Dangers of generic pedagogical panaceas: implementing service-learning differently in diverse disciplines

Amanda Hlengwa and Sioux McKenna

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Abstract

Descriptions of service-learning in the literature tend to position it as a powerful pedagogic tool as well as an exemplar of 'best practice' applicable across all disciplines and institutional contexts. Furthermore service-learning is couched as a moral imperative. In the South African context, this moral imperative is translated into policy pronouncements driving institutions of higher education to demonstrate responsiveness to the transformation needs of broader society. In this article, two departments, Philosophy and Environmental Science, at one university are used as case studies to interrogate what enables the uptake of service-learning as a pedagogic tool. Drawing on the work of Fairclough, this paper identifies the dominant discourses at play and considers how they constrain or enable the uptake of service-learning. We advocate for the infusion of service-learning in curricula, but argue that institutional culture, disciplinary values and the structure of knowledge impact on its uptake and should not be dismissed in the implementation process.

Introduction

The transformation agenda of South African higher education is informed by policies such as the 1997 White Paper which calls for a re-examination of institutional values:

> South Africa's transition from apartheid and minority rule to democracy requires that all existing practices, institutions and values are viewed anew and rethought in terms of their fitness for the era. Higher education plays a central role in the social, cultural and economic development of modern societies. In South Africa today, the challenge is to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meeting pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities (Department of Education (DoE), 1997, p.7).

The White Paper indicates that universities have to show social responsibility by engaging in community service programmes (Lazarus, 2001). Policy pronouncements such as these contain a strong moral imperative by overtly articulating the role of higher education in driving a transformation agenda in society. The White Paper of 1997 further stated that promoting social responsibility and awareness in students through community service programmes is a goal of higher education, the National Plan for Higher Education (2001) reinforced this by indicating that enhancing responsiveness through community service was a priority, and then the White Paper of 2013 argued that there is a need to explore the ways in which community service can foster constructive social engagement.

Despite regular calls for community engagement to be central to the work of our universities, it is not always evident what is meant by the term. While teaching and research can be seen to enjoy relatively stable conceptualisations, community engagement is plagued by 'epistemological ambiguity' (Hall, 2010). It is not clear who should be responsible for it, who should benefit from it, or what its purpose is; the methods, approaches and scope of community engagement are ill-defined and often contested.

Community engagement activities can be taken to include infusion into teaching and learning (for example, as service-learning) as well as initiatives provided by academic staff in their professional capacity and by students using disciplinary expertise (Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2006). It thus comprises a messy spectrum of activities which often draw from fairly disparate ideological positions that range from notions of charity and good deeds through to being spaces for engaged research and authentic learning.

A number of universities have drawn on the concept of 'public good' (Walker 2012, Williams 2016) to consider how their core activities can enable advantages beyond the private benefits accrued by individual students through their graduation. Community engagement is often cited as one means of correcting the balance between the university's contributions to public and to private goods (see, for example, Subotsky, 2001) and, thus to the forging of a new 'social contract' (Braskamp & Wergin, 1997) in which universities become jointly responsible for social change, along with bodies in the community with which they partner. A consideration of public good benefits provides a platform for more focused attention on community-engaged activities such as service-learning in higher education curricula.

This paper looks at the ways in which service-learning has been conceptualised with a moral charge and then looks at two case studies, Philosophy and Environmental Science, to question the extent to which this moral charge is enough to translate into uptake across the institutional and disciplinary landscape. The paper focuses on two disciplines within a specific university context to consider constraints on the uptake of service-learning as a pedagogic tool. The argument is not *against* the implementation of service-learning, but rather it is a call for a more nuanced approach that takes disciplinary norms and institutional cultures into account, and indeed challenges them where appropriate.

Emergence of service learning

Service-learning emerged in the 1960s (see Hollander, 1999) as a vehicle that would promote engagement and rejuvenate democracy in the academy (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002), through the 'integration of community service into academic study' (Hollander, 1999, p.vii). Because service-learning was positioned as a means of connecting educational processes with real-world issues, the concept was picked up in South Africa in the 1990s, in light of the desperate need for change in the country following the shift to democracy. These are some of the factors that culminate in service-learning emerging as a morally charged concept.

Bringle and Hatcher, who are frequently cited in the South African context, note that:

> Service-learning is a credit bearing education experience in which students participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (1995, p.112).

Service-learning, like its broader counterpart, community engagement, is a concept mired by contestation, evident in the varied definitions describing this pedagogic tool as designed to promote "academic enhancement, personal growth, *and* civic engagement" (Ash & Clayton, 2004, p.138). The intention of service-learning modules is to involve students in organised community service that addresses local needs while developing academic skills, and providing students with opportunities to further develop their sense of social responsiveness and commitment to the community (Hlengwa, 2010). The idea

of service-learning has often been introduced as an exemplar of 'best practice' of engagement between the university and broader community (CHE 2008).

Service-learning is framed as having the potential to contribute to higher education through engagement with societal issues and thereby showing a more visible measure of social responsiveness (Singh, 2014). Service-learning can be seen as a means by which to produce graduates steeped in disciplinary knowledge who are conscious of how that knowledge can be used to alleviate societal pressures.

Methodology

This paper draws from a PhD study (Hlengwa, 2013). Presented as two case studies, this article explores the response to calls for community engagement within two departments: Philosophy and Environmental Science. This allows an in-depth investigation of how programmes within their context of a particular university attempt to implement a national level push towards community engagement as a moral imperative.

Rhodes University is one of five 'research-intensive' universities in the South African system (Cloete, 2010) which affirms discourses within the University constructing it as a 'scholarly university' (Boughey, 2009). There are also strong financial imperatives whereby research is strongly validated in the institution because the state funding formula drives the privileging of research in all universities in South Africa (McKenna & Boughey, 2014).

Data for the cases take the form of curriculum documentation, including departmental handbooks and course guides, and interviews. In Philosophy, interviews were conducted with a senior academic in the department, Peter,[1] and Charlotte,[2] a Masters student. Both were involved with 'The Logic Course' offered as a community outreach project to school learners. The primary researcher initially approached the Head of Department to ask where service-learning was happening in the department. He explained that the only example was the Logics course and indicated the two people most involved in

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[1]   Peter is the pseudonym of the senior academic interviewed.

[2]   Charlotte is the pseudonym of the Masters student interviewed, who has since graduated with a Doctorate in Philosophy.

the running of the course. Both agreed to participate and signed informed consent forms indicating their voluntary participation and detailing their rights.

In Environmental Science, the whole department of four people, all of whom were involved in various service-learning initiatives, participated in a discussion about service-learning and the concerns of the research. This was followed by an in-depth interview with one staff member, Mona.[3]

The aspects of the data being reported here were analysed through Critical Discourse Analysis whereby sets of statements 'which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution' (Kress, 1989, p.7) were identified. Discourses here are understood as a means by which ideological positions are expressed, but more than this, they are understood to function as mechanisms with power over how the world is experienced (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer, 2002). Discourses are thus not merely seen to be reflections of ideas, but as also having power to enable or constrain events from occurring. Furthermore, discourses are understood to be but part of the explanation for the events and experiences in the world. The position taken by the authors of this article, in line with Fairclough (2005), is that all there is to know about a phenomenon cannot be made up only of discourses. In contrast to some postmodern approaches to discourse analysis then, in this article discourses are understood to be but one set of powerful mechanisms which sit alongside a number of other structures each having enabling and constraining powers (Fairclough, 2005). This study is thus partial in its attempts to account for how service-learning emerged in these two case study departments. What follows are the findings of the study presented as a set of dominant discourses that can help us to account for the varied emergence of service-learning as a pedagogic tool in Philosophy and in Environmental Science in this particular research intensive university. We can thereby to begin to consider the various constraints and enablements on the implementation of this pedagogical approach across a range of contexts.

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[3]   Mona is the pseudonym of the senior academic interviewed.

The case of philosopy

In line with the small size of Rhodes University, the Philosophy Department has a small staff complement as well as moderate student numbers. It comprised six full time academic staff and an administrator and under four hundred students from first year through to doctoral level.

Despite significant pressures on academic departments to formally include service-learning in the curriculum, the Philosophy curriculum did not offer courses that use service-learning as pedagogic tool. As will be seen, an argument was made that this was because the nature of the discipline constrained possibilities for such courses. The closest community engaged interaction in the department was at Master's level where students participated on a volunteer basis in the teaching of a course in philosophical logic, 'The Logic Course', at the Grahamstown Area Distress Relief Association (GADRA)[4] 'Matric School'.

This course focuses on teaching informal logic structures at a level accessible to high school learners exposing them to philosophy at a basic level through application rather than an overly theoretical approach. This entailed learners being introduced to the uses of argument and to the nature of fallacies. The Masters students guided the learners into identifying different types of arguments as a way of providing a form of grounding logic. These students worked with the school learners over a nine-month period towards achieving the goals of the course. It is important to note that the Logic Course is neither a formal part of the school learners' curriculum, nor does the service that the students provide by teaching on it provide credits towards their Master's degree. However, the GADRA Logic course meets some of the service-learning criteria identified by Bringle and Hatcher because the students' participation offers them opportunities "to gain further understanding of course content and simultaneously broaden an appreciation of the discipline while enhancing a sense of civic responsibility" (1995, p.112).

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[4]   The Grahamstown Area Distress Relief Association (GADRA) runs a number of projects intended to support citizens of the town. The project of interest to this study is the 'Matric School'. This provides an opportunity for school learners needing to rewrite Grade 12 subjects, which they have either failed or for which they require better marks for the purpose of entering tertiary studies. The GADRA Logic course offered by Philosophy Master's students is included as an extracurricular activity in the Matric School.

Valuing the abstract

The approach to teaching Philosophy in this particular department, according to various course guides, is to induct students into the discipline by exposing them to the breadth of the discipline. Interview data indicates that Charlotte and Peter were in agreement that the approach used leads students through argumentation by asking the really 'big' questions such as 'What is knowledge'? and 'Is scientific enquiry a way to gain knowledge'? The 'big' questions may well be inspired by contemporary issues in communities and therefore driven by a genuine regard for the need to analyse and arrive at plausible explanations of the observable and experienced, but the form of the inquiry is expected to remain theoretically abstracted. Central to the discursive construction of the discipline in the interviews was the idea that it focuses on theorising as means of providing insights of everyday living, but that it does so in formally abstracted ways, thus making it an unlikely discipline to consider service-learning activities; a point echoed in the literature (Zlotkowski in Lisman & Harvey, 2000, p.vi). Academics draw on 'procedures' that result in carefully structured arguments following the rules of logic but the activity is essentially theoretical rather than practical.

Philosophy as a discipline was generally taken by the interviewees, and in line with much of the literature, to be concerned with general and fundamental problems focused on existence, knowledge, values, and reason (Valentine in Lisman & Harvey, 2000, p.145). The academic pursuits of colleagues in this department, in the realms of both teaching and research, are framed by such abstracted approaches. Philosophy in this particular department had very strong boundaries between its concerns and what is seen to be outside of its domain. Knowledge production was thus understood as being 'inward looking' to the norms and values of the Philosophy disciplinary community. Peter's candid reflection illustrates why it would thus seem that the way that knowledge is valued in the discipline makes it less likely to be open to curriculated community based activities:

> *I do think philosophy does see itself largely as a discipline that is not practical, all right? . . .Now the idea of practical is an interesting philosophical concept, we did a lot of analysis about what practical means because, honestly, I don't know what it means. I think when you say that philosophy is not a practical discipline you mean; "I don't care about the world, my focus is on these deep theoretical issues",*

> *allegedly deep theoretical issues. And if I go practical. . . I'm going to water down my discipline.*

There was also a particularly strong discourse of academic freedom as an important value in the data. In the Philosophy Department at Rhodes University curricula discussions are not centralised and individual academics have a great deal of autonomy in determining what to teach and how to assess. As Peter noted: "It is very individualistic the way we choose 'things'". There was a valuing of the individual academic's right to select what gets taught and how it gets taught. This, in turn, means the academics have significant ability to influence the development of the disciplinary identities assumed by their students. In discussing discourses found in research intensive institutions in South Africa, Boughey & McKenna (2014) identified a discourse of 'academic argumentation' where a critical disposition is seen to include the demand to be trusted to develop and implement a curriculum without interference. It is possible that this discourse would work against the system-level implementation of service-learning, despite a 'moral charge' in the national documentation.

The identities forged by academics in this department were closely tied to those of the disciplinary community where the focus for most philosophers is on contemplating the existence of a real world rather than being engaged in practical pursuits *in* a real world (Lisman & Harvey, 2000, p.ix). Furthermore, the academics' identity seemed aligned to the 'argumentative academic' identity identified as common in research intensive universities. However, these identities are potentially in conflict with demands that institutions of higher education, particularly in South Africa, should be socially responsive to the challenges facing society. Peter draws attention to this tension by critically questioning the stance taken by philosophers:

> *We are an institution that is embedded in society. What is our role? What have we done as a community [of philosophers]? I think South Africa presents us with a very interesting format for thinking about this because the problems are so obvious – it hits you in the face every day. Are you just going to be looking inward and ignoring it and drawing your salary whatever, and writing for your peers, or are you going to think about things?*

The GADRA Logic Course would seem to be an opportunity for Philosophy academics to be more involved in community. However, the level of

disciplinary knowledge is not even at a first-year level of Philosophical theory, as expected given that the GADRA Logic Course is a school level introductory course. This made it unlikely, according to the interview data, that the course would be broadly appealing as an activity for most academics in the department.

Philosophers, like members of any other discipline, are beholden to ideas, values and practices that are conceived, argued for and maintained by the disciplinary community which, in turn, then shape the curriculum offered in the department (Henkel, 2005). This seems to imply that the introduction of new ideas about Philosophy, how it should be taught and how it relates to the world 'outside' the discipline (such as the idea that service-learning should be infused into the curriculum) would potentially have consequences with regard to the way the department is viewed by colleagues elsewhere. However, the existence of a volume of essays "Beyond the Tower – Concepts and Models for service-learning in Philosophy" (Lisman & Harvey, 2000) and various other texts (for example, Ramona & Hawthorne, 2011; Oxley & Ramona, 2015) provide evidence that others in the disciplinary community have indeed found it possible to use service-learning to teach Philosophy.

Primary audience discourse

What became apparent from the data is that the nature of the discipline of Philosophy itself, and the curriculum this engenders, promotes an approach to teaching and learning with a tenuous link to practical involvement in social concerns. In this regard, the *primary audience discourse* has the potential to constrain the likelihood of service learning being used as a pedagogic tool in Philosophy. The primary audience for Philosophers identified in the data is the disciplinary community. As Peter explains:

> *What we do in the first instance is speak to our colleagues. We have a community, we speak to each other, and I think that there are some who are not for that, right? Our primary audience should be our peers, but that does not mean that we should not have an impact, that we should not be concerned about issues?*

It would seem that the semantic density of Philosophical concepts and theories (that is, the degree of condensation of meaning, Maton, 2014) is so strong that they require considerable adaptation before they could be

accessible to audiences beyond the boundaries of the discipline and the academy, and this is not viewed as a valuable endeavour. By making semantically dense concepts accessible, there would be the potential to 'water down' the discipline. The focus on the disciplinary community as the primary audience is important as it impacts on the emergence of service-learning.

> *I could tell you some of the things that I would say, that the community [of Philosophy] would say as a whole, one of the things that the community would say as a whole is: 'Who cares?' We are not here to impact on an issue. We are interested in issues, right? Whether it has an impact or not, that is neither here nor there. Perhaps a little less honest response would be – it is a true response but a less honest one- is that there will be a trickle-down effect. We do not really know.*

This discourse constructs philosophers, and the activity of philosophising, as detached from worldly concerns because they are engaged in semantically dense conversations with each other. Philosophers seem to embrace this reputation of research as having limited practical application, and, according Paphitis and Kelland, philosophers working the South African context "have done little to dispel this reputation" (2015, p.420). Paphitis and Kelland reject this dominant view of Philosophy and argue for an ideological paradigm shift that opens up the possibility of infusing service-learning.[5]

Having the disciplinary community of Philosophers as the primary, or even singular, audience for the work of Philosophy reinforces a focus on research as the core business of the academy. This issue was raised in various ways in the data:

> *I will tell you how I see myself, right? I see myself, as primarily, my first love is research, right? That is my first love.*

Although areas of research interest for philosophers are varied, the data suggested that these Philosophers concentrate on what is commonly understood as 'pure' or 'basic' research. The value of this type of research that "lies in the furtherance of human knowledge for its own sake" (Graham,

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[5]   It is interesting to note that since 2014, Peter has been instrumental in developing a credit-bearing course called LiNtetho zoBomi (zoBom) conceptualised as providing students with access to existential conversations. This course which draws strongly on the discipline of Philosophy but explicitly uses service-learning as a pedagogic tool. However, it has found its home outside of the Philosophy department in another academic centre.

2005, p.82) is different to that of applied research that has utility and a 'further end' framing. A claim can be made that the *research driven discourse* in this Philosophy department adds to the factors that constrain the emergence of service-learning, especially since the emphasis and interest of the disciplinary community is on understanding the world within their disciplinary community rather than changing it.

Discourse of teaching as common sense

The discourses discussed thus far account for the systemic discipline based factors constraining the use of service learning as pedagogic tool in Philosophy. In contrast to this is a discourse whereby teaching is not particularly valued as a complex social practice. Peter offers insights into the emphasis placed on pedagogy in his discipline, from which emerges a discourse of teaching as common sense:

> *I do not think Philosophers on the whole – I do not know what happens in other disciplines, I imagine similar things - do not really reflect that much on their teaching. Teaching is something that just happens naturally. It is a thing that happens when you go into a lecture - you impart information. But the focus is on research, not everyone, but for the most part.*

As a pedagogic tool, service-learning would in part require academics to reflect specifically on pedagogic practice. As long as pedagogy is understood to be a common-sense practice undertaken alongside more valued research activity, then it seems unlikely that there would be an opportunity to re-imagine teaching of Philosophy to include service-learning modules. Having discussed some of the dominant discourses which seem to constrain the easy implementation of service-learning in the case of Philosophy, we now move to consider the discourses that emerged in the case of Environmental Science.

The case of environmental science

Environmental Science was a relatively young department in the institution, originating out of a cross-departmental programme located in the Science Faculty. The four permanent academic staff members had committed

themselves to answering the growing demand for suitably qualified environmental professionals able to tackle environmental management and sustainable development.

While the department did not use the term service-learning, there is a course offered by the department that meets the definition. The course, Environmental Monitoring and Monitoring Systems (ENV 301), is offered in the third year and has seven outcomes that culminate in a practical year-long research project. The outcomes capture the academics' aspirations of what students would experience of the ways in which project management principles can be applied in the field. Central is the ability to work outside of the university with members of the community in interrogating a particular real-world issue.

The students are divided into project teams required to answer questions about specific environmental conditions and trends that affect humans and the broader environment, and which manifest locally. The projects also values students' developing an understanding of the significance of society's response. As Mona explains:

> *So, they might go out and do some measurements on the vegetation and they will interview some people and see how they are using the commonage and that kind of thing. So, it will be, we try and make those third-year projects span the three focus areas of social, economic and ecological.*

The theory introduced in the course centres around the design and implementation of environmental monitoring systems appropriate at different spatial and temporal scales and which integrate the biological, social and economic components of environmental systems. These are then investigated and reflected upon by means of the research project.

The research projects require the students to view Environmental Sciences from a range of perspectives thus making it important to not only interact and work in teams with each other, but also to work with other teams drawing on knowledge and expertise beyond the borders of the academy. The expectations of the course align readily with service-learning criteria.

Discourse in environmental science

Valuing research

Rhodes University's status as a research-intensive institution is aligned with this department's culture of constructing research activities as being the most prestigious of their activities. The valuing of research is of course not limited to this institution, or even to research intensive universities, and is arguably driven by notions of status and, as mentioned earlier, by the 'flat' nature of the national funding formula.

The 'Valuing Research' discourse signifies a conscious and purposefully deep engagement with research processes. The staff in this department draw on this discourse in justifying time spent on developing funding proposals for research projects. Staff members often collaborate in order to produce contract research. Mona alludes to this in discussing the premium placed on research:

> *Well, we publish a lot. We're a very productive department. We bring in masses of money. For us, because our fields apply, because the world is worried about what's happening, there is masses of opportunity for money. You have to work hard to get it, but you can. So that brings us recognition. We're a tiny department, there's four of us but we bring millions of Rands into this university that helps fund our students, and helps build linkages with other organizations around the world and so on.*

Staff members in the department drew on this discourse in developing the ENV 301 course, which has research as its focus. A key aim of the course is to inducat students into the knowledge production processes in the field of Environmental Sciences, from problem identification, to data collection, to data analysis and dissemination of findings.

Intergrative discourse

The interview with Mona was replete with evidence of an *Integrative Discourse*. Here integrating oneself into the academic community in ways that entail being able to work across fixed boundaries of traditional disciplines, is valued. This is evident in the emphasis Environmental Science places on a

what is understood to be a successful education in the field – the undergraduate curriculum is, according to the data, firmly focused on the production of graduate students with a particular orientation towards and relationship with the environment. One of the key concerns in the Department is thus the production of the next generation of a particular kind of 'Knower' (Maton, 2014). While there is a strong knowledge base to Environmental Science, it draws from multiple disciplines and it is the development of the attributes of the Knower that is central in the curriculum. The quintessential Environmental Scientist, according to Mona, has a sound foundation in a specialist discipline, but, most importantly, takes on a particular 'understanding of the world around them'. This understanding entails acknowledging different worldviews from which different value systems emerge. This acknowledgment is critical to successful interaction in interdisciplinary research groups understood to be central for the addressing of complex socio-ecological issues.

Linked to the integrative discourse, where Environmental Scientists are expected to be able to integrate themselves into various inter-disciplinary communities to address environmental concerns, was the '*In Society*' discourse. This discourse promoted the ideal of situating the University closer to broader society, thus answering the call for universities to be a partner in a new social contract. This was linked to a wider social justice agenda of addressing social inequities. The *'In Society'* discourse clearly understood the University, and the Environmental Sciences department in particular, as having a role to play in addressing inequities not as an adjunct concern but as central to the identity of the department.

Mona and her colleagues explicitly focus on responding to the world beyond the university walls. This involves responding to environmental and sustainable development challenges and thus requires that curricula are developed that allow students to respond to these challenges. The ever-changing nature of the challenges means that course content needs constantly to be reviewed.

> *So [we draw] examples from the latest publications, [and] other materials that come across our desk. You know, like now this year, when I teach climate change I am going to have to do the conclusions from the [latest conference]. So, you have got to be constantly updating things.*

The process of updating and keeping the material current is the responsibility of individual lecturers, which echoes the discourse of academic freedom found in the Philosophy case. However, in this Department the curriculum development process that is followed entails that the changes are not only made at the level of the individual lecturer's syllabus but rather involve a sharing of practice amongst colleagues. Mona and her colleagues participate in regular curriculum review processes where the changes at individual course level are reviewed in order to see how they integrate and enhance the programme as a whole.

> *But we do meet [at least] twice a year for our kind of long Departmental Indabas.[6] We look at the course evaluations and get feedback from that, and we discuss it. [We ask] 'Is this too difficult at second year level?' Are they grasping this? But yes, it is important that they get it at this early stage. So, we do talk about it and reflect on our courses and see if any changes need to be made. And then, every year, we update our courses all the time, because in our field there is no textbook, and the field's changing so rapidly.*

Valuing pedagogy

Valuing Pedagogy was another discourse evident in the Environmental Sciences case study data. This discourse privileges a focused attention on pedagogical practice. For example, conference presentations could include knowledge from the field or from the classroom.

> *I've just come back from Florida, and I was invited to present at a conference which was held by what's called the Tropical Conservation and Development Programme. . . and there was a whole session on education on the last day, and it was absolutely fascinating. I got up and I said, "This has been amazing." You know, it really reinforced for me that we're doing the right thing back here.*

The *Valuing Pedagogy* discourse is located within the broader order of *Integrative Discourses* because it is indicative of a broader commitment to the way attention to teaching is linked to the broader ideals of Environmental

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[6]   Indaba is a Zulu word for 'news', used in South African English context to constitute a meeting or a forum where different views on a topic are shared.

Science. It can be argued that the explicit focus on pedagogy and the culture of overtly considering curriculum issues in departmental conversations makes it more possible to include service-learning approaches which would require careful understanding of how teaching and learning occur.

Conclusion

This paper offers insights into factors that influence curriculum decision-making in a Philosophy department and an Environmental Sciences department at a research-intensive institution. These specific curriculum cases are used to question the generic imposition of service-learning as both morally and pedagogically best practice. While this paper advocates service-learning as a beneficial pedagogic tool of any socially concerned curriculum, we argue that the development of any service-learning initiative needs to take seriously the knowledge structure of the target discipline as well as the inherent disciplinary values and institutional culture.

The argument presented concedes that singular,[7] inward-looking disciplinary communities are faced with the task of balancing the disciplinary values with the call to consider the use of pedagogic tools such as service-learning as a mean of heeding the strong moral imperative faced by the academy. The knowledge structure of a discipline like Philosophy has been shown to impact on the incorporation of service-learning as a pedagogic tool. On the other hand, the structure of knowledge in Environmental Sciences, with its strong valuing of integration and the development of a Knower who can respond to concerns in the world, is likely to have an easier time of implementing service-learning. It becomes apparent that service learning is not generic and may differ significantly across disciplines to the extent that it challenges the simplistic definitions promoted in generic guides.

Universities increasingly have to contend with pressures from outside the academy that impact on core disciplinary values and functions. Publically funded institutions like Rhodes University are, to some level, autonomous yet at the same time they are held accountable to the public purse by various mechanisms. University leaders and individual academics then have the

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[7]   Bernstein (2000) distinguishes between singular disciplines which are inward looking in their knowledge production (such as Philosophy) and regions which draw on multiple disciplines and look out to the world of work (such as Environmental Sciences).

responsibility to maintain a balance between these external demands and the integrity of the academic enterprise.

Until we understand what the discipline values then we cannot impose a pedagogical approach as generic good practice. This has significance for those in academic development who are responsible for working with academics around issues of curriculum development. Such considerations of the impact of disciplinary structures and values also provide an important critique of decontexualised 'best practice' discourses prevalent in many national documents, including the framing of a number of national quality initiatives. With an understanding of the ways in which the values and structures of the disciplinary knowledge impact on what is pedagogically possible, the notion of 'best practice' comes under scrutiny and we are forced to work in more careful ways to implement curriculum initiatives.

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Amanda Hlengwa
Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL)
Rhodes University

a.hlengwa@ru.ac.za

Sioux McKenna
Director of Postgraduate Studies &
Higher Education Studies PhD Coordinator
Rhodes Univesity

s.mckenna@ru.ac.za