID-19 to headline the stark inequalities in society along race, gender and class

lines. The economic and health decline because of COVID-19 has particularly affected vulnerable populations; that this epidemic has also threatened the lifestyles and income of people accustomed to a comfortable and secure life, may be why actions to minimize its impact have been made a global priority. However, adversity also breeds resilience (Ungar, 2019), and responses to fight the COVID-19 pandemic have shown that normally slow-working bureaucracies can work fast to generate creative ways to continue providing services. With their survival under real threat, higher education and other sectors have sprung into action, making decisions and changing their practices within short time frames.

Just as online teaching almost overnight became the new norm, the time is now ripe for new approaches to and paradigms governing research. The serious threat to life and livelihoods has also highlighted the resilience of community members who manage to survive in the face of extreme diversity. In response to the pandemic, a global spotlight has been turned on social inequalities and injustices prevalent in so many countries, sparking discussion around the need to strengthen efforts to attain the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, n.d.). These circumstances raise the question of how we can sustain the creative and useful responses prompted by the COVID-19 crisis—especially, perhaps, the thinking and principles behind such responses—to address social injustices through research partnerships. Of course, such complex social problems can be addressed or ameliorated only through long-term social restructuring that entails a fundamental shift in dominant values and world views within societies. However, we contend that research that involves the people most affected by such problems in identifying and working to resolve such problems can be a successful approach to attaining sustainable improvements in the well-being of communities. This is the key argument underpinning the research discussed in this book. If we continue to exclude people from involvement in research about issues that concern them most, we also exclude them from the educational, emancipatory and activist outcomes of CBR, as we discuss later in this chapter.

The academy can no longer run the risk of supporting research that may be valid and viable in theory but does little to improve the actual situation on the ground. Here we are not implying that all research should

be participatory. Some research questions do require a positivist paradigm and experimental approach, for instance in the natural sciences and other disciplines that require objective inquiries. However, many social, health and educational problems are addressed more effectively through collaboration of academic researchers with those who have first-hand experience of these problems. CBR affords universities and their research staff the opportunity to partner with communities to pursue social change for social justice (Strand et al., 2003). This approach is very much needed in South Africa, and in other countries where populations are rendered vulnerable by high levels of poverty and the inequalities that prevail in education, health and wealth distribution. Thus, CBR seeks to democratize knowledge creation to make it more socially relevant to the society it serves. There is ample rhetoric within higher education policy in South Africa (and other countries) on the need for research to be community-based (Luescher-Mamashela et al., 2015), but current practices of institutions mitigate against conduct of this type of research as a truly participatory and transformative project.

It can thus be argued that CBR in its current form is no less colonizing than traditional approaches to research. CBR should "throw off the intellectual, social and material shackles of colonialism" (Glassman & Erdem, 2014, p. 217). Even so, knowledge gleaned from a previous five-year research project of the South African National Research Foundation indicated real constraints to conducting research that meets the outcomes listed earlier (see Kearney et al., 2013; Wood, 2017a, 2017b; Wood & Louw, 2018; Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013; Zuber-Skerritt et al., 2015). The findings of the previous project, confirmed by international literature (Tandon et al., 2016), highlighted three distinct but overlapping areas that need to be further researched. These are discussed in the following section.

Aim of This Book

This book seeks to add to existing CBR theory and practice in a seminal way by providing responses to three unanswered questions raised in CBR literature. These questions are:

1. How do we develop *ethical* processes especially suited to CBR that, while upholding universal ethical principles, also allow for the principles of recognition, participation and joint decision-making to be implemented throughout the research?

   The ethical procedures and rules that generally govern research are designed for university-driven 'expert interventions'. It does not necessarily befit research that, as full partners in the research process, involves members of the community being researched, who have their own perspectives on what is ethical at each stage and are therefore encouraged to contribute to collective decision-making about ethics throughout the research process. University researchers continue to 'train' community participants in specific areas, rather than helping to release the potential in people to find and enact their own solutions through action learning. Self-directed action learning has proven to be a powerful way to restore dignity and self-determination to economically and socially marginalized people (see, e.g., Kearney et al., 2015; Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013). This is a more ethical approach and efficacious outcome than the benefits possibly afforded by a short-term 'training' programme. It could be argued that universities, as public institutions, have a moral imperative to develop a broader-based approach to enable the learning and development of community members. The very nature of interaction in both community learning and development and government enablement of this approach is an ethical issue not yet explored from the viewpoint of the community. What community partners view as ethical interaction and outcomes still need to be investigated.
2. How can we build the *capacity* of academics to conduct CBR?

   Current ethical standards rightly require academics to provide evidence of their expertise in whatever methodology they use. Yet, very few academics have received any form of training in CBR and therefore run the risk of being judged as unethical in their engagement with the community. Tandon et al. (2016) pointed to the lack of structured opportunities for academics to learn how to do CBR, specifically those that require academics to move outside the confines of the lecture room. Both academics and community partners clearly need to be capacitated in the principles of CBR, so that *sustainable* structures for

application can be developed—a need now evident on an international scale. Needs differ according to local contexts, so goals, processes and evaluation methods to implement CBR have to be tailor-made for specific projects, while keeping to the basic principles of CBR.

3. How do we ensure that the learning and development of community partners are recognized and *sustained*?

   Academics demonstrate their knowledge at conferences and author articles on the learning of research participants, but the participants' contribution to the creation of that knowledge is seldom acknowledged at public forums or in publications. Motivation will be increased if public recognition and certification (not accreditation) are built in as an integral part of the research partnership. Public recognition can be in the form of a ceremony at a university with certification of their learning and competence in a particular area. This can be a stimulus to other community members to also pursue similar learning. Research participants will be able to experience something uplifting and affirming that hitherto was unattainable for them even though no credits are allocated such as in accredited courses that allow people to build up credits towards a degree. Public recognition and institutional endorsement of the learning and development of community partners should be mandatory, without participants having to enrol in a formal education programme with cost implications and access requirements. CBR can thus enhance the *inclusion* of the community in knowledge creation as valid partners.

These key overlapping questions guide the research presented in this book to inform the development of an ethical, inclusive and sustainable framework for CBR in higher education. Chapter authors are researchers passionate about community engagement, who work with community partners, sharing their knowledge, experiences and skills, collaboratively create useful, relevant and effective knowledge for better-quality community life. While much has been written about CBR in health settings, literature in the social sciences and education is less extensive. This book steps into this space by providing a comprehensive exposé of CBR with

actual case studies, creating a seminal text particularly for social science researchers, but also useful for community members and agency workers keen to learn about ways to develop and sustain community well-being in partnership with experienced CBR researchers. In the next sections we turn to explain some of the key concepts discussed in this book. We begin with a detailed explanation of the book's central concept—CBR—as an ethical, inclusive and sustainable approach to addressing social issues.

Community-Based Research

CBR is conceptualized in this book as an umbrella term for research partnerships between university and community representatives, be they individual citizens, non-profit organizations, government departments or business interests. The main aim of CBR is to democratize the creation and dissemination of knowledge to make it suited to and therefore constructive for the society it serves. This approach to creating and disseminating knowledge builds the capacity of community partners to initiate and sustain positive change with, in and for the community, thus reinforcing key connotations of the original Latin term for community—*communis*—notably fellowship and solidarity.

However, especially for university-based researchers, community learning and development is often neglected in their pursuit of research outcomes. This lack of engagement with community members diminishes both the likelihood that change will be what most community members want and their capacity to sustain the change themselves when the university partners withdraw. Despite global recognition that CBR should be conducted primarily by non-academics (Hall, 2005; Munck, 2014), community input, knowledge and learning mostly go unrecognized, which raises questions of ethical concern. In addition, people who have been rendered vulnerable by deep-rooted structural inequalities are often not confident to contest epistemic colonization by the academy. Without cultivation of critical analytical skills, particularly through higher education, these people may be unable to identify or explain this epistemic colonization, even though, or perhaps largely because, they live on the

coalface of historical and contemporary colonization. The depth of their colonial experience may have made them unaware of the value of their local knowledge and experiences for addressing problems that directly affect them (Wood, 2020a). Raising both critical consciousness of the value of local knowledge and the potential of local people to apply it, are therefore a moral imperative of CBR.

The more the world grapples with complex issues arising from the way members of the human race treat one another and the planet, the more urgent the global need for research approaches grounded in ethical practices that foster inclusion of new knowledge creators and the valuable understandings and knowledges that they bring to problem-solving tasks. Only with this first-hand life experience and consequent knowledge can sustainable and knowledge-driven change be achieved for better community life locally and globally. Budd Hall and Rajesh Tandon,S co-holders of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Chair for Community-based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, raised questions about the word 'knowledge' in a publication in *Research for All* (2017). They called this approach to knowledge generation "Knowledge for Change" (K4C), and explained:

> The critical challenges facing humanity today require new understandings and solutions. Achieving [United Nations] Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will require new insights and connections locally and globally. New understandings and innovative solutions have been shown to be catalyzed through co-construction of knowledge carried out in respectful partnerships with local communities. (UNESCO Chair, 2020)

We refer the reader to their website (http://unescochair-cbrsr.org/) for more information and literature on the need for increased adoption of CBR in Higher Education, which we cannot address in this short introductory chapter. We now present a short overview of the philosophical underpinnings of CBR.

The Paradigm and Basic Principles of CBR

CBR is not a methodology in itself, but an overarching term for a distinctive participatory research design that includes those in the community who are central to the research purpose and process as research participants. Within the scope of this chapter, we cannot explain all the processes entailed, so we refer readers to Wood (2020b) for a concise and comprehensive overview of CBR. Here we highlight the important foundational values and principles of CBR, which are grounded within a transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2016) in pursuit of social justice. All paradigms are informed by specific assumptions in four fields: epistemology (how knowledge is created, valued and used), ontology (how people perceive themselves in the world in relation to others), methodology (how research is conducted) and axiology (what values underpin choices and actions). A transformative paradigm is characterized by the following understandings.

Epistemological Assumptions

One of the ground-breaking theories about learning and knowledge creation was Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycles that explain how people can gain knowledge (1) on the basis of their concrete experience, (2) by observing and critically reflecting on this experience, then (3) conceptualizing and theorizing about the outcomes and processes, and (4) actively experimenting in new situations, thus gaining new concrete experiences and repeating the cycles again or several times until they are satisfied with the results. Critical subjectivity underlies the cocreation of knowledge by all involved. Both local, experiential knowledge (knowledge embedded in community) and scientific knowledge (knowledge produced in academia) are valued, generated through critical dialogue. The purpose of knowledge creation is to enable the most effective action to bring about positive change. Sources of knowledge and ways of representing it are many. De Sousa Santos (2009) alerted us to "epistemological diversity" (p. 104) in the world and the need to recognize the value of drawing from an "ecology of knowledge" (p. 116) to challenge the view

that only scientific knowledge is valid. Since each form of knowledge represents only a small part of this ecology, researchers need to be open to embracing multiple ways of knowing as valid and valuable.

Ontological Assumptions

Through the development of trusting, respectful relationships, stakeholders in the research process work together to identify the best ways to arrive at answers to the research questions on which they have mutually agreed. A relational ontology is based on the understanding that reality is participative, meaning that we can develop understanding of the world through thoughtfully analysing experiences of people in relationship to one another. This view recognizes reality as multiple, fluid and ever-changing; and understandings are developed through critical reflection and dialogue with self and others. This systemic view of reality sees people as part of—rather than in control of—a larger whole and thus values the experiences of all for understanding an issue under investigation. Building trusting relationships with and handling the expectations of vulnerable populations should be the main focus, especially during the early stages of the partnership. Early attention to these aspects is crucial to setting up participatory processes that provide engagement and affirmation to all participants.

Methodological Assumptions

The research design chosen must allow for participation of all stakeholders in a collaborative enquiry, to not only come to a better understanding of the problem, but also to act to effect change. As such, most CBR designs are a genre of participatory action research, incorporating action learning and experiential learning, a research approach that follows iterative cycles of reflection and action until the participants are satisfied with the outcomes. A relational and participatory methodology is therefore more varied, comprehensive and complex than traditional research methodology in the social sciences. In CBR there are no fixed rules on

methods and methodology. All participants need to be open to new approaches and critically consider and evaluate alternative, innovative and creative strategies that best serve the mutually agreed aims, objectives, ethical requirements and desired outcomes of the project. Issues facing vulnerable populations are complex and are not easily resolved due to their multiple and interacting causes and effects. Action research designs enable participants to engage in action learning through cycles of trial and error where they develop capacity for self- and critical reflection to help them reach acceptable outcomes through the project.

Axiological Assumptions

According to Mertens (2016, p. 7), "for researchers … philosophically situated in the transformative paradigm, the ethical responsibility extends to seeking ways to design research that directly addresses issues of human rights and social justice and supports a pathway to action to address the problems". This is where the notion of the common good, as reflected in the title of this chapter, comes in. We agree with UNESCO (2015) that the common good is informed by life-enhancing values such as respect for life and human dignity, social justice, cultural diversity and compassion, which we all have a shared responsibility to embody in our interactions. However, since we are shaped by our social histories, we also have a responsibility to explore how our own and others' histories impact on our understanding and reactions to racism, sexism, privilege, oppression and other sensitive constructs to learn how to negotiate meaning and accommodate for different views. Since the embodiment of these values is so important for establishing a trusting relationship between the university researcher and community participants, we discuss the ethical considerations of CBR in more depth in Chap. 2. Here we merely highlight the ethical assumptions.

CBR is underpinned by an ethics of care, explained as "a distinctive approach to moral theory that emphasizes the importance of responsibility, concern, and relationship over consequences (utilitarianism) or rules (deontologism)" (Nair, 2020, p. 1). Since relationship is at the heart of CBR partnerships, ethical behaviour cannot be determined by the

academic researcher before the research begins, as per normal practice. Relationships and contexts are fluid and dynamic, so expectations change during the relational process. This means that ethical conduct should be continually (re)negotiated by the partners involved in the research. Since the aim of CBR is not only to attain effective practical outcomes but also to educate and emancipate those involved, the balance of power within the relationship should gradually shift towards the community partners as they begin to realize their potential, find their voice and develop agency. Thus, they may wish to review the roles, responsibilities and outcomes initially agreed upon. Noddings (1999) referred to this as *relational ethics*, where decisions are made based on the best interests of the parties involved, rather than adherence to hard and fast rules for interaction between university and community partners. The skill of guiding such complex ethical processes needs to be included in any capacity-development initiative for researchers embarking on CBR. We also suggest that unless university-based researchers are motivated by a genuine desire to improve society at large and the lives of others, they should refrain from doing CBR since their lack of authenticity will soon become apparent and they may do more harm than good. This brings us to the intended outcomes of CBR.

The Transformative Outcomes of CBR

The process of CBR has beneficial outcomes over and above both the scholarly intent to add to the body of knowledge, and the practical intent to bring about positive change. Because community members participate fully in the research, from design to dissemination, they also learn and develop personally and professionally. The process is educative, emancipatory and activist.

Educative Intent

Since the aim of CBR is, through stakeholders' participation, to develop knowledge for improving community life, research designs chosen are

normally variants of participatory action research. Critical reflection is therefore a key component of the process. Continual reflection on the process by all participants is required to ensure the project is proceeding as planned, or to identify where the research plan needs to be changed and whether ethical agreements are still being adhered to or need to be altered. However, it is vital that each participant also learns to self-reflect, to identify their own learning and learning needs and to become aware of how their behaviour is affecting or influencing the group process. This is especially true for academic members of the project team. It is a way to ensure they do not default to dominating the process, but rather are opening up opportunities for the community participants to learn and develop leadership and collaboration skills collectively. Most academic researchers have not learnt to develop an acute sense of self-awareness as part of traditional research approaches with their understanding of objective inquiry; hence, the need to develop the academics' capacity to conduct CBR, which is one of the aims of this book (see especially Chap. 3).

Participating in collaborative group discussions fosters the development of important life skills such as problem-solving, communication, organization, presentation, conflict management and goal setting. Participants may also be required to learn specific technical skills, such as data generation and analysis methods, report writing, operating computer programmes and creating digital representations of their findings. Thus, we can call CBR a form of community education, although it is not widely recognized as such. Participants are not given formal recognition for the learning they acquire while working in partnership with the university, a problem addressed later in the book (see Chaps. 12 and 13).

Emancipatory Intent

CBR aims to encourage the reappropriation of knowledge for people, by people (Gaventa, 1993). The process is emancipatory as it challenges all participants to question their existing assumptions and beliefs and to critique existing social structures to devise new, more socially just ways of "being, doing and knowing", the three main characteristics of a sustainable learning community as conceptualized by Kearney and

Zuber-Skerritt (2012, p. 403). Traditional research approaches lead to mental colonization, in that the universal 'truths' produced within and projected from the academy, backed up by the findings of purportedly objective, scientific enquiry, are generally accepted blindly as applicable to all contexts and all people. CBR is based on the premise that people can think for themselves; that those affected by a specific social issue are best placed to know how to address it; that responses need to be uniquely crafted for different settings; that knowledge generated through involvement of all stakeholders is more likely to lead to sustainable change; and that lay people can, and should be recognized as knowledge creators, not just consumers. Once people begin to think in a way that is outside mainstream knowledge, once they can critique the creation and purposes of mainstream knowledge and appreciate the value of the knowledge they already have, their sense of agency and self-worth tends to increase.

Activist Intent

Academic researchers have long concentrated on explaining social problems through theoretical lenses and using these interpretations to recommend change on behalf of a target community. Naturally, this approach has not contributed to real or lasting change in the lives of those affected by the problem, since (a) these people do not usually read academic publications, which are in any case inaccessible to them; (b) even if they were aware of the recommendations made by academic researchers, these people may not be able to implement the recommendations for various reasons and (c) policymakers do not always consult this type of research. Alternatively, an activist researcher has been described as one who *collaborates* with those subjected to the condition(s) being investigated, to *better understand* the problem and context and to *bring about change for the better* (Hale, 2001) on many levels, for example, personal, professional, organizational, social and policy. Some academics contend that activism through research hampers and is hampered by the expectations of the academy (Smeltzer & Cantillon, 2015). However, from a CBR perspective, it is unethical for outsiders to conduct research *on* people and make decisions or come to conclusions *on their behalf*, as it denies the principle

of democratic participation and collaboration. CBR requires an authentic partnership between the university and the community, with each bringing their specific expertise to contribute to the process of change. Although the constraints and responsibilities of working in a bureaucratic system may hamper academic researchers in being overtly activist (Couture, 2017), these researchers can stand in solidarity with their partners, helping as they can, for instance, by providing theoretical and research expertise, material resources, assisting in funding applications, using social capital to leverage contacts in industry and government. Where vulnerable populations are involved, the role of the academic normally starts as facilitator of the collaborative learning process and slowly shifts to a supportive function as community participants grow into leadership roles (Wood, 2020a). Such a facilitation role is complex. It strengthens the argument that university researchers need to both recognize unequal power relations in a research project and have the skills to negotiate and minimize this inequality. We now turn to some of the other important concepts discussed throughout this book.

Core Concepts of the Book

The main concepts discussed in this book and intrinsic to CBR include knowledge democracy, social justice, power relations and vulnerable populations. We explain these constructs in the following sections.

Knowledge Democracy

In this book, participatory approaches to knowledge creation in the form of CBR are offered as alternatives to the "monolithic knowledge enterprise based on the domination of the Global North and the marginalization and subordination of other knowledges" (Knowledge Democracy, n.d.). Hall and Tandon (2017) explained that democratizing knowledge entails the acknowledgement of plural ways of knowing, which have value in different contexts. This includes the appreciation of indigenous and cultural knowledge sources (oral, arts-based), and the multiple ways

of disseminating knowledge outside of academic publications. The movement for democratizing knowledge is in reaction to "intellectual colonialism" (Fals-Borda & Mora-Osejo, 2003, p. 35) and the "epistemicide" that results from it (De Sousa Santos, 2007, p. 15). Responding to this epistemic wake-up, community-based researchers must embrace multiple knowledges, multiple sources of knowledge and multiple means of representing knowledge and must commit to using such knowledges to create a more socially just world (Hall & Tandon, 2017).

Social Justice

Social justice can be said to exist when people have the capabilities to make choices that afford them a sense of dignity and agency and that inspire hope for the future (Sen, 1995). Two main paradigms are related to social justice. One is a distributional view (Miller, 1999), which is concerned with the allocation and accessibility of resources within society. However, while governments almost always claim that their policies aim to attain distributional justice, so often it appears that they have responded to other influences, usually not publicly identified, which makes achieving stated policy goals unlikely or impossible. Marginalization of so many people along race, gender, class and health lines in many societies further complicates government capacity to achieve stated policy goals in practice (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). The recognition approach to social justice (Fraser, 1997) is concerned with enhancing social structures that enable people to feel they are a valued part of society. Yet again, the enactment of social justice depends on the freedom of individuals to recognize and make choices that improve their subjective well-being (Nussbaum, 2003). Specific groupings in society are thus rendered vulnerable and marginalized since societal structures and attitudes tend to disadvantage those who most need help. CBR enables people to take action based on the values of individuals and communities to bring about positive change where it is actually needed (Sen, 2008); in this way challenging existing social norms and structures. Academics, as privileged members of society, have a moral imperative to assist vulnerable populations who may not have the social capital of those with higher status, and

thus face additional barriers to developing a sense of dignity, agency and hope. This lens makes clear that community-based researchers need to develop a critical understanding of power relations within their research project and well beyond.

Power Relations

Researchers in academia generally have symbolic power by virtue of their academic qualifications and position. They also have educative power through teaching and through knowledge creation in their research. If they seek to help address social injustice, they can use this power to promote the learning and development of community partners. CBR enables them to employ critical, humanizing pedagogies (Freire, 1976), with educative intent, to help empower people of disadvantaged communities through participating in the creation of knowledge about their community circumstances. Through adopting methods to democratize knowledge and increase the agency of participants, this approach to research can also help to flatten power differentials in society. Lister (2007) said that this is attainable only if academic researchers can be humble, open to all points of view, tolerate tension, be comfortable being uncomfortable, be self-critical and honestly seek to find compromise. The academic researcher is also a research participant, whose initial facilitative role in the research diminishes as the community partners learn and develop as researchers and leaders within their own context.

Vulnerable Populations

The *Cambridge Dictionary's* (2021) definition of *vulnerable* is "able to be easily hurt, influenced, or attacked". The use of the term in this book refers to social groupings of people who face two ongoing difficulties due to their status, including but not limited to gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, income, health, race, age and geographic location. One is the struggle to access and/or benefit from public protective resources such as quality health and welfare services (distributive view of social

justice, as discussed earlier). The other is that they are marginalized and excluded from mainstream society due to hegemonic (dominant) attitudes and norms (recognition paradigm). As Phillips and Fordham (2010, p. 11) explained, vulnerability does not result from deficit on the part of individuals, but from "the ways in which social systems are constructed, [and] choices are made", resulting in a susceptibility to adverse economic, social, emotional, educational and health outcomes.

An intersectional understanding (Reygan & Steyn, 2017) recognizes that vulnerability does not emanate from a single source, but that injustice and inequality result from a complex coming together of factors that create systems of oppression through disparities in power and privilege. To illustrate, someone who grows up in poverty in a South African township will most likely be black, and thus have less access to quality educational opportunities, good health care or even basic necessities such as adequate housing, electricity and a healthy sanitation system. If they are female, gay or lesbian, they are in increased danger of being abused (see, e.g., Gillum, 2019; Heise et al., 2019; Müller, 2016; Taylor, 2018). People are thus rendered vulnerable on multiple levels, robbed of a sense of dignity, agency and hope. The participatory paradigm of CBR requires that people experiencing such disempowerment are included in research seeking to bring about change in the societal, political and economic structures and attitudes that contribute to oppression of themselves and others. The educational, emancipatory and other activist intentions of CBR aim to reduce vulnerability of specific populations through raising awareness and understanding of oppressive systems, developing the ability to address injustices and supporting action to help overcome this systemic oppression, informed by empirical research.

Having clarified the core concepts discussed in this book, we now turn to an outline of the structure and content of the rest of the book.

Structure and Content of the Book

This chapter has argued that in a global setting where poverty and marginalization are increasing, there is an urgent need for methodologies and methods that support and enable engaged scholars to work with

disadvantaged communities on the pressing social issues of our time. This book discusses the context in which such action research may be conducted through CBR and the theoretical foundations of this approach. It also provides case examples from a variety of settings, mainly in a South African context, with some examples pertaining to research with marginalized populations in developed countries.

The book has three parts (see Fig. 1.1). Part I has three chapters, which respectively provide the rationale for the book (Chap. 1), address the construction of ethical guidelines for CBR (Chap. 2) and discuss the development of research capacity for researchers conducting CBR (Chap. 3). Part II presents case studies that offer varied methodological and theoretical perspectives on how university-based researchers can partner with vulnerable populations to make the university more socially responsive through engaging community partners in the co-construction of knowledge for change (Chaps. 4–11). Part III offers insight into the development of a framework for CBR, considering models of collaboration that

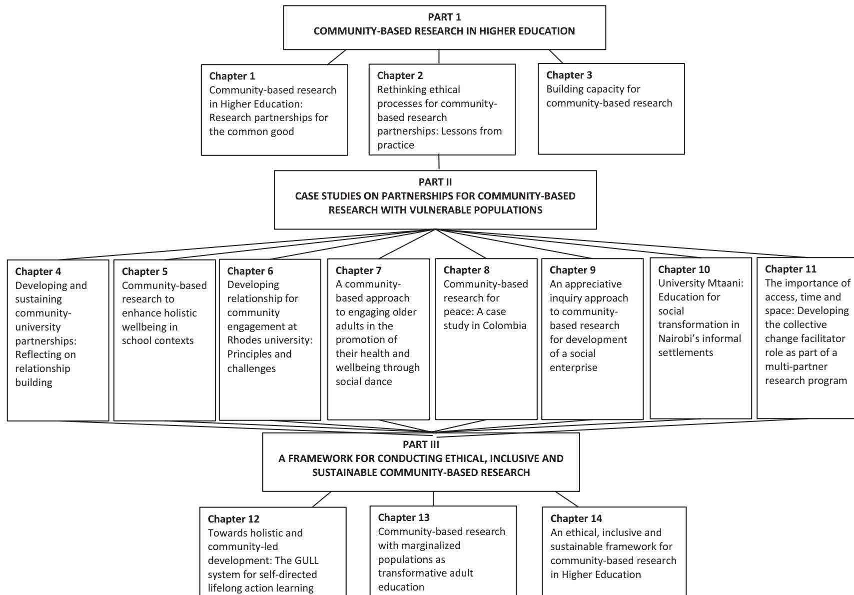

Fig. 1.1 Structure of book

recognize the capacity of community for learning and development (Chaps. 12 and 13). Chapter 14 concludes the book by drawing together insights from the various authors and their chapters to suggest responses to the three questions that prompted the research on which the book is based. These responses will help to move forward in understanding how to conduct authentic CBR with vulnerable populations. From this knowledge, an ethical, inclusive and sustainable framework emerges to guide CBR partnerships.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced and provided the rationale for the overarching research question that the following chapters will address from various angles and perspectives: How can universities improve their practice of CBR to make it a truly participatory, democratic, decolonized and decolonizing process?

The authors' aim is to help develop a conceptual framework that will address the three concerns the literature highlights, namely (1) the need to develop ethical processes, especially suited to CBR, that while upholding universal ethical principles also allow for implementing the principles of recognition, participation and joint decision-making; (2) the need to build the capacity of academics to conduct CBR and (3) the need to find a way to ensure that the learning of the community is recognized and sustained. Generating knowledge in response to the book's guiding question is a collaborative effort between community-based researchers from five continents who share their learning from their respective community projects, to inform the framework presented in the last chapter. This framework will be useful to universities around the world that want to contribute to social justice and engage in CBR in partnership with vulnerable communities for positive change and the common good.

Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. What benefits do you think CBR could bring to communities you work with or may work with in future?
2. What paradigm shift would you need to make to conduct authentic CBR?
3. What changes do you think need to be made in academia to enable authentic CBR?

Further Reading

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2

Rethinking Ethical Processes for Community-Based Research with Vulnerable Populations: Lessons from Practice

Mary Brydon-Miller and Lesley Wood

Introduction

When I think of community-based research, I think of a group of people holding hands around a fireplace. I see them relaxing under the stars and in the open—conversing, singing, dancing and sharing their life experiences. I see the fireplace warms people's hearts and warms their food—their sustenance for life! People are drawn to the fireplace. Its welcoming warmth assisting with forging relationships and genuine interest in each other's needs. Its energy igniting the fire within. The fireplace is a community project, bringing people together. I also see the dark side

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of the fireplace—it wanes and withers when not attended to and nearly disappears altogether. I see those around the fire, dispersing and running for cover, feeling cold and lonely, separated and rejected. Seeing fear emerging within the depths of the dark night when the fire is not attended to and the hopelessness of the overwhelming problem faced by each community member around the fire again takes control.

The latter vision is my experience of traditional research. We went to poor communities who had very little hope, to gain information ***from*** *them on how sport and physical education was being experienced at their schools. Their concerns about dilapidated schools and burned out staff, hopeless students, alcoholism, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and violence overshadowed our conversations about physical activity. What disturbed me most was that I knew I was only there to gain information, and then leave, never to be seen again. I knew that my interviews and focus groups and long-winded questionnaires would not help this community to transform. The community members knew this too. They asked me: Are you also here to just take information and get your articles published, improve your career, and leave us stranded? I was not sure how to respond, because I knew the type of research I was conducting was exactly that.* (Sam Kahts [SK], doctoral candidate's reflection, November 2020)

The vignette above illustrates a central ethical dilemma facing researchers who engage in community-based research (CBR). This young academic had been trained in traditional research thinking—to approach with and preserve objectivity, which would preclude her from forming relationships with the 'subjects' of 'her' research and bound her to abandon or 'bracket' her subjectivity. Yet the paradigm and principles of CBR require researchers to do the opposite. Trusting relationships guide the process of learning, knowledge creation, community development and self-development; critical self- and group reflection result in research participants becoming skilled in action learning; participants cultivate leadership and agency with and among each other as they develop their voice and value their sense of self-worth. Research participants achieve these outcomes through working with others, learning new technical skills and obtaining first-hand experience through knowledge creation in their contribution to collaborative research (Wood, 2020).

CBR at its core is humanitarian—in principle and in practice. CBR upholds democracy, social justice, genuine concern for humanity and the environment, and therefore recognition of community members and others who are involved as research participants. This is why university

researchers pursuing CBR need to recognize and remain aware of their own place in this research, especially their inherent privileges and their potential power and influence on both the group of research participants and the community at large. This requirement helps to ensure that university researchers uphold the principles and values of CBR and of the community they are researching, as well as of the university, which can at times be an ethical juggle.

Universities are bureaucratic, hierarchical and privileged institutions, where demonstrated knowledge of the chosen academic discipline and favourable peer review are among the most important determinants of career success. In this context, working *with* so-called vulnerable people to enable them to help generate knowledge collaboratively for social improvement appears to be outside the square conceptually and in practice, and thus not accommodated in the review board processes of most academic institutions. Indeed, because participatory research is grounded in values, worldviews and epistemological understandings completely different from—in some ways antithetical to—those that are currently dominant in mainstream academic institutions in many national contexts, CBR requires higher education institutions to rethink established ethical procedures. When the compatibility of CBR with the stated principles of the university system is more firmly established, university researchers can pursue CBR more proactively, and the educative, political and emancipatory outcomes of CBR (see Chap. 1) can be successfully attained. As our young scholar quoted above goes on to observe with profound self-honesty:

> *Had I known about community-based research, I could have had a different impact on these people's lives through helping them to articulate and apply their skills and knowledge in the midst of a desolate and hopeless environment. I could have brought together parents, children, teachers and others to create synergy and awareness of the problems they are facing, forming new relationships and networks, thereby providing opportunities for transformation that were community driven. I should have provided opportunities for people to vent their frustrations within social settings (such as universities, local councils, community meetings) in a constructive manner. I could have fostered hope and change from within, emancipating myself and others from the way we think*

about the world. It is sad that so many researchers take and take and take, and never give back. I was one of them. (SK, November 2020)

In this chapter we discuss areas in which CBR can generate ethical concerns that are distinctive to this particular research approach given both its place outside the dominant, institutionalized research paradigms and the difficulties around legitimacy inherently associated with CBR's relative newcomer status. Central to these concerns is that the values and worldviews giving life to CBR are somewhat different from those of the dominant research paradigms whose values and worldviews are embedded within the higher education system. We first consider the ethical principles related to the realms of CBR and how CBR fits into the major ethical frameworks. We then turn to the seven specific issues involving ethics that we have encountered through our own experiences with CBR. These issues relate to collaboration and power, unclear boundaries between researcher and researched, community rights and conflict, ownership and dissemination of research findings, anonymity and privacy, working within the constraints of institutional ethical review processes and the challenges of engaging in social action for positive social change. We briefly consider three short case studies to explore these ethical issues and their associated challenges in doing CBR. We also consider both lessons learnt from these experiences about ethics in developing and maintaining CBR partnerships, and overarching ethical issues involved in CBR, with examples from the South African context.

Ethics and Ethical Challenges in Community-Based Research

Learning about and doing CBR offers opportunities to address the broad issues of inclusion, positive social transformation and sustainability through participatory, democratic processes. However, at the same time, this approach to research raises certain ethical challenges not found in more traditional forms of inquiry, as illustrated by the vignette above. Unlike in traditional research, where the researcher controls the process

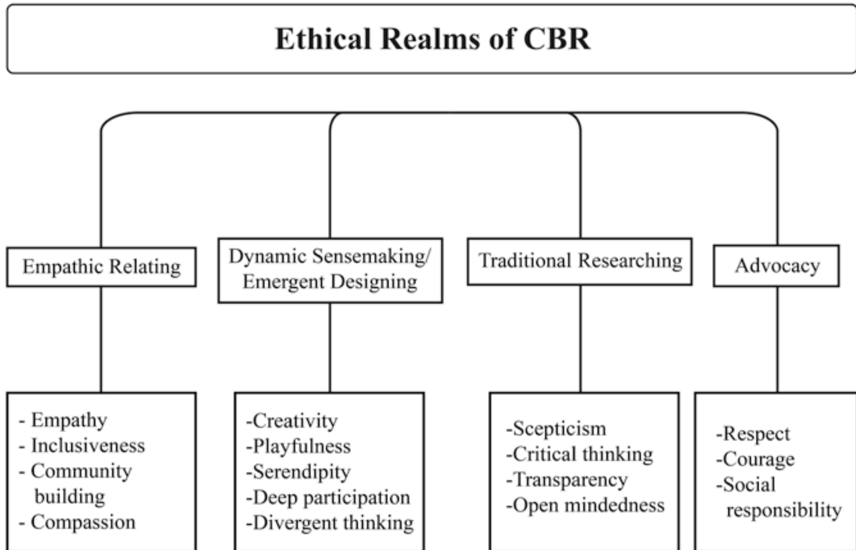

Fig. 2.1 Ethical principles related to the realms of community-based research

by virtue of their expert theoretical knowledge, community-based researchers occupy a variety of different realms and roles that the situation requires across the evolving research process. Given the shifting demands involved in developing a CBR project, these various realms and roles each carry with them a distinct set of values that serve to guide ethical practice (Brydon-Miller et al., 2021). Figure 2.1 identifies the realms, roles and personal qualities that CBR entails.

The realm of *Empathic Relator*, for example, focuses on building interpersonal connections and developing understanding within the research collaboration. In this realm, the researcher would focus on the ethical principles of caring, humility and respect. The realms of *Dynamic Sensemaker* and *Emergent Designer* are grounded in opening up new perspectives on problems and developing innovative solutions. Here the emphasis would be on developing such qualities as creativity, courage or playfulness. CBR incorporates many of the methods of more traditional research processes, and here would draw upon values such as critical thinking and attention to methodological rigour. But unlike traditional research, CBR

by its very definition moves beyond knowledge generation to the realm of *Advocacy*, and here values such as respect, courage and perseverance come to the fore. And across all realms, the core values of any CBR process remain central: "a respect for people and for the knowledge and experience they bring to the research process, a belief in the ability of democratic processes to achieve positive social change, and a commitment to action" (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003, p. 15). These core values are especially critical when conducting research with those considered to be from vulnerable populations, whose knowledge and expertise are most often not considered and whose ability to contribute to democratic change processes is discounted.

Major Frameworks for Research Ethics

Ethics can be understood from a number of different perspectives. We can identify specific actions as ethical (deontological or duty ethics); we can consider the costs and benefits of particular decisions (utilitarian or consequentialist ethics); we can examine the qualities of individuals (Aristotelian or virtue ethics) or we can look at the nature of our relationships with others (feminist, communitarian and covenantal ethics). Here we examine how the first two of these approaches have traditionally been applied to research ethics and how the others may inform a more reflective, flexible and caring answer to the challenges of ethics in CBR.

Established approaches to the regulatory- and compliance-focused aspects of institutional research review processes are based largely on two approaches to ethics. One is deontological, or duty, ethics (Davis, 1993; Ebels-Duggan, 2011) that focuses primarily on carrying out prescribed actions, such as following explicitly laid out subject recruitment procedures, gaining informed consent using authorized documents and storing data in an institutionally sanctioned manner. Utilitarian or consequentialist approaches to ethics (Askari & Mirakhor, 2020; Portmore, 2011) enter into considerations of risk and benefit, although risk-avoidance led by concerns regarding potential institutional liability seems to have the greatest influence in making these decisions in the current context of ethical review of university researchers' work.

The other major theoretical school of ethics is Aristotelian or Virtue Ethics (Swanton, 2011). This approach considers the moral character of the researcher and is seen as outside the purview of these research boards. As Brydon-Miller et al. (2015) observed, "a return to virtue ethics would reframe research ethics training away from a sole reliance on following a specified protocol to focus instead on personal reflection and dialogue regarding the complex ethical issues confronting researchers" (p. 598).

Similarly, approaches that focus on the centrality of human relationships, such as feminist, communitarian and community covenantal ethics, are not represented in the review policies or procedures of human subjects (Banks & Brydon-Miller, 2019). Hilsen (2006) has defined covenantal ethics as "the unconditional responsibility and the ethical demand to act in the best interest of our fellow human beings" (p. 27). This notion of an 'ethical demand' to act in the best interests of others captures the core ethical tenet of CBR, and it was as a means of operationalizing this concept that the process of Structured Ethical Reflection was developed (Stevens et al., 2016). This process of articulating a set of values and formulating ways of tracking how these values are put into action during our research can guide both individuals and groups in designing and carrying out more ethical research practices.

Another approach to ethics that speaks to CBR practice is the notion of everyday ethics, which are embedded in the moment-to-moment decisions we make about how we choose to relate to one another and to the communities in which we work. This "ethics work", as Banks (2016) defined it, refers to "the effort people put into seeing ethically salient aspects of a situation, developing themselves as good practitioners, working out the right course of action, and justifying who they are and what they have done" (p. 35).

A useful strategy for deepening our understanding of ethical issues in CBR is the use of case studies to illuminate particular challenges and concerns raised by this form of inquiry. Banks and Brydon-Miller (2019) used this approach in their examination of the ethics of participatory research in health and well-being. As they described the process, casuistry or case-based ethical reasoning, "starts with particular cases, taking account of the specific circumstances of each case in deciding on an ethically correct response" (p. 13). It is then possible to extend this reflection

to consider how this reasoning may apply in other situations in CBR and to begin to build more general guidelines to inform ethical decision-making. With this process in mind, we present the case studies of our work with vulnerable populations. But before doing that, we outline the main ethical concerns facing community-based researchers as a way to frame the presentations of our case studies and the discussion that follows.

Ethical Concerns in Community-Based Research

Drawing upon the work of the Durham Community Research Team (Banks et al., 2013), Banks and Brydon-Miller (2019) described seven areas in which CBR can generate specific ethical concerns. These include issues related to (1) collaboration and power, (2) blurred boundaries between researcher and researched, (3) community rights and conflict, (4) ownership and dissemination of research findings, (5) questions around anonymity and privacy, (6) working within the constraints of institutional ethical review processes and (7) the challenges of engaging in social action for social change.

Partnership, Collaboration and Power

The most essential component of any CBR endeavour is the establishment of strong relationships among partners, whether they be community members, academic researchers, organizational leaders or others (Grant et al., 2008; Israel et al., 2003). However, this emphasis on relationship building must be grounded in a clear understanding of the challenges inherent in developing partnerships, including addressing differences in power and privilege between researchers and community members but also within communities (Campbell, 2003; Chataway, 2001).

Blurring the Boundaries Between Researcher and Researched, Academic and Activist

For many community-engaged researchers their journey to this practice was motivated by a desire to find a way to bridge the divide between scholar and activist roles. But doing so brings with it a number of ethical issues when the demands of the academy conflict with the interests of the community. For example, if negative information comes to light during the course of the research that may impact the welfare of the community or individual participants in some way, the researcher must decide between the ethical imperative of telling the truth versus the ethical demand, and human inclination, to protect those they care about (Newkirk, 1996). This also includes questions about insider versus outsider status and how we negotiate relationships within the context of the research.

Community Rights, Conflict and Democratic Representation

Formal codes of research ethics tend to focus on the rights of individual research participants, but CBR must also consider the broader interests of the groups with whom they work as well as the potential for conflict between the rights of individual members of a community and the sovereignty of the community as a whole.

Ownership and Dissemination of Data, Findings and Publications

Publication in peer-reviewed journals may be the coin of the realm for academics, but it does little to further the interests of communities to have their stories told and to effect positive change. The goal should be to create alternative ways to present and disseminate the findings of CBR so that it is accessible to the community at large and able to be used by community members to inform policy and practice. One important

contribution to this effort is the development of the Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP™) principles led by First Nations communities in Canada which address issues of ownership, control, access and possession of the knowledge generated through research in their communities (Schnarch, 2004).

Anonymity, Privacy and Confidentiality

The assumption of vulnerability and the need to protect that inform the review of most established review boards' decision-making processes, overlook the possibility that community partners in research are generators of knowledge in their own right and warrant recognition for these contributions every bit as much as other scholars whose academic works may be acknowledged in publications (see Chap. 1 for an explanation of vulnerability as social injustice). On the other hand, there are clear instances in CBR in which participants do face significant risk, demanding that their identities be protected (Guhathakurta, 2019). And in some cases, these risks may not be immediately apparent as the changes in political power may create problems for participants in the future. But rather than assume a one-size-fits-all approach, as is currently the case, these questions merit thoughtful negotiation and more nuanced options for determining who is given credit for contributing to this research.

Institutional Ethical Review Processes

Existing human subjects review processes in most parts of the world, while well-intended, were designed to address issues arising in biomedical research contexts and do not provide meaningful guidance to community-based researchers. On the contrary, they tend to reinforce existing systems of power and privilege through their assumption that the researcher must control the knowledge-generation process from beginning to end (Brydon-Miller, 2009). The process of gaining institutional approval for research projects with human 'subjects' marks the end of any consideration of ethics for many researchers. Hence, the emergent nature of the

knowledge-generation process in CBR makes ongoing reflection on the research process and discussion of ethics shaping it critically important for the legitimacy and the future of this research approach.

Social Action for Social Change

Changing the world for the better may be the goal of CBR but success is not a given and questions arise as to what constitutes positive social change. Who determines the nature of the change being undertaken? Who benefits from the changes and who does not? Good intentions do not negate the importance of thoughtful consideration of the potential ethical implications of our work.

Using these overarching issues as a framework, we now present brief case studies to explore ethical issues or challenges we have faced in doing community-based research. Our analysis focuses on how the university and community groups partnered and what processes they used to set up and conduct the research, as well as the challenges the research participants faced, successes and failures they experienced and lessons they learnt about development and maintenance of ethical research partnerships. Based on these case studies, we then explore the larger ethical issues involved in doing CBR with vulnerable populations, particularly in the South African context.

Community-Based Research with Vulnerable Populations: Examples of Ethical Dilemmas

The examples that follow highlight some of the ethical difficulties encountered when doing CBR with vulnerable populations. The university researchers involved in these projects explained to us in a personal interview how they negotiated hurdles and threats to find ways to enhance and strengthen the research partnerships.

The first example comes from the project initiated by Ansie Kitching, a university professor, through her partnership with an education Trust[1] in the Western Cape in South Africa. The project's aim was to improve

the quality of education in schools in impoverished areas of the Cape Winelands through enhancing the holistic wellness of learners and staff (see Chap. 5 for more detail). Ansie and other research participants adopted a participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) approach (as explained in Chap. 3) to develop the capacity of stakeholders in the schools to set up sustainable structures and policies to enhance the wellness of school and community members on an ongoing basis, rather than addressing problems only as they arose. The community surrounding the schools faced problems related to unemployment, crime, poverty, alcohol abuse (including foetal alcohol syndrome), poor health and low literacy levels. These issues inevitably had an impact on the health and education of children at these schools and the challenges that their teachers face.

People in the education Trust and in the schools, and the academic researcher, all had their own priorities and understanding about what should be done and how. This was the first ethical dilemma Ansie had to negotiate:

> *[Y]ou enter into the partnership with the education Trust and they have power in the community and they have certain ideas of where they want to go. The ethical dilemma started there, because I had some perspectives on how things should be done but they had their own ideas.* (AK, January, 2021)

The three-way partnership therefore had to be continually renegotiated to ensure that communication was clear and that the three partners could come to an agreement on individual and collective responsibilities and outcomes. Trust had to be built, not only between the university researchers and members of the school communities but also with those in a third, outside party who had their own agenda to follow. This situation put pressure on the university partner to create an environment where participants could be honest and able to voice different, even opposing, opinions, while maintaining a trusting and respectful relationship. At first, the teachers and parents were sceptical about the Trust being involved, yet without Trust funding, the project probably would not have been possible. Ethical issues around conflict management continued as the university researcher became an integral part of the action

for seeking positive outcomes, since this blurred the lines between university and community research participants. The needs voiced by the teachers and school community were many. So, while the researcher felt she needed to meet their expectations of her help as best as she could, she could not but reflect continually on "how far can [a researcher] go in terms of getting involved in solving the problems" in the school. The university researcher also found it difficult to deal with internal conflict within the schools, such as when the needs of management and of teachers were difficult to reconcile. Ansie described the ethical dilemma she faced when conflict arose in a meeting between parents, teachers, school management and learner representatives:

> *There was a conflict that happened, and then you sit with young children within that conflict so that was where the moral compass, as you would say, really comes out strongly, where you have to make decisions about how you are going to deal with this. You cannot let it continue because you can't break the trust and respect, so what I normally did was to just ask people if we could maybe discuss that outside of this particular meeting because this was not the aim or the purpose of this meeting, but then again as a researcher you are taking on the burden of discussing something that really is not part of your business in a way as a researcher, but as a community-based researcher you do have to get involved to a certain extent.* (AK, January, 2021)

This experience highlights the importance of CBR researchers having both strong facilitation and people management skills, and the ability to reflect critically on their own feelings, reactions and influence on the research process. It is clear that in this case the ethical dimension of research entailed a complex process of constant monitoring and renegotiating, rather than a once-off exercise to satisfy ethical review boards. Ansie also recounted how she had to make sure that her actions were true to her professed intentions for the project and participants. The schools being part of a socio-economically disadvantaged community added another layer of ethical concern:

> *Then on top of all of that is the social justice issue, because if you work in a vulnerable community you are also drawn into those social justice issues. So you*

obviously have to engage in conversations where people do not agree with you, and even sometimes outside that space, in your own academic space you are confronted with people that may not have the same views as you and how do you deal with that ethically, without compromising this community? (AK, January, 2021)

Ansie depicted her ethical negotiations as a dance; she had to practice, learn new steps and move in tune with her partners, while still maintaining good working relationships with colleagues and government officials whose behaviour perhaps contradicted the values of CBR. She negotiated this successfully by recognizing the complexity of the process, putting relationships at the core of her decision-making priorities and continually checking in with her 'moral compass'. She had to be critically self-aware at all turns and acknowledge to herself and others when she made mistakes. She also did her best to understand the political climate of the community, including which people had to be consulted and informed about the project. The complexity of ethical considerations of CBR is also highlighted in the second example.

Maite Mathikithela conducted her youth participatory action research in the school where she was a teacher. The school was situated in an impoverished rural community in the Limpopo province and the state of the school and quality of education offered were affected by and reflected the impoverishment of the surrounding environment. Maite had permission from the school management and the Department of Education to work with a group of Grade 11 learners to research the aspects of their school experience that were impacting negatively on their ability to learn, and then to find ways to bring about improvement. She received ethical clearance from the university for her doctoral study, but as it progressed, ethical concerns started to arise that she was unprepared for. The first concerned blurring of the lines between her simultaneous roles as researcher and teacher, between social activist and colleague. When the youth researchers generated data in the first research cycle to identify what had to be done to make their school an enabling, rather than a disabling space, it became clear that the behaviour of many of the teachers was not only unethical but also illegal and immoral.

The visual artefacts and narrative produced by the learners told of teachers encouraging them to drink and smoke with the teachers and to visit taverns to entertain the customers by dancing on the tables; of teachers giving lower marks to learners who refused their sexual advances and higher marks to those who complied; of teachers verbally abusing learners in front of the class with regard to their HIV status or their inability to come to school in the correct uniform. The dilemma for Maite was how to protect the learners and raise awareness of the issues, without accusing specific teachers or bringing the school into total disrepute. How could she convince the school management to take the research seriously without the findings also functioning as evidence of management's incompetence? She approached the school principal with the findings and urged that he speak authoritatively to all educators in the school as part of a remedial response. She also suggested devising a school policy on educator conduct. The school management created the policy, but then some of her colleagues gave her the nickname 'Section 10', referring to the section in the policy that prohibits sexual abuse of learners. Like Ansie, Maite had to learn the steps of this 'dance' as she consulted her academic advisor and the university ethics board for help in dealing with this unexpected development in the research process. She had to learn how to contain her feelings, yet ensure she acted in the best interests of the children, upheld her professional responsibilities as a schoolteacher and fulfilled the requirements of the law, while not making her colleagues and management feel threatened. She recounts:

> *Another challenge was that of teachers trying to silence participants through personal victimization. When learners asked for help on academic issues, some teachers would say "we cannot help because you say we are discriminating against you, go and ask for help from those who don't". I addressed that problem by reading the letter of permission to conduct research from the District and threatened that if anyone ever attempted to victimize the participants, I would report them to the District Director. So, they backed off.* (MM, January 2021)

Maite was able to persevere because she knew what she was doing was right. That was why the name-calling did not upset her, and eventually she won over several of her colleagues who began to work with her and

the learners to improve the school's learning culture. She helped the youth participants to draw up a policy brief for management, outlining the changes they felt were needed and they began to invite other children to join them in after-school activities, cleaning the school and setting up clubs to improve safety. The management made efforts to improve the school's infrastructure. One teacher set up a support group for girls to share their problems; others began to get involved in extramural sports; a School-Based Support Team was created to deal with the problems learners might experience, and the District-Based Support Team began to visit the school regularly. When asked what a researcher needs to do when dealing with such complex ethical issues, Maite replied, "You have to be stoic, believe that what you are doing is right and develop a thick skin. Don't retaliate ever and be patient." However, it is also apparent that she thought long and carefully before acting, and that she was very self-aware with respect to her multiple roles in the research project.

Our next case study explores the conflict experienced by postgraduate student, Daryl Maclean, when trying to reconcile the expectations of the institutional ethics board with his practice in the field. Daryl co-constructed his research question with the non-governmental organization (NGO) that constituted his community partner, Training for Transformation (TfT). The NGO's aim was to secure formal recognition of TfT programmes within the South African National Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and by extension internationally, on TfT's own terms, rather than turning the programme into some other form to meet SAQA requirements. However, he soon began to experience an ethical dilemma. Daryl writes:

> *TfT inducted me into the values of the organization, inviting me to 'become part of the flow' by joining their weekly 'centering' and management meetings. They also generated much of the data on which the study was based; and helped me generate or interpret other data. Yet, from the outset, the research ethics regime governing my study didn't sit comfortably with the 'flow' of TfT. I dove deeply into this*. (DM, January 2021)

He included in his thesis a chapter on the character and evolution of research ethics ranging from the Nuremberg trials to the current

hegemonic biomedical research ethics paradigm informing research ethics at most research and higher education institutions, in South Africa and abroad. He also traced the emerging contestations to this paradigm, including the 2012 and 2015 Ethics Rupture conferences that led to the Brunswick Declaration, and subsequent scholarship (see van den Hoonaard & Hamilton, 2016). This review helped him to better understand why he was uncomfortable with the "ethical imperialism" (Schrag, 2010, p. 3) of institutional research ethics and led him to embrace an "ethics of care" (Robinson, 2020, p. 12). Research ethics can be fully grasped only in practice. Yet, the review alerted him to issues that he needed to explore in his relationship with TfT. Daryl explained a few of these moral dilemmas and how he attempted to handle them.

> ***Interrogating my positionality***. *I was studying toward a formal qualification through the very system of institutions my study was critiquing. I was committing what moral realism describes as a performative contradiction. My best shot at resolving this was that the study needed to speak the language of higher education if it was to engage the higher education system. TfT told me "we all live with contradictions in our lives", but it took a great deal of introspection to make peace with what I still perceive as a performative contradiction.*
>
> ***Co-governance of research ethics***. *My institution required ethics consent only at the start of the study. I embedded co-governance of research ethics throughout, designing my study as a co-constructed change project. I measured the validity of my study using* Lather's *(*1986*) validity criteria. My study has outcome validity if it contributes to achieving the change my co-researchers and I sought. I took the 'crisis of representation' seriously. And I aimed to find new locally determined norms of understanding through my co-construction of learner stories.*
>
> ***Privileging community needs and schedules during my fieldwork***. *Timelines for my study were set by the university. Timelines for TfT were determined by their own needs and schedules. The two conflicted constantly. TfT were hit by a funding and staffing crisis shortly after I started working with them, later a health crisis in top management, and throughout, by the pressures they faced in their work. The scope and schedule of my study shifted due to TfT restructuring into a legal entity. They asked me to put my study on the back burner while I supported them through a four-stage (months long) process to*

> *become a Public Benefit Organisation. This necessarily preceded the accreditation process (accreditation requires a registered legal entity to apply).*
>
> ***Interpreting data****. I used narrative metaphor analysis to interpret the stories. Asking the people telling me their stories to co-construct interpretation is akin to a form of psychotherapy (especially when using Jungian archetypes). This is hazardous ethical terrain for someone who is not a qualified psychologist.* (DM, January, 2021)

We now discuss some of the ethical issues from these case studies in relation to literature on ethical approaches to CBR.

Linking the Cases to Core Areas of Ethical Concerns

The research project descriptions from the three case studies reflect a number of the core areas of potential ethical concern that can arise in the context of conducting CBR. They also illustrate the ways in which the key ethical principles within each of the realms of CBR may be mobilized to address these issues. Issues related to *partnership*, *collaboration* and *power*, for example, were at the centre of the challenge that Ansie described in trying to balance the interests and goals of the school in which she was conducting her research, which included staff, students and their families, the project funders and her own interests as a researcher. Daryl, too, found that he was forced to balance the interests of his community partner organization against the expectations of his university. And Maite found herself having to challenge systems of power within her own school when she found that the welfare of students was being threatened by the very teachers entrusted with their care.

There was also a *blurring of boundaries* in these projects, as Maite described, being forced to blur "the lines between researcher and teacher, between social activist and colleague" when her research uncovered these serious breaches of ethics on the part of her fellow educators. So too, when Daryl chose to put his academic programme on hold, while he supported his community partner in their work to become a recognized Public Benefit Organization. Another boundary that Daryl encountered was in distinguishing between his role as a researcher using narrative

inquiry and the danger of taking on the role of therapist without proper training or support.

Community rights, *conflict* and *democratic participation* are clearly reflected in Maite's description of the tensions that arose when the students in her project reported serious misconduct by their teachers. Her fortitude in standing up to the attempts of these colleagues to silence the students' concerns is a remarkable example of the kind of courage researchers are sometimes called upon to exhibit when ethical issues arise unexpectedly. The notion of being guided by a moral compass is something that emerged in both Maite's case and in Ansie's description of her decision-making processes when confronted with conflicting demands of stakeholders in her study.

The challenges of *maintaining anonymity*, *privacy* and *confidentiality* when conducting research within organizations and communities became obvious when the teachers at Maite's school refused to provide academic support to those students they believed had reported the misconduct of these teachers as part of the research process. All three of these projects reflected a commitment to engaging in *social action for positive social change*, and in doing so these researchers encountered the kind of challenges and resistance that almost always accompany attempts to create more equitable and just institutions and organizations.

Two other aspects of ethical CBR are the ongoing processes of *reflection* and *facilitation*. All three of these researchers demonstrated how these two processes work in tandem to guide ethical decision-making. Ansie, for example, talked about the need to engage with people who may not share your views of the world, which requires both self-awareness and the ability to listen and work across these differences in the interest of moving a project forward. Daryl described his realization that in challenging the structures of the academy, he was engaging in a performative contradiction and had to reconcile these tensions in order to move forward with his project and his programme.

All three of these projects also reflected a fundamental truth of CBR—that you can expect the unexpected. All three researchers faced challenges that they could not have anticipated when they began their studies. And all three have met these challenges by positioning themselves in a set of values to inform their decision-making and their commitment to serving the interests of their community partners.

Implications for Practice: Doing Research with Vulnerable Populations

Current ethical processes tend to negate the reality that in carrying out research we are working with complex human beings with their own knowledge, experiences and ways of being. As ethical researchers, we need to find ways to deal with the uncertainty that may arise as we develop relationships with our co-researchers and go about conducting research together. Ways we can do this include:

- centre yourself within a set of values;
- know your school, organizational or community setting and participants;
- identify aspects and levels of power among stakeholders and in the larger research context;
- acknowledge your own interests—to yourself and to others;
- anticipate ethical issues and constantly reflect on them by using the values, roles and realms of CBR as criteria for evaluating your practice and
- expect the unexpected and be open and flexible to allow for change when needed.

Table 2.1 presents some questions designed to help you reflect on ethical issues in your practice.

One key question we must ask ourselves as community-based researchers is how we define the notion of vulnerability and how this may inform our practice. Within the context of existing systems of human subject reviews, populations considered to be vulnerable, for example, people with learning difficulties, or who are incarcerated, or living in poverty (in South Africa at least) and all minor children, are subject to enhanced oversight by academic review boards, which decide whether and to what extent these people may participate in research processes. Such boards also determine what constitutes acceptable risk, which can make it impossible for researchers and their community partners to engage in critical, if potentially challenging, issues.

Table 2.1 Questions to aid reflection on ethical practice in community-based research

Questions to ask yourself when faced with an ethical dilemma
• Is there immediate risk involved? • What are your core values and how are they being reflected in your decisions? • What roles are you playing and how does this inform your action? • Who is involved? What relationships do they have with one another? Where is the power? • Whose responsibility is it to respond? • What obligations or commitments do you have to the participants? • What is likely to happen later? • What are the larger impacts of potential actions? What happens if you do not act? • If there are competing values or interests, what is most important?

One response to this issue is to redefine the concept of vulnerability, emphasizing that what makes an individual or a group vulnerable is not some aspect of themselves, but a failure of the larger social, political and economic systems to provide the kinds of support and opportunities that would enable them to fully engage as both participants in communities and citizens within a democratic society. From a research perspective, this comes down to our conviction that every human being has the ability and the right to contribute to knowledge-generating processes that impact their lives, and that it is our responsibility, as researchers, to enable them to do so.

Conclusion

The ethical issues discussed in this chapter are instances of widely recognized ethical challenges in co-constructed CBR, as summarized by Banks et al. (2013). As this discussion reveals, when working on research with vulnerable populations, ethical considerations are also about re-presenting community perspectives ontologically and epistemologically, ensuring that people are heard on their own terms in their own language, using their own voice. Current review board processes and requirements do not allow for this, as they position vulnerability as individual deficit, even

when it arises from systemic injustice. People are then seen as 'subjects' who are incapable of making their own decisions and taking social action to change their lives as they deem fit. Researchers who uphold the values of CBR need to convince institutional ethics boards otherwise. We believe this is best done by documenting ethical challenges and sharing how they were overcome, just as we have done in this chapter. As our discussion has also indicated, it is difficult to create a standardized ethical form for CBR, since each research project and each research relationship is unique and brings its own unique challenges. However, by continually revisiting and reflecting on the values, roles and realms of CBR, the university researcher can adapt and further develop their practice to ensure they are acting true to the ethical imperatives of this approach.

Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. What would you have done differently to deal with the ethical dilemmas in each example?
2. What roles and realms have you occupied in the community-based projects you have been involved in, and what values have informed your action within these situations?
3. How would you define vulnerability, and how do you think this should inform your practice as a researcher?

Note

1. A trust in this instance refers to a not-for-profit organization that receives funds from a philanthropic source and allocates them to the benefit of a specific sector, for example education.

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3

Building Capacity for Community-Based Research

Lesley Wood

Introduction

Chapter 1 explained why researchers in higher education institutions need to adopt more socially responsive paradigms to guide their research. Across the chapters of this book, authors illustrate how and why this kind of socially responsive research, which we call community-based research or CBR, needs to be made more prominent inside and outside higher education institutions. We therefore need to design initiatives to enable academics to make this radical paradigm shift to build capacity for CBR. My own experience as a university-based leader, examiner and reviewer of participatory forms of research points to a dire need to develop capacity among academics to conduct CBR in an ethical, inclusive and sustainable way. Evidence from international literature on the topic (see Tandon et al., 2016, for research reports from various countries) supports my observation.

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Nevertheless, changing ingrained paradigmatic assumptions is not easy for most researchers. Effecting this change requires deep personal reflection on motives, beliefs and values regarding research and research partnerships by both academic researchers and other institutional staff. It usually entails a complete turn-around in approach, requiring the academic researcher to understand the situations of others from their own perspectives. The academic researcher conducting CBR works with these people—their fellow researchers—on their understanding to attain their goals, rather than "modifying existing representations by means of scientific knowledge" (Zamosc, 1986, p. 34). Zamosc (1986, p. 33) explained that only in this way will the "researcher achieve the acceptance and collaboration of the researched".

Indeed, as explained in Chap. 1, the term 'the researched' is indeed no longer applicable, as in CBR community members become researchers themselves. They are active participants in the whole process of research and problem-solving, from understanding the situation, through deciding on the research questions and how to answer them, to generating and analysing data and deciding how to mobilize the resultant knowledge. In the case of vulnerable populations, as conceptualized in this book (see Chap. 1), they also need to understand their own potential as valuable knowledge creators and agents of change, a potential eroded by years of political and mental colonization seeking to enforce their inferiority. Fals Borda (2013) explained the need to replace the idea of community development (on people) with community participation (of people). He calls this approach to research "a philosophy of life" (p. 158), where values and attitudes are the basis for forming research partnerships, and feelings are as important as thinking when making strategic decisions.

In a world where research is, at large, still associated with objective reasoning, many researchers can find this *sentipensante* (thinking–feeling) approach difficult to grasp, if they are aware of it at all. Galeano (1992) lamented that formal education and religious doctrine have taught us to prioritize reasoning over feeling, dehumanizing us in the process: "From the moment we enter school or church, education chops us into pieces: It teaches us to divorce soul from body and mind from heart" (p. 33). Participatory forms of action research are an attempt to rehumanize research and the knowledge it creates, making this knowledge

conceptually and in practice relevant, useful and educational, with both a political and emancipatory intent (Wood, 2020).

Across the past eight years I have been part of a group of university-based researchers passionate about participatory research for social change. We have been working towards a community–university partnership programme that enables academic researchers to understand the need for authentic, respectful research partnerships in pursuit of positive social change, and thus shift their research perspective and practices to the transformative CBR paradigm in pursuit of this goal. We have used participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) in several CBR projects and appreciate its power for enabling holistic learning and knowledge creation in and by the community as well as for community problem-solving (Wood, 2020). That is why we have adopted PALAR as the guiding paradigm, theory of learning and methodology to accomplish our research aims, as I discuss in the next section.

Participatory Action Learning and Action Research

PALAR was first developed by Zuber-Skerritt (2011) as a form of collaborative learning and research to improve practice in higher education and other organizations. Recently, we have been adapting it as a form of CBR when working with marginalized populations (Wood, 2020). It is a genre of participatory action research (PAR) with a strong focus on action learning (AL), a cyclical learning process where groups of people share their ideas to solve real-life problems through continuous reflection on practice. An important part of this process is critical reflection on assumptions about social problems and the people who experience them, and how these assumptions influence interaction among participants through the learning, research and therefore knowledge-creation process (Hurst & Marquardt, 2019). This focus on action learning renders more emancipatory and educational the process of addressing the research question (Wood, 2020). Community participants learn to be lifelong learners, to negotiate and communicate with people from diverse contexts, to find

voice and to develop the agency and confidence to bring about positive change within and/or beyond their community as they see fit. Academic researchers, as participants within the action learning group, learn to understand social issues from the perspective of the people affected by these issues.

Such understanding may be the aim of most qualitative research, yet a participatory paradigm goes further. Here the researcher and other participants develop relationships of trust with each other to enable open, transparent exchange of ideas and knowledge, and the application of the knowledge they have created to bring about positive change in practice. These relationships flourish through empathic communication and embodiment of life-enhancing values. The academic researcher should also learn to move at the pace of the group and to share control of the research process. These characteristics of PAR are not normally part of academic research 'training', and so the explicit focus on AL helps to keep the research authentically participative.

The process of PALAR is operationalized by three main principles: relationship, reflection and recognition, known as the 3 Rs (Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). As depicted in Fig. 3.1, the core principle is development of "democratic, authentic, trusting and supporting *relationships*" (Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013, p. 2), through critical *reflection* on self and the process, and *recognition* of the value that all participants bring to the group and the achievements of the collaboration. Since academic researchers usually come from worlds quite different from those of vulnerable populations, setting up a core research team and reaching agreement on the desired outcomes and process of the research can take time if it is done in an authentically participatory way.

The process is depicted as a figure eight, meaning that both relationship and research components are under way simultaneously. In other words, although the initial stages of the partnership may focus more on the work depicted within the relationship section, before moving to actual fieldwork (research section), at each meeting of the core project group, reflection on the relationship, process and progress is essential. Because of this dual focus on relationship and research, operationalized within an action learning group, PALAR is more than just a methodology for CBR; it is also a paradigm, a change process and a theory of learning (Wood, 2020).

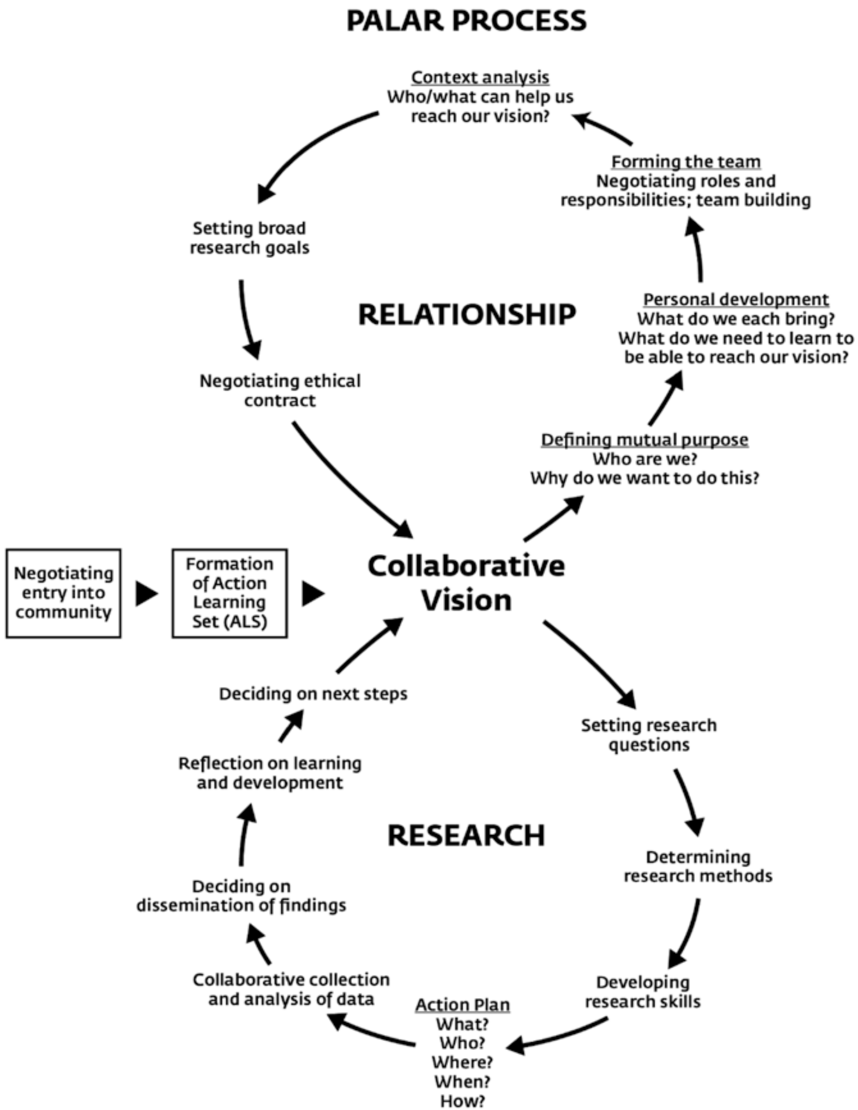

Fig. 3.1 The PALAR process (*Source*: Wood, L. (2020). *Participatory action learning and action research: Theory, practice and process*, p. 106)

Academics who are new to CBR are keen to learn more about the appropriate research methodology for this approach. An important question here is: "What content and pedagogy should be included in a short learning programme (SLP) to capacitate academics to conduct CBR?" In the next section, I explain the methodology we used to generate data to answer this question.

Methodology

The collaboration to design a programme to capacitate academics for conducting CBR formed part of a recent project funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF), which supports research conducted by university-based researchers in the country. The project aimed to research and develop a framework for ethical, inclusive and sustainable community engagement. As project leader based at the North-West University in the North West province, I invited as co-researchers for the collaboration five colleagues from universities in other provinces, who were already conducting community-based projects with vulnerable populations. These colleagues were all university researchers, but with different disciplinary backgrounds, mostly within education and health sciences. Two currently held management positions within institutional Community Engagement offices and two managed CBR entities. The six of us represented four different provinces (two from the Eastern Cape, two from the Western Cape, one from the Free State and myself from the North West) and as a group we were racially and gender diverse. We all knew each other from earlier collaborations of various kinds, but this was the first time we all worked together as a group towards a shared goal.

All the project participants had considered the project proposal, provided input and supported it before submitting it to the NRF. We had discussed the broad goals of the project together, but not the process how we would work together. After the NRF accepted our submission, two of the universities where our nominated participants were based opted for a team approach and invited other colleagues to join, adding three more members to our core project team. Various community partners also joined our meetings on an ad hoc basis, but the nine core members

remained constant throughout. The data sets I have drawn from for this chapter comprise (1) transcriptions of four meetings (in January, March, July and October 2019), each of which spanned two days; (2) interim communications between members and (3) visuals generated by the group at various stages. While I analysed the data on my own, I sought carefully to validate the findings by asking other members of the core project team as my co-researchers to constructively critique my reporting and interpretations, to ensure that I have reported accurately and truthfully. The North-West University where I am based provided ethical clearance for the project (NWU-00782-18-A2).

Process of Developing the Programme

January Meeting

At the first two-day meeting of core team members in January 2019, we ourselves as project participants worked through the upper section of the PALAR process (see Fig. 3.1). We discussed our understandings of CBR and its purpose, what we wanted to achieve in this project and how we could best work together. We agreed that for the most effective process and to be consistent with the values and understandings of the CBR paradigm, we needed to actively involve our community partners in our meetings, rather than us reporting back to them or bringing their input to our meetings. We had not made provision for this in our original project proposal since we understood that the NRF as a funding body recognized only other academics as co-researchers.

In practice, however, we recognized that if we as core team members, all of us university-based, designed a CBR course without the direct involvement of our community partners in the designing process, it would be hypocritical to the CBR paradigm that underpins the project. We therefore faced another challenge: how to accommodate six extra people—community partners—in the budget for travel and accommodation for each subsequent meeting. Collaboratively we identified a way to avoid extra travel and accommodation expenses by agreeing that

wherever the site of our meeting, which we rotated over the provinces, community partners from that site would join us, without much additional cost.

Clearly, we were already experiencing some of the ethical and practical challenges that the mismatch between traditional academic policies and participatory research paradigms create. Yet, rather than being a hindrance, these presented valuable first-hand learning opportunities as we collectively moved ahead on our project task with community partners. We discussed ethical issues, such as ownership of data. We created a project site on Google Drive where we posted all transcriptions, reflections and other data for all of us to use for our own purposes, in keeping with the view that co-created knowledge is the property of everyone who contributed to it. By the second day of our first core team meeting, we were able to set some specific research questions to enable us to base the design of the programme on the existing knowledge and needs of both university researchers and community partners. The questions we designed could be used in interview, questionnaire or arts-based format with other academics and community partners. These included: *What is your understanding/experience of community–university research partnerships? Do you have any ideas about how such partnership building should be done? What would enable you to engage fully in community–university research partnerships? What are the benefits of such partnerships? What should each partner achieve from the relationship?*

We continued our two-day meetings with local community partner representatives in March, July and October of 2019 at sites in different provinces.

March Meeting

Our March meeting focused on analysing the data gathered in answer to the questions we designed at our first meeting, which we had subsequently posed to university colleagues and community partners. Here we divided into three smaller groups, each group with at least one representative of the community, to do a preliminary analysis for presentation to the larger group. Table 3.1 presents an overview of both the main themes

Table 3.1 Summary of responses to questions

University	Community
Understanding of community-based research	**Experience of research**
No real understanding of how, why	One-sided—university in charge, no benefit to the community
Feeling that community-based research is of more benefit to the university than the community	No follow up—just come and go
Avoid it because of patchy knowledge or bad experiences	No structure for change; therefore, no change happens
Do not like dependency on participants—fear of losing control; not being able to finish in time	
Requires personal involvement—but not sure how to do this in research	
	Those who had experienced a community-based research project had different attitudes—they saw it as growth, development, learning, platform to make positive change in community, increased status of working with the university makes their work in the community easier
Needs for capacity building and ideas on how it should be done?	
Training on community-based research	Lose the 'us and them' attitude
Administrative structure to enable engagement	Develop equal partnerships
Model to guide practice	Invite the community into the university space
	University should pay or reward the community for collaboration
	University should certify community partners for the knowledge generated

(*continued*)

Table 3.1 (continued)

Implications for capacity building
• Focus on shifting paradigms of both partners to try and lessen power differential; raise awareness of privilege and social justice imperatives • Practical training in community-based research—from relationship building, facilitation skills, co-design, implementation, evaluation, dissemination • Build trust—working ethics agreement • Skills development in action learning—for sustainability of change and for ensuring an authentic process • Structure needed in higher education—'model' or framework on how to develop collaboration • Recognition of community partner learning—official certificate; new assessment methods needed

in the analyses of these smaller groups and the implications for CBR capacity development that we extrapolated from the group presentations and discussions.

We used this data to help develop a conceptual framework for the SLP, as shown in Fig. 3.2.

Dividing into smaller groups meant that each person at the meeting could participate in generating and analysing data and in establishing an agreement on the framework for the programme. The framework explicitly sought to address three questions of *why*, *what* and *how*, as I explain in the following sections.

Why Should We Do Community-Based Research?

At the first meeting, several of the academic participants appeared to be not well versed in the participatory approach that is intrinsic to CBR, which is not surprising, given that the CBR paradigm has some fundamental differences from the traditional research approaches these academics were generally familiar with. Core team members agreed at the outset that we all needed to be well grounded in the foundational principles of CBR to ensure we were of shared mind about how we would enable and why we would promote CBR so communities can enhance

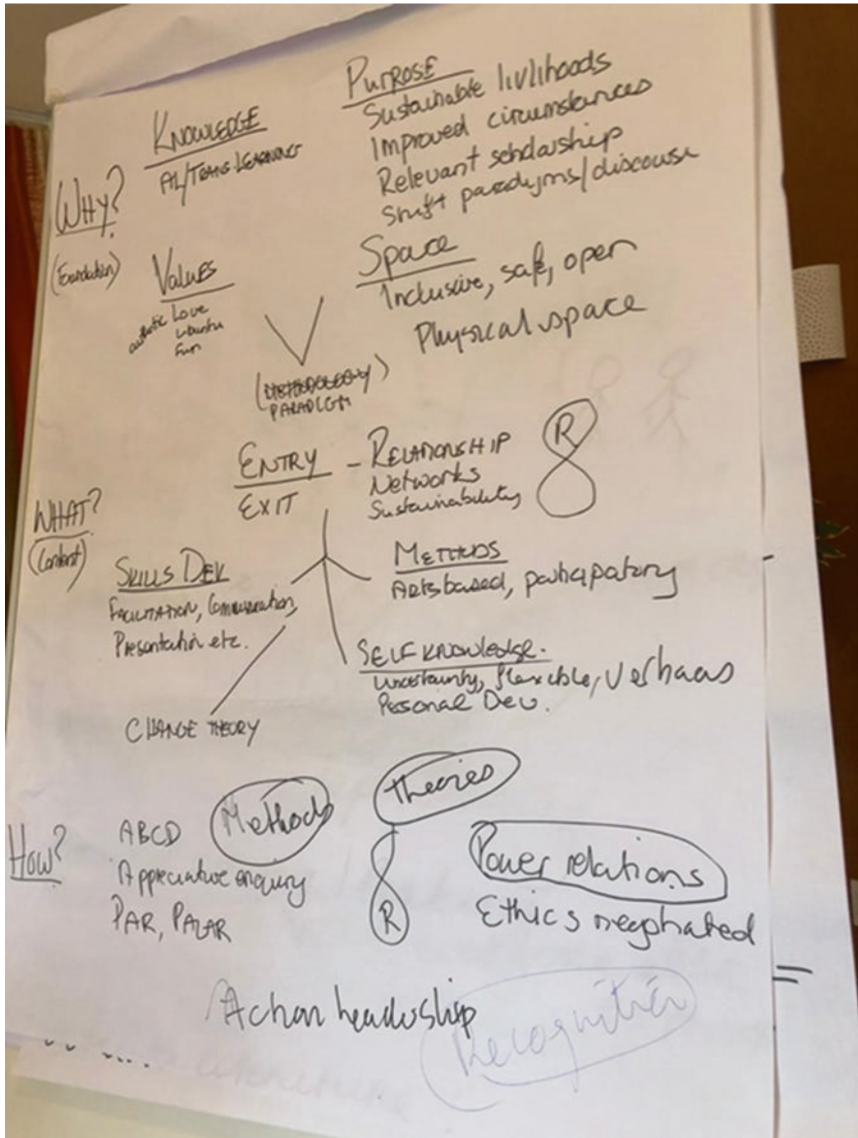

Fig. 3.2 Conceptual framework of the short learning programme for community-based research. *Note*: This framework is based on preliminary analysis of data

their well-being. This meant coming to understand CBR as a means to (1) bring about positive change to enable people to improve the quality of their life and create sustainable livelihoods; (2) enable academics to create relevant and useful scholarship and (3) quieten the dominant voice (of the academy) through the creation of authentic, ethical partnerships.

The programme we would design to prepare academics for conducting CBR would need to enable them to work with community participants to help them to (1) acquire knowledge to foster social justice (rather than mere technical knowledge to improve life circumstances), generated through action learning to develop participants' skills in lifelong, reflective learning; and (2) embed the research partnerships in social justice values such as *ubuntu* (the concept that a person is a person through other people), love, trust and respect. To be able to do this, academics would first have to go through a similar process to learn experientially how to facilitate such research partnerships. We would need to design a programme that enables academics to move towards a more participatory paradigm that fosters inclusive dialogue.

What Type of Content for the Short Learning Programme for Community-Based Research Would Build the Capacity of Participants to Authentically Lead and Conduct Community-Based Research According to Its Underpinning Principles?

Content would need to build the capacity of programme participants to engage others in a core project group to build trusting relationships where they can learn how to create knowledge collaboratively for sustainable improvement of community well-being. This requires the development of research and facilitation skills among participants so that they can lead and manage the change process in an ethical way. To be able to do this, participating researchers need to increase their self-knowledge, allow themselves to become more open to learning from others and develop the ability to tolerate the uncertainty inherent in CBR, as opposed to following a rigid research protocol.

How Should the Programme Be Presented?

We came to agree that while methods and designs can vary, their purposes in the programme should be consistent. They should enhance relationships and participation in the research, promote holistic development and minimize the influence of power relations. Experiential learning is paramount, as theoretical input alone is not powerful enough to enable people to unlearn years of "sayings, doings and relatings" (Kemmis, 2009, p. 363), as taught in traditional research approaches.

July and October Meetings

In these two meetings we worked on each of these broad outlines to develop outcomes and content, mapping them onto the PALAR process as a theoretical framework. Each group chose one aspect to develop and we collectively critiqued all inputs. Between meetings we shared our ideas on Google Drive, so everyone could participate and suggest changes.

In the next sections, I present some of our deliberations to highlight the complexity of developing a programme in an ethical, inclusive and sustainable way. Doing so is easy to profess but can be difficult in practice. To usefully shape the discussion, I draw on the tensions of doing participatory research that Fals Borda (2013) identified. These tensions—between theory and practice, between subject and object of research and between worldviews and research orientation—emerged strongly in our interactions while developing the programme.

Learning from the Tensions of Participatory Research

So, how did we come to agree on curriculum decisions about the programme and how it should be presented? We knew from our experience and theoretical knowledge of PAR that participating in iterative cycles of reflection and action leads to personal and collective change. It comes about through applying the knowledge created towards a common goal,

thus narrowing or closing the gaps between theory and practice, subjectivity and objectivity, and academic and community paradigms. Understanding this, we decided to use the PALAR process as a frame on which to map the *why*, *what* and *how* components as explained earlier. However, we soon became aware of the tension between our professed purpose and how we were interacting with each other. In effect, since we were following a CBR methodology to develop the programme, we were experiencing the same feelings, struggles and learning as future participants might do. I discuss some of these experiences and learnings later, using the codes "P" for project team member and "C" for community partner.

Closing the Gap Between Our Theoretical Understanding and Practice of Community-Based Research

As academics in the project team, we were aware of the staples of a successful PALAR process: critical reflection of participants individually and collectively, development of trusting and open relationships among participants and other stakeholders and recognition of the input and achievements of all research participants. This awareness entailed both acknowledging the privileges that our position as academics imbued and interrogating our motivations for doing this kind of work. We discussed the need to include these components in the programme but were soon made even more aware by the powerful irony of our research circumstances, that the very system we were working on alienates community partners and works against the development of trusting relationships among those involved in research and knowledge creation. As one community representative noted:

> *How do we see the university? You are people in high places, people who are rich. We have to struggle to get into the university, the security guards do not treat us well, we are not trusted. We are not seen as co-researchers.* (C3 March 2019)

This comment highlighted the need for deep reflection by all academics participating in CBR on not only our motives for doing CBR but also how to change the knowledge-creation system that is still rooted in hierarchical higher education research traditions, to make it more inclusive and accessible to community partners. This understanding brought home to us that we who are academics are widely seen by potential community partners as part of an unfamiliar and unwelcoming system, and even if we personally do not regard our community partners through a deficit lens, our partners still experience this deep divide within the knowledge production system and across life at large. An important first step in developing a strong and open community–university partnership is to create a space where such feelings and understandings can be aired. To explore this tension further, we asked the community members present at this session to explain how they understood the community–university relationship. This is one revealing perspective:

> *As we are trying to create a relationship as a family, a word that could be suitable could be unity or to unite. Because we are trying to engage the community and the university, because there is this line here that is saying that university is for the educated people and then there is community that has different people in it. Some of the youth are not educated enough and some of the elders are not educated enough but they also have a voice and they also have the knowledge. In a partnership you come and go.* (C4 March 2019)

From the start, we had talked about 'community–university partnerships'. Community participants explained that for them the word 'partnership' has connotations different from those held generally—a partner is someone you cannot always rely on, whereas your family is there for the long term and has your best interests at heart. One community participant suggested that a better representation of collaboration is the metaphor of a cooking pot, full of nutritious stew, where everyone can add different ingredients to create a nutritious and tasty meal for the benefit of all. This person used the isiXhosa term *ubudelwane* (relationships) and explained its connotations of trust, love, unity, patience and forgiveness, which are not conveyed by the English language term 'partnership'. We

then adopted this communal cooking pot visual as our shared vision, and *ubudelwane* the name for our WhatsApp group.

Later that week, one of the academic participants posted the Greek word *koinonia* on the group's WhatsApp portal. He explained the term as fellowship, communication, intimacy, sharing together, partnership, joint participation and close mutual association; therefore representing what we had discussed together about community–university relationships. Here we see how the valuable input by community partners forced academic members of this partnership to rethink a term we had previously taken for granted and enabled the emergence of a richer, deeper, more nuanced understanding of what our engagement should be. This new understanding was more resonant of the values underpinning CBR. As Myles Horton, one of the early proponents of participatory research believed, we should do this work out of love for people and concern for social justice; it should be a quest to discover a perspective with people (Horton & Freire, 1990). These experiences also reminded us of the need to be careful about assuming we all have the same understandings, just because we communicate in the same language. The important lessons we as academic members of the core team learnt through these experiences helped us recognize the value of carefully listening to and dialoguing with community participants to come to common understandings and mutual purpose. This approach to listening and dialogue is really a requirement throughout the collaborative research process, especially for creating and pursuing a shared vision for the group. These experiences also highlighted the power of language to include or exclude, to encourage participation or to alienate.

Throughout the four sessions, language use was a matter through which the academic team learned much from our community partners about how to understand, appreciate and actually practise CBR. What became clearer to us was not just that we automatically exercised power over our partners through the language we shared with them—our academic team spoke in the colonial language of English and assumed and expected that community members would speak with us in our language rather than us speak with them in their languages. We also came to recognize that through particular terms we used we were not truly living out the inclusivity we claimed to uphold. We learnt from our community

partners' responses that our language included terms such as acronyms and research jargon familiar to academics but that they could not understand, so our language at times had excluded them.

> *How do you start to develop common vocabulary to help us navigate [mutual understanding] because we are also sensitive to this change process now. And how do we start sponsoring a vocabulary that will encourage more voice into the space because I would like to challenge the community sometime on their thinking. I know the community members here are not afraid to engage very strongly, but there is a patronizing notion that we pause every time so can we hear your voice. There is something wrong since we cannot engage enough and then we become concerned, but I think it is a whole methodological thing to think about it from the start so that it does not happen in the future*. (P6 March 2019)

We came to appreciate that academic researchers would need to use everyday language to explain complex constructs:

> *Because it is possible to put complex ideas very simply and it is helpful if we say that this course may not only be for academics, it is also maybe for communities. Then even the way we teach academics is going to influence the words they use. They are going to go into communities and talk about self-efficacy and the community won't understand*. (P4 July 2019)

Increased understanding among all participants, especially between community members and academic partners, would help to expose the diversity of their ideas and thinking. This is important because if you do not understand what is being discussed, you cannot engage in discussion.

> *Also, you see when you are standing there like Professor Lesley, who is saying partner and I am here and I understand the word differently, but when you explain it, we see that your thinking and my thinking are different*. (C2 March 2019)

The implication of learning from these experiences is to ensure no one uses language, unintentionally or otherwise, to exercise power over or to exclude anyone else; reciprocally, the use of local languages by community members can be just as excluding of the academic participants and

potentially of other community partners with a different local language. A participant suggested that a glossary of technical terms be included in the course material, and that the community participants review definitions at the outset to make sure all participants share understanding of terms. The aim was to help academics change their discourse from being narrowly academic, which most academics find difficult to do given they are generally ingrained in academic discourse for discussing research. This suggestion also speaks to the need for academic researchers pursuing CBR to walk a fine line between patronizing others who have received less education and truly desiring to educate others to understand social and psychological constructs.

As one participant pointed out, CBR should be done from the perspective of community involvement and not community service. Despite professing this to be our understanding, we recognized how easy it was for us as academics to slip back into a 'default' mode of taking control of the process. We realized our need to continually reflect on such questions as:

> *How authentic are our motives in relation to CBR projects? Is our CBR support really about true community improvement, or is it perhaps to some extent about playing the publication game?* (P6 July 2019)

Critical self- and group-reflection is a core component of the PALAR process, where participants need to be open enough to admit what they need to learn to contribute effectively to the shared vision. Without this openness to learning about and from self and each other, it is unlikely the research relationship would survive the inevitable conflicts that arise from any human interaction, and particularly when the different roles and responsibilities of each party—another important component of the PALAR process (see Fig. 3.1)—are not clearly understood by all participants.

> *That moment there is the power of this engagement where you stand, based on everything who you are and where she [community partner] stands on everything that she is. So now who decides based on what we are moving forward? What is the traditional default? We are trying to create a new space*. (P5 July 2019)

> *I think it is also bringing us into the real situation of decolonizing in the moment. As we were speaking, our good friend Vygotsky*[1] *came to the party in my head. All of us are at different places, … how will we reach down and pull up? I think the Vygotsky principles are very important in this community-based process*. (P4 July 2019)

This type of reflection in action, as formulated by Schön (1987), helped academic participants to keep our "academic arrogance" in check, which is "an obstacle to the construction of more flexible paradigms of an holistic and participatory nature" (Fals Borda, 2013, p. 166). It also helped us as we actively sought ways to involve community members as full participants in CBR. While recognizing and actualizing the equality of research participants is vital to CBR, we know that within society, power and disempowerment are socially, culturally and economically entrenched. The so-called playing field is not actually 'level' for all CBR participants, especially given the inherent privilege of academics within society. Awareness of this by all research participants is vital for CBR, so that participants develop the mutually respectful relationships and create opportunities for equality that enable the distinctive personal and collaborative learning of CBR.

The creation of a shared vision among research participants and establishing their agreement on roles, responsibilities and learning needs to pursue this vision require participants to reflect critically and deeply on the attitudes, assumptions and positionality of themselves and others. Participants need to continue this critical reflection, not just before they actually move on to fieldwork, but throughout the CBR collaboration. This is a level of subjectivity and self-awareness not normally present in traditional approaches to research.

Dealing with Two Key Tensions: Between Subjectivity and Objectivity and Between Alternative and Traditional Paradigms

These two tensions are related since they both concern the traditional academic view of research that requires researchers to be objective, distant from the research process and without regard for both their own place

within it and influence upon it—the antithesis of a participatory paradigm. As Robles and Rappaport (2018) explained, "if grassroots and external intellectuals do not understand the dynamics of this collaborative exercise, the transfer of authority that these [participatory research] methodologies advocate cannot take place" (p. 606). It is paramount for all participants in a research partnership, and particularly the academics, to critically reflect on their paradigm and their positionality—both the social and political context that creates a person's identity in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality and ability status, and how their identity influences, and potentially biases, their understanding of and outlook on the world:

> *Building that capacity comes through building conversation. You have to have courageous conversations. You have to be willing to be vulnerable in this space and that ties to your reflexivity. Something we need to caution people before they do this type of research. Everything about you will be questioned and we don't need to fool people into that, that's our ethics of care when we facilitate this process, is that we make people aware of this and that this is not just another methodology*. (P7 October 2019)

Apart from self-reflection, and a willingness to explore phenomena through a consciously subjective lens, participants need to learn about one another's worldviews to develop the empathy all participants need for true understanding of each other's contexts. Only when we can see things through the eyes of others will we be able to negotiate processes to underpin ethical collaboration. Negotiating aims, the process and mutual benefits is an ethical requirement of PALAR (Wood, 2020), in opposition to the usual practice of the academic researcher merely conforming to the ethical protocols of the institution where they are based.

> *You find that the way we see things outside is not what really happens inside but now that is the thing … that if someone comes from the university and goes to the community and promises things that he cannot deliver. That is why prof is supposed to be clear with me and say, I am here to help you and you are here to help me. At the end of the day if I think that it is prof's responsibility, I will stay down because prof is supposed to deliver. So, then I am not expecting anything from prof and prof is not expecting anything from me, but if it is mine I will stand up*. (C5 July 2019)

Exactly. It is a tactical issue as to how we are going to go forward. Because if you put the academics in this room to argue with the other academics about ethics of care they can argue until end of time and they will not win the debate. But you put some community reps in the room to argue the ethics of care and suddenly the power relations change, so if we don't capacitate the community representatives in these processes to engage the universities we will never win the debate. (P1 July 2019)

In CBR, researchers develop their understanding of the phenomenon or issue under investigation by appreciating it within its context. Therefore, academic researchers need to understand the reality of the people with whom they are working. They need skills to facilitate dialogue with and among, and encourage participation of, people from very diverse backgrounds, as one community member pointed out:

The background of each person differs. The values of the two different people can also create a barrier. Religion can also create a barrier. I wrote down here that the facilitator must know the content but must be mindful and have empathy for the barriers that they will face. (C9 October 2019)

This points to the need for academic researchers to include in-depth context analysis to facilitate mutual understanding among participants, given that most academics do not have lived experiences similar to those of the vulnerable populations they work with. If academic researchers do not carry out this analysis with community participants, then faulty assumptions may derail the research process:

You need to understand that context, like what is happening. I cannot go into an informal settlement and think everybody is poor. I was sharing earlier on that it took two years for people to invite me into their home, and when I got into their home I was quite surprised. It was a hard knock for me to realize that I had those preconceived notions because I thought I didn't. I became so comfortable to think that I was going to save the day. I am not going to save the day, so I had to be respectful and mindful. I also had to allow them to set the pace, because the day I was invited it was such an honour. (P4 October 2019)

One purpose of the context analysis is for academic and community participants to meet each other where they are at, so that each is

comfortable with the vulnerability that comes by voicing their ignorance. The excerpt above warns of the danger of academic participants assuming that all poor people are homogeneous and face the same problems (that academics can solve for them), when the truth is that all communities are made up of people from different backgrounds, with different problems and different capabilities. Again, we became aware of academic arrogance rearing its head, and the need to learn how to engage in activities that reveal people's true context. Critical self-reflection does not come easy to academics trained in rigorous objectivity. Indeed, the very idea of subjectivity was paradoxical (and still is) in some academic contexts. However, experiential learning is powerful in changing mindsets and allaying fears of change, as one participant expressed:

> *I think that if we are critical about this we are getting to a stage where we reflect on everything and sometimes it is about how we reflect. We have been uncomfortable with some of the engagement in this space but that is the comfort I am taking away, that I can actually do it and still be okay with myself … we came to some consensus through a reflective justice process by keeping ourselves accountable for what we are trying to do*. (P6 October 2019)

The sections I have presented here are just a sample of the many deep, and sometimes painful, discussions we had over the year of collaboratively developing the programme. At this point, it is important to state that although we decided on developing an SLP, the findings of our research process appear to be applicable for any type of formal or even informal learning opportunity. The SLP approach suited our purpose of quickly building a critical mass of community-based researchers within our own institutions.

Implications of Our Learning for Building Capacity for Community-Based Research

The learning we experienced through engaging in a PALAR process to develop the CBR programme has implications for other similar initiatives. Although the actual process of research in PALAR (see Fig. 3.1) and

other participatory designs remains similar to the process of more traditional paradigms in terms of the 'steps' (problem identification, deciding on questions and methodology, gathering and analysing data), it is very different in that it first requires the development of trusting, democratic and inclusive *relationships* to enable critical self- and collective *reflection* and *recognition* of the different inputs and achievements of participants (Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). These features are interrelated and contingent on each other and need to be monitored and developed throughout the research process. I now summarize the main features that, according to our findings, are critical for enabling authentic collaboration with external partners from vulnerable populations towards mutually beneficial outcomes.

Relationship is central to the process. Relationship is built up by a willingness on the part of the academic to suspend unquestioned assumptions about 'vulnerable' populations and to critically examine their own biases, motives and values in relation to doing this kind of research. Although community participants should also critically reflect on the same research processes, due to the symbolic and knowledge-creating power vested in the academic position, the onus is upon academics to model this behaviour and explicitly state their purposes for engaging in CBR. Relationship can be destroyed by using language that excludes others from joining in, and that intimidates people not used to talking in acronyms and academic jargon.

Relationships are also deepened through the cultivation of empathy and a desire to really understand the life context of those with whom we collaborate. Listening to understand and taking time to dialogue around the political, economic, social, health and other contexts that have an impact on our daily lives are important to not only guide research decisions, but also begin to understand the strengths and resilience of community participants, as well as the barriers they face in reaching their potential.

Reflection is a powerful tool for developing knowledge. Unfortunately, it does not come naturally to most people and thus requires nurturing. The best learning emerges from reflections done in action or at the end of a session. Letting people leave, with the task of reflecting later, normally results in a loss of valuable insights. Thus, reflections should be done at

the start and end of each meeting, a practice that also teaches the skill of lifelong action learning.

Recognition of the input of all is paramount to make participants feel valued, acknowledged and an important part of the CBR process. Similarly, knowledge generated by the research group should be mobilized in the contexts it addresses. Dissemination by and in the community is vital for change to be sustained, and is, in fact, the whole point of CBR, rather than just the publication of theses or articles.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter the aim was to explain how a group of researchers and community partners collaborated to develop learning opportunities to build the capacity of academic researchers to conduct authentic participatory research. Through our collaboration in the development of this SLP, we were able to experience for ourselves the tensions and challenges inherent to CBR methodologies as explained earlier, and to learn what we had to include in the programme to minimize these tensions and challenges. PALAR provided us with a framework on which to map the work needed to answer our *why*, *what* and *how* questions, based on the data we gathered from a wider pool of academics and community members. We created a programme to capacitate academics to foster research relationships to progress democratic action for social justice. In effect, by developing this programme in a collaborative way, we were living a philosophy that infuses "meaning into technical practice" (Fals Borda, 2013, p. 158). We learnt how to minimize power relations through critical self- and collective reflection and being open to learning from each other. In essence, we moved from the notion of a mere partnership to the more nuanced and meaningful idea of a relationship, grounded in love, trust, equality, democracy and mutual respect.

This process is not an easy one; it requires a willingness to (1) understand diverse social challenges from the point of view of those experiencing them; (2) stand in solidarity with others to help bring about change and improvement and (3) be open to learning from those who society labels marginalized and vulnerable. This was the dream of the 'fathers' of

participatory research such as Fals Borda, Freire, Horton and their colleagues. Even so, research in higher education is still far removed from this ideal. Our hope is that initiatives such as the one explained in this chapter will help to open up space in the academy for research of this nature, encouraging academic researchers to actively pursue "science useful to the people" (Fals Borda, 2013, p. 165) through the convergence of theoretical and local knowledge. The programme we developed is only a starting point, but hopefully this account may influence others to develop similar programmes or to change their views about the need for and validity of CBR in today's world. I end this chapter with a poem we composed by taking phrases from our reflections on learning after one session that captured the values, aims and subjective orientations underpinning authentic CBR.

Comrades in Shared Social Activism
Deeply rooted in a transformative agenda, synchronicity and synergy steers a space
Different paths to a common vision, an authentic human connection
Valuing of voices and deepening of relationships, willingness to share knowledge
Amazingly committed, reviving faith among the people

Being personally present in the process, embracing discomfort leads to learning
Infuse own ways of thinking in a sensitive way, mindful of unequal relationships
Doing reflection, deepening over time, praxis is rooted in shared love
Creative tension emerges, reviving faith among the people.

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Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. What do you think should be included in a programme to build capacity for CBR?
2. What do you think is the most difficult aspect of CBR for traditionally trained academics to understand or embody?
3. How is working with vulnerable populations different from working with other professionals in the field?
4. What tensions have you experienced in your research relationships?

Note

1. The participant is referring to the scaffolding approach to learning as propounded by Lev Vygotsky, where the teacher supports learning by incrementally helping the student to build on prior knowledge. See https://blog.prepscholar.com/vygotsky-scaffolding-zone-of-proximal-development for more information.

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Part II

Case Studies of Partnerships for Community-Based Research with Vulnerable Populations

In this section case studies of community-based research offer varied perspectives on how university-based researchers partnered with vulnerable populations to increase the social responsibility of the university through engaging community partners in the co-construction of knowledge for change. The eight case studies from four different continents explain both the challenges and successes of conducting research with community partners, drawing valuable lessons from this experience to guide future engagements.

4

Developing and Sustaining Community–University Research Partnerships: Reflecting on Relationship Building

Heloise Sathorar and Deidre Geduld

Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa are largely viewed as a private good, linked to the forces of economic development (Heleta, 2016). This aspect has strained the relationship between universities and the communities they serve (Bhagwan, 2017). Racial undertones and varying levels of discrimination against people from different communities have historically had a negative influence on community–university partnerships (CUPs) (Mbembe, 2017). Gill (2009) argued that universities are not only exclusive havens of refined culture, they are also sites of

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endemic insecurities and outright exploitation. Universities place a high value on research and publications and as such academics are under pressure to publish or face the consequences of not being promoted and recognized. This pressure sometimes contributes to academics drawing on the knowledge of community members during their research without adequately recognizing the owners of the knowledge. Despite various legislation-encouraging universities to do research *with* and *alongside* communities, there is still a tendency to do research *for* and *on behalf of* people. This hypocrisy is justified by claiming that research is done for communities to tackle discrimination and disadvantage (Wallerstein et al., 2018).

HEIs around the world have seen many social, economic, and political transformations. Currently, a largely westernized ideology of knowledge construction is giving way to an essentially more organic and democratic form that embraces previously disregarded indigenous knowledge systems. While the democratization of the political culture guarantees citizens' rights and freedom, it does not automatically result in the democratization of learning and knowledge creation (De Sousa Santos, 2014). While acknowledging the various legislation and efforts to enhance community engagement, we also recognize that this remains a contested space where power relations, inequality, and claims to knowledge ownership continue to pose challenges to the co-creation of knowledge. Societal development issues such as diversity, sustainability, social justice, and multiculturalism are varied and complex issues that require new approaches and new solutions. The 'scientific' knowledge of the academy has to be combined with the local, experiential knowledge of those directly affected by the social issues under investigation. On a policy level, the White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education (South Africa, Department of Education, 1997) sets out broad national goals and refers to community engagement as an integral part of higher education in South Africa. Thus, universities and communities have a clear vested interest in building strong relationships and establishing research partnerships in the interest of the public good. As two researchers from the Nelson Mandela University (NMU) in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, we are committed to, and mandated by, the university to develop sustainable research partnerships for social change.

Context and Background of Community–University Partnerships at Nelson Mandela University

In her inaugural address in May 2018, Prof Sibongile Muthwa, Vice-Chancellor of the Nelson Mandela University, under the theme 'Taking Nelson Mandela University boldly into the future in service of society', stated:

> Our student and our community protests … is linked to the financial and economic meltdown and the further entrenchment of structurally-anchored inequalities on a global scale, as well as a mistrust of institutions.
>
> The role of higher education must inevitably engage with these challenges; and as Mandela University, we must purposefully generate a just institutional culture within which we can all contribute to the renewal of the curriculum and the academy in order for us to play this wider role more successfully. (Muthwa, 2018, p. 7)

Prof Muthwa drew our attention to two questions posed by Lalu (2015, p. 1): What is a university supposed to do? and What should its posture be towards CUPs? In her response, she suggested that what the university should do and what it should be known for are closely tied into the stature of our namesake, Nelson Mandela, who advocated for the expansion of human understanding for a more equal and socially just world.

As a result of ruminations on the mounting importance, and yet challenging nature of CUPs, the Centre for the Community School (CCS) was established in 2013 as an engagement entity in the Faculty of Education at the Nelson Mandela University. One of the core responsibilities of the CCS has been the development of alternative approaches to school improvement that are relevant and responsive to the contextual realities of underresourced schools and underprivileged communities in the country. The CCS has initiated projects to strengthen and support the work of schools in Eastern Cape communities and provide an organic link between the Faculty of Education and schools in our surrounding communities. Some schools in the Nelson Mandela Bay area already had

an existing working relationship among themselves and invited CCS in 2014 to partner with them. These schools were mostly located in the underprivileged township areas of Nelson Mandela Bay. The principals, selected staff, and school-governing body members of these schools mobilized to establish a community of practice, known as the Manyano Network. Manyano (meaning *coming together*) spans across 14 schools (11 primary and 3 secondary schools). The focus of the Manyano Network is to respond to the educational and social challenges affecting schools stemming from their contextual realities. In collaboration with the communities they serve, the schools co-create opportunities for social and academic development. They invited the university to partner with them for mutual learning and research to promote their agenda of becoming agents of hope and social change for their schools and communities. They made it clear that they have knowledge to offer and that they want to be acknowledged as an equal partner in the CUP.

Inspired by the exciting vision of the Manyano Network, CCS was happy to embark on a research project with them. This project involved supporting schools to enhance the reading and mathematics skills of learners at these schools in after-school reading and mathematics clubs. The schools had invited unemployed community members to run these clubs and requested the CCS to provide training and support to these community volunteers. The volunteers called themselves site coordinators (SCs) of the clubs. These SCs formed their own support group that they later named *Intsika* (a pillar) *Yokwabelana* (for sharing) *Ngolwazi* (knowledge), shortened to IYN.

In 2017, the SCs invited us to partner with them to conduct community-based research (CBR) within their IYN project. The CCS applied for a national research grant in 2017 and listed the IYN project as one of the focus areas. When we engaged with the SCs to negotiate how we could support them in the work they did in the after-school clubs, they expressed three initial needs: (1) To expand the project to include more schools; (2) to disseminate the knowledge they had created about establishing and offering reading and mathematics clubs; and (3) the development of a training manual for the site coordinator for this purpose. In addition, SCs expressed the need for recognition in the form of certification for their work as community educators and for financial

compensation so that they could sustain their work. The CCS is affiliated to the Global University of Lifelong Learning (GULL—see Chap. 12), a nonprofit network that enables its affiliated organizations to recognize the individual and collective efforts of those who are contributing to change and progressive transformation in communities through certification. In this chapter, we reflect on the success and challenges of establishing CUPs with specific reference to the IYN project and provide evidence of how collaborative arrangements shaped our experiences and understandings of knowledge creation within CUPs.

Methodology

We engaged in participatory action research (Wood, 2020) with IYN as a community-based organization, based on the understanding that democratic, participatory, CBR breaks down patterns of domination and submission and allows us to listen to local community voices—but not uncritically (Wood, 2017). This process was participatory as the research was conducted with the SCs, from formulation of the research questions to the dissemination of knowledge. We recognized the legitimacy of the knowledge and worldviews of our community partners.

Our research project was guided by Schön's (1983) seminal work on reflective practice as a means of improving relationship building. We engaged in a five-step process of reflection, namely reporting, responding, relating, reasoning, and reconstructing as developed by Edwards (2017). We, two university researchers and three SCs engaged in collaborative reflection to generate knowledge about how working relations in such projects could be enhanced to support the co-creation of knowledge and publicly acknowledge the contribution of community partners. We respect and value the participation of SCs in our joint project, where their contribution informed our work, as much as our input informed theirs. We utilized narrative freewriting (Elbow, 1973, 1998) to gather data to enhance our understanding of collaboration in CUPs. We used freewriting as it allows for spontaneous reflection and eases the mental burden of trying to "think of words and also worry at the same time whether they are the right words" (Elbow, 1973, p. 5). The narrative

freewriting exercise took place during a project progress report meeting where we reflected on what worked, what did not work, what factors enhanced, and what factors were barriers to the CUP. We read through our narratives and identified keywords under each question to guide our discussion. The common keywords were mutual benefit, reciprocity, knowledge ownership, and sustainability of benefits. We reflected further on these keywords that informed our discussion below regarding the successes and challenges experienced in our CUP.

Reflecting on the Relationship Between the University and the Community

We start by explaining how we each understood the term 'community engagement' and how we thought it should be done before we discuss what worked well in our CUP and the challenges we experienced. We conclude with suggestions on how to enhance and sustain CUPs.

How Do We Understand Community Engagement?

It was important to come to a mutual understanding of what is meant by community–university engagement. As academics familiar with this construct, we shared theoretical definitions with our community partners, noting that there is no single accepted definition of community engagement and the meaning can vary in different contexts. The definition that we all thought would best serve our purpose was that of Holland and Ramaley (2008), "Community engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (p. 17). We also recognized the potential of CUPs to bring about change, not only in the social issue being addressed but also in the thinking and attitudes of the partners in the project (Wood, 2017).

However, in spite of all the university's learning and teaching, research and engagement policies, procedures, rules, and regulations around

community engagement, these still tend to position the university as the expert and driver of the research, written for university-led research, rather than being geared to enable full engagement with community stakeholders (Wood, 2020). The university primarily benefits from these partnerships through publications and conference presentations (South & Phillips, 2014). Our partners also felt that the university benefitted more than the community and that the university was only interested in a partnership when it suited them.

> *They [the university] only come to us when they need help, and then they forget about us; they then go and present our projects to the world.* (SC1, 15 August 2019)

We found the broader construct of building relationships between the university and the community to be very complex. Our collaboration with the SCs was fluid and constantly evolving as we shared our different perspectives and experiences. This multiplicity of perspectives and values, as well as moments of vulnerability and the unpredictability of the environment, created deep learning for all of us involved in the process. The multiple identities that we assume, as well as our lived experiences, create tension between what the university requires (research and publications) and what the community needs.

According to South and Phillips (2014), many communities distrust the motives and techniques of the university in research projects. They have experienced exploitation and abuse in research and engagement projects, and many may be burned out from participation in several research studies running concurrently. Our partners highlighted that their experience of CUPs for research was that the focus remained on goals set by the university that were often irrelevant to the needs of the community. This is evident from the statement made by SC3 when she referred to her experience of being involved in a research project where the university was interested in the development of reading skills:

> *The university did not take into consideration the contextual realities of these children; nor the fact that the parents who are responsible to support their fami-*

> *lies are unemployed and not able to provide in the basic needs of their children.* (SC3, 15 August 2019)

Even though engagement might respond to some social problems, the biggest challenge is that it often does not provide sustainable, long-term solutions at the community level (Bhagwan, 2017). It was thus important to find out how we could do it differently in this project to enhance mutual benefit, reciprocity, and encourage ownership of knowledge and sustainability of benefits.

What Theories Guided Our Thinking About How Community Engagement Should Be Done?

Mtawa et al. (2016) postulated that community engagement in all disciplines lies at the core of new knowledge creation—communities hold knowledge that universities should tap into to collaboratively create new knowledge to push back the frontiers of human knowledge. Boyer (1990, 1996), through his model for community–university engagement, suggested that universities should commit to searching for answers to the most pressing societal, civic, economic, and moral problems through the use of the four domains of engagement, namely discovery, integration, application, and teaching of knowledge for the benefit of the community and the development of academia. To be relevant to community needs, research should be based on a societal problem voiced by the community, rather than universities entering the engagement partnership with a preconceived idea for research (Cooper & Orrell, 2016).

The IYN project was initiated by a community need identified prior to our engagement, namely schools requiring assistance with after-school reading and mathematics clubs. It provided a response to a community need and created an opportunity for the university, through the CCS, to research the collaboration between the university and the community with the purpose to contribute to an enhanced understanding of community engagement and how it can support the creation of new and shared knowledge. This supports the scholarship of discovery as described by Boyer (1990, 1996).

The integration domain refers to cross-discipline convergence that encourages meaning-making of isolated facts and perspectives to find a mutually beneficial response to the research problem. Zuber-Skerritt et al. (2020) explicated that integration allows for connecting expertise from different disciplines and could lead to providing a theoretical understanding of local, indigenous knowledge, while responding to complex issues in a comprehensible manner. Our project brought together stakeholders from various disciplines in adhering to the integration domain of Boyer's model. Thus, the university library and publishing companies contributed to the development of libraries or reading rooms at the schools. The Departments of Education and Social Development also became involved and provided support, including providing meals for the learners. According to Boyer (1990, p. 33), the teaching aspect of community engagement is a "communal act" that allows knowledge to be communicated to different constituents. This moves teaching from a theoretical to a practical level; it encourages all partners to be active in the process and to become critical thinkers and lifelong learners.

The application aspect of Boyer's (1996) model refers to moving from theory to practice and from practice back to theory. This enables not only the generation of new knowledge but making the knowledge responsive to the lived experiences of communities (Darder, 2017). The fact that the SCs wanted to share their experience and knowledge by developing a manual that explicates what the work of an SC entails refers to the aspect of teaching. Their enquiry about recognition for the work they do through GULL certification further showed their commitment to lifelong learning. This chapter is an outcome of the aspect of application where we move from theory to practice and from practice back to theory to make sense of our research experience and to develop ways to enhance the CUP.

What Worked Well in Our Community–University Partnership?

We were impressed by the energy and creativity with which the SCs undertook their responsibilities at school. The SCs were responsible for the development of reading and mathematics skills within their

respective school communities. They were invested and completely committed to the task to contribute to the betterment of their respective communities. The collaboration in the project was empowering for both academics and community partners. It allowed us to get to know each other better as relationship building was an explicit focus throughout the whole process.

Participation in the CUP enabled our community partners to develop and write a Site Coordinators' Manual, unpacking the definition and roles of a SC. They also organized an exposition of their work on 8 October 2019 at the Missionvale Campus of the NMU. The learners they worked with in these clubs used artistic performance to show what they had learnt from the SCs, while the SCs held a mini-seminar using video presentations to explain the work that they do. This event was attended by local and international stakeholders.

Participation in the IYN project enhanced the SCs' self-confidence, enabling them to stand their ground as equal partners in project meetings despite having no formal training in research. SC1 said the following regarding this:

> *The appreciation that my learners showed for the work that I do in the reading club gives me confidence to defend the offering of such a class and to strive to do more in this class*. (SC1, 15 August 2019)

The SCs developed the questions for their training manual, facilitated rich, critical dialogue, and transcribed and interpreted data collected during their meetings with each other, with notable success and with little to no guidance from us. This was confirmed by SC2 who mentioned:

> *It is important to us to share what we are doing in the reading clubs so that we can ensure that other schools will draw benefit from it*. (SC2, 15 August 2019)

This resulted in two members attending two different national academic conferences in different cities in South Africa and another member participating in a national multi-university workshop. Community members communicated their knowledge comfortably and confidently,

formulated around their own strengths, in spaces where academic researchers would normally present on behalf of community members. Through this liberating process, community members themselves became agents of change and social justice by challenging the existing social relationships and privilege structures (Darder, 2017; De Sousa Santos, 2014).

Challenges Experienced in Our Community–University Partnership

Despite our Vice-Chancellor strongly advocating for community engagement, this sentiment has not infiltrated the institutional culture yet. Institutional culture can serve as a barrier to community engagement, especially where it is seen as an add-on or afterthought and where university academics go to communities with preconceived ideas of what they would like to research (Bhagwan, 2017; Mtawa et al., 2016). Despite realizing the importance of community engagement, as well as having the CCS to support and promote community engagement in our faculty, we still had to use our own time to engage in this project, as it was not allocated specific workload hours in our task agreement.

A further challenge experienced in CUPs is the difference in the contextual realities between the university and communities (Ledwith, 2011). Cooper and Orrell (2016) highlighted how insufficient resources and the absence of infrastructure in communities encourage universities to bring community participants to well-resourced university campuses that are far removed from their contextual realities and their lived experience. This posed a challenge in our partnership project as SCs reflected on their challenges of struggling to access the campus because they did not have a university access card. SC1 explained:

> *I was asked by the university security to provide a student or staff card to gain access to the university campus to attend a meeting. When I was not able to produce such a card, I was denied access, and this signified to me that the university did not welcome the community on their premises.* (SC1, 15 August 2019)

This confirms the presence of physical barriers as well as institutional cultural barriers where the university does not see the community as an authentic partner.

The inequality in resources also contributes to the power imbalance in CUPs (Jadhav & Suhalka, 2016). It is important for university researchers to understand the differentials to act upon them to ensure that they do not negatively impact the partnership. Having meetings in a community space can encourage participation and community voice to emerge. Bhagwan (2017) and Strier (2010) highlighted community scepticism as another challenge in CUPs. Scepticism is increased when engagement projects exclude fair processes, partnership principles, and resources that support equal participation in mutually beneficial engagements. Communities claim that partnership benefits accrue disproportionally in favour of the university, with academics publishing research papers and presenting papers at conferences. This makes the community feel that the university is servicing its own needs and often does not ensure a sustainable benefit for the community after completion of projects. In the IYN project we also experienced scepticism among SCs as they felt that we would benefit financially from the research on our collaborative partnership, as well as from travelling to conferences. We allayed the scepticism by openly discussing budgets and project plans with them and by including them as presenters in workshops and conferences. The establishment of the reading and mathematics clubs is a lasting benefit for the community and the development of an SC training manual will benefit other schools and enable the SCs to sustain the project by providing a small income.

Suggestions for Sustaining Community–University Partnerships

We now summarize our learning from the reflection on the CUP in this project and provide suggestions to make CUPs more sustainable. First, engagement projects should be initiated by a community problem and

the action taken should bring lasting benefits for the community, as also argued by other researchers (Cooper et al., 2010; Shannon & Wang, 2010). Enhancing learners' reading and mathematics skills was a mutual concern of both the Faculty of Education (university) and the community, leading to the foundation of the IYN project which is ongoing and community-driven.

Second, spaces are not neutral; they are highly political, and we thus decided to have some of our project meetings within the community so that they would feel more in charge and at home. Facilitator roles were rotated, which gave community members an opportunity to facilitate some of the sessions. This enhanced shared ownership of the engagement. SC3 reflected on the value of being asked to facilitate a session as follows:

> *I learnt a lot from chairing a session during one of our project meetings with the university. It provided me with a skill that I can use in the future*. (SC3, 15 August 2019)

Third, explicit attention must be paid to developing mutually beneficial questions and solutions (Bhagwan, 2017) to lessen feelings of exploitation and scepticism on the part of the community participants. As Darder (2017) argued, if universities want to fulfil the role of change agent through community engagement projects, they should be willing to share their authority with the community and treat them as an equal partner. We did this through dialoguing and problem posing (De Sousa Santos, 2014) in our engagements and by continually reflecting on the relationship as well as on the research goals.

Finally, we learnt that it is important to both recognize the knowledge and experience that communities bring to the table and to publicly affirm the skills and learning gained as a result of the partnership. For this reason, we facilitated an action learning process, certified by GULL, where the SCs designed learning pathways for themselves and provided evidence of reaching their goals through their participation in the project.

Conclusion

The knowledge generated in this case study highlighted the successes as well as the challenges that we have experienced in our CUP. Our reflections confirmed that the benefits of effective and ethical community engagement far outweigh the challenges posed. CUPs based on trust, mutual respect, and reciprocal benefits can help the academy to flourish and produce research that does not only meet institutional requirements for outputs but also prioritizes partnerships for the development of vulnerable communities. By fostering relevant, mutually beneficial engagement initiatives, we reached beyond our ivory tower offices and demonstrated a shared responsibility of social and civic engagement for both university and community.

Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. What principles, challenges, and ethical issues of CBR does this case illustrate?
2. What, if anything, would you do differently if you were one of the key participants in the case study/example?
3. What lessons have you learnt from the case study about how to engage in a partnership for CBR?

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5

Community-Based Research to Enhance Holistic Well-being in School Contexts

Ansie Elizabeth Kitching and Robert Tubb Carstens

Introduction

As an influential social context, a school can provide opportunities to advance the quality of life in vulnerable populations by supporting the promotion of health and well-being (Cefai & Cavioni, 2015; Kitching et al., 2012; Roffey, 2016; Themane & Osher, 2014). In the South African context, the promotion of health and well-being in schools has been an integral part of the post-apartheid agenda (Lazarus, 2006). A health-promoting framework was developed by Swart and Reddy in 1999 to address the adversities experienced by the majority of children deprived of opportunities for scholastic, health and well-being enrichment during the oppressive apartheid regime. The framework has been adapted over the years and currently the integrated school health policy guides the

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promotion of health and well-being in South African schools (South Africa, Department of Basic Education & Department of Health, 2012).

Although this policy is helpful, professional support staff appointed at district level in the Department of Basic Education mainly take responsibility for its implementation. These professionals, in collaboration with experts from non-profit and higher education institutions, tend to implement a variety of programmes aimed at the promotion of health and well-being in a fragmented manner, rather than working with schools to develop a strategy to integrate interventions into an overarching process of which schools can take ownership. Ng and Fisher (2013) called for a more integrative, multileveled approach to the promotion of health and well-being, involving all the members of a school community as active participants. In response, we have established an integrative approach to the enhancement of health and well-being on individual, relational and collective levels (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007) in these school communities.

Between 2015 and 2017, we engaged in community-based research (CBR) with six schools to expand their capacity to establish an integrative approach to the promotion of holistic well-being. These schools were situated in a socio-economically challenged area within a very affluent region in South Africa. Well-being support teams were set up to ensure that the schools take ownership of the process. The process is sustained by a school well-being initiative, in which the well-being support teams across all six schools collaborate. In this chapter we will (1) contextualize the case study; (2) discuss the formation of the complex, multilayered partnerships; (3) explain how a participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) process has contributed to the sustainability of the teams and (4) elucidate the process of knowledge mobilization.

Contextualizing the Case Study

The six participating schools are situated in a small town on the outskirts of Cape Town in the Western Cape, one of the nine provinces in South Africa. The town has approximately 17,000 inhabitants (Polus, 2020). A

group of inhabitants who wanted to facilitate transformation in line with the ideals of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) launched a Transformation Charter in February 2012. The Charter highlights the extreme socio-economic inequalities that affect the majority of the inhabitants. These include tangible disparities in access to decent employment, education, housing, health care, safety, transport, childcare, sport and recreational facilities, as well as resultant intangible disparities, which are no less important, such as a lack of self-confidence and learned helplessness. The Charter expresses concern that members of this community are so marginalized and negatively impacted by inequalities that they lack the capacity to exploit new opportunities. A strong argument is made for action to repair the damage of the past and to ameliorate the resultant deficiencies.

Adversities impacted around 4000 children living in the community. The schools experienced resultant challenges such as absenteeism, school dropouts, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy. Parental involvement was limited for various reasons related to poverty. The schools received some support from the Department of Basic Education, from non-profit organizations and from the local community to assist in addressing the basic needs of the learners. However, these resources were inadequate to enhance the quality of life of children and their families on a continuous basis (Kitching & Van Rooyen, 2020).

In 2014, the first author, in her role as researcher and educational psychologist, became involved in an initiative launched by an education trust whose aim was to provide learners access to opportunities to enhance their quality of life. The involvement of the trust in these schools was mainly informed by the concerns expressed in the Charter, as well as by research conducted by Erasmus et al. (2013), which established the support needs of children and young people in this area. The director of the trust invited various stakeholders to participate, including sports coaches, information technology specialists, school leadership consultants and reading specialists. Officials from the Department of Basic Education and researchers from various higher education institutions were also invited to partner in the initiative.

Establishing Multilayered Partnerships

During our initial conversations, it became evident that we all shared a commitment to the purpose and aims of the initiative. However, we constantly had to keep in mind that the trust occupied a position of power due to the funding they provided to the schools. As partners in this initiative, we therefore had to navigate between the agenda of the trust and the needs of staff, learners and parents.

The director of the trust—acutely aware of the impact that this power position could have on the success of the engagement with the schools—arranged regular meetings with all stakeholders to give feedback and also engaged in ongoing strategic planning processes involving all partners. These engagements contributed to an awareness of the power imbalance, an inevitable outcome in a context where services are provided to vulnerable populations. Recognition of power imbalances increases the possibility for power sharing, as indicated by Malone et al. (2013). Showing mutual respect and engaging in transparent, authentic conversations allowed us to clarify our differences and move towards the achievement of our shared goals.

Determining the Focus of the Partnership and Process with the Schools

The first author, accompanied by the director of the trust, initially met with the principals of the schools to discuss the nature of her involvement in the project. The principles all agreed to recruit between four and six teachers from their school to participate in initial discussions to clarify the direction of their collaboration with the university she represented. The second author was one of these teachers. During follow-up meetings, all participants gained a better understanding of the contextual histories of the schools and the associated needs, as recommended by Christopher et al. (2008). The discussions centred on the overwhelming impact of the array of problems identified in the Transformation Charter. Teacher stress and burnout, as well as limited human resources to address support needs, were added to the list of concerns. As a result, staff members who took part in the conversations were despondent about their situation.

In adherence to the principles of participatory community engagement, it was important that the external partners (university researchers and a representative of the trust) refrained from presenting solutions. We had to recognize the multiplicity of epistemologies that already existed within these contexts (Hall et al., 2015). We discussed local and global perspectives on the promotion of health and well-being (Keyes, 2006; Lazarus, 2006; Prilleltensky, 2012). As the participants gained a deeper understanding of the value of shifting their focus to the promotion of well-being, they became more receptive to the idea of an alternative strategy to address the challenges and concerns that underpinned their despondence.

We then continued to explore the value of the holistic well-being model developed by Evans and Prilleltensky (2007), using it to construct a basic framework to guide us in our actions. We agreed to establish informal teams in each school, referred to as well-being support teams. These team members included learners and parents nominated by peers who showed interest in the promotion of well-being in the school. Each team nominated and selected a coordinator. These coordinators were already members of formal structures, including the school management team and the school-based support team. The position of the coordinators in these formal structures presented an ideal opportunity to engage directly and on a regular basis with the principal and the members of the school management team about the development of the process. Strong partnership with management and governance therefore enhanced the support for the process and opened up opportunities for innovation (Carstens, 2018).

Negotiating Participation in Research

The establishment of the well-being support teams coincided with the first author receiving a grant from the National Research Foundation to conduct research on the development of the holistic well-being process in schools. The addition of a research dimension posed challenges to the partnership with the schools. The principals, as a result of previous experiences, were suspicious of research and expressed concern that the interest of the

researcher and the institution might become the only priority. To allay these fears, we affirmed a commitment to the goals set by the schools, as suggested by Strand et al. (2003). The development of a partnership with officials from the Department of Basic Education was more complex. The multilayered nature of the governance structures—provincial, district and circuit—made it extremely difficult to engage with all the relevant role players. At the onset of the process, the director of the trust communicated with the district officials about the process. They in turn devolved it to the circuit management. The well-being coordinators, who already had a working relationship with the circuit staff and the circuit manager, shared their enthusiasm about the process with these officials and thus secured their support. This speaks to the need of making sure that the relationship between the different partners is conducive to collaboration.

In contrast, we found it more challenging to partner with district officials. The introduction of a CBR process was apparently at the core of this tension. We detected that some departmental officials had conventional expectations of what research should entail and apparently felt uncomfortable with the collaborative and emergent form of research that involved teachers, learners and parents as co-creators of knowledge. In retrospect, we realized that it would be crucial to include officials from the multilayered governance and leadership structures from the onset of the CBR, to ensure that they understood the process-orientated and organic nature that underpinned this kind of work.

Involvement in this research encompassed a complex array of partnerships. Working in these multilayered partnerships had been fulfilling, but not without challenges. We concur with Brush et al. (2020) that navigating the complexity of the partnerships required community-based researchers to develop and maintain relationships, while remaining open to achieving partnership goals and at the same time continuously evaluating the progress.

Developing an Integrative Holistic Well-being Process

In 2015, following ethical clearance to conduct the research, a core research team comprising the first author as primary researcher, a doctoral student as research assistant and the coordinators of the six

well-being support teams began to research the development of a holistic well-being process with the well-being support teams. PALAR emphasizes the relational dimension of research and aligns with the principles of community psychology as propounded by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2020). The university-based researchers and their community co-researchers worked together to generate knowledge for the creation of a holistic well-being process. Epistemologically, we embraced traditional conceptual knowledge as well as the experiential, presentational and practical forms of knowledge (Heron & Reason 2008) that were mostly present in the community partners.

The cyclic nature of the PALAR process (Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013) opened up opportunities for long-term engagements with community partners, as mandated by the trust. In the first cycle, 52 members of the six well-being teams, including teachers, learners and parents, attended an introductory workshop where the content and activities were designed to enhance commitment to the project. To open up opportunities for collaboration and learning, the relationships among the members of each team, as well as between the teams, were strengthened. A crucial outcome in this cycle was the development of a vision for each school context. The visions formulated by the teams clearly demonstrated a shift towards a focus on well-being rather than being ill, as demonstrated in Fig. 5.1.

Fig. 5.1 Vision illustrating a shift towards well-being

In the second cycle, the teams presented the vision to their respective school communities to obtain their input before finalizing their vision for the holistic well-being process. Each team also began to develop its own process to identity needs related to well-being on individual, relational and collective levels and design tailor-made responses. The research team, following a PALAR process (see Chap. 3 for an example), organized action learning meetings once a term, for five consecutive school terms.

During these meetings, the school-based members discussed the needs of their respective school contexts and identified activities and interventions related to well-being. They asked questions and we shared relevant knowledge and skills to enable them to conduct their own assessment of their situation and to identify strategic plans for the promotion of holistic well-being in collaboration with all the relevant stakeholders. We, as the university partners, shared ideas but were not directive about what they should do. In this way, the team coordinators were able to enhance their confidence and take a central role in facilitating the promotion of holistic well-being in their school communities.

In the third cycle, the well-being support teams started to take ownership of the process by developing their own well-being support plans and submitted them to the education trust to obtain funding for implementation. Informed by a complexity perspective on human behaviour (Stacey, 2007), the teams steered away from the development of rigid blueprints, in favour of a process-orientated approach. The implication has been the creation of unique spaces wherein they could expound their own goals in order to address their specific needs.

In the fourth cycle, the six teams came together to share what they had achieved thus far. All six schools participated in a mid-term celebration to which they invited officials from the circuit, other partners who had been included in the education trust's initiative, colleagues from the university researcher's institution, an international visitor as well as members of the school management teams and school governing bodies. The team coordinators insisted that learners give feedback to strengthen their voice in the quest for holistic well-being in schools. The confident manner in which these learners made their presentations validated the importance of including them in the development of a holistic school well-being process. Their confidence suggested that they had already become agents for change due to their involvement in the project.

In the fifth cycle, the teams took full responsibility for the process. The research team had a final follow-up action learning meeting to support and motivate coordinators to continue their team discussions, since regular action learning team meetings in each school were the key to the process of remaining open and flexible. Each team developed and presented their own strategic action plans for the new school year to the education trust for funding purposes. They also initiated alternative funding opportunities. The coordinators clearly displayed confidence in their ability to continue with the process, and so input from the university researchers became redundant.

A World Café event, attended by 60 well-being support team members and the 6 school principals, was held to discuss the impact and value of the integrative holistic well-being process developed over three years. The value of the project was summed up by one participating teacher:

> *We can already see what it [this well-being process] does for our children and I think it will only get better and better and it is going to grow more and more with our children and our community and our parents.*

A final celebration to conclude the research process involved representatives from the larger community, departmental officials and other partners. This event recognized the valuable input of all the team members and confirmed them as creators and owners of the holistic well-being process. Janzen and Ochocka (2020) argued that CBR builds the capacity of, and gives agency to, vulnerable populations. Through their involvement, the teachers, parents and learners had the opportunity to promote well-being and effect positive social change. In an effort to assist the teams with the obligation to address pressing issues, the first author, in collaboration with colleagues from higher education institutions and non-profit organizations, offered assistance parallel to the research process. Examples of such assistance included presenting three-hour social-emotional development workshops for all Grade 4–12 learners; presenting sexuality education sessions for Grade 5–7 primary school learners; presenting workshops for parents and providing counselling services in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Sustaining Ongoing Transformation Through Participatory Action Learning and Action Research

A significant outcome of this CBR project was the establishment of a school well-being initiative, led by a well-being coordinating committee. All six coordinators and a representative group of parents currently serve on this committee, which liaises with each well-being team for planning purposes. The committee currently oversees the implementation of the holistic school well-being process across schools. They plan collective as well as school-specific projects, and also interventions throughout the school year, aimed at promoting well-being on individual, relational and collective levels. They have an administrator who provides logistic support across all six schools and share their collaborative and school-specific events, activities and interventions on social media. The funding provided by the education trust still continues, thereby enabling the teams to continue with the process. The larger community has also become more aware of the value of promoting health and well-being, even amid the challenging circumstances they face on a daily basis.

The sustainability of this process depends on the ability of the well-being support teams to take ownership and responsibility of the process across all levels of interrelatedness; develop a clear sense of direction to promote shared responsibility; enhance the connections between people to ensure their shared commitment in the process; facilitate an integrative approach that brings all the efforts to enhance health and well-being together and, finally, recognize the complex interactive nature of the process (Kitching & Van Rooyen, 2020). Through their participation as core members of the action learning group within the PALAR process, the well-being coordinators learnt how to develop and continually improve these skills, enabling them to implement their learning to the benefit of their respective school well-being support teams.

Knowledge Mobilization

In addition, the well-being support teams have shared their knowledge on multiple levels, for example, with colleagues, learners and parents during staff meetings, assemblies and parent evenings. The team members also applied this knowledge to design activities and interventions to proactively promote well-being on individual, relational and collective levels (see Kitching, 2019). The parents in the teams informed other parents about the advantages of a well-being approach. The learners in the teams were involved in the presentation of workshops and the development of strategic plans for their contexts. In addition, the university researchers and the well-being coordinating committee met with the director of support services of the Provincial Department of Education to share the findings of the research and the process they developed, in an effort to influence policy and practice related to health promotion in schools. The first author invited members of the well-being coordinating committee, including the second author as chair of the committee, to co-present the findings and their experiences at a community engagement colloquium, an event hosted by the higher education institution where she is currently employed.

Participation in the CBR project not only brought about improvement in the holistic well-being in schools but also enabled practitioners (teachers) to contribute to 'scientific' knowledge in the form of a doctoral and a master's study. The findings of the master's study on the coordinators' experiences (Carstens, 2018) were disseminated at a national education conference. Detailed findings of the doctoral study on the sustainability of the process have been reported in an article (Kitching & Van Rooyen, 2020). A peer-reviewed book chapter on the holistic well-being process has been published in a textbook (Kitching, 2019). The well-being coordinators were acknowledged in each of these outputs, which they said enhanced their sense of ownership of the process. We thus wish to recognize the six well-being team coordinators as co-authors of this chapter, based on their input in this process. We base their inclusion on the premise that the recognition of scientific contributions,

combined with the contribution of non-academic collaborators under conditions of their own choosing, can work towards epistemic justice and better scientific practice (Sarna-Wojcicki et al., 2017).

Conclusion

Based on this case study, we conclude that a CBR approach created a space where community partners felt that their input was respected and valued. We achieved this by minimizing the power relations between academics and school community partners through the establishment of trusting, authentic relationships. Our commitment to the development of the well-being support team members' capacity to take ownership of the process enhanced their capacity to successfully sustain the process. A CBR approach enabled school communities to learn experientially how to develop an integrative process to ensure the promotion of holistic well-being at all levels of interrelatedness. This ensured it became, and remains, part of the core business of schooling.

Questions to Promote Discussion

1. What principles, challenges and ethical issues of CBR does this case illustrate?
2. What, if anything, would you do differently if you were one of the key participants in the case study/example?
3. What lessons have you learnt from the case study on how to engage in partnerships for CBR?

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6

Developing Relationships for Community-Based Research at Rhodes University: Values, Principles and Challenges

Diana Hornby and Savathrie Maistry

Introduction

From its inception, the Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) Division was cognizant of the need for relationship building to foster partnerships with local communities for community engagement (CE) in general and community-based research (CBR) in particular. The city of Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown), with an estimated population of 70,000, is located in the Eastern Cape, the poorest province in the country (Statistics South Africa, 2019), and may be viewed as a microcosm of South Africa. The apartheid legacies of poverty, inequality and unemployment are conspicuous in the structural racism of urban divide between the privileged and marginalized in the separate development spaces for 'blacks' and 'whites'.

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RUCE espouses that mutually beneficial and sustainable partnership relationships are important for the success of CBR and that local community knowledge may be harnessed through authentic partnerships, developed prior to the implementation of CBR, to effect social transformation. Bivens et al. (2015) affirmed the importance of building partnerships with the community for CBR to co-create "knowledge which draws dynamically on multiple epistemologies and lifeworlds" (p. 6). This chapter explains the values and principles that RUCE has adopted to guide these community–university partnerships (CUPs) for enriched knowledge production and transformation of all involved. However, relationship development for CUPs is not without its challenges, and we discuss some of these and ways in which they are addressed. We also acknowledge that some challenges may be addressed jointly by the community and university, but others are more structural, systemic and psychological as consequences of the socio-historical context and require ongoing socio-systemic change. Here, we draw on the Reviving Schools initiative by RUCE as an example of our approach to relationship building within CUPs. We conclude that, whatever the challenges, the time spent on establishing strong relationships with partners is an essential part of the engagement process for effective CBR. In the next section, we begin by explaining the approach to CBR at Rhodes.

Rhodes University's Approach to Community-Based Research

Dr Saleem Badat and Dr Sizwe Mabizela, the erstwhile and current vice-chancellors, made the commitment to firmly ground CE as a core function of Rhodes University. Both are unswerving in their belief that the university has a central role to play in the development of the Eastern Cape province in general, and particularly in improving the quality of life and instilling a sense of community in the city of Makhanda. RUCE conceptualizes the community as individuals or members of a specific geographical location or physical space (Rhodes University CE Policy, 2005, p. 3). This is significant because the spatial divide between groups of people—the privileged and the marginalized—in the city of Makhanda

requires a process of 'healing' as a consequence of structural racism. The values and principles that guide CBR at Rhodes University are intended to break down such systemic oppression through working with the community and within the university to bring about change.

RUCE views CBR as proactive, participatory in nature and requiring the development of supportive leadership roles in communities to enable sustainability of change. It is a systematic approach to create knowledge for social action (Hall et al., 2016). However, few universities in South Africa have fully engaged in CBR to date, despite its benefits of seeking to "change society" through joint decision-making and shared sense-making (Stirling et al., 2016, p. 517). Importantly, transformational CBR involves "high levels of trust and relies on authentic dialogue, with frequent interactions amongst a more limited group of partners" (Stirling et al., 2016, p. 518). RUCE's approach to CBR and the development of authentic partnership relationships is influenced by ecosystems theory and the philosophy of *ubuntu*.

Ecosystems Theory and the Philosophy of Ubuntu

The belief that human and social phenomena can be perceived and addressed in an isolated and fragmented manner is problematic, particularly in South Africa where fragmentation, segregation and division remain a way of life. Such a fragmented view may bring about improvement in one area, only to cause more problems in another (Nel, 2018). Many development programmes have sought to look at a single aspect of development, mainly economic, while ignoring others. Such an approach is not likely to produce the required results because it stems from linear thinking, rather than an integrated ecological perspective. Community problems are multifaceted and as such must be addressed in a coordinated, multidimensional way (Ife, 1999). An ecosystems perspective enables RUCE and community partners to look at problems and issues in an integrated and holistic manner and jointly arrive at appropriate and sustainable strategies for change.

The essence of the ecosystems perspective is the integration and systematization of knowledge about the interrelationships of people with each other and with their environments (Pillari, 2002). This perspective emphasizes whole systems over linear causality and highlights the interactional patterns formed through the relationships between parts. Systems are seen as consisting of smaller elements or subsystems, but in turn are also part of larger suprasystems (Pillari, 2002). RUCE connects the 'big picture' and local realities by attempting to understand the interdependence of systems from micro (individual), meso (family, group and community) and macro (societal) levels. Human and community functioning is studied in terms of the interactional or relational patterns within and between synergistic systems (Pillari, 2002). The whole is always more than the sum of its parts; separate parts of a system can therefore not just be put together in order to say something about the whole. The ecological systems perspective enables a broad and interrelated understanding of problems that offers scope for a variety of solutions that may draw in a number of different role players. The development of authentic, trusting relationships between RUCE and the communities of Makhanda is viewed as essential for this purpose, with the focus on the quality rather than quantity of the partnership.

The ecosystem perspective resonates with the philosophy of ubuntu which also highlights the interconnected and interdependent relationships of all human beings. Conceptually, ubuntu may be described as the "quality of being human … to be a good moral character, to show goodwill, kindness, charity and mercy to one's fellow human" (Coetzee, 2001, p. 113). The main attributes and values of ubuntu applicable to CBR are respect for human beings, human dignity and life; collective sharing; obedience; humility; solidarity; caring; hospitality; interdependence and communalism (Kamwangamalu, 1999). Love, kindness, forgiveness, sympathy, tolerance, appreciation and consideration are integral to the notion of ubuntu (Broodryk, 2002).

We are aware that the theoretical and philosophical perspectives adopted by RUCE do not make for an easy trajectory. It is an ongoing process of learning and adaptation. Student and staff engagement at Rhodes University as part of CUPs cover a wide range of initiatives, including in the field of education, wellness, food security, arts, science and the environment.

Community–University Partnerships

RUCE regards CUP as the coming together of individuals from different contexts and backgrounds to work in a collaborative team and contribute towards a shared purpose of social change and transformation (Rhodes University, Institutional Development Plan, 2018). Eckerle Curwood et al. (2011) defined CUPs as "collaborations between community organizations and institutions of higher learning for the purpose of achieving an identified social change goal through community-engaged scholarship that ensures mutual benefit for the community organization and participating students" (p. 16). "A key tenet of partnering is that … individual partners cannot accomplish their goals on their own: the partnership creates the ultimate win-win situation" (Eddy, 2010, p. 2). The practice of building CUPs is not an easy task in the South African context in which structural racism demarcates the spatial divide between the 'privileged white' and the 'marginalized black' population, as manifested in Makhanda. Invariably, the mistrust that accompanies the racial divide permeates interaction both within the university and within and between communities, students and academics. Ray (2016) explains,

> Even as partnership, collaboration, and the co-creation of programs and knowledge are increasingly embraced as best practices for college-community engagement, they are only ever partially achieved. Notwithstanding the best intentions, the smartest program design, the most committed collaborators (among faculty, staff, and community colleagues), the best institutional support, and so forth, partnership is an essentially elusive thing … rather than being primarily an exchange or an agreement, partnership within the context of civic [community] engagement [and CBR] is fundamentally relational, and a relationship is always a work in progress. Much like deep friendships, partnerships need ongoing cultivation and care. They require sustained attention, stubborn commitment, flexibility, empathy, humility, patience, imagination, and a generous sense of humor (para. 3).

Importantly, RUCE has adopted a set of values and principles to keep this 'work in progress' an ethical and epistemically just endeavour. A value system is an enduring set of beliefs concerning preferable modes of

conduct. Core human values serve to build understanding and social cohesion between and among the participants of engagement (Pathania & Pathania, 2006). Ethical practice, guided by principles, is about ensuring the needs, desired outcomes and local knowledge of the community that guides the relationship. Many of the principles that RUCE has adopted for CBR are derived and adapted from community development literature, particularly from Bopp et al. (1998), whose community development principles were formulated from participatory research with communities of 'third world countries'.

The Reviving Schools initiative in Makhanda is now discussed to show how some of the values and principles that underpin CE and CBR were operationalized within this specific CUP. These values and principles are not mutually exclusive but interact to enhance the formation of trusting relationships.

Reviving Schools in Makhanda: Values and Principles for Building Community–University Relationships

Since 2007, the Eastern Cape has almost continuously been the worst performing province in South Africa, with the lowest percentage of school-leaving (commonly known as Matric) passes (Westaway, 2021). In 2009, six public school principals in Makhanda sought assistance from the university to improve the matric results to enable learners from local schools to access Rhodes University. At this point, the bureaucracy and lack of respect for hierarchical authority proved to be extremely difficult and challenging for CUP development and collaborative planning, organization and implementation of any formal assistance as requested by the school principals. Nevertheless, it was the beginning of the relationship building process between schools in the area and the university, embedded in specific values and principles.

Before entering into a relationship with the community, students and faculty must develop an *awareness of context* which requires them to understand how social and economic inequalities influence the lives of

people. They must learn how to work skilfully with people from local communities, to understand their specific culture and how their experiences have an impact on their lives and decisions. Students and researchers involved in CE must be aware of the social factors that can have a negative impact on the school performance of the learners from these communities. They must be willing to learn about themselves and the people they work with and to master the art of active listening. They must also show that they have identified and addressed any personal bias they may have. Without such prior self-development, forming a trusting relationship with the community would be difficult for both parties. RUCE has developed short learning programmes to foster such learning.

Trust enables participation and the accomplishment of goals. Those in leadership and decision-making positions need to be transparent in their actions or risk losing that trust. From 2010, RUCE provided assistance to only a few public schools through student volunteers who offered tutoring classes for Grade 12 learners in Mathematics, Science and English at the university. Cultivating trust is a slow process, as disunity, the primary disease of communities, exists within and between communities.

In South Africa, *disunity* is endemic due to racism and other oppressive factors (Molope, 2018). *Unity*, on the other hand, is the term used for the cohesive force that holds communities of people together. From a national level, social cohesion is promoted as an imperative for authentic engagement and development within the education sector (South Africa, Department of Education, 1997). Without unity, the common oneness that links seemingly separate human beings in a community is impossible. In any CUP relationship, restoring and maintaining unity is seen as a prerequisite for the healing of vulnerable and marginalized communities. This is especially relevant in Makhanda, given the wide chasm that separates the privileged and disadvantaged. Even though healing the divide is a slow process, each step taken through initiatives such as this is a step closer towards creating a strong CUP. In February 2015, the vice-chancellor of Rhodes University set out his vision wherein he repositioned the institution as being "not just in Grahamstown but … also of and for Grahamstown" (Mabizela, 2015). He thus committed the

university to engage with the unequal and inadequate basic education sector in Makhanda in a sustainable way, as evidenced in the Reviving Schools initiative.

Commitment is the shared obligation to contribute to community development by genuine efforts from both community partners and the university to achieve mutually beneficial CUP project goals. This sense of commitment is also tied to a greater understanding of the necessity for perseverance in collective community building. The Reviving Schools initiative was an example of the commitment of the university to transform local public schooling so that *every child* in Makhanda could receive quality education. The initiative was built upon existing activities of multiple education stakeholders. From a systems perspective, it was recognized that multilayered, carefully coordinated, multistakeholder efforts were of greater value than the sum of various separate approaches to improve education. Together with various community partners, a carefully planned education pathway for the children of Makhanda was crafted. Such *networking* opens opportunities for partner organizations to explore their potential roles, prevents dependency, broadens the professional circles for partner organizations, promotes sustainability and improves the confidence and knowledge of all partners (Bouchillon, 2021). The pathway runs from early childhood development, through primary school, high school and bridging programmes into the university and other post-schooling options.

One of the ways in which RUCE ensures *honesty* and *transparency* in the CUP relationship is by deliberately creating an enabling and safe space for mid-year reflections and end-of-year evaluations with partners. Constructive criticism is encouraged with the understanding that it is a critical part of change and development. Community partners readily raise challenges and questions which RUCE responds to openly and honestly. This is aligned to Freire's notion of praxis where "critical reflection is already action" (cited in Baum et al., 2006, p. 856). The level of trust and honesty between the community partners and RUCE enables the former to easily discuss their development challenges. Together, the partners explore the challenges and ways to address them. Choosing an option and following it through remains the responsibility of the community partner, but RUCE provides the required support.

The cohesive force that binds the CUP is *love.* In the context of development, love is referred to as a shared connection between people with qualities of openness, regard, trust, warmth, interest, mutuality and sensitivity, and a response to the natural goodness that exists in people (Bartley, 2003). The aspect of love is inherent in ubuntu, as it means showing compassion to others. The ways in which these values are shared within local communities include fables, proverbs, myths, riddles and storytelling (Kamwangamalu, 1999); these methods are also important in the knowledge creation process of CBR. Bartley (2003) critiqued education that only focuses on developing the 'hard' skills of expertise in students and ignoring the 'soft' ones of process, connection and people-centred enabling as promoted by RUCE in the orientation of students and academics to CE through short courses. The ongoing relationship building process of RUCE within the university community has seen a progressive shift in the mindset of academics and students towards acceptance and adoption of these principles for effective CE and CBR. Furthermore, they are required to ensure that their engagement is sustainable.

Sustainability refers to behaviours and actions that take into account the effects that individual actions have on the world and society as a whole and towards future generations (Hafezi et al., 2017). All the participants in the Reviving Schools initiative need to be mindful of how their actions will affect the community in terms of economic, social, environmental and political sustainability. A guiding question that underlies the relationship is: How will our actions today impact the long-term improvement in education in our community? Sustainability of development depends on sustained *collaboration* and *participation* of all stakeholders.

Collaboration requires working *with* community partners and not *for* them (Wood, 2020). It encompasses joint decision-making, open and honest communication and understanding the needs of community partners as determined by them. Therefore, creating partnerships in which community and university members share in decision-making is critical to the success of the relationship. RUCE is committed to listen to the voices of community partners in the process of engagement and

cultivates an environment conducive to shared decision-making as indicated in the reflection and evaluation processes with partners.

Participation is a necessary component of CE and development in that it supports the community members involved in the decision-making process. Participation is seen as a means to overcome professional dominance, to improve strategies, whether for practice or research, and to show a commitment to democratic principles (Baum et al., 2006). Effective participation enables community members to articulate their vision, which enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of engagement and research outcomes (Chile, 2007). Relationships of power, however, are particularly apparent in debates around the concept of participation. Many dilemmas of the participatory approach revolve around contested power dynamics in research relationships. Participation can be a mechanism for empowerment but can also be a mechanism for rendering the 'poor' even more powerless when the agenda for research and development is not theirs to begin with (Hammersley, 2013). Baum et al. (2006) reminded us that the participatory action research movement is meant to "challenge the system of surveillance and knowledge control established through mainstream research … [and] when communities seek control of research agendas, and seek to be active in research, they are establishing themselves as more powerful agents" (Baum et al., 2006, p. 855). The Reviving Schools initiative incorporates ongoing self-reflection with regard to possible differences in perceptions of priorities and the different ways in which researchers and community partners may interpret findings (Baum et al., 2006) in their quest to reach mutually beneficial outcomes.

Reciprocity and *mutuality* are fundamental principles and inherent goals of community-engaged partnerships. Janke and Clayton (2012) defined reciprocity as "recognizing, respecting, and valuing of the knowledge, perspective, and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration" (p. 36). Reciprocity requires a continuous and intentional practice of valuing and drawing on the various forms of knowledge, resources and other assets that each person contributes to the shared activity and outcomes to a degree that the experience is felt by all to be

equitable (Hammersley, 2013). Achieving reciprocal relationships demands an understanding of forms of power and differentials in power. Attention should be paid to each individual's and group's authority and resources. Thus, the partners in the Reviving Schools initiative are involved in an ongoing process of dialogue, self-critical reflexivity and renegotiation. Only when such actions are integral to the CUP can *social justice* and *inclusion* be attained.

The principle of social justice in CBR implies that every person must be treated with respect as a human being, regardless of gender, race, age, culture, religion, personal beliefs or any other distinction (Wang, 2013). Every person must be accorded equal opportunity to participate in the process of development and to receive a fair share of the benefits. Unless CUPs are driven and guided by the quest for social justice, some people will always benefit at the expense of others. When some are enriched through a process which simultaneously impoverishes others, sustainable CE and development are impossible. Inclusion is best defined as actions taken to make sure that everyone is equally valued and has equal access to resources. It is a way to put everyone in a community on a level playing field, regardless of their differences from their peers (Chile, 2007). The Reviving Schools initiative, which is driven by Sustainable Development Goal 4 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020), ensures that quality education is grounded in these principles. Thus, it spans the whole educational experience, from preschool to higher education to maximize learning and development throughout the lifespan.

The promotion of various kinds of *learning* is an important component of the Reviving Schools initiative. RUCE advocates and promotes three types of learning:

- Critical learning enables people to analyse their own situations and behaviours, as well as the social, economic, political and cultural forces influencing their lives, and to uncover the root cause of situations that require change.
- Transformational learning enables people to see the possibilities and potential within themselves and to envision a sustainable, desirable and attainable future.

- Relational learning refers to learning for interpersonal well-being. Relational learning involves the acquisition of virtues and the practice of values that promote good human relations. Relational learning requires learning together with other people because much of what needs to be learned is connected to the habits of thinking and acting that only arise when people are together (adapted from Bopp et al., 1998).

To provide evidence of the success of this value-based approach to developing CUPs, we now focus on one particular programme. RUCE partnered with an experienced local non-profit organization, GADRA Education, to develop the Nine Tenths Matric Mentoring programme as an integral part of the Reviving Schools initiative. The priority in this regard was to increase the number of disadvantaged local Grade 12 learners who could secure access to Rhodes University based on merit. The Nine Tenths Matric Mentoring programme was launched in 2016 for Grade 12 learners in three historically disadvantaged, predominantly black, non-fee paying schools. In this project, learners are paired with Rhodes University student volunteers in mentorship relationships. The mentoring project is geared towards equipping matric learners to cope with their final year of school and to reach their full potential. Learners are given one-on-one support from a Rhodes University student volunteer through nine guided and structured contact sessions throughout the year. The Nine Tenths programme is focussed on academic improvement and self-development of learners; hence, mentoring and not tutoring is employed. All mentors are trained in an accredited short course, “Mentoring for CE”, that requires them to develop self-awareness, awareness of context and demonstrating how their interactions embody the values and principles discussed above. The number of matriculants who obtained university passes improved from 50 to 62 at the end of the first year (2016) and improved even more to 102 in 2017, dropping only slightly to 86 in 2018. (The number of learners who completed this exam varied each year.). However, such success does not come easily.

Challenges to Developing Relationships for Community–University Partnerships

Establishing a CUP is a long and slow journey punctuated by challenges, two of which we now discuss. The first challenge was to change the paradigms and attitudes of academics within the institution regarding the role of the university in the wider transformation agenda of the country. It took several years of nurturing relationships and educating the academic community to establish CE and CBR as a core function of the university. We did this by working closely with those who showed interest and by involving students and staff from all faculties. Thus, relationship building has to start within the university before sustainable external partnerships can be established successfully.

The second related challenge concerns power dynamics. The 'expert' mentality and attitude of both students and academics can undermine the relationship building process with community partners. As posited by Lortan and Maistry (2019a), merely acknowledging the community is not a remedy for the 'expert' academic knowledge syndrome. Otherwise, CBR is no less colonizing than the traditional approaches to research (Lortan & Maistry, 2019b). Therefore, university partners need to critically approach engagement activities, giving specific consideration to the avoidance of oppressive social relations. Furthermore, engaged relationships at the individual-to-individual level need to ensure that both participants articulate the terms of the relationship so that knowledge is created on equal terms. Understanding dialectical elements of power at the individual-to-individual level ensures that contributions from all parties are valued. Partnerships should be premised on the idea that academics are not ready-made knowledge deliverers; rather, community members have a legitimate stake as co-creators and consumers of knowledge (Kliewer et al., 2010).

Lesser challenges, but no less important, include the lack of time to invest in the CUP relationship by some community members and students, and the assumption by community members that their limited formal education is a barrier to engagement with students and academics, in addition to 'a feeling of not being welcome' in the academic setting.

Regular interaction with community members to reassure them and acknowledgement of the milestones reached in projects is one way to strengthen the confidence of potential community partners in CBR.

Conclusion

While systemic and structural challenges are ongoing, great strides have been made in the development of CUP between Rhodes University and the school community in Makhanda. As a consequence of the Reviving Schools initiative, Rhodes University now enjoys a much improved relationship with the previously disadvantaged communities. This is quite different from ten years ago when the university was regarded as a far-removed 'ivory tower'. The initiative has mobilized hundreds of Rhodes University students to use their social capital, skills and time in service of the Makhanda community. The Reviving Schools programme is an example of how value-based, focussed interventions can achieve social change. The nature of the CUP relationship existing between the schools and RUCE makes it possible to do CBR as a collaborative effort of student volunteers, academic staff, community partners and the RUCE programme coordinator. Developing sound and healthy CUP relationships is not an easy task, but the grounding of relationships in the values and principles as adopted by RUCE ensures that collaboration fosters social justice outcomes and leads to the sustainable learning and development of all involved.

Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. What principles, challenges and ethical issues of CBR does this case illustrate?
2. What, if anything, would you do differently if you were one of the key participants in the case study/example?
3. What lessons have you learnt from the case study about how to engage in partnerships for CBR?

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7

A Community-Based Approach to Engaging Older Adults in the Promotion of Their Health and Well-Being Through Social Dance

Orfhlaith Ni Bhriain and Amanda Clifford

Introduction

Dancing is associated with improved health status and decreased social isolation. Previous research studies found that regular older social dancers have better balance, gait, cognition and physical functioning compared to age-matched controls (Kattenstroth et al., 2010; Shanahan et al., 2016). Studies have also noted that social dancing can result in a range of positive outcomes, including enhancing a sense of youthfulness, promoting psychological well-being and reducing social isolation (Roberson & Pelclova,

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2013; Skinner, 2013). At the University of Limerick, we were interested in exploring how Irish social dance could enhance the holistic well-being of older people in the community. We also knew that it was important for the sustainability of the project to involve older people as full participants, and we therefore adopted a community-based research (CBR) approach. The community we were collaborating with is considered a vulnerable group because they were over 65; however, it is important to note that the participants in this study did not consider themselves as vulnerable and were all active members of a community group for older people.

Ireland has an ageing population, and many older people report low levels of physical activity, loneliness and social isolation leading to reduced physical health and falls. Less than a third of adults aged 50 years and older are sufficiently active (Ireland, Department of Health, 2016) and have high levels of sedentary behaviour (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). This pattern is replicated worldwide, with reports that sedentary time accounts for 65%–80% of an older adult's day (Harvey et al., 2015). Physical activity has been shown to maintain health, wellness and quality of life, and prevent functional decline and loss of independence of older people (McPhee et al., 2016). Regular participation in physical activity can potentially delay age-related decline and help promote neuroplastic preservation of physical and cognitive functions (Erickson et al., 2013). Thus, it is evident that enjoyable opportunities to engage in physical activity are required for older people.

We first explain why we chose Irish social dance as an activity suited to older people in the community. The research processes followed are then outlined, explicating both the challenges and successes of CBR in this context. Finally, we share the lessons learnt that other community-based researchers may find helpful.

Irish Social Dance

Irish social dance is both an art and a form of exercise. It is a social dance style embedded in Irish cultural life, and it encompasses partnered multidirectional, weight shifting and stepping movements (Clifford et al., 2019). This dance genre incorporates socialization, aerobic exercise and

musical accompaniment, thus creating an enriched social, musical and cultural experience, which can foster community networks, social identity and cohesion (Clifford et al., 2021). For many years, dance has been tightly woven into the cultural tapestry of Ireland, whether as a ritual performance, a social pastime or a performance art. It is still a key component in and contributes significantly to the leisure landscape in twenty-first-century Ireland (O'Connor, 2013). The accompanying music is also significant and is very much integrated into the musical taste of the community. The following section outlines the processes and procedures we followed to set up the project and reports on the recruitment and consultation phases.

Establishing the Project

This project was a collaboration between a research team based at the University of Limerick, a consultant geriatrician, local and national retirement groups and a dedicated group of senior dancers. The academic team members consisted of researchers and clinicians with expertise in dance, physiotherapy and geriatric medicine. This team built on the learning gained from previous research projects, in particular when they designed and evaluated the feasibility and effect of a set dance programme for people with Parkinson's disease. A key strength of the set dancing for people with Parkinson's disease (Shanahan et al., 2015) was that the dance programmes were embedded in local community practices. This contributed to local community participation, enhancing the long-term sustainability of the dance programmes following the completion of the research study. Additional pragmatic strategies to facilitate implementation of dance programmes in local communities included a conference, workshops and an evidence-based educational booklet designed to provide recommendations for set dancing to people with Parkinson's disease, carers, dance teachers and health care practitioners. We drew on the learning from this previous project to inform our work with older people.

Developing the Partnership

We connected with Active Retirement Ireland[1] groups nationally and locally to ascertain interest in the project. In this chapter, we focus on one group of 16 participants all aged 65 or older from Limerick, who were English speaking and could walk three metres without a walking stick. They had not danced more than twice in the six-month period leading up to the proposed study and reported no contraindications to participating in an exercise or dance programme. The participants' readiness to exercise was assessed via the Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PARQ+) (Bredin et al., 2013). Written information letters were given to all participants in advance of participating in the study, and they were given time to consider their participation before signing a consent form. We obtained ethical approval from the faculty's research ethics committee at the Limerick university.

A post-doctoral student had several meetings with this group to answer queries and address the practical aspects, including accessibility, facilities, timing, location and travel. The premises where the group normally met were unavailable during the day as they were used as a dining area for another group. The participants, however, were adamant that they did not wish to travel to the university campus for this study due to public transport issues, traffic and parking difficulties on campus. The group wanted a more accessible location in the city centre. From a resource perspective, the location required a suitable dance floor, access to kitchen facilities for tea and coffee, and restrooms on site. The scope for building *communitas* and general socializing during tea breaks helped facilitate conversation, a sense of belonging and general group cohesion. Opportunities to share stories and reminisce with fellow group members bolstered community spirit and extended social networks (Stacey & Stickley, 2008). Thus, we adopted a pragmatic and participatory approach (Zuidgeest et al., 2017) in an endeavour to meet the needs of participants in terms of logistics and resources. This approach also encouraged a cyclical learning process (McNiff, 1992) throughout the study to ensure that the project was sustainable and embedded in community life. The participants' values and perspectives informed the scheduling of the dance

classes. The community members proposed that the optimum time for the delivery of the classes would be between 11:30 and 13:30 to allow for any medical appointments or carer visits in the morning and also leave the rest of the afternoon and evening free for other activities.

The primary aim of this research was to assess the feasibility of Irish social dance as a way to improve health and well-being of older people. Thus, important aspects to determine included safety, the take-up by community members and the potential benefit of the classes for physical and emotional health. Secondary outcomes included measuring physical functions, dual task ability, endurance, mood and quality of life before and after the intervention.

In the spring of 2017, we provided social dance classes once a week for a period of six weeks. Classes were two hours long to allow for social breaks and refreshments, while ensuring that the physical activity target of 1.5 hours per week was achieved. Participants were also given the option to invite spouses and/or family members as partners. Classes were conducted by an experienced dance teacher and designed with the guidance of a physiotherapist with previous experience of teaching social dances. All sessions commenced with a warming up. Participants were seated at the beginning of each session and later progressed to dynamic stretches using the chairs for support as appropriate. The class allowed for frequent rest periods and participants were encouraged to take more rest, if required. Safety was a key component in all sessions, and participants were advised to report any adverse effects. This open and discursive platform allowed for ongoing consultation and communication between the teacher and the dancers.

All dances taught were partnered and involved multidirectional stepping, weight shifting and turning. Repertoire evolved and progressed according to the participants' abilities. Ongoing dialogue with, and feedback from, participants was a key factor in pacing each session. The musical tempi included marches, waltzes, mazurkas and hornpipes. Dancers were asked to submit their own musical choices and a playlist of participants' personalized music preferences was developed for the classes. In some instances, participants sang along as they danced, which created a very energetic vibe in the room. As the weeks progressed, the participants became more comfortable with making suggestions and contributions

regarding musical choices and variations we could include in the dances. During the breaks, we conversed over tea and coffee in a social and convivial atmosphere. This created a sense of group cohesion, and participants indicated that they looked forward to attending the sessions. In the final session, we had a feast of cakes, coffee and tea when one of our dancers celebrated her eightieth birthday. For this session, we invited a young musician who was a student at the University of Limerick to join us. She came with her fiddle and played live music while the dancers were performing the six dances they had learned. This really added to the enjoyment and energy in the room. The student who was from Donegal in the north of the country noted that it reminded her of playing for tea dances back home and the nostalgia created positive reminiscences for all present. The convivial atmosphere created in the room at this session really highlighted the sense of belonging and celebration. We had helped create an affinity group who shared the broader social values underlying their music and dance practice (Turino, 2008). However, creating this atmosphere also brought challenges.

Challenges of Creating a Collaborative Group

We encountered some unexpected challenges during the classes related to emotions evoked by dancing. A lady became upset one day when we were learning the waltz as she said she had only ever waltzed with her husband of 50 years who had recently passed away. This was something that we had not really accounted for in the planning as it elicited a negative emotion that contravened the well-being we were trying to promote, but the community members came up with a solution. They invented an imaginary partner called Stephen or Stephanie for any dancer who wanted to tread the boards alone at any stage during the class. This also meant that if we had an uneven number of dancers, nobody ever felt excluded as we always had our standby dance partner to step into the breach. Participants were also given a home dance programme to enhance the beneficial effect of dancing.

The programme involved integrating dance steps into the daily routine such as waltzing down the length of the kitchen counter instead of

walking and sidestepping while brushing teeth. Participants were asked to record the number of daily dancing time in a home diary. We made this enjoyable by adding words to some of the dance melodies, for example:

> *To the front door, to the front door, to the front door and stop.*
> *Pick the mail up, pick the mail up, pick the mail up don't flop.*

The group embraced some of these home-based tasks but really participated more actively in the face-to-face classes. They noted the importance of connecting with others as well as the shared energy in the live setting. They were gathering together not only for the dance class but also for the social engagement. This was something that was not easily replicated with the home-based tasks.

Some Successes

On reflection, the study had many positive moments. At the first class, I (first author) arrived 15 minutes early to discover that the cohort of dancers was already in situ. This was a good indicator in terms of motivation and commitment to the project. We commenced with gentle warming up with each person introducing themselves, while we went through the exercises in a semi-circle. We learned three short dances the first day and walked through the steps and movements before trying to dance with the music. The playlist I had prepared was too fast, and I realized that future music tracks would have to be at a slower tempo while we were learning the dances. The group also suggested songs and tunes they thought would work with the chosen dances and we started to sing as we danced. This was something that evolved organically and contributed to the overall welcoming ambience of the class. The initial pace was too fast, and I realized that I needed to be more measured in the speed of delivery without diminishing my energy or enthusiasm. Home exercise diaries were distributed, and all agreed to try to engage with the material at home. The following weeks were more enjoyable as the music tempo was more appropriate and the class took on a pace and evolution of its own. I was

receptive to suggestions and input from the group and less worried about leading the class. Consequently, the quality of engagement and enjoyment increased at least during the classes. However, there was less interest in performing the dances at home although some participants indicated that they sometimes sang the words of the dances at home. The group was positive and dynamic in their outlook and attitude towards the class and towards life in general. A core group attended regularly, and reported absences were generally due to social engagements with family and friends. In general, attendance rates were good with ten participants attaining an attendance rate of 80%.

So where did we successfully engage with community-based participatory research (CBPR) in this process? The social and emotional well-being aims of the project were enhanced due to the relationship of trust built up with participants. We listened and responded to their ideas regarding the design and pace of the intervention. This led to an increased sense of belonging and commitment to the common goal. The dancers valued the face-to-face interaction and the fact that they were active agents in the design and delivery of the classes.

We selected easy social dances from Ireland and Scotland, but the waltz was the one the dancers enjoyed the most. They offered a number of reasons for this choice. The first was that they had many happy memories of dancing in waltz time at social gatherings and felt at ease with this tempo. Second, they felt that they would have an opportunity to try out their new movements at upcoming social events and were therefore inspired to perfect these dances. The dances and music we chose were relevant and agreeable to this group of senior dancers in the south-west of Ireland. For example, a study into the meaning of Irish (traditional) *céilí* dancing, for three elderly *céilí* dancers, found that in addition to the participants' perceived health and social benefits of Irish traditional dance, they also felt that *céilí* dancing was important for the "stimulus for reminiscence" it provided, and also "its connection to cultural heritage" (Allen, 2003). However, this model of adapting traditional social dances could potentially be replicated and adapted in other cultural contexts.

The group asked if they could have a printed sheet with the words and description of the dances included to assist with practice at home, and we agreed that once they had embodied the dance to a degree, the handout

could serve as an *aide memoire*. At the end of the six-week dance programme all were delighted with their progress and many expressed a desire to continue the class or to find new outlets to practise their dancing skills. One participant reported that her family noticed she was always smiling and happy returning from class. The shared communal repertoire assisted with the collaborative evolution of the project. All parties involved had specific goals, but their shared goals were the improvement of well-being of the community participants, as expressed by them and documented by the research team. At the outset, the dancers were not specifically focused on producing research as such, nevertheless, their participation and input generated data which enabled the university team to measure and record the research findings. Yet, this project also highlighted many flaws in our approach to CBR.

Improving Our Approach to Community-Based Research

This is a case study of a participatory health research project as a form of CBPR. Despite our attempts at consultation, it must be acknowledged that we did not engage in public patient involvement (PPI) when the study was in its developmental phase. PPI in research is described as "research being carried out 'with' or 'by' members of the public, rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them" (Holmes et al., 2019, p. 2). Members of the public should thus be actively involved in research projects and in research organizations. The findings of this project caused us to realize that our approach to PPI was too top–down. We now understand that if our PPI process is to be truly meaningful, then it must permeate all stages of any future project. We have since established a PPI advisory panel to ensure meaningful and authentic collaboration with our community participants in future. In order for the PPI to be meaningful, it must give the participants autonomy and decision-making power at different stages of the research process (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). This increases participation and a sense of community. This approach is critical as one of the most important tenets of participatory health research is to ensure that

those for whom benefit is sought are at the heart of all research decision-making. The population with whom we consulted came with existing expertise, and while the intervention was co-created with important input from the participants, ideally, they could have had input into what the research objectives were and how they would be operationalized.

We also learned that this cohort requires particular attention with regard to how recruitment posters are worded and disseminated. Preferred channels of communication and information were existing community groups, local radio and newspaper advertisements as well as through their health care professionals. As this was a feasibility study, we were unable to implement much change for this particular project, but subsequent projects have taken these issues into consideration. We have reached out to local media outlets, both print and community radio, and also considered the importance of accessibility of language when preparing posters and presentations.

Our methodological approach did not match the needs of the community or facilitate future sustainability as anticipated. We implemented a dance programme as part of our feasibility study to improve well-being, and while many of the participants indicated a desire to continue with the dance classes once the official study was over, we were unable to do so due to the narrow stipulations of our ethical approval, which only allowed us to interact with them until we had reached our research goals. In fact, we had just built a good relationship with the group when the classes ended. While our approach may have fulfilled the aims of the research study, it did not include a mechanism to ensure that the well-being of the community participants would continue to be enhanced through dance. Future engagements should include a way to devolve responsibilities to the community should they wish to continue. The purpose of a CBPR design is to focus on issues and data relevant to decision-making and taking action and to produce results that are relevant to stakeholders, while providing valid research data (Glasgow & Chambers, 2012).

The project began as a scientific research project based in a local community but evolved into a community of trust where the programme was tailored and adapted to fit the needs of the participants. We concluded the classes with a social celebration with live music, but we did not effectively include the voices of the participants in our dissemination process.

We have presented this material at a number of conferences and symposia in Ireland and abroad. We have also conducted a further study on the benefits of music and dance for older patients after hospitalization, and we are currently liaising with older people's advocacy groups to design an art-based intervention for older adults. The university thus benefited, but we missed an opportunity to share the findings of the research through the voices and from the perspectives of the dancers. We made informal contact with the dance group after the intervention, but we should have arranged a community event where they could have given their feedback in public. We could have prepared a text-based or video resource to enable the community dancers to continue their social dance engagement. We could also have considered incorporating the dance component into an arts-and-health or dance-in-health module so that a sustainable engagement between students, faculty and community partners could continue. However, we have now involved members of the dance groups in PPI planning sessions for future studies and will ensure that our future CBR will incorporate what we have learned from this project.

Tandon et al. (2016) argued that universities have a social responsibility to generate research that promotes democratic participation, inclusion and collective co-creation of knowledge, as opposed to traditional, objective, expert-driven forms of enquiry. In this project there was an aspiration towards an inclusive knowledge democracy. All stakeholders brought their own expertise to the dance floor, and a relationship of trust and respect was cultivated as the project progressed. Yet we realized that ongoing consultation and engagement with communities is essential if we are to engage in meaningful research that can benefit both the community and the university.

After reflection, the research team agreed that a PPI panel should have been established at the outset to ensure that the voices of older adults, the public and advocacy groups are heard and to strengthen their autonomy and decision-making power throughout the research process. This would have facilitated community ownership and involvement of those who were supposed to benefit from the product, which are the fundamental principles of community-based research. Since older adults would be active agents in the preparation, construction, delivery and dissemination of this research project, their knowledge, lived experience and expertise

would further illuminate and enhance the process and outcomes. Tapping into pre-existing groups and venues already used by the community, rather than establishing new groups, is an underutilized strategy that warrants further research (Cleland et al., 2012).

Concluding Thoughts

The researchers involved in this study came from a variety of disciplines. Dancers, medical experts, older adults, academics, physiotherapists and members of the local active retirement community all combined forces to contribute to this project, and we appreciate their input and value their knowledge and expertise. The generosity of the participants facilitated significant learning for the research team. The participants did seem to benefit from the classes, but more importantly, the experience allowed us to learn from our mistakes. Reflection on this learning taught us how to build more sustainable relationships with our community partners to co-create future opportunities that can better adhere to the ideals of CBPR.

Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. What principles, challenges and ethical issues of CBR does this example illustrate?
2. What, if anything, would you do differently if you were one of the key participants in this example?
3. What lessons have you learnt from this case study about how to engage in partnerships for CBR?

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Note

1. Active Retirement Ireland is a voluntary organization for older people, with a national membership of over 24,500 people and over 550 local associations. Members range in age from 50 to 100+ years and cover a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The organization is run by voluntary committees at local, regional and national level with approximately 4200 volunteers (Active Retirement Ireland, 2021, *ARI mission*. https://activeirl.ie/ari-mission/).

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8

Community-Based Research and Higher Education for Peace: A Case Study in Colombia

Doris Santos

Introduction

In 2012, the Colombian government began a series of dialogues with the leaders of the Revolutionary Forces of Colombia—People's Army (Spanish: *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo* [FARC-EP]) with the aim of reaching an agreement that would end the armed conflict of more than 50 years. With the support of the international community, both parties signed this agreement in November 2016, which, in its 297 pages, posed six major challenges in the process

This chapter mainly drew from an unpublished case study written in Spanish in July 2018 as a requirement to complete the Mentor Training Programme developed by the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Global Consortium led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Chair in Community-Based Research & Social Responsibility in Higher Education.

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of building a stable and lasting peace in the country. These challenges are presented in six sections: (1) Towards the new countryside in Colombia: Comprehensive rural reform; (2) Political participation; (3) The end of conflict; (4) Solution to the problem of illicit drugs; (5) Victims of the conflict and (6) Implementation, verification and public endorsement (Oficina del Alto Comisionado & FARC-EP, 2017).

During the five years of dialogues in La Havana, Cuba, the Think Tank on Peace Dialogues and the follow-up of Universidad Nacional de Colombia (UNAL) supported the holding of regional forums on topics of interest in the negotiations. However, UNAL's support did not end there. Nine months before the peace accord was signed, the university management asked academics to start exploring how we could contribute. As the director of the university's recently created Think Tank in Education, I invited academics from different faculties and campuses in May 2016 to participate in the design of a strategy to support the peacebuilding process from the field of education. After several meetings on two campuses of the university, this group of academics came up with a proposal with four courses of action of an education for peace, namely (1) to promote education for sustainable human, social and environmental development; (2) to articulate the Colombian educational system in the territories in a meaningful way; (3) to revise and transform pre-service and in-service teacher education to adequately face the challenges in the new sociopolitical scenario and (4) to work towards a university as a territory of peace (Santos & Reinartz, 2016). Since then, these academics have been leading different teaching, research and community engagement initiatives nationwide.

In August 2016, several members of the Think Tank in Education began to explore a project that would allow us to start opening communicative spaces with high schoolers and other community members in the most remote territories of the country being affected by the armed conflict. The original objective of this institutional project was to provide information about university courses to tenth and eleventh grade students who lived in the remote areas of influence of the university campuses. This offer was critical for young people to decide to apply for a place in one of the courses, instead of opting for joining illegal armed groups. The director of the Research and Community Engagement Office of the main

campus in Bogotá, a physicist who was a member of the Think Tank in Education, took the lead and invited a group of 15 academics to explore this institutional project as an opportunity to begin to make sense of the mission of the university in the new scenario of the country. These academics from the faculties of Sciences, Arts and Human Sciences (including myself) began a series of conversations about the meaning and possibilities of this project to face the new challenge of supporting the peacebuilding process in the country.

An Institutional Project that Became a Learning Opportunity for Academics

The first outcome of the conversations in the academic team was to agree on giving the project a name that would reflect the principle of dialogue we considered as critical to support peacebuilding. The creation of communicative spaces would be aimed at helping to build trust based on a mutual understanding of different ways of thinking, feeling, acting and dreaming in the new sociopolitical scenario of the country. Also, the project would promote the recognition of local knowledge and academic knowledge (scientific and artistic), as well as acknowledgement of the knowledge co-constructed for peacebuilding during the conversations. We named the project (and it is still called) 'Espacios de Re-Conocimiento para la Paz' [Acknowledgement Spaces for Peace, hereafter ASPeace].

The first stage of the ASPeace project, which was carried out from August 2016 to December 2018, was developed at the Tumaco campus, in the south-west of the country. I describe this stage as a 'roller coaster' due to the gamut of emotions all participants (academics and community members) experienced. Within a period of four months, we went from full excitement for a future that many had dreamed about but could not believe was going to happen to hopelessness and bewilderment due to an unexpected result in the plebiscite former President Juan Manuel Santos ran in early October to get citizens' endorsement of the peace accord. The opposition party designed a social network-based strategy to align people's fears, angers and uncertainties about the peace accord with the 'No'

vote. Unfortunately, this strategy succeeded. The right-wing party shamelessly confessed to the mass media that they had achieved their objective the way they planned. The 'No' vote won with a difference of 0,40% over the 'Yes' vote; this resulted in a sociopolitical polarization in Colombian society that still exists. In spite of the unexpected result, the peace accord was signed and endorsed by the Colombian Congress. During those four months the community–university collaboration process gave rise to a meaningful and feasible working methodology, which I describe later in the chapter. The second stage of the ASPeace project allowed the academic team to learn how to adapt the working methodology to the particularities of each later phase of the implementation process of the peace accord in the territories. This second stage was carried out in the Municipality of San José del Guaviare of the Department[1] of Guaviare, located in the south-east of Colombia, an area of influence of the Orinoquia campus of UNAL. This stage took place from March to April 2017, when the phase of the disarmament of the FARC-EP was occurring. This case is focused on the events of this community–university collaboration process in this second stage of the ASPeace. The next section explains the context of the geographical territory where we conducted the research.

San José del Guaviare: A Territory of Convergences and Tensions

San José del Guaviare (SJG) is the capital of the Department of Guaviare and also one of the four municipalities in this department. With an area of 53,460 km^2, this department is politically divided into two townships and four municipalities: SJG, El Retorno, Calamar and Miraflores. According to the Guaviare Planning Department (Spanish: Departamento de Planeación del Guavire, 2015), their 111 060 inhabitants are engaged in agriculture, livestock, fishing and handicraft activities in a tropical rainy territory. As recorded by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (Spanish: Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas [DANE], 2018), about 30% are young people. This

department was created as a result of recent economic and social strategies aimed at articulating an extractive economy and colonization, which resulted from massive displacements in the late 1950s due to agrarian conflicts and, in the late 1990s, with the growing of coca plants (Del Cairo, 2011). Though 'white' is the self-descriptive category used by the majority of the non-indigenous population, representing 92.8% of the total (Guaviare Planning Department, 2015, p. 18), the Municipality of SJG is a convergence point for 15 indigenous groups: The Jiuw, the Nukak and the Eastern Tucano, consisting of 13 multilingual ethnic groups. However, since November 2016, these were not the only communities in this territory.

As agreed in the negotiations in La Havana, Cuba, 26 geographical spaces were created to initiate the process of preparation for the reincorporation of former FARC-EP members into civilian life. They were located in several of the 32 departments of Colombia. According to the socio-economic census done by Universidad Nacional de Colombia and the National Council for Reincorporation (Spanish: Consejo Nacional para la Reincorporación, 2017), about 10 000 ex-combatants had to start a new life in these geographical spaces known as Transitional Rural Normalization Zones (Spanish: Zonas de Normalización Rural de Transición [ZVTN]) until August 2017, and as Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces (Spanish: Espacios Territoriales de Formación y Reincorporación) until August 2019. The social geography suddenly changed in the Department of Guaviare as 2 out of the 26 ZVTN were located there. One of these two ZVTN was of special interest and meaning for the ASPeace project.

The ZVTN 'Jaime Pardo Leal' in the rural area of Colinas was the new home to about 500 demobilized former FARC-EP members, whose leaders accepted to participate in this community–university collaboration. The preliminary talks with them were facilitated by one of the advisors of the Governor of Guaviare at the time, who had been a FARC-EP supporter in the city. The Governor, who was one of the first settlers in the region and one of the wealthiest men in the Department of Guaviare, was willing to support the ASPeace project. The ASPeace project leader also contacted school principals and teachers in SJG, who had worked with academics of the project in the past. Some of the teachers were UNAL

alumni or graduate students, who were also leaders of the community surrounding the ZVTN where the new community of former FARC-EP members was established. The project leader also talked to other local authorities interested in this community–university collaboration such as the mayor of SJG, his advisors for education and agricultural affairs, as well as with other UNAL alumni and graduate students, who worked in radio broadcasting networks and associations working on social, cultural and environmental matters. Setting up these partnerships was an important steppingstone to start co-constructing this community–university collaboration, which is explained in the following section.

Emergence of a Collaborative Working Relationship

Based on a retrospective analysis of the data about this case, I argue that this process illustrates the fundamental principles of action of the most inspiring approach to community-based research (CBR) in Latin America: 'investigación acción participativa' (participatory action research) as critical pedagogy. This approach draws upon the concepts of dialogue as praxis and praxis as political action of Brazilian pedagogue, Paulo Freire (1921–1997), and sociologist Orlando Fals Borda (1925–2008), respectively. Freire (2006) said that it is necessary that human beings show they are willing to engage in dialogue so that they can understand the differences in how people understand and live in the world. He claimed that the essence of dialogue is 'the word' and that there is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Dialogue as praxis, thus, "cannot exist without humility, faith in humanity, hope, mutual trust and critical thinking. This critical thinking admits no dichotomy between people and the world nor between thinking and action" (Freire, 2000, p. 92). This way of understanding dialogue was observed in the preliminary and subsequent talks and experiences with different community members. This dialogue was powerful and useful in gaining a first-hand understanding of the hardships and everyday challenges these communities had to cope with when working with the university. In a way, dialogue was a path to equalize the relationship of power

embodied in this community–university collaboration. The first stage of the project in Tumaco helped us to understand the importance of respecting and learning from the communities' ways, paces, timing and practices to co-construct knowledge with them. This dialogue as praxis, in turn, became the political action we were all committed to. As Fals Borda claimed, "social research and political action can be synthesized and mutually influential so as to increase the level of efficiency of action as well as the understanding of reality" (Fals Borda, 1979, p. 41). These fundamental principles of action have enabled us as academics to co-construct a collaborative working methodology with the communities, through which we learned from each other. Three moments were identified in this methodology based on reports written by some of the participating students, the participant observation notes of the author of this chapter, the audiotaped discussions and videotaped workshop sessions consented to by participants, as well as the meeting minutes prepared by the professionals hired to support the logistics.

Moment 1: The Acknowledgement Visit

In the preliminary talks, it was agreed that the local authorities would provide facilities for the activities (workshops and meetings), as well as transportation in the region. School principals and officers of the National Learning Service (Spanish: Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje) would provide their facilities for different types of activities such as workshops with students and teachers of different educational levels, and the journalists of the local radio stations would disseminate the programme of ASPeace activities to the inhabitants of the region. The National Army would guarantee security in the transportation of equipment, and the Peace Accord Verification officers would support communication to hold meetings with members of the FARC-EP in the ZVTN located in Colinas. UNAL would participate with a multidisciplinary team of academics and undergraduate and graduate students, which would facilitate group discussions with members from different communities. The director of Bogotá Extension Research Office (Spanish: Dirección Investigación Extensión Bogotá) and the Office of the Academic Vice-Chancellor at

UNAL would fund travel expenses of 15 academics and 10 students from Bogotá to SJG. With these roles agreed, the talks took place in the House of Culture in SJG on February 25, 2017. Approximately 100 people, who heard about the project through the local radio stations, participated. The following day, we travelled to the ZVTN in Colinas to have these conversations with the ex-combatants. After a 15-minute presentation, attendees from both sites were invited to have group discussions to brainstorm how the university community could support the strengthening of citizenship education in the territory in the new peacebuilding scenario.[2] High schoolers and UNAL students participated in these discussions.

Back in Bogotá, the ASPeace project team met in a couple of two-hour sessions during March 2017 to debrief the discussions and collectively analyse the concerns and ideas shared by the community participants. These oral debriefings were recorded and summarized, and the resulting analysis was captured by mind mapping. Based on this collective analysis, a proposal for a series of two-hour workshops intended for different groups of community members was sent to the local authorities and community leaders, including the leaders in the ZVTN, for their consideration. With an agreement reached on the proposal, the planning for a week-long second moment started.

Moment 2: The Workshops

After meeting institutional requirements, 15 academics and 10 undergraduate and graduate students from different faculties ran 14 workshops and 37 other activities. About 1500 people, including high schoolers, teachers, families and community leaders, participated from April 24–28, 2017. This second moment ended with a closing gathering in which the ASPeace project team reported back to the communities, while host communities provided a taste of the richness of their sociocultural diversity with songs and dances from different ethnic groups. From my perspective, this experience of mutual learning with these "communities under reconfiguration", including the university community, allowed us to take a step further in the strengthening of citizenship education in this territory in peacebuilding times.

As data collection and analysis are cyclical in CBR processes, an analysis of what happened during the preparation and carrying out of the 14 workshops allowed for the identification of four pedagogical principles that inspired the academic team's actions. These can be formulated as follows.

1. It is necessary to promote recognition (internal appreciation) of the richness of sociocultural diversity of the participants, as well as mutual acknowledgement (external appreciation) of such richness, as one of the greatest strengths of the communities for the peacebuilding process in their territories.
2. The communicative spaces that we can support to create with and between the participants of the different participating communities should promote individual and collective reflection processes on their relationships and actions with the social, cultural and natural world.
3. It is important to use multiple languages and knowledges that allow the participants to identify different ways of recreating a good life for themselves.
4. A necessary condition for moving towards social change in the peacebuilding process in the country is the strengthening of the abilities of different community members (this includes university members).

These principles inspired the preparation and running of the workshops with UNAL undergraduate and graduate students. High schoolers were invited to play active roles in the workshops of their preference. All young people and other community leaders could experience a path to strengthen citizenship education in the territory. Finally, the ASPeace project ran 68 workshops with 6680 participants nationwide (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2020).

Moment 3: The Emerging Projects

To disseminate the process and outcomes of this community–university collaboration, a video was recorded and used as a resource in the preliminary talks with the community leaders and local authorities in the third and fourth stages in the Municipality of La Paz and the San Andrés

islands, respectively. This video was also used to invite other university community members to join the ASPeace project. In addition, several reports about the four stages of the ASPeace project were published in the university newspaper.

After the workshops, several groups of academics and community members began to explore ideas for specific collaboration. One of these talks resulted in an international event on sustainable rural development that was held in SJG in September 2018. This event was convened by the director of the Orinoquia campus of UNAL, with the support of three international academics and two academics who had participated in the ASPeace project. For the first time, about 100 people, including fishermen, local authorities, community leaders, the National Learning Service and UNAL alumni, undergraduate and graduate students, school principals, teachers and a group of former FARC-EP members, interacted in participatory planning based on dialogue as praxis. At the end of the event, participants were invited to share their thoughts and feelings during these dialogues to co-construct knowledge. They expressed that collectively they had been able to experience dialogue aimed at bringing about new actions. Over the subsequent years, these seeds became a series of projects in the territory, some of which brought about other initiatives. The cascade effect had been put in place.

Concluding Reflections

After recognizing 'a blind spot' due to conducting a literature review on CBR only in English, Tandon, Hall, Lepore, Singh, Easby and Trembley (2016, pp. 23–24) identified two other major limitations to how universities conduct CBR. First, they found that higher education institutions that conduct research with communities do not formally document their learning processes or training in knowledge construction processes with communities. This chapter aimed at contributing to this knowledge gap by explaining an experiential way of training *in situ* through existing institutional projects. Second, they found that universities often find it

somewhat irrelevant to teach how to do research with communities, either because such teaching does not need to be intentionally treated as a topic in university education or because working with communities is not associated with research in traditional academic practices. Although this case study revealed that this CBR process was not irrelevant for the participants, it reflected that it is still a discretional collective practice of politically committed groups of academics and community leaders. This case study also demonstrated that the university has to start an intentional transformation of its organizational structure so that it can face this challenge timely and adequately. This implies evaluating what has been learned from this type of participatory process to strengthen partnership communities so that their sustainability can be assured. From an ethical perspective, it is important to consider what Harris (2010) claimed for peace education and peace education research as praxis: "[It] is unlikely that academics could encourage students to adopt peace as a way of life unless they are personally committed to it" (p. 300). If they are also politically committed, I suggest academics should tell more stories about their CBR experiences so that the invisible weaving of relationships that supports dialogue as praxis and praxis as political action in higher education can be understood in its complexity.

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Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. What principles, challenges and ethical issues of CBR does this example illustrate?
2. What, if anything, would you do differently if you were one of the key participants in this example?
3. What lessons have you learnt from this case study about how to engage in partnerships for CBR?

Notes

1. With 48 258 494 inhabitants according to DANE (2018), Colombia is politically divided into 32 provinces called in Spanish 'departamentos' (departments).
2. The academic team had discussed in the preparatory meetings in Bogotá whether or not to ask a direct question about the peacebuilding process that had only begun a couple of months before. This consideration was raised considering the polarization in the Colombian society after the plebiscite results. The team decided to rather ask a question that could facilitate the conversation on a broader topic needed for the peacebuilding process in such affected communities and the need to strengthen citizenship education.

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9

An Appreciative Inquiry Approach to Community-Based Research for Development of a Social Enterprise

Karen Venter and Alfi Moolman

Introduction

We live in a complex world riddled with pressing societal challenges that contribute to an imbalance in the so-called triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit (Wells, 2017). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015), which aim to address these complex challenges, require collective partnership responses across the globe. Higher education institutions, mandated by a public good and socially responsive mission, can help address global challenges by providing scientific solutions. In the quest to address glocal (global to local) challenges, universities can engage with the larger society to co-create action-orientated knowledge for positive social change. Such co-creation can materialize by integrating learning, teaching and community engagement, more specifically, using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) agenda to address sustainable development (Wood, 2020).

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Within community–university research partnerships (CURPs), at the interface of science and society, joint action and knowledge can lead to innovative solutions for change (Tandon & Hall, 2015). This case study reports on a long-term CURP between Bloemshelter, a nonprofit organization (NPO), that serves vulnerable women, children and families by providing them with shelter, food and love, and the University of the Free State (UFS, 2021) in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Bloemshelter began operating in 2002.[1] The organization's vision is to provide personal development opportunities for the holistic transformation of vulnerable, homeless, abused and differently abled members of society. They enable personal livelihoods by providing love, housing, nutrition, counselling, skills training and personal development opportunities. At the time of this research, Bloemshelter housed about 35 women, three married couples and 12 children.

Background and Context

> Our country is facing a stark reality. Our economy has not grown at any meaningful rate for over a decade. Even as jobs are being created, the rate of unemployment is deepening. The recovery of our economy has stalled as persistent energy shortages have disrupted businesses and people's lives. Several state-owned enterprises are in distress, and our public finances are under severe pressure. It is you, the people of South Africa, who carry this burden, confronted by rising living costs, unable to escape poverty, unable to realise your potential. (South Africa. Parliament, 2020)

South Africa is struggling to reduce poverty in the country; between 2011 and 2015, the $1.90 per day poverty headcount rate increased from 16.8% to 18.8% (World Bank in South Africa, 2021). Compared to the proportion of 46.3% for males living below the international poverty line in 2015, the number of females was 53.7% (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Unemployment remains a key challenge, with a figure of 29.1% in the fourth quarter of 2019. The unemployment rate is even higher among young people, where 40.1% of South Africa's 20.4 million young people between the age of 15 and 34 years are unemployed and not engaged in education or training (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Out of

a number of 182 countries, South Africa has the fourth-highest unemployment rate after Namibia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Angola (BusinessTech, 2020).

Poverty and unemployment are in many instances the general causes of homelessness (Tenai & Mbewu, 2020). In 2016, it was estimated that up to 200,000 people were homeless in South Africa (Roets et al., 2016), but due to the complexity of the issue, it is impossible to attain precise figures. Simply because these people do not have fixed abodes, national census figures cannot capture the extent of the problem. There are also different degrees of homelessness and different categories such as temporary, episodic and chronic homelessness (Rule-Groenewald et al., 2015). During the previous democratic dispensation, it was mostly men who were living on the streets, but in recent times it is mostly women, children and the elderly (De Beer, 2015; Roets et al., 2016) who are the most vulnerable to homelessness.

In developing nations, the NPO sector plays a key role in support of social change, assisting to reduce inequality (Maboya & McKay, 2019). Moreover, the NPO sector has a remarkable economic footprint through job creation initiatives that help contribute to the gross domestic product. The NPO sector further fills the gap when governments fail to deal effectively with persistent social issues. Despite fulfilling these critical roles, most NPOs constantly have to struggle to find funding to sustain their services. Such financial unpredictability can be addressed if NPOs are able to develop a variety of sources for income. South Africa's challenges—inequality, unemployment and slow economic growth—make the use of a social entrepreneurship model an attractive option for funding (Visser, 2011).

In the case of an NPO, social entrepreneurship requires the generation of funds from their own activities, helping to sustain services, while also improving their social impact (Dwivedi & Weerawardena, 2018). While these NPOs may receive supplemental funding from grants and donations, they tend to be less dependent on these sources (Austin et al., 2006). Greater social value can be created by working collaboratively with other entities, such as public universities and private businesses. The reality is that the magnitude of social issues faced by the country require far more resources than any single organization can muster

independently. In contrast to commercial entrepreneurship where business is conducted within an organization, the provision of social value should not be confined within the organizational boundaries of NPOs (Austin et al., 2006). Partnering for "social entrepreneurship is an innovative, social value-creating activity that can occur within or across the non-profit, business, or government sectors" (Austin et al., 2006, p. 2). Networking across boundaries with different sectors can become a vehicle for creating social value. Hence, the establishment of relevant partnerships can become a powerful strategy for NPOs to become social enterprises.

Partnership Development for a Community-Based Participatory Research Project

From 2016 to 2019, before the period that this case study reports on, Bloemshelter had already embarked on a CBPR project in partnership with the UFS to develop the social entrepreneurship skills of residents living in the shelter. The aim of the first research project was to enable the participants to re-enter society as self-sustainable citizens. In this process, the organization also developed as a social entrepreneur. Alongside individual projects undertaken by the residents, they established various group projects to generate an income for the shelter. Although this lessened their reliance on donations and sponsorships, Bloemshelter still experienced severe financial strain, which worsened with the passing of the manager and founder. The remaining board members thus decided to reconfigure the organization as a social enterprise in an effort to become self-sustaining. This decision led to the initiation of a CBPR project with the UFS, and relevant partners were carefully recruited with sustainability in mind (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010).

The UFS partners comprised representatives from the Directorate of Community Engagement, as well as the Centre for Development Support and the Department of Business Management, within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. From the NPO sector, partners

included representatives from Bloemshelter, loveLife and Lighuis Community Centre. These NPOs serve the community of Bloemfontein (Mangaung) in the Free State, South Africa, by addressing issues of homelessness, holistic youth development, welfare and educational development. Due to the wide scope of these challenges, a representative from the Department of Social Development was included as public sector partner. Finally, the CURP has included a media partner to raise public awareness regarding the negative impact of these challenges on societal development. In addition to clarification of roles and responsibilities, a research contract was compiled, based on the ethical principles and practice of a CBPR (Wood, 2020, pp. 84–94).

Research and Development of the Social Enterprise

We began with four days of active engagement to synergize training and research, due to the reality of the limited time and availability of the participants. The training was based on the knowledge for change (K4C) pedagogical principles that link community-based and academic knowledge, namely (1) orientation towards research ethics and values, (2) a deep understanding of power and partnerships, (3) incorporation of multiple modes of enquiry, (4) ensuring a balance between classroom and field and (5) developing critical and reflexive researchers (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, 2020).

The training was based on adult education principles, beginning with the participants' own experiences, and moving with them to reach the desired outcomes (Jarvis, 1987). We made use of multiple ways to share knowledge to maximize interaction, participation and engagement, by applying methods such as videos and PowerPoint presentations for the training sessions; a storytelling circle for discussion of social challenges related to homelessness; appreciative conversations and reflective group discussions for collective data generation and analysis; designing a group collage for collective data generation; creating a digital story for

knowledge dissemination; and music, song and drumming for team building and group cohesion. These sensory interconnected sessions energized the participants—they were having fun while doing research! All of these interactive knowledge sharing methods created a safe and conducive space for learning and inquiry to take place.

The training content included an orientation on (1) CBPR and arts-based research methods, for example, the creation of the collage and digital story; (2) social challenges, specifically linking to the research topic of homelessness and related social challenges addressed in SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth); (3) the role of the NPO sector in finding solutions and (4) the concept of social enterprise and related social enterprise business models.

We adopted appreciative inquiry as the research design (Cooperrider et al., 2008), which was originally developed for the business sector and therefore a good fit with the focus on social entrepreneurship. In contrast to traditional problem-based research, appreciative inquiry follows a strength-based, participatory action research methodology (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Stavros & Torres, 2018). Appreciative inquiry captures the positive features of an organization or social system as a foundation for action towards reaching a future destiny. The strength-based methodology allows for the "cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 3), instead of focusing on weaknesses and trying to fix existing life challenges. It uses the theoretical lenses of generativity and social constructionism (Bushe, 2013; Cooperrider et al., 2008). Generativity involves the collective discovery and co-creation of new ideas to positively alter the collective future, whereas social constructionism enables a social system, for example, the CBPR team, to collectively create its own group reality.

The philosophy of appreciative inquiry is based on a set of five core learning principles (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The participants applied these principles to guide learning and inquiry in the case study. First, the *constructionist principle* guided the words and conceptualization required to envision how Bloemshelter can become a social enterprise. Second, the *simultaneity principle* reminded the team that the envisioned change begins the moment when someone asks a question. Third, the *poetic*

principle guided us towards a relevant topic choice for addressing the organization's funding challenge, namely transformation towards a social enterprise. Fourth, the *positive principle* reminded us that positive change can be created by asking a positive question. Fifth, the *anticipatory principle* constantly reminded us about the anticipated vision, which in turn inspired the creative design of actions for change. These principles provided positive energy to inspire creative thinking. The appreciative inquiry methodology followed a 5D process (define, discover, dream, design and delivery/destiny) as explained below. The process was highly participative, reflexive and transformative, and a deep trusting relationship formed at the core of the CBPR team.

Defining the Research Question

The research question was co-constructed by the CBPR team. They first discussed in pairs (small groups), before coming together in the larger group to determine the best question. The following positive question defined the inquiry: *How can Bloemshelter, as nonprofit organization, become a flourishing social enterprise?*

Discovery

The discovery phase involved the search for the positive core of Bloemshelter, which comprised knowledge about the best practices, character strengths and values portrayed by the participants, who engage at the heart of the organization. The participants framed the positive core as follows:

> *We are a multitalented group of people with a lot of expertise. We have a heart for humanity and we are God-centred people. Therefore, we serve with respect. We are honest and can be held accountable. We stand for the truth.*

This positive core served as a foundation for the co-creation of the dream.

Dream

Building on the positive core, the participants co-created the dream to envision how Bloemshelter could become a flourishing social enterprise. The following scenario as set out in the appreciative conversation protocol inspired the dream phase:

> *It is 2022. Bloemshelter has just won an award as an outstanding social enterprise of the year. What is said about Bloemshelter as the award is dedicated? What are residents living in the shelter; the board/staff and the community saying? What did it take to win the award?*

To strengthen the co-creation of the dream, the participants were requested to share ideal, realizable and relevant single-line statements, serving as provocative propositions to describe the shelter as a flourishing social enterprise. The participants proudly co-created a collage to portray the collective dream (Fig. 9.1).

As indicated in Fig. 9.1, four dream themes emerged, namely catering (bottom frame), fashion and make-up (top right), health and wellness (top left) and finally, a holistic learning and development programme, specifically focussing on family well-being (top centre). As the largest frame, the catering theme was prioritized. The participants further envisioned how a powerful marketing strategy could strengthen their choice of catering as a means for providing a nutritious all-in-one product to reach the "hungry, healthy and wealthy". They chose the slogan *Made with God's Love.*

As an arts-based research method, the creation of the collage was fun; it opened up divergent thinking, enabled group dialogue, created a sense of social cohesion and addressed language barriers across different cultures. Through a rich narrative description, the participants captured why they chose specific images, their meaning, as well as the negative and positive feelings which motivated their specific choices. The negative feelings, which aligned with the organizational challenges, were reframed to positive visions of opportunity. This was followed by the design phase.

Fig. 9.1 Collage of the collective dream. (Source: Co-created by the participants in the community–university research partnership [2020])

Design

Guided by a social business model canvas, the participants co-designed an action plan to enact the dream (Stanford Graduate School of Business, n.d.). The canvas included a broad framework comprising of eight

domains, namely the mission and vision, target market, value proposition, implementation, cost structure, revenue streams, monitoring and evaluation, and finally an innovative "30-second pitch". These domains are discussed in detail.

Mission and Vision of Bloemshelter

The constitutional mission and vision of Bloemshelter is to position itself in a manner that will guarantee dynamic, effective and efficient service rendering in order to be a worthy and stable citadel glorifying the Kingdom of God. The vision involves the holistic transformation of vulnerable, homeless, abused and disabled members of society, enabling the creation of personal livelihoods by providing housing, nutrition, counselling, training and personal development opportunities.

Target Market

The target market included three subdomains, namely customer segments, the macroeconomic environment and competitors. Central to the business of Bloemshelter is the social service it offers to customers. Bloemshelter provides a shelter and livelihood for the homeless community, which ultimately alleviates poverty. This social purpose customer segment can assist with profit making in the macroeconomic environment of Bloemfontein, as main city of the central part of South Africa in the Free State province. With regard to the dream theme of catering, this customer segment includes all the partners, friends and clients who can make use of the Bloemshelter catering services, for example, the public sector and private businesses. Therefore, the participants envisioned the provision of a unique nutritious all-in-one meal that would appeal to environmentalists, the health conscious, the poor and vulnerable community, and simultaneously to philanthropists and the wealthy. However, Bloemshelter could expect strong competition from the private sector, but can use their social service purpose of alleviating societal challenges, as an essential marketing tool.

Value Proposition

As outlined in its constitutional mission and vision, Bloemshelter provides essential services to the homeless, jobless, hungry and poverty-stricken community in Bloemfontein, which essentially addresses future sustainable development.

Implementation

Various subdomains support implementation, namely partners, sales and marketing, activities and resources. Relationships have been nurtured with several partners since the establishment of Bloemshelter. These include relevant stakeholders, serving as so-called Friends of Bloemshelter, from local to global such as business partners, representatives of international universities and international faith-based organizations. These partnerships play an essential role in allowing Bloemshelter to effectively carry out their social plans, mostly towards educational, developmental, livelihood and financial support.

For the subdomain of sales and marketing, a comprehensive marketing and network strategy can be developed through service-learning support, offered by marketing students from the Department of Business Management in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, UFS. The participants focused on the dream theme of catering, as a product for social business. Their catering products (cookies and pancakes) are uniquely branded as *Made with God's love*. In turn, the catering activities can connect with provision of team-building exercises for private businesses and the industry. The products should be of high quality and exclusive, yet still affordable and available. If Bloemshelter can partner with upcoming economic corporate or public sector businesses to use their services, broad-based black economic empowerment points can be obtained. With regard to resources, Bloemshelter already own the physical, human and social resources needed to drive the enterprise. These include human resources within Bloemshelter, the Friends of Bloemshelter serving as steady donors and the use of social media to share heart-warming Bloemshelter success stories.

Cost Structure

Major cost drivers of Bloemshelter are bond repayments, infrastructure maintenance, transport of residents and electricity, which may increase to produce the food items.

Revenue Streams

Revenue for Bloemshelter largely stems from donations, investors, in-kind contributions from corporates and individuals, as well as several income-generating projects. In addition, unexplored crowd and global funding opportunities could be used to be more self-sustainable in the future.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is essential for Bloemshelter to monitor and evaluate their social impact on the greater community of Bloemfontein, to give a precise image of their social return on investment.

30-Second Pitch

To summarize the action plan, Bloemshelter compiled the following 30-second pitch to share with promising funders and clients:

> *We have a product that has the potential to feed the hungry and the wealthy. We also offer a holistic learning and development programme with a focus on family well-being. This all-in-one product has a job creation spin-off, and at its heart, holds a promise of hope—come taste and see!*

Destiny

The delivery or destiny phase involves the implementation of the action plan and evaluation of progress after six months. This phase can proceed

infinitely into the future, each time restarting an appreciative inquiry regarding a relevant affirmative topic. The next section outlines the notion of action-orientated knowledge, the mobilization thereof and a reflective conclusion to share our lessons learned.

Knowledge for Action

Throughout the CBPR process, action-orientated knowledge was generated for advocacy about the societal challenges. From (1) framing the research question to (2) the training for the practice of CBPR and related arts-based research methods for collective data generation and analysis and (3) the mobilization of the findings—every element was designed to create action-orientated knowledge.

The Department of Business Management in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, UFS, will draw from the co-constructed knowledge to inform service-learning engagement for furthering the social enterprise development. The departments of Dietetics, Consumer Sciences, and Microbial, Biochemical and Food Biotechnology will be approached to assist in the development of nutritious all-in-one cookies and pancakes, to fit the envisaged product description.

The Department of Social Development is currently busy with consultations to inform the White Paper on Families in South Africa. Stemming from the CBPR project, the CURP has been invited to participate in the consultation process. The Lighuis Community Centre was invited to participate in the CBPR project as a participating observer, which motivated the NPO towards similar engagement to solve their societal challenges through CBPR.

In the spirit of true knowledge democracy, we considered how this knowledge can benefit the greater society for the common good. The report of the case study in this chapter is intended to reach an academic and non-academic audience. The lessons learnt can further be adapted and implemented at other NPOs, and hopefully, ultimately transform the dismal financial state of the NPO sector in South Africa. We strategically included a media partner from the onset of the CBPR project to raise public awareness about the impact of poverty and unemployment

on the complexity of homelessness. Two articles were published in two local newspapers: *Volksblad* (Breed, 2020) and Bloemnuus (2020). These articles also increased the visibility of the UFS, Bloemshelter and other partners involved.

The CBPR team created a digital story to increase an empathetic understanding about the vulnerability of the residents of Bloemshelter and to combat stigma towards the homeless. We showcased the digital story on 26 February 2020 at a symposium themed *Engaged Scholarship Through Digital Storytelling for the Common Good,* hosted in partnership by the Centre for Development Support in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences and the Directorate of Community Engagement at the UFS. The symposium was connected to other projects driven by the community to impact social change, and with universities from around the world through the Common Good First Global Digital Network Platform (Common Good First, n.d.). The findings of the case study thus left a global footprint on the Common Good First website, as well as on the printed publications of the Media24 Network.

Conclusion and Lessons Learned

When establishing a CURP, it should be carefully crafted to include positive matchmaking of diverse partners and powerful objectives for co-creating high-impact knowledge for change. In this sense, the case study offered a successful model for sustainable development. By inviting additional observing NPO partners, we were able to inspire more CBPR projects for future engagement.

The ethical considerations in a CURP need to encompass issues of effective networking, collaboration, honesty, integrity, knowledge democracy, respect, recognition of learning, responsibility and accountability. A reciprocal balance of power relationships is key to the successful design of effective and sustainable actions and knowledge for change. By negotiating an ethical research contract, clear objectives, roles, responsibilities, limitations and professional boundaries were communicated to all partners.

Since funding was so relevant in this case study to support organizational development, issues of ownership of co-created knowledge, for example, patents for products and knowledge dissemination, should be ethically clarified to avoid conflict and disputes. We had to ask two serious questions, namely: (1) How and where will co-created knowledge be disseminated? and (2) How and in what proportions will partners share in income streams? We clarified these aspects upfront. As mentors and facilitators, we realized the essence to involve the UFS Faculty of Law as partner in future CBPR projects to assist in negotiating ethical and fair funding generation.

This case study attempted to address multiple objectives. We achieved this by presenting a four-day, all-in-one synergized training and research residency. However, due to the fast-paced, result-driven world in which we live, we need to admit that ample time for reflective *thoughts* often had to be compromised to allow for *actions*. If we agree with Freire (2000, p. 87) that a word is only true when "reflection and action" are present in dynamic interaction, then we will have to create more space for reflection on action in future projects.

The chapter, by means of a CURP case study, shared the story of an appreciative inquiry approach to CBPR. The research agenda supported Bloemshelter, an organization for the homeless, to move from the status of a financially challenged NPO towards becoming a flourishing, self-sustainable social enterprise. Although the process is ongoing, we can conclude that the appreciative inquiry enabled the NPO and university to strengthen their research relationship, develop theory about how to use CBR to develop a social enterprise and bring about practical change in the lives of the participants and the organizational structure. Our hope is that other CURPs will be inspired to apply this appreciative inquiry model for their own purposes.

Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. What principles, challenges and ethical issues of CBR does this example illustrate?

2. What, if anything, would you do differently if you were one of the key participants in this case study/example?
3. What lessons have you learnt from the case study about how to engage in partnerships for CBR?

Note

1. Read more about Bloemshelter here: https://www.bloemshelter.co.za

Further Reading

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10

'University Mtaani': A Case Study of Service Learning and Civic Engagement for Social Transformation in Nairobi's Informal Settlements

Mercy Nkatha and Jonas Yawovi Dzinekkou

Introduction

This chapter focuses on University Mtaani as an education outreach programme by the Institute of Social Transformation (IST) at the Tangaza University College. It is the IST's attempt at providing transformative education and lifelong learning opportunities in Nairobi's urban informal settlements in Kenya. The chapter is organized as follows: We begin by introducing and discussing the background to the establishment of University Mtaani. We then explore its rootedness in service learning and civic engagement for social transformation. We elucidate community

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dialogues as the main method used by students in their service learning. We illustrate through a case study of a joint student–community project on sanitation how University Mtaani uses community dialogues. We explore some of the challenges and successes encountered during the establishment and roll-out of University Mtaani and conclude by reflecting on the impact of University Mtaani as a sustainable, ethical and inclusive framework for community engagement with vulnerable populations in urban informal settlements.

The discussion is informed by an evaluation that we conducted on the diploma programme in Civic and Development Education at the Tangaza University College. The evaluation sought to assess the contribution of service learning to social transformation in the urban informal settlements of Dandora, Mathare, Huruma, Korogocho, Kariobangi, Mukuru kwa Reuben and Baba Dogo in Nairobi. The evaluation assessed the pedagogy used, the context of the programme, the curriculum, the community agency and self-organization, using a mixed methods design, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. Data was gathered through field notes, document analyses (including minutes of meetings), e-mail correspondence and students' community dialogue reports, telephone interviews, key informant interviews and questionnaires. Research assistants resident in the community were recruited from among former and current students of the programme. The already existing connection between the Tangaza University College and the community, because of the programme, helped us form personal relationships with community members in these informal settlements. This was essential for community buy-in and the overall success of this evaluation. Data was analysed using the Nvivo software package and the discussions in this chapter drew from preliminary findings of the evaluation.

Background to the Programme: University Mtaani

In Kenya, 54.7% of the urban population lives in urban informal settlements (Ren et al., 2020). In Nairobi specifically, about 60% of its 4.4 million inhabitants (2.6 million) live in informal settlements. This population is packed in about 5% of the city's residential areas and just 1% of all the

land in the city (Kamunori & Alemayehu, 2019; National Council for Population and Development, 2020; Ren et al., 2020). Challenges posed by urban informal settlements such as those in Nairobi, emerged from a multiplicity of factors, including migration from rural areas, unemployment and underemployment, as well as failure by government to control land planning and urban housing. Such overpopulation and lack of infrastructure exacerbated constraints to public service delivery. Paradoxically, inhabitants of informal settlements are also the most reliant on public services, due to the high cost of private services. They suffer from a lack of access to basic services, or, where low-quality services do exist, they are forced to pay a high price for them. In addition, informal settlements are often deliberately excluded and denied public service provision by the government, presumably as a deterrent to squatting and illegal land developments (Jones et al., 2014; Talukdar, 2018). The government also may have deliberately tried to make the area politically unstable to force them to leave the informal settlement (Lines & Makau, 2017).

The improvement of the quality of life in these informal settlements calls for radical adult education for civic engagement and action. In his 1976 speech, *mwalimu* (teacher) Julius Nyerere, the former President of Tanzania, observed that real adult education is a highly political activity in which conscientization directly influences how people think about the society they live in and how they could seek to change it to their advantage; it is therefore imperative that people learn by doing (Nyerere, 1976). As Hall et al. (2020) noted, this kind of learning and education allows for 'critical reflections on ways of connecting theory and practice' (p. viii), which in turn leads to taking more effective social action. Similar sentiments were echoed by Gouthro (2012) to illustrate how education for civic engagement and action can be pragmatically linked to a participatory democracy that engenders social justice and social transformation. 'Learning for active citizenship and for governance involves thinking about the individual's relationship with larger social, cultural, political, and economic structures and considering how changes can be initiated, both at the individual and collective levels' (Gouthro, 2012, p. 52). This approach to learning for the purpose of creating active citizenship and social movement for social transformation is what University Mtaani set

out to achieve through service learning as a form of community-based research.

The idea of a diploma in Civic and Development Education in an informal settlement was conceived about a decade ago, when Kenya was at the height of a debate about a new constitutional regime. The then proposed 2010 constitution of Kenya would fundamentally shift views about government, governance and citizens' rights and therefore build higher expectations for public service delivery. The enactment of this constitution was preceded by the 2008 post-election violence that negatively impacted on the lives of Kenyans in urban informal settlements (Jacobs, 2011). In an effort at reconciliation, a network of some 700 teachers from informal settlements in Nairobi began undertaking a civic education campaign for peace. Given that the post-election violence had also heightened the urgency for structural and democratic governance reforms in Kenya, the 700 teachers found themselves being increasingly engaged in distributing copies of the proposed new constitution to prepare informal settlement communities for the 2010 constitutional referendum. This layering of constitutional enlightenment onto peace work by the same organization related to *mwalimu* Nyerere's reflections that adult education 'must build upon what already exists' (Nyerere, 1976, p. 9).

Parallel to the constitutional reform agenda ongoing during this time, the then president launched Kenya's Vision 2030. Its immediate function was to address economic recovery and the country's sociopolitical development that had been severely curtailed by the post-election violence (Kenya Vision 2030 Delivery Secretariat, 2016). Also taking place at around this time were discussions about global sustainable development which culminated in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were agreed upon in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. Taken together, the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and Kenya's Vision 2030 can be regarded as the foundational sources and forces of development and social transformation in Kenya, while the SDGs framework offered Kenyans a global common good to aspire to, in line with the aims of both their Constitution and Vision 2030. The ability to unpack all three, harmonize them and embed them in the social transformation fabric of the Kenyan society,

became key if Kenyans were to realize their full benefits. Civic education for civic engagement and action thus became central to their realization.

It soon became clear that it was impossible for the 700 teachers to effectively conduct sustained, comprehensive, civic education to a population of over two million people. Through the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Kariobangi, an informal settlement in Nairobi, these teachers reached out to the Tangaza University College for help. It is a constituent college of the Catholic University of East Africa that is formally affiliated with the Christian Catholic religion and was well known for active involvement in various projects in the settlements (Mati, 2012). Crucially, the Catholic church in Kenya was a core member of the Ufungamano Initiative, a church-led coalition and a social movement consisting of over 52 religious and civil society groups who led the process of constitutional reforms in Kenya. Delegations from across Nairobi's informal settlements gathered at the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Kariobangi for a public presentation of the proposed draft of the new Constitution (Mati, 2012; Otieno, 2012).

The Institute for Social Transformation (IST) at the Tangaza University College interpreted the teachers' request as an opportunity to raise critical consciousness about the Constitution of Kenya and its impact on public life in the settlements. In doing so, they hoped to bring about a realization of the possibilities to transform life and society in line with the values of social justice, common good, human dignity and collective responsibility. The IST civic education approach aimed to move away from the common practice of educational interventions in informal settlements by external actors, as these so often make little difference due to the fact that the relationship and action is not sustained. These types of interventions, for example short learning programmes and workshops, are delivered by outside 'experts' who have little interest in the community beyond performing the job they are paid to do. To fulfil the need to show that they have attained their targeted numbers, community participation in the proceedings is often incentivized by some form of reimbursement. In other words, there is no attempt to build a trusting, long-term relationship where both parties are committed to the same goal.

However, the IST leadership took a different approach. They wanted an educational programme that was embedded in the community and

that engendered better engagement between the students and their communities (J. Dzinekou; A. Parise; F. Pierli, personal communication, September 17, 2020). Thus, the students would be drawn from the informal settlements and the programme would be wholly administered, taught and researched in the *mtaa*, a neighbourhood in the Nairobi informal settlement lingo. Taking the academy to an informal settlement was a first of its kind approach to education for a university in the country, and indeed in many other countries too. The Diploma in Civic and Development Education became synonymous with University Mtaani—a 'university in the hood' and it is commonly referred to as such.

During University Mtaani's co-construction process with communities in the settlements, some concerns emerged that further reinforced the need to do things differently. Community members expressed a high interest in a school-based, formal, academically recognized programme that would create a pathway for low-income learners from these vulnerable spaces to proceed to completion of degree programmes. Potential students also voiced twofold expectations from the programme. They were interested in becoming community educators, much like the 700 teachers, in order to render community services to facilitate social change in their spaces. They also expected to be able to advance themselves professionally or academically, start a new career as a result of their studies or continue with their studies to attain an academic degree (Institute of Social Ministry in Mission, 2012; IST, 2020). These aspirations resonate with findings by Powell and McGrath (2014) that vocational education, if located in a multidimensional context, plays an important role in addressing social justice challenges by expanding learners' capability to aspire, find their voice and reawaken their ability to dream of a better future.

University Mtaani: The Curriculum

The influence of education on social transformation depends greatly on the pedagogy that is used. Service learning, as a form of community-based research (Strand, 2000), is a practical pedagogical approach to connect learning to lived realities and contributes to the democratization of

knowledge. According to Strand (2000), such an approach encourages students to engage

> with some important epistemological debates surrounding the production of knowledge in the social sciences by modeling alternatives to conventional assumptions about why we do social research, how best to study humans and society, and who should control the research process and the knowledge that is produced. (p. 85)

This was the foundation upon which IST chose to build University Mtaani. According to Speck (2001), service learning is premised on two impulses: philanthropic and civic. Contrary to the philanthropic approach that essentially holds that service learning is about charity, while perhaps honing learners' marketable skills and encouraging them to feel good about themselves, the civic approach to service learning assumes a fragmented society that generates all types of injustices. It also recognizes that higher education is deeply implicated in the perpetuation of injustice and must therefore be radically transformed so that it can create citizens who can promote justice in a democratic society (Speck, 2001). Essentially, it is a Freirean pedagogy that challenges the often criticized colonial, discipline-focused, 'banking' model of education (Freire, 1970), still practised in institutions of higher education in Kenya, and indeed globally. This necessitates a pedagogical shift towards service learning as movement building, where student reflections examine how context, ideology, power relations, institutional arrangements and social structures shape learning, stakeholder participation and, therefore, solutions to community concerns (Swords & Kiely, 2010).

The fact that by virtue of their composition and position, Nairobi's informal settlements are a consequence of their sociopolitical history, made it all the more appealing that University Mtaani should adopt a pedagogical approach that compels both students and community to work together across different informal settlements to address social justice challenges in line with the provisions of the new Constitution. Students' political participation as part of the curriculum is a thought process that Bowen (2014) alluded to. He inferred that while a philanthropic approach to service learning may be desirable and even admirable

for its feel-good factor and ability to yield immediate results, if it lacks participation through political processes it might reinforce or perpetuate social justice concerns such as racism, sexism, classism and a colonialist mentality (Bowen, 2014). It would also be counterproductive to the objectives of social justice education for social transformation. Bowen (2014) stressed that learners' political participation as part of the curriculum is essential to finding solutions to community challenges and cautions that the philanthropic approach to service learning risks reinforcing social justice concerns by continuing to exclude people from decisions about their lives. This type of education is disempowering. In other words, the process of learning is in fact the learning itself. Participative processes of learning demand that people recognize their positionality, agentic power and personal potential. Such a process, in turn, empowers people to demand social transformation, and therefore is in and of itself an essential part of the transformation.

The intersection of a new Constitution, Vision 2030, the SDGs and the community's requests led to the co-creation of a two-year curriculum of three trimesters each that would engender student participation in political processes for social transformation. It was rolled out in 2012. The teaching frames the social justice issues in the different settlements as human rights and encourages students to view them through the same lens. Year 1 is dedicated to civic education with modules based on the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, while Year 2 focuses on development education, in which modules are designed to take into account participatory development frameworks, and the context of marginalized communities such as those in informal settlements, vis-à-vis Vision 2030 and the SDGs. The students are required to conduct three community dialogues during each trimester for academic credits and to develop practical skills and their capacity to educate others. The participatory interaction between groups to come to consensus on issues is known as a community dialogue (Martin et al., 2017).

A community dialogue is a communicative space for communities to engage with their social issues, find solutions for their problems and build consensus towards actions. An essential component of community dialogue is voluntary community participation. Community dialogues leverage the rich knowledge heritage inherent in communities to solve

social problems. At University Mtaani, there is an exchange of knowledge and co-generation of ideas between the community and the students. The community members know their context and existing social realities better than anybody else, as do the students because they come from the same environment. However, the students bring their newly acquired skills and understanding into the community dialogue space. The merging of the knowledge between the community and the students generates new knowledge that enables the community to take action to address their issues. The roles of the actors in the community dialogue are well defined. First, the students as civic educators are facilitators of a process that entails mobilizing their own community. To conduct a community dialogue, the students organize themselves in groups of three and identify thematic issues in their community. They analyse the gaps between the existing situation and consciousness of the people, and the situation and consciousness promoted by the Constitution. They then initiate a series of community dialogues (18 over the 2 years of the programme) on these thematic areas within their community. In sharing with the community what they are learning, the students are accountable to the community, and the community develops skills, attitudes and knowledge alongside the students. University Mtaani considers the outcome of a successful community dialogue to be the generation of new knowledge on social issues and concrete action that the community take to address their social situation. This evidence shows how the community members have been able to reinforce their self-efficacy, develop ownership, reshape social norms and take action for social transformation (King et al., 2020).

Case Study of Community–University Engagement: Improving Sanitation

By way of example, using the community of wellness cycle of praxis methodology (Hey & Roux, 2015; Totikidis & Prilleltensky, 2006), students in the 2014 cohort were able to draw out key public service issues affecting citizens living in Dandora, Mathare, Huruma, Korogocho, Kariobangi, Mukuru kwa Reuben and Baba Dogo—all informal

settlements of the Nairobi City County. The cycle of praxis borrows from the pedagogy of Paolo Freire that seeks to link concrete experiences to abstract theoretical concepts and broadens the perception of power and change. As alluded to in the beginning, University Mtaani is a constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, rooted in Catholic tradition. It therefore borrows from and builds on a cycle of praxis which combines two approaches to Christian learning, what they call the four sources approach (the Bible, tradition, experience and reason) and the praxis cycle of insertion, analysis, reflection and application (Hey & Roux, 2015, p. 207). It is a four-step cyclical process towards community consciousness and action on a specific issue.

The cycle starts with insertion in concrete reality. Here, learners at University Mtaani are encouraged to begin reflecting and acknowledging their lived experiences even as they start gaining new knowledge from the Constitution-based modules they are enrolled in. In so doing, they begin to question their lived experiences and preconceived notions that may have developed due to their geographical, social, economic or even historical experiences. This acknowledgement, which for most of the students, is the first time that they truly reckon with their reality as an underserved and neglected informal settlement community, happens parallel to the new information and understanding of the promise of economic, social and cultural rights accruing from the Constitution of Kenya. The second step is social analysis where the learners, together with the community, engage in a deeper analysis of their social realities using methodologies that they are learning in class, and primarily through dialogue. The third step is faith reflection where the community interrogates their values system in order to give deep meaning to the need for community engagement and commitment to improving the issue. The final stage is the action when the community agrees on the concrete actions to take to address a social problem. This process is illustrated in Fig. 10.1.

Following this process and after conducting a collective social analysis, the learners and the community established that sanitation was a key issue. In particular, the sanitation problems related to a shortage of water and poor garbage and sewerage disposal. From their first-year modules, the students had understood that Chap. 4 of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of Kenya provides for enjoyment of economic and social

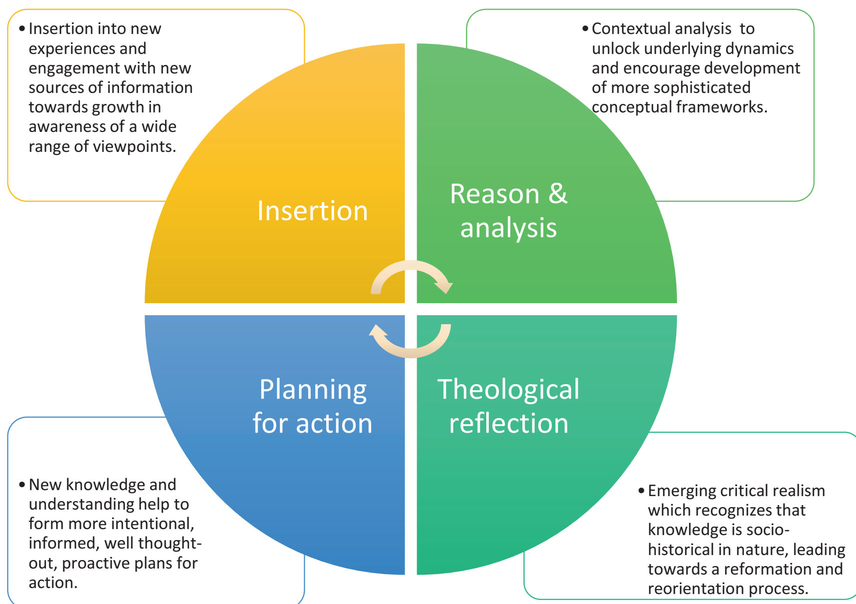

Fig. 10.1 Cycle of praxis (*Source*: Hey & Roux, 2015, p. 207)

rights. Under Article 43(1) (a–f), it outlines what these rights are across six sectors: health, adequate food and of acceptable quality, housing, clean and safe water, social security and education (Republic of Kenya, 2010). Furthermore, the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution of Kenya vests county governments with the duty of providing these services to citizens. County governments have both an executive and a legislative (assembly) arm in much the same way as the executive and parliament at the national government level. It is at the Legislative Assembly at the county government level that we find the Member of County Assembly (MCA). This is an elected representative in charge of an electoral unit known as a ward. The ward is the smallest electoral and administrative unit in Kenya. Among other duties, the role of the MCA as defined in the Constitution includes providing a linkage between the county government and the electorate on public service delivery, a role that is strongly tied to their legislation and oversight mandates. Through legislation backed by a robust public participation process, MCAs decide how the

County Executive shares public resources within the county and by oversight, MCAs ensure that the County Executive implements county policies and projects in an efficient and effective manner and, crucially, one that corresponds to the felt and expressed needs of the community.

The students decided that they would use community dialogues as a platform for conscientization and to mobilize collective action to tackle sanitation concerns using the understanding gained above. They framed the issue as one of violation of the right to health by the Nairobi County government in seven informal settlements. They held training sessions in their settlements about the new government and governance structure prescribed by the Constitution. Through these dialogues, residents began organizing themselves to attend public participation forums during the Nairobi County government budget planning cycle. They also began voluntary weekly clean-ups of their *mtaas*, contributing cleaning materials from their own pockets. Ultimately, the learners working with the community brought on board MCAs from the seven settlements for dialogue on accountability for provision of public sanitation services. They branded their action and the movement they were building, *Usafi Jukumu Letu* (Sanitation—Our Responsibility). Ultimately, in an area where all resources are scarce, this group of students was able to lead the community to contribute land, time and resources to construct a block of community toilets and bathrooms and, critically, to secure a budgetary allocation by the Nairobi County government that made piped water available for the toilets and bathrooms and for general use by the community.

Challenges and Successes of University Mtaani

University Mtaani as a model for promoting service learning in disadvantaged informal settlements is not for the faint-hearted, as we explain below. And yet, this is exactly what effective service learning calls for: Going beyond mere salvationist feel-good university–community engagement to education that transforms both the students and the community. As initial participatory research has indicated, there is a chasm between those that want to pursue higher education in urban informal settlements

and government and university responsiveness to that need (Hall et al., 2020). This chasm is due to lack of access to the university for community members (physical distance and economic ability), as well as a disconnect in curriculum design, leading to programmes that lack meaningful content and learning outcomes that do not enable students to make a real difference in their communities. The transition from a philanthropic approach to service learning to a civic one, through to service learning as a social movement providing relevant social justice solutions to communities, is highly regulated by the desire for immediate results and also because political participation is not what universities as institutions of higher education primarily concern themselves with. So, when it is made a core part of the learning process, as with University Mtaani, the lecturers and the students have to make many adjustments, since both of them, for the most part, have only ever experienced classroom-based transmission forms of teaching, where the teacher is the purveyor of knowledge and the learner a mere recipient (Love, 2019).

In as far community-based research with vulnerable populations is concerned, the lesson from University Mtaani is that it is best if it is led from within. Build on what you have. This has been demonstrated from the outset by the 700 educators, through to the conceptualization of the Diploma in Civic and Development Education and drawing students from the community, and by the success of community dialogues to enable social transformation. The community willingness to contribute clean-up materials from their own homes, time and other in-kind resources can be attributed to the fact that they trusted the students to organize and lead them through the process because they too came from the same settlement context. This voluntary participative action contrasts sharply with the usual three-day workshops that require an incentive to attend. Given that it is the role of the county government to keep the city clean, including the informal settlements within its jurisdiction, it was essential that the community dialogues involved the officials who would be able to continue the actions when the students withdrew. Finally, the fact that enrolments at University Mtaani continues to grow is proof that, as a model of inclusive civic education for civic engagement and action, it is fulfilling the need to address the lack of access to higher education, while contributing to building activist citizenship in Nairobi's urban informal settlements through community-led social transformation.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to shine a spotlight on University Mtaani as an education outreach programme by the Tangaza University College aimed at providing transformative education and lifelong learning opportunities in Nairobi's urban informal settlements. Using service learning and community dialogues as enablers of the 'civic' towards participatory action, University Mtaani has sought to embed participatory processes of learning that enable people to recognize their positionality, agency and personal potential to demand social transformation. Set against the Constitution of Kenya, Kenya Vision 2030 and the SDGs agenda, University Mtaani stands as a sustainable, ethical inclusive framework for community engagement with vulnerable populations in urban informal settlements, as Kenyans reflect on a decade of implementation of the 2010 Constitution.

Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. What principles, challenges and ethical issues of CBR does this example illustrate?
2. What, if anything, would you do differently if you were one of the key participants in this case study/example?
3. What lessons have you learnt from the case study about how to engage in partnerships for CBR?

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11

The Importance of Access, Time and Space: Developing the Collective Change Facilitator Role as Part of a Multipartner Research Programme

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Introduction

The *CREATE-ing Pathways to Prevention Programme* (CREATE) was a series of collaborative capacity building research projects implemented between 2014 and 2020. The CREATE programme was developed and led by a group of researchers, including the first three authors, at Griffith University interested in the prevention of child and youth behavioural health problems in communities experiencing social disadvantage. Such problems include school suspensions, exclusions and dropout, disruptive and antisocial behaviour, substance misuse and involvement in youth crime (Fagan et al., 2019). Recognizing the importance of a strength-based approach to promote the flourishing of children and young people, as well as the centrality of the social and emotional well-being of the child to positive youth development, the improvement of child well-being became CREATE's central objective. We decided for practical, evidential and theoretical reasons that these objectives could best be achieved by strengthening the abilities of families, government departments, schools and community agencies to collaborate in the creation of healthy environments in which children can flourish (Shonkoff & Fisher, 2013). We therefore wanted to understand how best to 'create (co-create) and support the infrastructure and leadership' for collaboration and how to 'help researchers and funders take this [collaboration] seriously as a skill set' (Oliver et al., 2019, p. 39).

The Griffith research team's belief in the fundamentally important roles of families, governments, schools and helping agencies led us from the earliest stages of our planning (in 2012) to form a partnership with a range of national not-for-profit organizations, interest groups, universities, and Commonwealth and state government departments (14 partners in total, including the Griffith research team: see Fig. 11.1). A central feature of the CREATE programme was the development of human resources and electronic systems responsive to the needs of children, families, community agencies and schools.

Electronic systems designed for a variety of users, included measures of cost-effectiveness and (where appropriate) cost-benefit measures; the child's social and emotional well-being and executive function; parental empowerment and efficacy; and the functionality or well-being of the community coalition. The measurement tools in these systems were psychometrically valid and reliable or were grounded in extensive research.

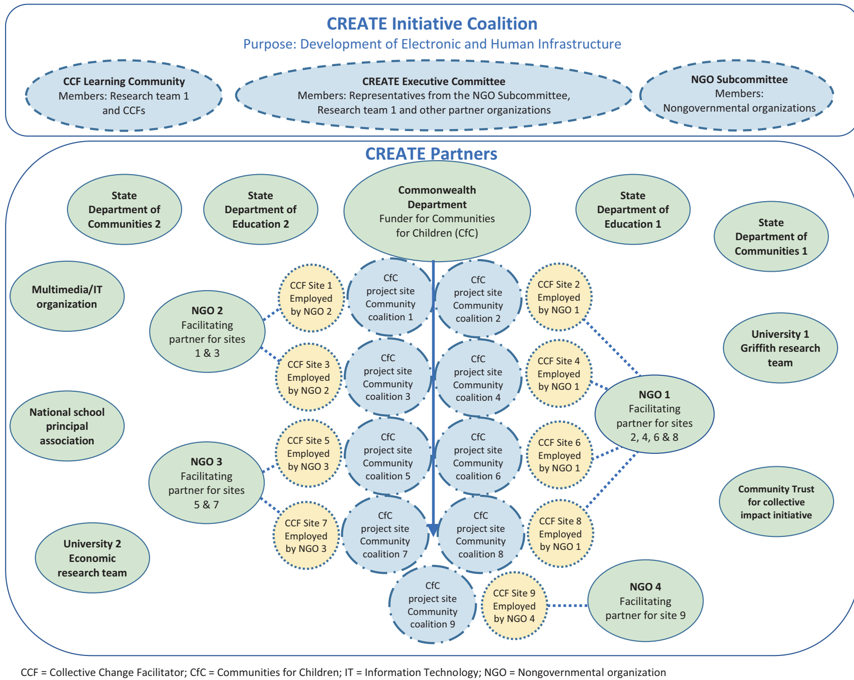

Fig. 11.1 CREATE initiative partnership: relationship to collective change facilitators and project sites

They were integrated with comprehensive multimedia software that generates user-friendly online data reports and supports users to understand and respond to their data in an iterative cycle of continuous quality improvement (Branch et al., 2019; Day et al., 2019; Freiberg et al., 2014; Homel, 2019; Homel et al., 2015, 2019, 2020).

The role of the Collective Change Facilitator (CCF) constitutes the human resources developed by CREATE. CCFs work in what we call the *translation zone*—the space between the research and development activities of academics and the work of practitioners delivering services, and potentially using some of the electronic systems. CCFs therefore speak the language of both practice and research and understand the principles that underpin both. This chapter describes how the CREATE partnership sought to develop the CCF role, the challenges experienced at the community and the CREATE partnership level while doing so, and the forces that shaped those challenges.

Research Partnership for the Development of the Collective Change Facilitator's Role

The Griffith research team conceptualized the CCF as a critical friend who guides community coalitions to develop the goals, roles, procedures and relationships necessary for healthy coalition functioning (Plovnick et al., 1975). The CCF's central purpose is to support collaborative relationships, both internal and external to the community coalition. We define a community coalition as a partnership of agencies, schools, community stakeholders and others that seek not merely to cooperate or to coordinate activities, but to collaborate across sectors in the achievement of shared goals, to which all members direct time, cash and in-kind resources (see Butterfoss, 2007). CCFs also support members as they work towards individual, coalition, organization and community change. Depending on the nature of the coalition, CCFs may provide support to coalition members as they develop new skills, acquire and apply new knowledge or learn new ways of thinking about service delivery (Homel et al., 2019). In other words, CCFs strengthen the way coalitions think about and exercise their approach to collaboration, decision-making, planning, implementation, evaluation and review (Kania et al., 2018).

As a critical friend who provides objective, knowledge-based critiques of current practices, the CCF is a step removed from routine service delivery. *They should always see themselves, and importantly be seen by others, as being close to, but separate from, the community coalition.* They share their observations on the coalition's functioning with leaders and members to highlight issues, celebrate successes and failures, and prevent or move through sticking points. They do this by guiding the coalition through a change cycle based on the principles of CREATE (**C**ollaborative, **R**elationship-driven, acting **E**arly in the pathway, **A**ccountable through clear, measurable goals, **T**raining and workforce development, and **E**vidence-driven) (Branch et al., 2019; Homel et al., 2015). Accordingly, CCFs emphasize the role relationships and data play in enabling and guiding decision-making and planning. Embracing the need for adaption and learning, the CREATE Change cycle first brings members together in an ongoing relationship-building phase called Coming Together.

CCFs then guide members through an action learning cycle (Kolb, 2015) of decision-making (Deciding Together), planning (Planning Together), doing (Doing Together) and reviewing (Reviewing Together) (see Fig. 11.2) (Branch et al., 2019).

From 2014 to 2020, while trialling and developing the role of the CCFs, the CREATE programme operated in nine sites across two Australian states. There was one CCF per site, and varying degrees of engagement at each site. CREATE operated within the framework of a Commonwealth government initiative called Communities for Children (CfC) (Homel et al., 2015). The CfC initiative operates through a brokerage model. In 52 communities throughout Australia (hereafter referred to as CfC sites) non-governmental organizations, called facilitating partners (NGO-FPs), bring local practitioners, service providers, schools and community groups together to work in partnership to identify each community's priorities and to deliver services.[1] Each of these communities was identified as experiencing social and economic disadvantage, based on Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas[2] and Australian Early Development Census[3] scores. Many of the communities in which CfC operates are characterized by a wide range of ethnic cultures and backgrounds,

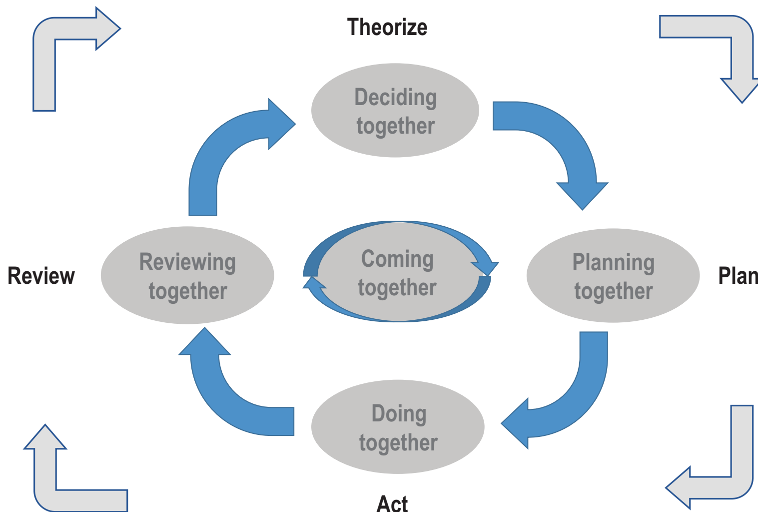

Fig. 11.2 CREATE change cycle within Kolb's action learning cycle

including First Nations peoples, as well as recent arrivals to Australia, such as refugees. The CREATE CfC sites include urban, regional and rural communities, each with their unique strengths, vulnerabilities and priorities.

Using a co-development process (Brandsen & Honingh, 2018), the aim of CREATE was to test and adapt the CCF role as it emerged through application in the nine project sites. A *learning community* was formed to support the development of the CCF role. It included the nine CCFs (including the fourth author) and the Griffith research team (the first three authors). The CCFs and members of the research team developed a process to feed back CCFs' experiences in the field to the CREATE coalition executive through an adapted Most Significant Change process (Dart & Davies, 2003). Thus, the experiences and reflections of the CCFs as they worked alongside their community coalition were designed to help shape how the research team understood their role. The data used to draw conclusions for this chapter came from the adapted Most Significant Change process and from data collected from interviews conducted with CCFs when they completed the role.

In addition to the initial four days of training provided to CCFs, the Griffith research team planned and delivered activities for their ongoing professional development. This included fortnightly one-hour training sessions on topics derived from a training needs analysis. The research team shared recently released research articles and reports with the CCFs via a dedicated website that also enabled online discussions. CCFs were encouraged to share knowledge within the learning community by, for example, facilitating a training session for the other CCFs, or by posting information about a topic on the website discussion board. The research team also encouraged CCFs to enhance their skills and knowledge by conducting a review of facilitation processes. The review was designed to embrace the *facilitator* element of the CCF role and build up a toolbox of techniques and processes that CCFs and community coalitions could use as they progressed through the CREATE Change cycle. CCFs, therefore, performed dual roles within the CREATE programme. First, they were critical friends to community coalitions, helping them to support the

coalition function and guiding them through any change required. Second, they worked with the research team as partners in the co-development of the CCF role.

Challenges of Developing the Collective Change Facilitator's Role in Real Time

Initially CCFs were funded through the CREATE budget and were employed by Griffith University and supervised by the Griffith research team (2014–2016). The CREATE NGO-FP partner organizations assisted the research team to recruit CCFs. However, funding restrictions in subsequent project phases meant that as from 2017, the recruitment, employment and supervision of CCFs shifted to NGO-FP partner organizations. This created a potential conflict of interest for CCFs because they were now employed and managed by people whom they were also meant to serve as an independent critical friend. As critical friends, CCFs need to combine a deep understanding of, and empathy for, the work of community coalitions, with a strict professional distance that enables them to support, guide and sometimes challenge existing practices. As a critical friend, the CCF should be seen by all members to support the community coalition as a whole and not individual organizations or agencies. When CCFs were employed by the NGO-FP organization there was concern that there could be a perception that CCFs were there to primarily serve the NGO-FP organization they were employed by, rather than to serve the community coalition as a broader unit.

However, this funding shift also opened the opportunity to assess whether the CCF role could be delivered from within the coalition, rather than by a third party such as a university, as was done initially. To avoid a potential conflict of interest, the Griffith research team suggested to the NGO-FPs that CCFs be supervised by someone other than the CfC site manager. This advice appeared to have been heeded in some sites where CCFs were, for example, supervised by a member of the organization's research team. However, most CCFs were supervised by the CfC site manager. All CfC site managers were either briefed or have attended training by the research team to ensure that they appreciated the independence of the CCF role.

Importance of Access

Interestingly, the challenges CCFs experienced once they began working alongside their coalitions were also experienced by the Griffith research team when co-developing their role with CCFs. This was not surprising, as both the CCF and research team were providing servant leadership support to their respective coalitions, namely site coalitions and the CCF-research team learning community. Reflections by CCFs indicated that the limitations they felt in what they could do appeared to arise from a lack of access to community coalition members with whom they hoped to build relationships. Similarly, research team members found it difficult to provide ongoing developmental opportunities, such as the facilitation process review and relationship-building activities, due to a lack of access to the CCFs. The CfC site team, led by the manager, played an important role in enabling CCF's access to coalition members, as well as the time necessary for the CCF to engage in ongoing training and to have conversations with the research team in the learning community. Understandably, the time for CCFs to engage in training, reflection and learning with the research team was limited due to the priority placed on work with the community coalition within sites. It appeared that the dual roles of CCFs, as critical friends to community coalitions and as partners with the research team in the co-development of the CCF role, were in conflict. Their time was prioritized for NGO-FP work over the time allocated to research activities.

The enabling role of the CfC site manager was enhanced when time was afforded to the CCF to build relationships, trust and understanding with them as a precursor to working directly with community coalition members. While some CfC site managers attended briefings and training at the beginning of the programme, explicit ongoing discussions involving CfC site managers, CCFs and the Griffith research team members about the dual roles of the CCF within a research initiative did not occur. This indicated the importance of having discussions with CfC site managers, both early in and throughout the process, about granting access and time to support the CCF to act both as critical friend of coalition members and as an active member of the learning community.

Importance of Time

In addition to the challenge of access, some CCFs raised the difficulty of working with community coalition members who were not available to them, either because they were busy or because they did not see a need for change. CCFs understood that collaboration with them could be considered a burden, but when they did have time to build others' understanding of the CCF role, they were able to overcome this challenge. For instance, one CCF reported that discussion about the CCF role assisted both the CCF and CfC site manager to come to a shared understanding. Taking the time to build a shared understanding was especially important when the funding model was changed, when the CCFs, as employees of the NGO-FP, could easily be considered as another employee, rather than as an independent critical friend of the whole coalition. Similarly, it also took time for the CCFs and the Griffith research team to build a shared understanding of the CCF role, as it evolved throughout the project.

Importance of Space

Part of the CCF's role was to support the community coalition to create *safe spaces* for coalition members to come together, reflect and share successes and failures. Likewise, the role of the CREATE learning community was to bring the CCFs and the Griffith research team together to explore the role as it emerged. This is what Baker (2010) would describe as conversation spaces that support learning exchanges. Indeed, 'learning and innovation are more likely to emerge in receptive spaces where people can openly talk about possibilities and differences' (Baker, 2010, p. 108). Safe spaces, however, do not just happen; they are formed intentionally (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015). The creation of such spaces can nevertheless be a challenge (Oliver et al., 2019). Kisfalvi and Oliver (2015) suggested several strategies for developing conversational spaces, one of which is to create a suitable physical environment by, for example, sitting

in a circle. *Time and timing* denote a second important strategy. CCFs required time to establish and strengthen trusting relationships to enable discussions that might challenge mental models and practice; they also needed to be able to judge when to initiate or continue conversations (Kania et al., 2018). Relationship building was necessary, not just between the CCF and the CfC site manager and community coalition members, but also with the research team. Without access and time, the trust necessary to engage in learning conversations that at times may challenge individuals will be lacking. In the absence of trusting relationships, members may not share information about situations where actions did not work as well as hoped, reducing the potential for learning and change to occur. Creating the conditions for learning takes time and good judgement about timing. Time, however, can be a scarce commodity in busy community or organizational settings. Making time,

> is an attitude that is less oriented toward efficiency, linear thinking, problem solving, and closure (i.e., the manifest, single-loop-learning level), and more toward the messy process of free-flowing dialogue, inquiry and surfacing of underlying, latent issues (double- and even triple-loop learning). (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015, p. 727)[4]

For CCFs, time is required for three reasons: (1) to build a safe space to explore successes and failures, (2) to engage as a reflective practitioner and (3) to continue to develop and share knowledge, skills and resources. Being reflective 'means an awareness of what is happening to us in the here and now, an awareness of our bodies and emotions as well as our thoughts, and an effort to understand from where these reactions may be emanating' (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015, p. 730). Self-reflection is considered a fundamental factor for those who seek to support emergent learning (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015). Effective CCFs need to consider their own ability and willingness to reflect and learn, prior to supporting others to be reflective learners.

Just as access, time and space were important for CCFs when working with community coalitions, they were also important for enabling the Griffith research team to co-develop the role with CCFs. Oliver et al.

(2019) suggested the challenge of *time* is common for collaborative research projects and that it can come with significant costs for all partners and stakeholders. When CCFs were funded by the NGO-FPs, it was difficult for the research team to gain access and carve out the time to develop a safe space for CCF-research team reflection, learning and training. One CCF observed that they and the research team shared the same struggles when supporting their respective coalitions, that is, a lack of time to engage in dialogue about collaborative processes and how the CCF role could be understood better. Not having the time to meet as a learning community meant that the development of a safe learning space was hampered, along with what the research team was learning about the role.

This finding underlines the need for organizations, funders and researchers to consider structural changes to what is funded and how it is funded, especially if the funding is based on an expectation of collaboration. Oliver et al. (2019) suggested that collaborative research work 'is often added on to 'real research' with little thought for how to properly resource it' (p. 37) and does not fit with the 'hit-and-run research (get funding, do research, achieve impact, leave)' culture (p. 38). Collaboration 'is expensive, as it requires the presence or time of multiple actors who are often not on site, have other primary responsibilities, or need travel or other reimbursement' (Oliver et al., 2019, p. 35). Funding time for collaboration would require funders and organizations to adjust their expectations of the importance of access, time and space to deliver a programme or research project based on collaboration.

In other words, there needs to be recognition within the funding system that access, time and space are required when learning how to collectively respond to complex social issues. Both community and research coalition members need to be funded to come together for relationship building, learning conversations, strategic decision-making and planning, as well as for self-reflection. Similarly, research funding that mandates collaboration, particularly for large multipartnership projects, needs to include support for research partners to come together regularly to build the relationships and trust that support collaborative learning. Provision of a budget for this purpose would help overcome some of the

professional costs for researchers when engaging in complex collaborative initiatives, such as devoting time to teaching, writing proposals for grants and publishing articles (Oliver et al., 2019).

Conclusion

In our experience, time invested in relationships and shared learning really reinforced the importance of the 'R' in CREATE: Relationship-driven (Branch et al., 2019; Homel et al., 2015). The experience of the CCFs working alongside community coalitions, and the Griffith research team's co-development of the role, underlined the significance of access, time and space to develop relationships. This includes

> examining the costs and benefits to all involved, recognizing the significant costs and risks to investing time and resources into good facilitation and management of expectations, establishing ground rules and processes, and deciding on evidence-informed strategies to achieve established and shared aims and outcomes. (Oliver et al., 2019, p. 38)

Identifying and supporting gatekeepers or those who enable access was critical, as well as building relationships with the people who had the power to make adequate time available for the multitude of tasks required and to create the safe settings in which exploration and learning could lead to more reflective and data-informed practices.

Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. What principles, challenges and ethical issues of CBR does this chapter illustrate?
2. What, if anything, would you do differently if you were one of the key participants in this example?
3. What lessons have you learnt from this example about how to engage in partnerships for CBR?

Notes

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4. For more information about double-loop learning see: Argyris, C. (1977). Double-loop learning in organizations. *Harvard Business Review*, September, 115–125.

Further Reading

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Part III

A Framework for Conducting Ethical, Inclusive and Sustainable Community-Based Research

The following three chapters offer guidelines to inform university policy and practice for community-based research. Chapter 12 explores the challenges of working with large non-profit organizations to effect change in vulnerable communities and suggests pathways to long-term community-led action learning initiatives. Chapter 13 explains how CBR partnerships between university and community stakeholders could be used to deliver community education for personal and technical transformation in socio-economically challenged communities. Chapter 14 concludes the book by drawing from the research presented in the book to construct a framework to guide collaborative, democratic knowledge generation.

12

Towards Holistic and Community-Led Development: The Gull System for Self-directed Lifelong Action Learning

Richard Teare

Introduction

Millions of people live without reliable sources of water, food and energy—often in communities that are blighted by disease and tribal, ethnic or religious conflict. To make matters worse, they may have little or no support from local, regional and national service providers, especially where corruption is rife. The situation is exacerbated by the coronavirus disease 2019, and in the aftermath of the pandemic, there will be insufficient international aid to respond to unimaginable need. While the developed world continues to advance, it is still the case that the place where a person is born affects their future and for those with little or no money, nor the opportunity to study and earn qualifications, most people can only dream about improving their material conditions. Although governments, international and national agencies devote considerable

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resources, energy and time to working with the world's poorest communities, lasting improvements are difficult to secure from the outside. Given the spiralling cost of poverty alleviation, this chapter advocates a shift towards community-led development that gradually cascades through the community and enables local people to make the fullest use of the human and natural resources available to them. The chapter draws on a decade of work by the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) who provides a structure, system and process to facilitate community-led change and ongoing development linked to professional recognition and certification. Most of its activity has been in support of vulnerable communities where GULL's motto, *Enabling YOU to make a difference in OUR world*, can be applied. Details can be found in two books about the work done by GULL with communities: *Designing inclusive pathways with young adults: Learning and development for a better world* by Kearney et al. (2015) and *Lifelong action learning for community development: Learning and development for a better world* by Zuber-Skerritt and Teare (2013).

Drawing on an example of a successful community-led project in Burundi, the chapter addresses the question of why the current system of international aid fails to embed sustainable change in communities by asking: *How and why should international aid be more closely aligned with community-led development*? The chapter offers suggestions about how a systematic approach to lifelong learning and development could better enable communities to improve their quality of life, while formally recognizing and certifying their ability to do so. The chapter commences with an explanation of the purpose, structure and processes employed by GULL.

Initiating Community-led Development

At its inception, it was decided to avoid setting up or replicating costly infrastructure; instead, GULL works through a network of affiliated organizations with ongoing relationships with communities. GULL aims to foster, recognize and certify self-directed change characterized by greater self-reliance, financial independence and the ability and

willingness of participants to share their learning and benefits with others. GULL does not compete with existing education provision, but facilitates a broader-based, holistic form of lifelong action learning with recognized certification that is accessible to all. GULL's work is continuously recognized by the state and government of Papua New Guinea, and its mandate is based on a Statement of Recognition signed on 10 April 2007 by the Head of State and the Prime Minister. GULL has no buildings or employees and operates internationally via a network of honorary representatives. GULL has historically sought to reach low-income and subsistence communities by partnering with non-government organizations (referred to in this explanatory section as an 'agency') and since 2008, thousands of community participants have attained recognition for sustained self-help.

GULL's generic approach is as follows: At the beginning, GULL is introduced to a lead group of 10–12 senior agency staff to help them improve the outcomes of their own work (Stage 1). When the group is familiar with GULL's approach, they in turn introduce action learning to their field staff (Stage 2) and to community participants (referred to in this section as 'volunteers'). GULL facilitates self-discovery by drawing on prior experience, learning from doing and insights from others. The process builds self-confidence and professionalism and equips the learner to help others. The benefits for wider stakeholders reflect the fact that outcomes can be implemented, quantified and aggregated; the process can be systemized, monitored and evaluated; and the approach yields a return on investment for both the sponsor and the learner.

Stage 1: Introducing GULL to Agency Staff

The objective of the first stage is to assist the agency's led group to think about how they will integrate the GULL action learning system with their own community development work and cascade their understanding of action learning to a second group of agency field staff who can facilitate the process for volunteers. The question can be asked: *Why are agencies willing to participate in this way?* The answer lies in what GULL provides:

- A credible, recognized and low-cost personal and professional development approach for staff.
- A generic outcomes-focused system in support of ongoing projects and programmes.
- A method for transitioning from training to action learning.
- A way of incentivizing communities to embrace self-directed change via recognition and certification.
- A way of encouraging sustained, community-led change as first-wave volunteers share GULL with others.

The GULL process is based on two parallel strands of self-directed action and reflection. To begin, participants develop a plan for their own learning as a basis for attaining personal and role-related learning outcomes. To attain certification, participants must demonstrate their personal contribution by gathering verifiable evidence that is appropriate to their work and/or community role. The process centres on self-reflection through journaling with the support of a community-based learning coach (enlisted by the participant on a voluntary basis), personal and peer support groups, and a facilitator. Initially the facilitator is likely to be an agency field staff member but later this role is assumed by continuing GULL students, enabling them to share their new learning with others as part of a 'few to many' inclusion strategy. The long-term objective is to integrate GULL as a vehicle for change and to establish a mechanism for community-led tracking so that participants can identify and work towards addressing their own development needs and sustain the community's progress towards self-reliance and financial independence.

Apart from providing a system, structure and process for lifelong action learning, GULL's other role is to recognize and certify the contribution of volunteers and agency staff. As the number of volunteers is often large, the GULL system must be implemented at low cost. Cascading beyond agency staff is important because agency volunteers provide front-line support to the wider community and few will have had access to formal education beyond primary school level and so there is often genuine excitement about the opportunity to participate.

Stage 2: Cascading GULL to Community Volunteers

In the second stage, agency staff begin to introduce GULL to the volunteers they work with by linking the expected outcomes of agency-facilitated projects with GULL recognition and professional certification. As noted earlier, agency staff initially act as GULL facilitators for small groups of volunteers working on a project that agency staff feel has the potential and scope for wider replication. The aim is to demonstrate the value of this approach as quickly as possible—typically with a small group of the most enthusiastic volunteers. By starting in this way, action leadership (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011) can be nurtured as the first group of volunteers assume responsibility for sharing GULL with others as an integral part of their learning journey. As momentum builds and numbers increase, the communities that deploy the GULL action learning system will be able to demonstrate that the positive impact of their work is significantly greater than the resources deployed by the partner agency. Within 12 months of implementing Stage 2, stakeholders can expect to receive a report on the social return on investment that has been secured as the impact of financial support is multiplied by self-directed development.

In the following section, the approach outlined above is illustrated with reference to a case study from Burundi of a community-led project facilitated by World Vision Burundi with GULL during the period 2013–2016. I selected this particular project from many others because it fully illustrates the scope and potential for community-led development linked to recognition and certification. It profiles the voices and actions of GULL participants who, mindful of their own change in thinking, realized that they could lead their own development, drawing on outside technical assistance when needed. In the locations where community-led change is established, dramatic improvements in the lives of communities occur and they are willing and enable to sustain and expand their own initiatives at very low cost. *Could this be the model that is needed on a much wider scale?* GULL's experience and observations would suggest that this is a more effective and long-term way of alleviating poverty than investing in short-term, agency-driven training programmes, particularly in the current economy where agency funding has been reduced.

Implementing a Community-led Solution to Child Malnutrition

The Latest Human Development Index Ranking (United Nations Development Programme, 2020) ranks Burundi in 185th place—close to the bottom of its coverage of 189 countries. Among other challenges, communities suffer from high child mortality linked to malaria and malnutrition. Burundi's provincial administrative regions each have divisions known as municipalities or communes, and the case study is set in the Province of Muyinga and the Commune of Gasorwe in the north-east of the country.

After a GULL briefing in December 2013, Elysee Nibitanga, a World Vision Burundi (WVB) coordinator in Gasorwe and a member of the Stage 1 senior agency staff group, introduced GULL to a small group of community members who were using a pestle and mortar to crack open soya beans prior to making small quantities of soya milk. Several months later, soya milk production began to increase after the group acquired two mechanical grinders which enabled them to process more beans. During a review visit on 7 November 2014, community members told me and a senior team from WVB that as an outcome of their GULL project, they had *eradicated child malnutrition in their commune*. They said that they had secured this outcome by producing and organizing the distribution of soya milk to sick children over a wide geographical area, spanning 29 hills and valleys. We spent a full day reviewing progress with the community who told us about the benefits they had derived from the first 10 months of their GULL journey, as summarized in Table 12.1 below. The first three items (1–3) were supported by factual data in the form of soya milk production records, WVB budgeted expenditure details and community bank account statements.

I took notes of what we saw and heard that day (GULL, 2014a) and my report, *WVB with GULL capacity-building review* (GULL, 2014b) is based on a transcript of the audio and video (GULL, 2014c) records of the review meetings. The main purpose of our meeting with Elysee and community members, which was translated by Elysee and her colleagues,

Table 12.1 Deploying GULL: benefits derived and evidence of impact

Principal benefits derived	Evidence of impact
1 We advanced from ad hoc to systemized production of soya milk	Daily production of soya milk scaled up from 35 ℓ to between 150 ℓ and 497 ℓ per day
2 We constructed nine new nutrition centres for malnourished children	Community members constructed the new centres, saving US$4,000 in construction fees
3 Our community savings and assets have multiplied	Prior to GULL, we had community savings of 150,000 Burundian franc (BIF) and now we have 2 million BIF
4 We are more confident, organized and determined to press on with self-help	There is a mindset change: GULL participants focused on the causes of malnutrition as well as its prevention
5 Our success encourages others to participate in self-help	The first GULL group recruited and guided new participants, opted to join because of the positive changes that were occurring
6 We think and act differently	We think differently about how we can reduce costs and improve the outcomes of self-help initiatives
7 GULL helps to facilitate sustainability	The community formed an association to recruit and equip others to engage in self-directed development
8 We can build on technical assistance	The GULL process is assisting us to reduce child mortality levels
9 GULL provides an enabling framework	Everything that we have accomplished has arisen because of the inclusion of GULL in our community-led projects

was to identify how GULL was supporting community-led development. In essence, GULL's involvement prompted action that was explained (anecdotal evidence), balanced by outcomes that had been verified (factual evidence). This kind of periodic review is important because in my view, communities *should* be actively involved in tracking the evidence of their own impact. If this task is left to outside specialists, how will they know if they improved and developed the capacity to bring about change themselves? This is an important role for GULL: It can function as an enabler of self-directed change and although participants begin with GULL because they want to be recognized (through certification) for the work that they are doing, it is the collective impact of GULL participants in the community that makes an enduring difference. In the following

section, summary extracts from the review day discussion with Elysee Nibitanga elaborate on the principal benefits derived from GULL and the evidence of impact as outlined in Table 12.1.

Deploying GULL: Benefits Derived and Evidence of Impact

Elysee explained the following in her interview:

> *In 2013, my manager refused to approve the funding needed to extend the projects we had been running in Gasorwe. We had trained community members on the principles of good hygiene but they didn't take our advice. Fortunately, a small group enrolled in GULL and began to make progress by applying our training. If I compare, the impact now is greater than when WVB was spending much more money. We have encouraged micro enterprise, safe hygiene and sanitation practices and now, all community members who are participating in GULL project work are trying to improve.*

Elysee presented the following as evidence of learning and development:

Advancing from Ad Hoc to Systematized Production of Soya Milk

The GULL soya milk project aimed to reduce the high incidence of malnutrition among children located far and wide in the commune. In 2014, they were working with 188 community volunteers to achieve this goal. Specifically, working in the community with the aim of changing the behaviour of community members by promoting improvements in child nutrition based on locally produced soya milk. They linked this to family planning in relation to the wider problem of child malnutrition and promoting village loan and saving associations to help families increase their income.

When the volunteers started the soya milk production project, they were able to produce 35 ℓ per day, but production increased when it assumed the status of a GULL project. Daily production is now running

at between 150 ℓ and 497 ℓ of soya milk. In 2014, there were 995 children who received soya milk as part of a well-organized effort to resolve the widespread problem of child malnutrition in this commune. Given these outcomes, the community was cultivating soya beans on a much larger scale and they were allocating more land for soya bean cultivation because the project yielded such positive results. Furthermore, 254 caregivers (community supporters of children) were also engaged in soya bean production. In terms of behavioural change, they have mobilized and sensitized more and more community members to healthy living and the outcome was that many households had better latrines, garbage pits and hand-washing facilities. They were also promoting kitchen gardens for food production and there were 871 community kitchen gardens at that stage—a big increase since they embraced GULL. In fact, the GULL team were continuing to sensitize more community members to better integrate kitchen garden food production with improved nutrition. Additionally, the GULL participants were able to manage two fish ponds. The participants were also learning how to reflect, ask questions and seek ways to improve their work. Prior to GULL, WVB was providing soya milk for children and at the same time, encouraging the community to produce its own soya milk. GULL was the catalyst, providing them with an enabling framework to think about their own strategy for resolving the long-term problem of child malnutrition. To begin, they went to the community to sensitize mothers and other care providers of malnourished children about the importance of soya milk. After that, many caregivers offered their support and since then, more than 1000 families buy their soya milk from the project team and this was why daily production had dramatically increased.

Constructing Nine New Nutrition Centres for Malnourished Children

At the beginning of the 2014 financial year, WVB planned to support 25 nutrition centres—these are small facilities for the rehabilitation of malnourished children. When a child is admitted to a centre, he or she stays for 12 days and after that, the child is screened again to check for

improvement and weight gain. At the time, WVB had 20 nutrition centres in a commune area that spans 29 hills and valleys. This has since increased to 29 centres—one for each hill. The additional nine centres have been constructed entirely by community volunteers—this was their own, community-led initiative. WVB budgeted labour cost for these additional centres was US$4,000 and having initiated the project, the community built them so that WVB did not have to spend this money—all they had to do was provide the material needed to construct the additional stations.

Community Savings and Assets Have Multiplied

Prior to GULL, the community's objective was to save 1000 Burundian francs (BIF) per person per month and at that time, there was almost 150,000 BIF in collective community savings. Since then, they have amassed close to two million BIF in their bank account. They have deployed their funds in many ways and increased their bank balance to 800,000 BIF. Their capital assets have increased too and have been valued at more than four million BIF. Among other initiatives, they have loaned money to support microenterprises and the scaling-up of soya milk production by acquiring more land to increase their soya bean production capacity. They also provided loans to caregivers who assist with the soya milk production and distribution network so that all children in the commune could benefit from a more balanced diet.

More Confident, Organized and Determined to Press on with Self-help

Monthly meetings were organized with the GULL participants to challenge them to continue asking questions about the issues that they were addressing. Elysee said,

> *This is the GULL action learning method that I discovered for myself at the beginning of my own GULL journey. We continue with this until we find possible solutions to try out. We are determined to keep going because this approach is working. The thought of our certification day event has helped them to stay*

focused and advance and when I reflect back on their respective starting points and compare with what they are able to do now, there is an amazing change! Not only that, we monitor our progress and this helps us to recognize the changes that are occurring.

As mentioned, the Gasorwe commune has 29 hills and the project team have implemented soya milk distribution across a large geographical area using bicycles. It can be said that they have resolved to take full ownership of the problem of child malnutrition and to build a better future for the community as a whole. It was their own initiative, and their GULL project focuses on both the causes of malnutrition as well as its prevention by setting up a system to ensure the continued provision of soya milk to all children.

Success Encouraged Others to Participate in Self-help

The soya milk project provided every sick child with half a litre of soya milk each day for 30 days, which is the normal rehabilitation period. To fund this and the expansion of its production facility, the team sold surplus soya milk at local markets. After 30 days—provided the child is well again—families received an invoice for continuity of supply. If a family did not have the money to pay for the soya milk, the community's benevolent fund was used to cover the cost as an interim step and a community team trained and supported the family until they were able to generate enough income to pay for the soya milk from their own resources.

The first GULL group explained the benefits of participating by sharing their success stories and many of the neighbours of participants were curious and came to see the practical improvements they had made in their own homes and in their project work. The wider community were especially keen to see the newly constructed nutrition centres and the improvements that GULL participants had made at home. For example all GULL participants decided that they should focus their home-based improvements on hygienic practices by using and maintaining a supply of soap. These advances and improvements have been noticed by friends and neighbours and inspired them to follow the example set by the GULL participants.

Thinking and Acting Differently

In the words of Elysee,

> *There are big differences in all the participants and I am sensitive to this because I am a GULL student too. I know that my own work has improved and that GULL is helping me in all aspects of my life. Now, when I look at my job description, I know where I have improved and what I need to work on next. As an example of this, when I worked on a voluntary counselling and testing campaign for HIV/AIDS, I began to think about how we might improve the outcomes without increasing the costs. Our budget for the campaign was US$1,000 and our target was to reach 150 couples. By using an action learning approach, we managed to reach 558 couples at a lower cost than our budget allocation. Prior to GULL, I would not have thought this to be possible! This is just one example of many improvements that I and others have been able to make by asking questions and continuing to challenge ourselves to improve.*

GULL Helps to Facilitate Sustainability

The community live with many ongoing challenges and when they sit together, they discuss the action needed to sustain their work. As one responded, they decided to set up a community association to expand the ongoing projects and because many people wanted to join, they prioritized the most enthusiastic applicants. It was a well-organized effort because every group has a specific role to play in the overall objective of reducing child mortality levels. They began by sharing their experience and explaining the process they were using and if applicants were enthusiastic and demonstrated understanding, they were invited to participate. Interest was growing all the time because the whole community knew that those who were leading the work have advanced a long way since they started with GULL. This has prompted a competitive spirit in the community—those who are not yet involved or are just beginning wanted to catch up. The certification event at the Football Stadium involved new and continuing GULL students and would attract hundreds of people who were curious about GULL and the improvements that were happening throughout the commune. A large crowd would be able to see their

fellow community members receiving certificates and so it would be an exciting time for them.

Building on Technical Assistance

When they reviewed their records, it was clear that many children have died from two causes—malaria and malnutrition. Therefore, as they have discussed, the GULL-inspired soya milk project could play a key role in reducing the incidence of child malnutrition. The community volunteers could also use the GULL approach to reduce the incidence of malaria. Taken together, these are the major problems they had to address. They also struggled with conflict among large families and deaths often occur because of parental neglect. If, for example, the male has more than one wife, it becomes more difficult to care for an extended family with children dispersed beyond one physical location. In this context, the GULL approach could help them with social problems such as family planning so that children are not neglected in their home environment.

GULL Provides an Enabling Framework

Elysee expressed herself as follows,

> *Everything I have spoken about has arisen from the inclusion of GULL in our work. When members of the community started to produce soya milk, it was a very small-scale initiative and they were not able to see a bigger picture or even imagine that they had the ability to develop and sustain such a large-scale project. GULL helped me to realize that most community members don't have an opportunity to see what others are doing—I realized this when we held our first GULL mid-point event in the capital, Bujumbura—for some who came to this event it was the first time they had travelled outside their area. One of the attractive features of GULL and action learning is that it fosters opportunities to meet, to share and to encourage one another. A GULL certification event is the perfect way to enable people from one Province to come and see what others are doing in a different part of the country. I am working with my learning coach (a medical doctor) on the compilation of a detailed case study about the*

dramatic reduction in child malnutrition that has taken place. We are writing-up the WVB with GULL soya milk project outcomes and he has already verified the impact of the community's work in the area of nutrition. He will also conduct an ongoing study of the children who have benefited from the project by checking on their progress over a period of time.

What Happened Next?

Although the benefits arising from deploying GULL in Gasorwe in a very cost-effective way are clear and the evidence of the impact in multiple reports is beyond doubt, the collaboration ended when the national director of WVB moved to a different country and role. Efforts to sustain the collaboration were also impeded by the reorganization and funding challenges experienced by WVB, as well as significant and continuing civil unrest that began in mid-2015. Although the community were advancing with GULL, they had not yet reached a 'tipping point' that would enable them to continue without the support of WVB with GULL. This was dispiriting given the remarkable early progress they had made. *So how could they have done things differently?* The next section offers some ideas.

Towards Holistic and Community-led Development

The GULL approach to self-directed lifelong action learning is an inclusive, collaborative and creative process that enables participants to develop ways to improve their own lives. When the approach took root as illustrated by the case study from Burundi, entire communities advanced from survival mode to an outlook that was characterized by a shared belief that the community can thrive (without outside help), however difficult the circumstances. That said, attaining this outcome can take several years and it requires holistic (whole person) change and sequential

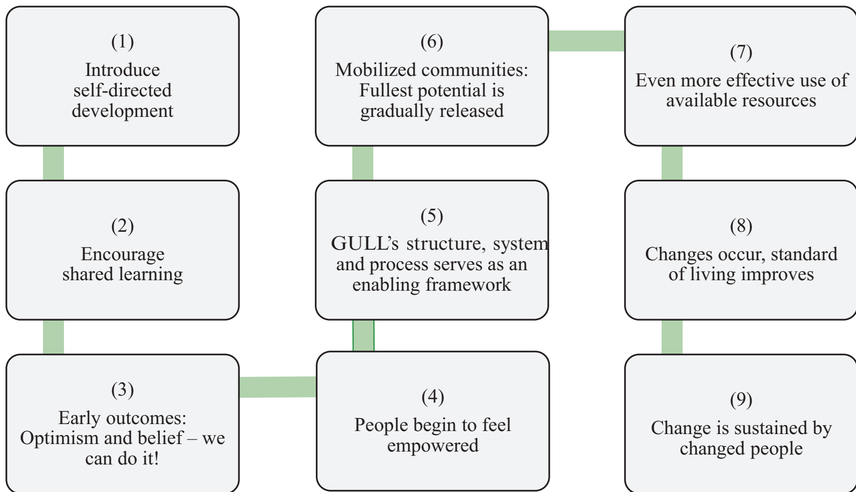

Fig. 12.1 Towards holistic and community-led development. (Source: Author)

step-by-step personal and community-led development as depicted in Fig. 12.1.

Since its inception in 2007, GULL has sought to support community-led development by partnering with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Some 50 initiatives around the world have enabled communities to draw on GULL's enabling framework and to attain recognition and professional certification—a powerful self-help incentive for the many communities with limited or no access to conventional forms of development. As a distribution model it is challenging, although as partnerships with large NGOs it is unstable mainly due to funding challenges. If funding is not renewed (or alternative funding secured) they must reorganize to reduce costs. This has often meant that NGO staff familiar with GULL move on and progress towards community-led development stalls. For example in 2019, I spent a week with a team working for an international NGO in South East Asia. They told me that they were employed on 12-month contracts that would only be renewed if the NGO was able to secure new external funding. Due to this often repeated cycle of events, GULL is now seeking to work more directly with communities, beginning in South Africa where GULL has

partnered with the University of the Free State, which, along with other universities, is striving to find ways to be more socially responsible, and second, by implementing a digital initiative that is facilitated by a team based in Kigali, Rwanda. We think that this is timely, given the likely impact of the global coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic:

> Every region is subject to experience substantial growth downgrades … These downturns are expected to reverse years of progress toward development goals and tip tens of millions of people back into extreme poverty.
>
> Emerging market and developing economies will be buffeted by economic headwinds from multiple quarters: pressure on weak health care systems, loss of trade and tourism, dwindling remittances, subdued capital flows, and tight financial conditions amid mounting debt. (World Bank, 2020, p. 2)

Most networks and self-help groups provide training, but self-directed development is rarely integrated with this training. If participants do not know what they are capable of, the benefits of training tend to be more limited. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that training will be applied; trainers cannot insist on this unless correct understanding and application is integrated with a certification process. This point was made clear by Elysee Nibitanga in the case example from Gasorwe commune, Burundi. Elysee saw a transformation in the hearts and minds of participants when they began to take ownership of the never-ending problem of malnutrition. Participants were motivated by the prospect of personal and collective recognition of their efforts and by a desire to find and implement their own lasting solutions. A training-led approach had clearly failed to secure a breakthrough because it had not empowered participants to draw on their own creativity, indigenous knowledge and skills in the way that self-directed and community-led action learning did. Furthermore, training is typically controlled by outside experts, whereas the energy underpinning community-led action learning grew from a small spark of hope nurtured by Elysee into a proverbial wall of flame that overcame every obstacle in its path.

Historically the GULL pathways have been individually customized in support of ongoing self-help initiatives, but this is costly in terms of travelling to meetings and it adds complexity. Instead, GULL's holistic and

community-led (HCD) design is based on the core approach to self-directed personal development, balanced by and blended with an ongoing technical strand leading to low-cost digital certification on completion. Personal development begins as participants learn to think differently about their situation via easy-to-use reflection tools and begin to discover and develop their individual gifts and talents. The parallel technical strand is provided by a GULL-affiliated local agency and for the HCD initiative, the agency will either be a single church, a group or denomination of churches, a university or an NGO. As a side note, GULL has worked extensively with African church denominations because they are organized, untainted by corruption, deeply concerned about the plight of the poor and willing to work with different faith groups in the context of poverty alleviation. The HCD pathway design stipulates that the agency must facilitate both personal and technical development and provide guidance and support for self-help project planning of at least four months (Step 1) and for the implementation and evaluation of a project of at least six months (Step 2). Those who complete Steps 1 and 2 will be eligible to advance to Step 3 (at least ten months) by equipping others to sustain the self-help initiative (see Fig. 12.2).

The technical strand of the HCD pathway should include a self-help project for a small group of participants, with a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 15 participants per project. On successful completion of Step 1, participants are eligible to receive GULL's professional certificate and then implement and evaluate their project prior to receiving GULL's professional diploma at the end of Step 2. The HCD pathway concludes at diploma level as participants will have developed self-help skills in personal and technical development. For those who wish to continue by equipping others to sustain community-led change, there is an optional Step 3. To successfully complete this third step, participants must facilitate a new certificate group and guide them through to completion at diploma level. When their group has successfully completed the requirements for Step 2, the facilitators of Step 3 will be eligible to receive their GULL Bachelor of Professional Studies (BProf) degree at the same time. These design features align with the goals of indigenous self-help initiatives: to reduce dependency and embed self-help as the core process for mobilizing the wider community so that, just as in Burundi, community members can be recognized for the contribution they have made.

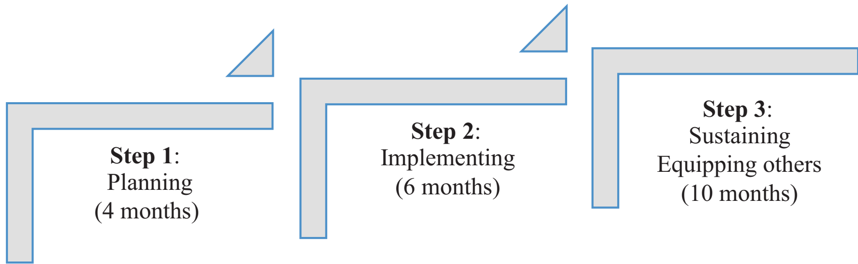

Fig. 12.2 Holistic and community-led steps

Conclusion

Due to the challenges that GULL has experienced in sustaining NGO relationships—even though significant advances in community-led development have often occurred—I want to return to the question outlined earlier: *How and why should international aid be more closely aligned with community-led development?* In 2012, I had a discussion with a bishop from the Episcopal Church of Sudan in rural Kajo Keji and I asked him about the importance of facilitating long-term self-help. He replied: *If you give aid—when it runs out, that's it. But if you help people through a process of self-directed change, they will continue and teach others.*

There are many reasons why aid programmes are designed to support subsistence and why low-income communities tend to fall short of expectations. Among these, over-reliance on conventional training can lead to dependency and as a mode of assistance. Such 'pre-packaged' training is less likely to bring about mindset change or a community-led resolve to find solutions to their own challenges. GULL should be reaching much larger numbers of people, but they are limited by their visibility, the scope and scale of their networks, their ability to handle one-on-one relationships around the world with modest resources (money, people), and they cannot rely on linkages with NGOs as they do not endure. That said, thanks mainly to NGO support and excellent NGO staff, GULL has been able to initiate projects in 60 countries. Sadly, though, turbulence in the aid sector has meant that all of these projects ended just at the point when long-term benefits were emerging. *Why is this?*

My experience-based view is mirrored by an article by McVeigh in *The Guardian* of 5 February 2021, entitled: "How Covid could be the 'long overdue' shake-up needed by the aid sector". Its critique encapsulates much of what GULL has encountered during the past decade. Development experts and critics who spoke to *The Guardian* called for a global reset of an aid industry that they said is outdated and facing pressure to reform. They want international charities and NGOs to root themselves in communities, to decentralize their Western-centred power, and to trust and invest in the people they want to help. To conclude, I have paraphrased the main actions they recommend and added several of my own reflections:

- Stop dividing countries into donors and recipients. Poor countries are significant contributors to sustainable development; rich countries are impeding it.
- Reform the current aid model so that more money goes to local and national responders. McVeigh (2021) reported that an international target set four years ago at the World Humanitarian Summit (to direct 25% of aid to grassroots organizations by 2020) has failed. Current estimates are that just 3.5% of international aid goes to local NGOs.
- Mandate reform to encourage international NGOs to allocate more long-term funding to front-line groups. Those who proposed this say that grassroots agencies are better at encouraging community-led development. Furthermore, that local agencies operate more cost-effectively, they know what works and what does not and that they tend to be more committed to change than outside agencies.
- Encourage international NGOs to listen more closely to the communities they serve rather than acting as implementing agencies for donors and for their own corporate agendas, both of which tend to focus on 'delivering' relatively short-term solutions.
- Find ways of doing more with less. The international aid sector needs to change because overseas development budgets continue to decline, in part due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Encourage consolidation of NGOs with similar objectives that operate in the same geographical areas to reduce duplicated efforts. McVeigh (2021) cited Sudan as an example, where approximately 100 foreign NGOs are working.

McVeigh's article in *The Guardian* (2021) concluded with a quote from the founder of 'Aid Re-imagined' who poses the following question as a guide to reform: *What can my organization, based in the global North, do to work with local actors to come up with their own solutions to their own problems?* If the international aid sector and the international NGOs respond as they should, then community-led development will flourish. This chapter has proposed one way this may happen, through a tried and tested system of action learning as developed by GULL.

Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. GULL emphasizes the value of reviewing personal learning needs prior to beginning a process of self-directed change. What role may traditional knowledge and culture play in this and in community-led development? In what circumstances do you think that outside help may assist or impede progress?
2. To what extent do you think that public recognition and professional certification motivates people to participate in community-led involvement? Why is this and how might it contribute to sustainable development?
3. Given the large numbers of people who are excluded from development because of money, qualifications and often fragile local educational infrastructure, what could be done to help facilitate much wider participation in self-directed development using the approach advocated in this chapter?

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13

Community-Based Research with Marginalized Populations for Transformative Adult Education

Lesley Wood

Introduction

Education is enshrined in the Bill of Rights as a human right (Chap. 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). In similar vein, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], n.d.) positions access to quality education for all, including the most marginalized populations, as an important pursuit for governments around the world. SDG 4 sets ambitious targets to be reached by 2030, covering the whole range of education from preschool to higher education, including technical and vocational training. This requires governments to provide lifelong learning opportunities for all, from early childhood to adult education, through an equitable, inclusive and gender-equal system. It entails effective learning and the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills and competencies that will increase employability and

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global citizenship (UNESCO, n.d.). These are admirable targets, but the reality in developing economies is that access to quality education, as defined by UNESCO, remains a dream for many (DeJaeghere, 2019). Even in countries where access to education is almost universal, at least up to secondary level, how relevant for today are education systems that were designed to meet the needs of industrialized societies of the previous century? Even where education is free, the systems are rigid and standardized, and not responsive to the demands of twenty-first century societies and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Farmer, 2020). The increasing commodification of education, from preschool to tertiary, has seen the rise of private institutions, inaccessible to most citizens in developing countries (Berkley, 2019). Higher education in general is affordable only for the minority. In South Africa, the technical, vocational education and training (TVET) and community colleges were supposed to close this gap, but they are under-resourced, poorly managed and offer poor quality teaching and learning (Rivombo & Motseke, 2021). Thus, those who cannot afford to pay for quality education remain relatively unskilled, unqualified and unemployable—and their number is growing every day.

This chapter argues for a transformative and inclusive approach to education, opening a learning space for members of marginalized populations to become critically reflective, self-directed learners who can adapt and adjust to the ever-changing demands and opportunities facing them. Such learning can evolve from community–university research partnerships. As public institutions, universities have an opportunity and obligation to respond to the needs of the communities they serve. Hall (2009, p. 348) argued that the 'collective resources of these universities and colleges (students, academic staff, facilities, research funding, knowledge, skills, and capacities to facilitate learning) represent our largest accessible, available, and underutilized resource for community change and sustainability'. Thus, universities could use these considerable assets to deliver community-based education. While this is a global issue, I illustrate this argument within the South African context.

I first discuss how the South African education system has failed to provide lifelong educational opportunities for most of the nation's citizens, with specific reference to the community colleges that were supposed to cater to the needs of the marginalized and educationally

excluded. Then I elucidate how community-based research (CBR) could fill this gap by providing a platform for transformative adult education. I argue that such a system needs to be recognized by national qualification and training structures, through introducing different, but equally valid, assessment and accreditation criteria—not by requiring it to adapt to meet the current requirements. The chapter is centred on the premise that marginalized people will continue to be excluded from lifelong learning opportunities and denied their basic human right to live a life of dignity if the system is not changed to accommodate the type of learning that enables people to take control of their own lives and livelihoods.

Challenges of Education in South Africa

The public education system in South Africa is 'broken and unequal' according to a publication by Amnesty International (2020, p. 1). This document explains the many barriers to quality education, including poverty, multiple languages, underqualified teaching and managerial staff, lack of infrastructure and unsafe learning environments. Although over 90% of children begin school (Hall, 2019), more than half of those children will drop out before attaining a matriculation pass (Statistics South Africa, 2020), which is a prerequisite for practically all jobs or further study. This is usually not the case for children whose parents can afford to buy quality education, only for those with no choice but to access the less expensive or no-fee schools. This situation has contributed to the rising unemployment rates in South Africa of over 32% in the fourth quarter of 2020 (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Youth unemployment (those aged 18–35) stands around 60% (Statistics South Africa, 2020) and is most likely on the rise as the economic effects of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) come into play.

With so many people unemployed, the future of the country is indeed bleak, as poor economies give rise to unhealthy and non-cohesive societies (Pane, 2017). While the TVET colleges were designed to enable early school leavers to learn marketable skills, these colleges have largely failed to address the issue. There are various reasons for this, as explained by Powell and McGrath (2018):

> [C]hoices to pursue valued lives and livelihoods through VET learning are undermined by a series of systemic failures that make it near to impossible for them [learners] to successfully exit the system in the expected time period. Inadequacies of student finance, assessment, certification and internship availability all get in the way of these learners. (p. 305)

In addition, the most economically marginalized people cannot afford to attend TVET colleges, since bursaries are either unavailable or inadequate to cover their living and transport expenses (Powell & McGrath, 2018). Although learners may exit school on completing Grade 9, with a General Education and Training certificate that grants access to TVET colleges, many colleges first accept those who have completed Grade 12 to ensure student intake of a higher standard of literacy and numeracy (Jobson & Duncan, 2019). Thus, marginalization of the most disadvantaged members of society remains institutionalized in South Africa.

In an effort to widen access to further education at community level, the Department of Higher Education and Training (South Africa, DHET, 2014) established community education and training colleges (CETC), as promulgated in the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training. These colleges were supposed to enable adults to learn skills responsive to the needs of their local communities and thus improve their chances of being employed or starting income-generating initiatives, or access further education and training. Nine community colleges were established (one per province), with over 3000 affiliated community learning centres (CLCs). The initial idea was that government would liaise with local industries and employers to fund these centres (South African Government, 2017), and that the training offered would match employer requirements, thus increasing the chance that graduates of the colleges would be able to gain income-generating work experience. As stated by DHET (n.d.), 'community education and training will offer programmes that contribute to improving community cohesion and social capital, and [are] responsive to the geographic and sectoral needs and challenges'. However, this did not materialize as envisioned. No government funds were allocated to the CETCs between 2010 and 2017; in 2018 the CETCs did receive R112 million from government, but 93% of that went to paying salaries, with only just over 2% spent on

operational costs (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2018). According to Mabiza et al. (2017) (cited by Rivombo & Motseke, 2021),

> No funds were spent on recruitment of appropriately qualified lecturers, equipment, resources and curriculum development. The unavailability of these resources had negative implications for skills development and job creation. The government's failure to adequately fund the CETCs may discourage private sponsors from supporting the CETCs. (p. 8)

Notably, I feel that the curriculums offered by the CETCs have perhaps been not innovative enough. It seems as if the CETCs have simply taken over the old curriculum for adult basic education and training (ABET), with its focus on teaching literacy and numeracy. Even in 2005, the Minister for Basic Education, Naledi Pandor, declared the ABET approach to be unsuited to adults, describing it as narrow and utilitarian education similar to schooling for children (Aitchison, 2005). The CETCs were supposed to develop community-specific training programmes in consultation with the local industry and businesses. The government was meant to facilitate such relationships to increase the employability of future graduates (Rivombo & Motseke, 2021). Baatjies and Chaka (2012) found that people generally consider the existing community colleges and education centres as difficult to access since these colleges and centres are only operating in specific communities. People generally think that the courses these colleges and centres offer are not always useful, and partnerships with local non-profit organizations (NPOs) and businesses, which could provide sustainability for community members attending, are not always present. The CLCs are thus plagued by absenteeism, drop outs and failures (Adams, 2019), as students are not finding the curriculum to be relevant or useful for improving their life circumstances. These students believe they were not able to gain the skills needed for employment at school, so why should they be interested in a watered-down extension of school. Community colleges in other countries where curricula have been tailored to local industry demands have been more successful in terms of meeting employment needs (Gaviria, 2012; Getachew & Daniel, 2016).

Thousands of people in South Africa have not completed schooling to grade 12 (South Africa, Department of Basic Education, 2017), so entrance to the formal labour market is difficult for them. Likewise, it is almost impossible for them to access further formal education and training, due to their lack of prior learning and their inability to pay for education. The creation of community colleges by the DHET was a brilliant initiative that sadly government has not supported enough to enable the initiative to achieve its potential and that seems to have strayed from its initial purpose. The community colleges should have been set up and operated to meet the need of people being excluded by the formal system for relevant educational and training opportunities, but this system has largely failed to do so. The idea that the students should be included in curriculum development to voice their needs and desires has also been lost.

Simply modelling the CETC on the current (failing) TVET system was not the original intention of this initiative, as Land and Aitchison (2017) explained. The idea was that the community college in each province would serve as a coordinating hub for the CLCs in the different districts, and the latter would network with existing NPOs and faith-based organizations to deliver programmes relevant to that specific community (Land & Aitchison, 2017). Although the DHET is working hard to try and improve the quality of teaching at CETCs and CLCs, the curriculums of both are still tied to formal education. This may not be the best option for people with a low academic self-esteem, who have failed or dropped out from the formal system. Alternative options need to be developed for those who have been marginalized by the current education system.

Alternative Paradigms for Adult Education

There is value in creating opportunities for people to complete their schooling or learn technical skills. However, the CETC system failed to develop lifelong, self-directed learners. Neither did it enable people to learn what they themselves deemed to be relevant to improve their lives or support them to flourish as individuals and with others in the community. From a capability-theory perspective (Sen, 1999), it is not

enough just to teach people technical skills; they also have to learn how to use these skills to improve their lives in accordance with their choice. As Walker (2008, p. 117) argued, 'education is not just for human capital and economic productivity, but has instrumental, intrinsic and social value'. She cited Nussbaum (2000, p. 58), who considers each person to be a 'source of agency and worth in their own right, with their own plans to make and their own lives to live'. UNESCO (2016, p. 7) advocates that 'learning opportunities should be increased and diversified, using a wide range of education and training modalities'. These opportunities ought to develop the learner holistically, rather than just focusing on work-related skills.

Powell and McGrath (2018, p. 306) supported the argument that skills training alone is not enough to bring about positive change in the lives of people, when they stated: 'Current orthodox theorizations of 'skills for employability' are inadequate for explaining much of [young] people's learning, lives and livelihood'. Given that universities receive over 80% of the Higher Education and Training budget in South Africa (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2018), is it not time that they started to give back by providing such learning opportunities at community level? Engaging in CBR with local NPOs and community stakeholders could address many of the problematic issues and provide transformative adult educational opportunities. Transformative learning should underpin the curricula of such initiatives.

Transformative Learning for Transformative Education

Transformative education is based on learning that enables the 'recasting of adult learners' beliefs about themselves and the way they view the world and their place in it' (Hyland-Russell & Syrnyk, 2015, p. 515). For people who have not been able to succeed within the current education system, this outcome is of particular importance. Low self-esteem and lack of confidence block learning (Mărghitan et al., 2017). Therefore, helping people to recognize their strengths and the value they can add to

society is fundamental for educational success. Those marginalized by material barriers develop inherent negative ideas about their self that they need to transform so they become confident to apply newly acquired technical skills to enhance their lives and livelihoods. Freire (2004), who worked with the socially and politically marginalized in Brazil, suggested that people have a 'fear of freedom' (p. 36), which must be overcome. Traditional, performative approaches to education tend to characterize people as 'good' and 'clever', or 'bad' and 'stupid', so years of internalizing such labels require people to engage in social and mental emancipation, before they can begin to create more positive life trajectories.

Mezirow (2009) developed the transformative learning theory to explain how unproductive frames of reference could be changed through critical questioning and reflection. Transformative learning enables people to perceive themselves as capable learners through critical reflection on previously held beliefs about self, others and society. Through being faced with disorientating dilemmas, people can shift from 'a space of exclusion to inhabit a community of learning' (Hyland-Russell & Syrnyk, 2015, p. 515). Transformative learning is not only a cognitive experience, but also a process of emotional, imaginative and interpersonal growth and emancipation (Cranton, 2002; Dirkx, 1998) that restores agency (Taylor, 2008) to people to change their lives as they see fit.

I argue that such learning calls for similarly progressive assessment strategies, rather than formal tests and examinations. Learning can be evaluated through oral methods such as professional conversations (Timperley, 2015), where the student explains their learning and offers evidence of how they have applied it to reach both personal and technical outcomes. Such methods remove the need for the learner to master a high level of literacy in a language that may not be their mother tongue and therefore allows them to demonstrate their learning in more practical ways. The educational outcomes become less instrumental and more focused on the learning needed to transform self and society. The current education system, which the people accessing community colleges have not been able to navigate successfully, focuses on the acquisition of declarative knowledge or facts, rather than procedural knowledge that involves knowing how to do something (Nguyen et al., 2019). Assessment for informal adult education should test more for procedural knowledge,

so as not to disadvantage those with little or no schooling. The ability to make such procedural knowledge explicit would require the learner to explain why they would do a specific task, how they would do it, and provide evidence of being able to do it. Since CBR is grounded in various forms of critical, participatory action research, it is an ideal medium to enable such transformative learning to occur.

Community-Based Research for Transformative Adult Education

As Nyland et al. (2016) stated:

> The 'real' world consists of millions who are without an adequate income to rear their families, a world without dignity or education, without clean water or adequate food and medicine and whose share of world wealth is actually diminishing. The arguments for devising a new curriculum which addresses these issues seems to be self-evident. (p. 1)

The above statement is of particular significance in South Africa today. As public institutions, universities have an opportunity to use public investment to respond to the challenge to generate knowledge to address such challenges through community-based action research. Participatory and community-based action research has been shown to lead to deep learning about community problems and solutions (see Cammarota, 2008; Kgobe et al., 2012; Warren & Mapp, 2011) and is ' recognized as particularly useful when working with populations that experience marginalization … because it supports the establishment of respectful relationships with these groups, and the sharing of control over individual and group health and social conditions' (Tremblay et al., 2018, p. 2).

CBR and community education share the same purpose: To respond to people's own concerns and to create a shared, active and political space for learning and development (Tett, 2010). Community education is based on specific principles: (1) lifelong educational opportunities, both formal and informal, need to be provided; (2) people have a right to identify their own learning needs; (3) people need to learn how to solve their

own problems; (4) education should develop skills and improve leadership capacity; (5) public institutions need to respond to changing educational needs and demands; (6) organizations involved in community education should collaborate to share resources; (7) educational institutions and initiatives should be located close to where people live and (8) no one should be excluded from education on grounds of age, race, income, gender, religion or any other characteristic (Decker, 2021).

The principles of community education not only reflect the foundational tenets of CBR—including lifelong learning, inclusivity, self-determination, collaboration—but also echo the call of Odora-Hoppers and Richards (2011) for a rethinking of education to embrace multi-paradigmatic, multi-epistemic, place-relevant learning. Baatjes and Chaka (2012, p. 12) argued that participation in projects that address local issues enables people to learn what is important and useful to them and improve their lives on personal, relational and collective levels (Koster et al., 2012). Grounded in values of caring and compassion, self-determination, human diversity, social justice and participation, CBR is a process of empowerment and development with educative, emancipatory and political outcomes (see Chap. 1). CBR stimulates a critical sociopolitical analysis of self in the environment, raising awareness about different forms of oppression that constrain human flourishing and opening minds to alternative possibilities. As an experiential, participatory process, beginning from peoples' own experiences, it empowers people to see themselves as agents of socio-environmental change and provides them with opportunities to explore, understand, challenge and ultimately transcend the constraints placed upon them by dominant ideologies, structures and cultural practices, which are both part of and apart from the learner.

The DHET (2012), in its policy on community colleges, envisions community education as follows:

> Community Education should support learning and development that leads to *social justice* for everyone. Community Education can be seen as committed to the principle that education should *originate in and be designed to meet the interests of the community and be directed to improving its quality of life*. Policy and practice for community education and training

> should be founded on the underpinnings of a democratic society which views *collective improvement in quality of life* as the primary goal of its educational initiatives. All citizens should be provided with the opportunity for a *lifetime of intellectual growth, vocational enrichment and social improvement* … Community Education is about the *community itself learning to work together to identify and solve developmental problems* (personal, social, economic and political) [emphasis added]. (pp. 32–33)

This bold vision for community education, to be delivered by community colleges and their satellite learning centres, mirrors the principles of CBR, as the italicized text above indicates. Community education can be the first step in attaining an 'equitable, sustainable and inclusive growth path that brings decent work, sustainable livelihoods, education, health, safe and secure communities and rural development' (National Research Foundation, 2018, p. 2). Community education, developed with community stakeholders such as NPOs and businesses through the process of CBR, can also contribute to the attainment of the objectives of the Beijing Declaration, to which community colleges worldwide have declared their adherence. This declaration regards the work of community colleges to be the empowerment of individuals and the promotion of social cohesion through the provision of skills; sustainable development through action learning; the revitalization of learning families and communities by ensuring that learning programmes respond to local needs through stakeholder participation in programme design; the enhancement of creativity and the capacity for action learning; the utilization of existing community resources and the development of evidence-based strategies for promoting lifelong learning (UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, 2015).

The South African Department of Education (2005) cited an example of how such partnerships for learning could evolve. As long ago as 1989 in a village in Maputaland, a 'democratic development committee as part of a donor funded community development programme … [with] expertise from universities and NGOs' (p. 16) set up a community education and development initiative. The various partners worked closely with other stakeholders to develop 'village infrastructure and skills training and production units' (South Africa, Department of Education, 2005, p. 16)

over a period of five years. Even though this project eventually collapsed, because the traditional authorities were not involved, it does show how such partnerships can lead to change. If this initiative had been set up according to CBR principles, the traditional leaders would have been involved as key stakeholders from the start and the project may have been able to continue.

The objectives of the Beijing declaration and the vision of the DHET made it clear that community education is about more than just the acquisition of technical skills (South Africa, DHET, 2012; UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, 2015). To break the crippling cycle of unemployment and inequality, people need to learn to live and work together, to tolerate diversity, and develop the capacity to transform themselves in response to a rapidly changing and volatile world. Many short-term job creation programmes have been rolled out in the poorest areas in South Africa, but once the programme is over, people tend to return to being unemployed (Wood, 2020). Unless people also learn how to use the technical skills they acquire to better their lives, any long-term improvement in quality of life is unlikely. In other words, community education must provide opportunities for people to learn and demonstrate the ability to make positive life choices, to think creatively and critically, to develop self-leadership, and to see themselves as lifelong learners. Participation in CBR can create this space for growth, as well as to generate knowledge among participants to inform community education on a larger scale. In addition, knowledge generated from research partnerships in this field can also feed back into teaching programmes across the different disciplines at school and university level to revitalize curricula throughout the system.

However, in developing countries such as South Africa, millions have lost out on the opportunity to develop their 'personal viability' (Teare, 2013, p. 99). The concept of personal viability, coined as such by Samuel Tam in Papua New Guinea, refers to the ability of a person to create a sustainable livelihood for self and others through a process of 'holistic lifelong action learning' (p. 101), similar to the process of CBR. Personal viability is anchored in a high degree of integrity, a clear value orientation and a commitment to improving not only one's own life, but the lives of family and community. Training in technical skills is necessary to enhance

employability or develop entrepreneurial opportunities, but without simultaneous development of personal characteristics, for example integrity, social conscience, moral framework, intrinsic motivation, capacity for self-directed learning, people are unlikely to sustain change in and beyond themselves and to cascade their learning to the benefit of the wider community. CBR provides a framework to enable universities to partner with diverse community stakeholders, for example, NPOs, government departments, faith-based organizations as well as community members to initiate and sustain a learning system that 'enables people, and specifically those living in economic and social adversity, to discover and develop their talents together with like-minded people, become self-confident, self-directed and self-sufficient, and then cascade what they have learned to help others' (Wood, 2020, p. 133). Through such collaboration, CLCs could be revitalized to be more in line with the original vision of them providing locally relevant education and training. For such a transformative approach to adult education to be seen to be credible, and for the qualifications that learners acquire at CLCs to have traction in the employment market, this learning framework must be recognized as valid and valuable.

Recognizing Community-Based Research as a Valid Pathway for Adult Education

In South Africa, all formal educational qualifications are quality controlled and recognized by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), whose purpose is to oversee the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The objectives of the NQF include improving access to and articulation between qualifications, enhancing the quality of programmes offered, and addressing inequalities of the past regarding educational opportunities. These objectives should also promote lifelong learning and holistic development for the benefit of the individual and the nation at large (National Government of South Africa, n.d).

While these goals are admirable and fulfilment of them is much needed, the process and requirements for accreditation on the NQF tend

to adhere to traditional conceptualizations of learning and assessment. Transformative adult education, operationalized through CBR, requires the development of progressive, but equally valid, assessment and accreditation criteria and a curriculum grounded in the principles of transformative learning. A lifelong action learning system, operationalized through CBR, would enable community-led holistic learning and development, as has been shown in global sites, such as the Global University for Lifelong Learning (see gullonline.org and Chap. 12 of this book). A partnership between universities and the community colleges and learning centres, involving local non-profit education and training organizations and other interested stakeholders, could provide a starting point for the research and development of such learning pathways, based on local community and industry needs.

The research and development of innovative curriculum content and pedagogy for transformative adult education could help to ensure that learners at these centres develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to improve their lives in the short term, benefitting in the long term the national economy and social cohesion of the country. To be inclusive of all abilities, assessment criteria would need to be multimodal, for example, oral, visual and through other appropriate means, not only textual, to allow learners to demonstrate skills and knowledge through application, rather than by theoretical, standardized tests and examinations. Opportunity for multilingual assessment is also needed, as the many languages spoken in this country require us to rethink the use of English only as a language of teaching and learning for adult education. Developing these contextualized learning pathways could address the mismatch between the knowledge and skills of local people and the employment or entrepreneurial opportunities in the area. Integrating pursuit of holistic development outcomes into the curriculum to enhance long-term personal viability could begin to repair the psychological and educational damage wreaked by colonization and apartheid policies. Recognition of the importance of developing life skills is apparent in the current school and TVET curricula. Yet the inclusion of life orientation as a stand-alone subject, rather than as a component of all subjects, gives precedence to theoretical knowledge and rote learning, and helps to fortify a system where the real-life application of life skills is rare (Swarts et al., 2018).

Although ideally, SAQA should accommodate informal learning on the existing NQF, as parallel to formal qualifications, validation of learning attained through CBR by universities through certification would also give credence to the learning. This could be done in the same way that non-accredited short learning programmes are certified, by establishing action learning pathways and suitable assessment criteria that the learner would have to provide evidence of having satisfied.

Conclusion

The ideas presented in this chapter may seem rather far-fetched to those whose thinking has been shaped by current neoliberal conceptualizations of higher education. As with all new ideas, they will have to be tested in practice, adapted and improved. However, if this is done as rigorous CBR, then the knowledge it generates can lead to the development of an adult education sector that more effectively meets the needs of marginalized populations than is currently the case. The involvement of multiple community stakeholders will help to ensure that the action learning pathways remain grounded in their specific education and training needs. In the long term this could help revitalize the economies and social cohesion of communities currently wreaked by poverty, violence and social disorganization. Universities involved would benefit by becoming more socially responsive institutions, generating knowledge with considerable social impact. I suggest that a CBR approach to adult education would provide a suitable answer to the question posed by Land and Aitchison (2017, p. 10) in their discussion document on the 'Ideal institutional model for community colleges in South Africa', namely: How can we make adult education offerings worthwhile to the millions of South Africans who still suffer from our history of educational deprivation and system failure?

The ideal may be that government takes steps to actualize such a system, but the historical record of accomplishment reveals this approach is not likely to happen any time soon. In this chapter, I have offered ideas for universities to begin to generate knowledge that can inform such a system in the future through deploying their ability to attract research funding and to provide material resources and curriculum and training expertise. Universities enjoy high status in communities, so any learning

certified by them, even if informal, carries weight among prospective employers or investors in entrepreneurial enterprises. CBR thus provides an ideal framework for the development of learning opportunities,

> that will enable people to survive in a labour market where permanent jobs are not available, to find information they need to manage their lives, and to find a way out of poverty … to discover what options are open to them, to know what information they need, and to build enough confidence in themselves to risk failure. (Land & Aitchison, 2017, p. 11)

CBR not only provides an unending source of research, a framework for community engagement, and opportunities for students to develop through service-learning, but also affords sustainable benefits for those marginalized by the current approach to adult learning and development. Hopefully, the ideas suggested in this chapter will spark thinking towards realizing CBR as transformative adult education for marginalized populations.

Questions to Provoke Discussion

1. What do you think about the suggestion that CBR could be used to fill the gap in the adult education system?
2. How could CBR be used to improve the social impact of universities?
3. What critique do you have of this chapter and how would you improve on the ideas suggested?

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14

An Ethical, Inclusive and Sustainable Framework for Community-Based Research in Higher Education

Lesley Wood

Introduction

Much has been written on the need for the university to become more socially engaged. Levin and Greenwood (2016) even phrased it as an ultimatum: 'Public universities can either become an integral element in the recreation of social democracy or can continue to operate as an instrument of elite domination of the planet' (p. 7). While there may be some middle ground to this thinking, governments worldwide require public universities to account for their social impact. University leadership in general is not, in my experience, averse to adopting more socially responsive policies and practices. However, most universities were structured historically to serve the idea that knowledge production is their exclusive right and responsibility and they continue in this mode through embedded institutional arrangements and dominant academic paradigms that sustain the status quo. It is therefore difficult to change entrenched ideas

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about ethical processes and methods of knowledge validation without edging out or replacing these dominant paradigms.

Until recently, it has been widely accepted that knowledge is embodied in a highly educated elite that creates knowledge within the university system; indigenous and other knowledges have generally not been recognized, let alone appreciated. The dominant research paradigms are still rooted in so-called scientific approaches as discussed throughout this volume, so the concept of involving lay people in research to create knowledge through the approach of an alternative 'non-scientific' paradigm is still alien to many. Yet, worldwide change continues to prompt—at times of global emergency to swiftly force—shifts in dominant worldviews. In 2020, for example, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic forced a rethinking of how we as human beings live. It exposed a fundamental truth of life that the now dominant neoliberalism has subverted: As members of the human race, we need to live with and be mindful of each other on this planet that we share. We are not individuals who are solely responsible for ourselves and competing with each other to maximize our own personal benefit, regardless of and at the expense of the common good.

Responses to the pandemic revealed that universities are fully capable of changing their modus operandi relatively quickly and purposefully in response to external challenges. Hall and Tandon (2021, p. 1) observed that for academia, this global crisis may be 'an opportunity for … a great transition' to new ways of thinking, being and doing. The pandemic revealed the vulnerability of all sectors of society, irrespective of social and economic class, race, religion and sexual orientation. But while everyone may be affected by the pandemic, coping responses tend to be stronger among those with access to economic, educational and health resources. Marginalized sectors of society have been hit the hardest by the fall-out from the pandemic, widening both social and economic divides. The pandemic has also reminded us that natural and human-made disasters are fuelled by inequalities, discrimination, and social and economic marginalization. This palpable reality makes it even more imperative for universities to become more socially engaged, committed to social action for positive social change and therefore better prepared to foster critical thinking among students and other researchers. Social engagement by

the academy requires universities to value the knowledge embedded in the communities they serve. After all, the people most affected by issues under investigation know most about what needs to be changed and how, within their specific context.

The argument put forward in this book is that research, particularly in the social sciences, should be an educative, emancipatory, and collaborative political process to generate knowledge and capacity to improve community well-being, through democratizing the process of knowledge production. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019) professed, epistemic freedom needs to emerge from the ground up, and cannot develop until people understand their own potential to bring about change to improve their own lives as they deem fit. This is the role and purpose of community-based research (CBR)—to enable the co-creation of solutions to complex social problems through the communities the university serves, in collaboration with academic researchers. Participating in collaborative research creates pathways to sustainable learning and development, so the process moves from research *for* social change to research *as* social change (Schratz & Walker, 1995). Díaz-Reviriego et al. (2019) spoke of the increasing awareness that science-based knowledge is insufficient to address the complex challenges of today's world, and of the need to combine it with indigenous and local knowledge to generate sustainable solutions. This requires a willingness on the part of both academic and community partners to learn from and with each other, and to value the knowledge that each brings to the task when researching ways to improve the quality of life of those involved. However, marginalized populations, which are subject to various forms of oppression, tend to internalize a feeling of inferiority and thus adapt to their circumstances, rather than realizing their potential to change these circumstances (Gasper, 2002).

To enable people to increase their agency and begin to question their circumstances, it is important for the academic researcher to acknowledge the power relations in their relationship with these people. The academic researcher can then strive to acknowledge and minimize their own exercise of power in the research process through recognizing and addressing learning and development needs before or at least simultaneously with conducting the research. If academic researchers do not take these steps, their relationships with community participants will likely revert to

the respective default positions of producers and receivers of knowledge. Hall and Tandon's (2021) description of CBR as 'research which negotiates knowledge … [with] society' (p. 3) is thus appropriate for the thesis propounded in this book.

In this chapter, I revisit the questions that inspired the research concerns we have explored in this book. I attempt to provide answers through analysing the knowledge and practices that authors have explained in the diverse contexts and projects discussed in each chapter. I draw on these answers to inform and justify the framework I have developed on the basis of this book for conducting ethical, inclusive and sustainable research through partnerships between academic researchers and lay collaborators. I then summarize the theoretical contribution of this book to the field. Finally, I leave you, the reader, with a few critical questions to inspire further exploration of how CBR, through partnerships with so-called vulnerable populations, can democratize the production of relevant conceptual/practical knowledge to address the complex challenges facing us in today's world.

Revisiting the Research Questions

To generate findings to inform a framework for CBR with vulnerable, marginalized populations, I used the three questions posed in Chap. 1 as an analytical lens in my rereading of the chapters:

- How do we develop *ethical* processes, especially suited to CBR that, while upholding universal ethical principles, also allow for the implementation of recognition, participation and joint decision-making throughout the research?
- How can we build the *capacity* of academics to conduct CBR?
- How do we ensure that the learning and development of community partners are *recognized* and *sustained*?

To validate that my conclusions are consistent with CBR, I asked the co-investigators in the project funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF; see Chaps. 1 and 3) for their critical input. Earlier in

the book I have explained that the North-West University in South Africa, the public research university where I am employed, granted ethical clearance for the project (NWU-00782-18-A2).

The answers I offer to these questions are of course interdependent. All three questions require that the academic researcher understands and applies the principles and values of CBR, which renders the research inherently ethical. And if the learning and development of all participants is a main outcome of the research process, sustainability of research outcomes is enhanced. Drawing from the applicable chapters, I now discuss each question to craft conclusions about which paradigms, processes and practices support ethical, inclusive research leading to sustainable research outcomes.

Enhancing the Ethics of University Research Partnerships with Marginalized Populations

Research associated with a university requires clearance from the university's ethics committee, which by the university and its researchers' understanding, adheres to the universal principles of respect for persons, justice and beneficence (United States, 1978), known collectively as the Belmont Principles. Universities are now starting to recognize the value of participatory forms of research in the style of CBR (Lake & Wendland, 2018). However, the processes and policies universities have adopted to embody these principles are to some extent inconsistent with the values and worldviews underpinning participatory research such as CBR, as we have seen illustrated throughout the chapters of this book. In practice these processes/policies appear to be very much about institutional self-protection more than upholding humanitarian ideals; that is not just to protect the 'subjects' of research from unscrupulous exploitation, but also to protect the university from any type of legal challenge associated with research and to commercially protect the university's market stature from being 'branded' unethical.

In traditional approaches to research, where 'the' researcher drives the process through their control over decision-making, the central ethical principles are informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity and

fairness regarding selection. University ethics procedures operationalize these principles rigidly, in a way that obviates even the idea of a relationship between researcher and researched. Since the contact between researcher and respondent is limited and prescribed, once the researcher has satisfied the committee that they have met the ethical requirements, the researcher does not need subsequent approval, barring a major change in protocols. For CBR, however, relationship is a central aspect, especially between the academic researcher and all others in the project who are participant researchers themselves. The established university approach to ethics is therefore not appropriate to fulfil the foundational tenets of CBR (see Chap. 1, Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2022).

As we saw in Chap. 2 of this book (Brydon-Miller & Wood, 2022), the ethical realms of CBR are more extensive than those of traditional, supposedly 'objective', researcher-driven approaches. A researcher who administers a survey or conducts a 40-minute interview should not wield influence over the respondent. The ethical requirement of objectivity requires the researcher to bracket their own understandings and assumptions and to separate them from the research findings. The presumption of objectivity does not allow researchers to give their own opinions or to influence the respondent in any way, although the researcher probably chose the nature and direction of the research project and chose or designed the questions asked through a survey and/or interview.

A current trend is to refer to participants in objective qualitative research, but these people do not participate in the research in any meaningful way, other than sharing their knowledge and insights with the academic researcher guiding the project. However, in CBR, as we have seen repeatedly throughout this book, both the notion—and the practice—of partnership is paramount, since the academic researcher becomes part of a team or action learning group to generate knowledge collaboratively with other stakeholders. The input of every participant is not only recognized, but actively pursued throughout the project. This difference between traditional research and CBR in both understanding and the actual roles of participants is well illustrated in the vignette that opens Chap. 2—the warmth of the fire (relationship for the learning and development of all) versus the coldness of the dark night (objective interaction for the benefit of the researcher). The first scenario reflects an ethics of

care (Noddings, 2012) where the integrity of behaviour is determined by relationship, whereas the second represents a deontological conceptualization of ethical behaviour (Ebels-Duggan, 2011) where actions are governed by specific regulations.

The ethical commitment of CBR requires not only preventing harm to research participants, but also creating opportunities for positive change that improves life sustainably for the participants and their communities. This ethic is not simply a component or an add-on that imposes certain requirements upon behaviour at specific times in the research process, as done by university ethics committees. Rather, it is the very purpose of CBR, and so permeates the entire CBR process from initially forming the research partnership, through collaboratively identifying problems and seeking long-term solutions, to disseminating the co-generated knowledge. Project participants therefore necessarily embody ethics by following the CBR approach. Rather than an exercise in compliance, ethics is 'the way' of CBR.

As such, ethics in CBR cannot be reduced to three specific principles, to be applied in what some claim is 'a universal manner'. The knowledge, assumptions and behaviour of all participants determine how well they can embody the principles of CBR in relationship with each other. However, the onus is on the academic researcher as the more privileged and thus more powerful collaborator to develop their own capacity to conduct participatory research, before initiating a partnership. An important component of CBR is educating community partners to understand the principles and values underpinning the partnership, and to be aware of their respective rights and responsibilities. Negotiation of an ethical agreement between community partners, academic researcher(s) and their institutions is thus an important task in forming the research partnership. Commitment to the learning and development of all participants also enhances the sustainability of outcomes.

Through my review of the research presented in this book I have identified three aspects that are not normally a requirement for ethical clearance in traditional research but are vital to the integrity of CBR, namely the need to constantly (re)negotiate the relationship; to commitment to action for positive change and to belief in the ability of so-called vulnerable people to positively change their own lives.

Ongoing Negotiation of the Relationship

Power relations in CBR partnerships are inevitable, particularly when working with people who have been led to believe that their opinions do not matter. The importance of upholding respect, transparency and commitment to working through differences and dealing with unexpected problems cannot be overemphasized. This was particularly evident in projects such as the holistic well-being initiative (Kitching & Carstens, 2022; Chap. 5), which required much negotiation to level out power relations and build trust between funders, academic researchers, teachers and community members to ensure authentic participation of those who needed to be involved. Similarly, in the case studies by Hornby and Maistry (2022; Chap. 6) and Branch et al. (2022; Chap. 11), the authors explained ongoing negotiation of the terms of the relationship as one of their key strategies for building trusting and effective partnerships. Since relationship is central to CBR, and human relationships are complex and ever-evolving, ongoing, critical reflection on the research process is vital to ensure that academic researchers hold themselves accountable to the values and principles underpinning the methodology of their research efforts in and for the project. They must also make a moral commitment to moving the project to action.

Commitment to Action for Positive Change

The ultimate purpose of CBR is to enable people to enhance their quality of life through strategic action most appropriate for their circumstances. Whereas traditional research creates theories *for* people to inform them how they could or should change, to be ethical, CBR must bring about actual change by or through the participants. CBR cannot be a short-term foray into the lives of others; the academic researchers must have an ongoing commitment to remain in the community setting until community members are ready to take over the process themselves or decide that the project has changed sufficiently to address their current issues. Developing leadership to ensure sustainability of research outcomes was thus a key activity in several of the projects discussed in this book, for

example Hornby and Maistry (Chap. 6), Mercy and Yawovi Dzinekkou (2022; Chap. 10) and Sathorar and Geduld (2022; Chap. 4).

Belief in the Ability of People to Bring About Change in Their Own Lives

Traditional research is based on the premise that academic researchers can, through theoretical analysis of their findings, make recommendations to address complex social problems. Granted, these researchers are very skilled at describing problems, and explaining why such problems occur, but little research of this type is useful to bring about actual change. It may inform policy, but good policies often remain unimplemented on the ground, mostly because they were informed and created by people out of touch with the real-life experiences of those affected by the issue. Ethical CBR requires academic researchers to reject the notion that their knowledge is superior to that of the community members, and to be open to listening and learning from—therefore including in the research—the people experiencing the problem. Academic researchers need to appreciate that they are capable, especially when they have confidence in their ability, and to regard a lack of agency in resolving community problems as a systemic rather than a personal issue. Ethically, academic researchers should create space for other people to learn what they need, to enable them to participate in solving their problems. This principle is illustrated in several of the case studies such as that of Branch et al. (Chap. 11) and Mercy and Yawovi Dzinekkou (Chap. 10), where the focus is on changing the larger system that fuels vulnerability through developing the leadership of community partners as an integral outcome of the project. The educative and political intent of CBR is thus of strategic ethical importance. This is why the integrity of the CBR process depends profoundly on the ability of the academic researcher to embrace a participatory paradigm and to cultivate appreciation of it among fellow research participants.

Building the Capacity of Academics to Conduct Authentic Community-Based Research

Increasing numbers of academic researchers now profess their adherence to participatory forms of research, but in practice many of them end up reproducing traditional, researcher-dominant processes (Andreotti et al., 2015). From my own experience in facilitating the development of academic researchers' capacity to undertake CBR, shifting their understanding, perspective and practices from traditional to transformative paradigms can be difficult, particularly for those drilled in what they have conceived to be objective research methodologies. The case study by Ni Bhriain and Clifford (2022; Chap. 7) illustrated how easy it is for an academic researcher to revert to traditional ways of decision-making, all the while using 'buzzwords of co-creation, empowerment and participation' true to the participatory paradigm (Moreno-Cely et al., 2021, p. 920). To be sure, the mere use of distinctive participatory dialogue and some participatory methods does not necessarily render authentic participation in research (Valencia et al., 2012).

The academic researcher's critical reflection throughout the research project on its purpose(s), processes and participation is key to ensure that all research participants and the project continue to embody the values and principles of CBR through to the completion of the project (Wood et al., 2015). Wood et al. (2015, p. 85) illustrated how academic researchers can do this by using the foundational principles of Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR; discussed in Chap. 1) as the standards of judgement to which they hold themselves accountable. Since most academic research programmes still do not include participatory forms of research, initiatives such as the Knowledge for Change (K4C) consortium coordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Chair in CBR and Social Responsibility (2020) are necessary to equip academic researchers around the world to develop their capacity to engage in CBR. This entails more than learning alternative research methods. Such a paradigm shift entails deep reflection on motives, assumptions, values, personal characteristics, skills and epistemology, and a commitment to embrace a participatory

paradigm if consistent with one's disposition and worldviews (Wood, 2020a).

CBR requires the academic researcher to master skills not normally needed for traditional forms of research such as facilitation skills to ensure that all participants feel included and valued; a high degree of emotional intelligence to be sensitive to possible conflicts and resistances within the group; ability to listen and respond carefully to needs; an understanding of transformative learning theories and group dynamics; the flexibility to deal with uncertainty and unexpected outcomes; respect for diversity and dissenting opinions and courage to innovate and push boundaries both within and outside the structures that academic institutions enforce (Wood, 2020b). Several of the case studies in this book, for example Sathorar and Geduld (Chap. 4) and Branch et al. (Chap. 11), evidenced how critical reflection enabled researchers to recognize potentially more appropriate actions and what they need to learn or consider to ensure better outcomes in the future. Explicit learning about CBR is thus paramount, ideally before entering the field, but as Santos (2022; Chap. 8) found, it can also be developed in situ under close supervision. The ethical implications of CBR, as explained earlier, demand that community members too contribute to identifying what they need to learn to effect change, and that such learning is acknowledged within and beyond conduct of the project as valuable—indeed essential—to sustain the change they desire.

Recognizing and Sustaining the Learning and Development of Community Partners

The educative component of CBR is a crucial consideration for working with marginalized people who have struggled against material and social barriers to access quality education. Yet, the learning these people attain through participating in CBR is often not recognized by certification or by public acknowledgement. In Chaps. 12 and 13 of this book, Richard Teare and I respectively discussed this issue in detail, while putting forward several ideas about possible frameworks to enhance and recognize the learning and development of community participants in CBR.

In Chap. 10 we learnt from Mercy and Yawovi Dzinekkou how a university in Kenya developed a programme to equip students from rural areas to conduct CBR. These students returned to their home villages and applied their learning to mobilize communities towards change for positive community development. This university adopted a pedagogical principle similar to that adopted by the university that Doris Santos discussed in the Colombian case study in Chap. 8. The Colombian university recognized the value of community contributions and integrated this local knowledge into the university's teaching, with appropriate attribution to the knowledge creators. Research undertaken at the National University of Colombia into the CBR process informed the university's decision to develop a unique approach to CBR to suit its specific context of peacebuilding with highly fragmented, marginalized populations living in volatile contexts.

In both of these successful, ongoing CBR projects, each university involved undergraduate students in mobilizing and sustaining the desired change, and this appears to be an important contribution to project success. The anchor for this may well be the values and worldviews that CBR cultivates among research participants, since they include students who are community members. Involving students from the communities with which the university partners can benefit both the students and the CBR projects. Because local students understand the community and how it works, their university education can help to create citizens who learn and later apply the life-enhancing principles and values of CBR in their respective contexts and professions. They are familiar with its power structures and are better able to gain the trust of people with whom they share a language and culture. They are also more likely than others to remain in, or return to, their communities.

Another important point gleaned from the research presented in this book is the need to include a diverse range of stakeholders in the process, such as local government, representatives of cultural and religious groups, and a transdisciplinary team of researchers (see Venter & Moolman, 2022; Chap. 9). Inevitably, the university will withdraw from an active role in the change process, so it is important to create local structures that include other institutions with local knowledge and vested interest in a successful project outcome to ensure that desired change is sustained.

The idea of accredited educational programmes—created specifically to enable community members to take action to achieve positive social change, enrolling local community people, and requiring these people to lead a sustainable change project in their community as a criterion for successful programme completion—is very simple, yet effective. So why are more universities not taking this initiative in partnership with local communities? That question itself deserves critical study, since constructive answers can help to enable more CBR partnerships and the positive community outcomes that they yield.

As Branch et al. (Chap. 11) pointed out, the funding allocated and time available for academic researchers to conduct multi-partner CBR projects are currently insufficient in most higher education institutions. So is the will of university decision-makers, who benefit from and remain comfortable with the status quo of knowledge creation. Indeed, operationalizing the ideas suggested in this book will require influential people in these institutions to rethink many of the research processes and structures universities still uphold, and perhaps most significantly the values and worldviews that underpin these firmly institutionalized arrangements. The instructional changes forced or inspired by COVID-19, and the new spaces these changes have opened up, may pave the way for more structural changes within the university system. They may also lubricate or enable shifts in the dominant research paradigms that are so influential within this system, including the ethics it seeks to uphold and the type and extent of knowledge it seeks to produce.

The understandings developed across this book concern CBR, its place within the university system and its relationship to the research paradigms and ethics that dominate this system. These understandings are useful for developing guidelines to make CBR a more constructive and legitimate research approach in the eyes of all involved, that is universities and academic researchers in partnership with local communities. So let us turn here to conceptualize learning gleaned from the NRF project supporting the creation of this book and map findings into a framework that can serve as a useful guide for advancing ethical CBR within the higher education system.

Mapping the Findings to a Framework

Before engaging in CBR, it is vital that academic researchers have and can embody the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that align with the foundational principles of a participatory paradigm. The opening chapters of this book have explained how an academic researcher's institution holds this researcher responsible for the ethical integrity of the research with which they are associated. That is why in most universities, researchers undergo ethical training, but rarely does this training cover participatory forms of research. University training in research is more likely to concentrate on objective forms of research, so the idea of forming collaborative, democratic partnerships with external partners is a foreign concept for many researchers. The research presented in this book has highlighted important findings and learning from which valuable knowledge can be gleaned to inform CBR with vulnerable populations. These ideas are represented in Fig. 14.1, which suggests a framework for ethical, inclusive and sustainable CBR with vulnerable populations.

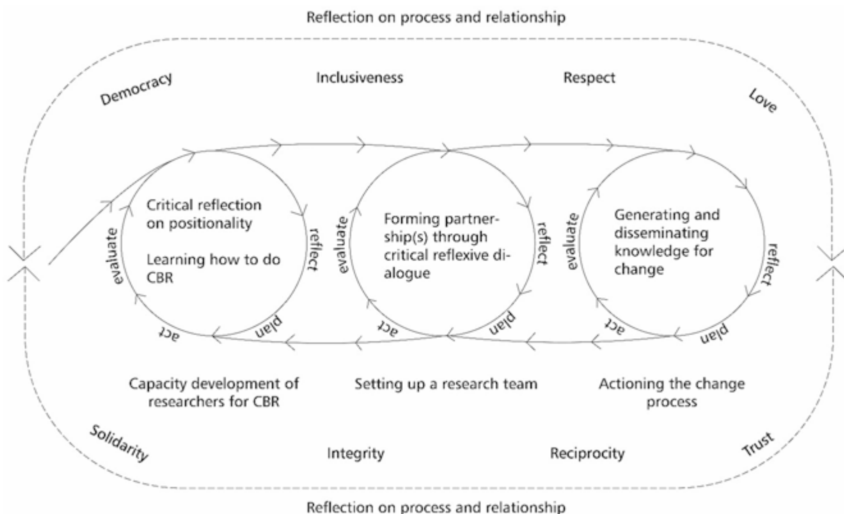

Fig. 14.1 An ethical, inclusive and sustainable framework for CBR with vulnerable populations

Wood (2020b) explained the different components that academic researchers need to master to improve their capacity as participatory researchers. Figure 14.1 stresses the importance for academic researchers to first reflect on their own positionality in relation to the philosophical assumptions of CBR to determine how they may need to change their ontological and epistemological suppositions. It also indicates that they will have to (re)learn ethical considerations in CBR, and how to conduct research ethically with community partners, for example the aims and purpose of CBR as compared to traditional research; to set up and maintain an inclusive and democratic research group and to conduct collaborative enquiries with a focus on self-awareness, critical reflexive dialogue and democratic methods of knowledge generation, analysis and dissemination.

This is akin to a preparation cycle before entering the field, and without it many academics, particularly those from a positivist paradigm, are unable to conduct ethical, inclusive CBR towards action for sustainable positive change. I call it a cycle, rather than phase, to reflect the iterative nature of CBR methodologies. Learning from this preliminary cycle should underpin the whole project and partnership, and thus cannot be just completed and put aside. In Chap. 3 I suggested that researchers undertake such development through a short learning programme (SLP) that can be conducted online or face-to-face, but there may also be other means for academics to attain this learning. As one of the participants in a recent SLP that I facilitated said, indicating their difficulty in making the paradigm shift, 'I have really enjoyed working through the material. I was again confronted with how I still stand with a foot in two worlds'.

This preparatory learning about CBR for academic researchers is vital for the success of research in the field. The aim of CBR is for all project participants to be co-researchers, but this cannot happen overnight in a project working with marginalized groups. All participants need to spend time together to build trust in the relationship, to create a space where participants can feel safe in identifying their learning needs and developing confidence to participate fully in the project (Wood, 2020a; Wood & McAteer, 2017; Zuber-Skerritt et al., 2020). It is therefore paramount that academic researchers learn the skills to do this, so they can enable

similar learning by participants when they enter the field (see Cycle 2 of Fig. 14.1).

The second cycle in Fig. 14.1 is focused on setting up a core research team and developing the relationship between the academic and community or external partners to craft a collaborative vision to which all project participants should ascribe. The work in this cycle includes that all participants identify the useful resources they bring to the group, as well as their learning needs, to enable collaboration towards collectively agreed-upon goals. Sometimes, depending on the life and educational or research experiences of the group members, participants may need months of involvement to feel confident enough to embark on the actual research/action cycle (Wood, 2020a). However, once into this cycle, participants can experientially learn participatory research methods, for example drawing images of ideas/visions, photovoice, PEST (political, economic, social and technological) analysis, and future-creating workshop (for more on this see Wood, 2020b, Chaps. 4 and 6). These research methods enable the research participants to identify the group's shared assets as well as individual and collective learning needs; map the community resources they can draw on to help them with the project; identify and minimize potential threats; clarify and confirm the project's vision and broad goals and negotiate and affirm an ethical agreement. In a multi-stakeholder partnership, this process can be complicated. Nevertheless, it must also be ongoing and be flexible as needs and circumstances change.

Based on their work with vulnerable populations, Moreno-Cely et al. (2021) advocated a similar process to ensure that research conducted by those who claim their approach is collaborative, is in fact so. The first steps in their model concern research participants' understanding of themselves, each other and their purposes in coming together (Who am I? Who do we represent? Why are we here?). It includes guidelines for participation (as well as negotiating ethics); building mutual affection and solidarity (identifying personal and group strengths, team building); opening spaces for co-creation of knowledge (making explicit the value of everyone's input through critical, reflexive dialogue) and taking solutions to practice (setting research goals and questions). The democratic ideals of participatory action research (PAR) are difficult to sustain if this cycle

is rushed or omitted. As Phillips et al. (2018) pointed out, unequal power and knowledge relations can disrupt true dialogue among participants, resulting in academic partners dominating the discussion. All participants in the partnership need to be able to listen respectfully, be comfortable with silence and validate the input of the less powerful members of the group. As Moreno-Cely et al. (2021) argued:

> [D]ialogic listening is a lever with the potential to change the forms of interaction between different types of knowledge. We believe that a mentality shift in how we communicate is necessary to close the gap between diverse knowledge systems. Our contribution seeks (i) to explore alternative pathways in which different types of knowledge co-exist and are enriched by each other; (ii) to delve into the potentialities of listening in an inter-ontological and epistemological dialogue. (p. 923)

The lives, experiences, education and status of privileged academics are usually far removed from those of our community partners, who, in South Africa at least, normally do not share the same language with their academic partners. Communication is a complex business in the context of diverse knowledge and language cultures. Hence, the need for all participants to listen carefully to each other; to understand, clarify and probe, to gain others' insights, observations and questions on which to reflect, to check out meaning and begin to create shared ontological and epistemological understandings. Investing time on this cycle will help to improve collaboration in the following action cycle.

The third cycle in Fig. 14.1 concerns the actual research process, where the partners collaboratively identify specific research questions and determine how to generate data. To ensure full participation of partners who are external to the university, it is usually necessary to develop their associated knowledge and research skills at this stage, so all participants are ready for this stage of collectively designing and implementing the action plan(s). They then decide how and where to share the knowledge they co-create through the project, to benefit from the desired positive change in their own communities and beyond. Participants' individual and collaborative reflection on their learning helps them to determine the next steps in the project, should they deem it necessary to continue.

These three cycles do not necessarily proceed in a linear fashion. Circumstances and needs can change, and participants need to continue reflecting critically on their work within and across all three cycles throughout the research process to ensure they are aware of, have critically considered, and are best placed to adapt or otherwise respond to these changes. Because CBR involves partnerships with university researchers, the learning gleaned from the research presented here highlights important points to note to ensure that CBR is ethical research practice. This requires that CBR not only is inclusive and sustainable, but also enables university partners to meet the ethics standards that universities are required to satisfy. These points of highlight are:

1. You cannot assume that any researchers in a CBR partnership—from university, community or elsewhere—know how to do CBR. CBR is a participatory paradigm uncommon among researchers who have not been exposed to the idea of democratic research, which strives to generate knowledge to underpin social action for positive change, rather than to add solely to a disciplinary body of knowledge. Thus, explicit development of researchers' capacity to conduct CBR is a necessary starting point, until CBR is recognized and valued as a valid research paradigm.
2. Sociohistorical oppression over a protracted period of time has negatively impacted on the psyche and capabilities of certain populations, leading to a loss in self-belief in their ability to contribute meaningfully to changing their circumstances through peaceful means. This creates a need to spend time on the educative and emancipatory work of PAR by creating a safe space for listening, questioning and learning. Development of trusting relationships among project participants will help to build participants' confidence and their capacity to fully engage in the change process. That is why PALAR (see Wood, 2020b, for a full explanation of PALAR and how to operationalize it) was the preferred design of the research team in the NRF project that inspired this book.
3. Involving students in CBR via critical service learning will help to improve the social responsiveness of the university on various levels. First, including students from vulnerable communities and teaching

them how to conduct CBR will enable change from the inside, that is within members of these communities themselves. Second, requiring students from more privileged communities to engage in CBR with vulnerable populations will help these students from both community types to develop a stronger understanding of social (in)justice and of the role they can play as future employers and leaders in perpetuating or reducing inequalities. Third, academics who are required to create such courses at universities will need to develop their own understanding of marginalization, and their political will not only to theorize about it, but also find ways to engage students in actions related to minimizing social injustices.

4. The more that students and researchers embark on such initiatives, the more university committees and leadership will have to find ways to support them. This will lead to the transformation of existing processes and policies to find positive solutions to the ethical, financial and time challenges that community-engaged research and teaching now confront. To reach this tipping point or critical mass where CBR becomes 'mainstream' research, simply requires more researchers to adopt a participatory paradigm and engage in CBR, in partnership with external stakeholders, towards fulfilment of the United Nations sustainable development goals.

Contribution of the Book to Knowledge and Practice

Universities can no longer be elite institutions to educate and reproduce the wealthy; their responsibilities to educate extend well beyond the so-called ivory tower. Today, socially disadvantaged populations are seeking to enhance community well-being by enacting change themselves in the communities where they live. Higher education institutions across the world need to respond effectively to the pressing issue of engaging with these disadvantaged populations to help develop and support their communities' capacity to do so. Partnerships for community-based research, linking university researchers with community members to undertake

problem-solving research at the community level, are becoming a valuable response.

This book provides a needed introduction to CBR through such partnerships. It explains the conduct of CBR, linking university researchers with community members in vulnerable populations, particularly those working in the fields of social science and education. However, the processes, practices and theories of CBR presented in this book also have relevance across the disciplines. In this way the book's content responds to the urgent need for methodologies and methods that support and enable engaged scholars to work with disadvantaged communities on the pressing social issues of our time. In a global setting where poverty and marginalization are increasing, this book provides insights into how to action social change through research by acknowledging and including the lived and experiential knowledge of vulnerable or marginalized populations.

Rooted in a critique of the current practices of higher education that fail to support participatory and transformative research, the chapters across this book offer research-based examples of ethical, inclusive and sustainable frameworks for CBR that have international relevance. The chapters explain the importance of academic researchers in a CBR project developing and sustaining a high degree of ethical awareness. The chapters also offer guidelines on how academic researchers can learn to set up and monitor an ethical and inclusive partnership for CBR with local communities, while ensuring consistency with university ethics requirements, which is a crucial matter for the academic researcher. Various answers are suggested across the book in response to the three questions that inspired the book:

1. How do universities need to reapproach CBR, recognizing its worldviews, and consequently, ethical underlay that differs from but are no less principled than those set in place in universities to uphold the dominant paradigm(s) and the status quo these paradigms sustain?
2. What do academics need to (re)learn to enhance their ability to apply the foundational principles and values of CBR to real-life practice?
3. How can universities ensure that the learning of community partners is recognized and sustained?

The chapters across this book also offer suggestions about how higher education can more effectively fulfil its social responsibilities and increase its own capacity for positive educational impact through supporting and enabling research in the developing field of CBR, which has educative, emancipatory and political intent as well as increasingly recognized capacity for beneficial practical outcome. The case studies discussed here offer ideas on how to democratize research partnerships by intentionally counterbalancing power relations among research participants, particularly through strengthening the self-belief and skills of community partners to mobilize for positive change. Case studies also highlight the importance of participants' continuing critical reflection on the process for developing innovative frameworks and methods that more accurately reflect the foundational principles and values of CBR.

This book presents new insights into how CBR aficionados, and others who are interested, can design and carry out CBR projects that are ethical, inclusive and sustainable, while contributing to improved community well-being. Such projects are guided by academic researchers who fully understand the purpose and process of ethical CBR; who embody values and attitudes that promote the flourishing of humanity within their research partnerships with vulnerable populations; and who choose to follow the CBR approach precisely because it is consistent with their own worldviews and values of care, respect and equality of human beings. The suggestions for further reading and critical questions presented at the end of each chapter are designed to provoke further debate and research to strengthen the field of CBR while providing deeper insight into its theory, practice and ethical essence embodiment.

Overall, then, we as its authors believe that as a seminal text on CBR, this book makes valuable contributions to conceptual knowledge and to ethical, problem-solving practices. We recognize the timeliness of this contribution at a historical moment when the ever more deeply troubled world in which we live so clearly needs these contributions to knowledge, to practice and to the challenge needed to depose the dominant academic paradigms still firmly institutionalized in higher education systems across much of the world. Those paradigms are now manifestly beyond their use-by-date as the 'only show in town' for knowledge creation.

Conclusion

In Chap. 1, as editor of this book, I stated and explained the shared aim of authors in collaboratively preparing this work: To provide an ethical, inclusive and sustainable framework to guide university-based researchers to work *with* vulnerable populations for the co-generation of knowledge. In this concluding chapter, I have attempted to draw together the theories, practices and processes explained in the case studies and theoretical chapters to do just that. CBR is grounded in participants' continual critical reflection and the need for flexibility in practice, so any framework for CBR is by nature open to adaptation and improvement by those working in different contexts. The framework represented in Fig. 14.1 does not and cannot provide a conclusive answer to the three questions underpinning this book's line of enquiry. However, the concepts and principles highlighted in this particular framework enhance the formation of *ethical* partnerships in that its approach requires academic researchers to first ensure they understand and are willing and able to apply the democratic and inclusive values and foundational principles of a participatory paradigm. This framework enhances *inclusivity* through increasing the ability of all people who are associated to participate fully in the research, by ensuring they are given opportunity to access the knowledge and skills needed to do so. The negotiation of ethics makes explicit the expectations of each partner and also spells out the different roles and responsibilities of each. Due to the focus on capacity development of both academic and community partners, the outcomes attained are more likely to be *sustained.* The requirement for community partners to mobilize the knowledge in their community also provides public *recognition* of the knowledge produced and their role in its generation. However, as befits the action research paradigm, I have also identified more questions that require research. It is my sincere hope that these questions and the research presented in this book will inspire you, the reader, to embark on CBR yourself to provide some answers. And to experience the challenge, stimulation and upliftment of participating in a CBR project!

Critical Questions to Guide Future Research

Reflecting on the content of this book has highlighted various questions that need to be explored in future research to improve the way we do CBR with vulnerable populations. I list some of these below, as possibilities for further study.

- How can more universities begin to offer certified programmes such as University Mtaani (see Chap. 10) to community members? What are the barriers to this and how can they be overcome?
- What systemic changes will enhance the incorporation of community-engaged scholarship as a core business of universities?
- How can CBR be integrated into undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to encourage more community-engaged knowledge creation in higher education?
- What other approaches to, or requirements for, the development of researchers could be introduced to build capacity for conducting CBR?
- How and where should the process of critical, reflexive dialogue be explicitly taught to bridge knowledge cultures between the university and its community?
- How can ethics committees work towards including CBR as a viable form of research into their policy and decision-making processes?

Further Reading

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