UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: LIVING THE CONTRADICTION

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Resumo

As part of the post-apartheid reconstruction of the South African Higher Education system, universities have included community engagement as one of the three pillars of its core business along with teaching and research. However, the approach to community engagement by Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) is characterized by the hegemonic notion that HEI's are the only institutions who have knowledge to offer. Furthermore, research and engagement are mainly conducted on communities, reinforcing the Eurocentric notion that the University is at the centre of knowledge generation. In addition, due to our particular history in South Africa, universities are still perceived as institutions who extract information from communities without making any meaningful contributions to these communities, including not recognizing the voice and agency of the people on who they were doing research. We make this claim on two accounts; firstly, we give an account as educators who worked in schools who were researched on by universities. Secondly, we reflect through the lens of academics doing engagement with communities. It is through this lived experience that we grapple with the tension of wanting the university to play a more central role in the transformation of communities versus the more perceived privileged role it occupies. We reflect on how this tension is further escalated after attending a conference in Colombia, which challenged our ontology of community engagement. It is through our own lived experiences that we interrogate our living theory around what community engagement ought to look like within a South African society challenged with so many contradictions.

Keywords: Community Engagement; Higher Education Institutions; Living Theory; Reflective Practice.

1. Introduction

South Africa is faced with many contradictions that continue to plague us more than two decades after our first democratic elections. These contradictions manifest in the socio-economic challenges, which confront most of our predominantly black communities. These contradictions extend beyond the geographic boundaries of communities and are reflected in the formal institutions, whose purpose it is to serve society. Universities are

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one such institution, charged with the responsibility of not only serving the interest of a privilege few. The South African government has specifically tasked universities to contribute to broader societal transformation, and to work towards addressing the challenges of the South African population.

However, the question confronting us is do our universities have the will, capacity, support and agency to become agents of this societal transformation, to bring about an equitable society. Due to our history, universities in their interaction with the wider society, mirror the unequal and segregated socio-political landscape of our country. To some extent, universities can be perceived as maintaining the status quo of the two-tier education system that has been prevalent in our country. Although attempts are being made to engage with these contradictions, universities still seem to favour and serve the middle class and rich, at the expense of the black majority. We need to recognize the culpability and concurrently the possibility of how the structures that maintain the university can ultimately transform it. Furthermore, although many universities have engagement activities with communities, the question is what influences are they truly having on improving the conditions within these communities? Besides improving the conditions of the lives of the community, it is important to explore how the interaction occurs between community and university. Is it a case of the university coming in to help and give advice or is it a case of the university coming to learn and work with the community to bring about transformation and social upliftment?

Due to our apartheid past and how universities used to be viewed; universities, in their interaction with the wider community, still seem to mirror the hegemonic, unequal approach to epistemological knowledge creation. This hegemonic approach or superior knowledge positioning, could create the notion that university community engagement is oppressive and one-sided, with the university being the primary beneficiary. Within the growing inequalities, not only in our country but globally as well, it is becoming apparent that as academics we have to re-think how we engage with communities to bring about meaningful change and transform the society for all.

It is against this background that we, in our capacity as academics at a university in South African explore the complexity of living in the contradiction. Delivering on the mandate regarding community engagement often stands in contradiction with what is required for true transformation to take place. This contradiction creates a tension with our ontology regarding community engagement.

2. Our Lived experience

For the purpose of this paper, we draw on our lived experience to reflect on the role of HEI's in community engagement. We share our experience of the educational system in South Africa and how we have experienced community engagement by HEI's at various stages of our life journeys.

We were all born into racially segregated, socio-economically challenged communities in the midst of apartheid South Africa. Our exposure to the educational system while growing up was that of a segregated and unequal education system where our schools had limited resources as compared to the privileged white schools. Yet, we are mindful of even harsher conditions experienced by the black majority in the country. Despite the

constraints and with the support of community networks we managed to navigate the prevailing unequal education system.

Bruce in his reflection highlighted the unequal reality that prevailed as we grew up and how this framed his thinking:

> *"I grew up classified as a coloured under apartheid and my socialisation was framed by this upbringing. Although, not equal to the white population, I was more advantaged than the black majority in the country".*

Deidre highlights the importance of proverbial storytelling in the community that served as inspiration and motivation to fight apartheid and the impediment of poverty. The young were encouraged to become "educated" as it was perceived that it was only through an education that you would be freed from poverty:

> *"How does one outline the genesis of an inspiration? The community in which I grew up had a strong code of traditional moral values, mostly enshrined and intertwined in the language used; a language very rich in proverbs: No man is an island.... However, this conventional wisdom is being eroded, as reflected in the fact that its manifestation in language is disappearing and losing its original meaning because of the unending cycle of poverty and its corrosive effect."*

Similar to Deidre, Heloise's reminiscences highlighted the strong sense of community that prevailed during the apartheid years and how families and communities rallied around the youth to obtain an education.

> *"I attended a Catholic school from grade 1 to grade 12 and the catholic ethos of fairness, social justice and equality for all was instilled in me from an early age. I saw the school as an extension of my family…a home away from home…where I learned and played with peers from a similar race, culture and background. The school with the church was the centre of our community and my parents with their peers worked hard to raise funds to ensure that us young ones would get a good education. Apartheid prevented the people of my community from accessing institutions of higher learning and it was thus, seen as a privilege if you could attend a university."*

The apartheid education system in South Africa was designed to serve the ideological philosophy of the government of the day. Thus, not many options were available to us. In addition to this, universities at the time were absent from any form of engagement within our communities. Our first encounter with HEI's was when we enrolled to train as teachers. Subsequently, as qualified teachers working in schools, we were then exposed to engagement by the university that tended to focus on doing research on our learners, our community and us.

Bruce recalls how in his many years as a teacher and subsequently a school principal he was asked by the local university to participate in various research projects. He highlights the lack of sustainability of such research projects in his reflection.

> *"Having spent more than 25 years in the formal education sector, 15 years as a school principal, I have experienced university engagement at a number of levels. All this experience was in communities who were confronted with severe socio-economic conditions and I knew that if we*

wanted to impact on improving the quality of education for the learners at my school, we had to establish meaningful partnerships with multiple stakeholders. I recognised that among these stakeholders the university could have been a key stakeholder in providing not only intellectual support but material support as well. Engagement between university and community/school was new at the time and we looked at the university as the institution who should provide solutions to the multiple challenges we faced.

We were looking for a broad spectrum of support, which included academic, extra mural, and social support. In reflecting on my experience now, it becomes apparent to me that the support from the university was more to find out information from us rather than support. When I started pursuing postgraduate studies, I was exposed to action research. The philosophical underpinnings of action research made me realise the value of the possibilities of a relationship between the university and the community for social justice. However, I realised that if the relationship was not reciprocal, it had little or no sustained value for the school. Therefore, we had a number of masters and even two doctoral students, who completed their studies through research projects at the school. During the time that they were engaged in the school there was value in the relationship, but as soon as they left the space, most of the projects did not continue and we seldom saw the 'researchers' again."

Deidre taught at primary school level for 19 years and served her school as deputy principal. She recalls how her role as female leader, in an otherwise male dominated school leadership context, was deemed an interesting research topic for postgraduate studies. She is reminded of how she was overwhelmed by requests to participate in research projects and how the research approach left her feeling violated and disempowered at times.

"The school, at which I was teaching, opened its doors in 1975. Not once in the history of this school was it ever lead by a female principal, nor did a female ever serve as the deputy principal of this school. Within the schools in Port Elizabeth, women in management positions are still in the minority, despite the many changes that have taken place in education in South Africa in recent years. This resulted in this population group being a very sort after entity for research by the local university. However, within this research relationship I experienced a lot of social exclusion as the "research object", leading to feelings of alienation and marginalization."

In addition, Heloise recalls how the lack of university presence and limited community engagement by the university made her a symbol of the university to the community she worked in.

"My first teaching post was at my Alma Mater, as I wanted to give back to the community that supported me to obtain an education. Because the school was situated outside of Port Elizabeth, we seldom saw the local university at our school. Learners and the community got to know about the university through me – and I became a symbol of the university. During my time at the school, I can only recall the university coming to the school once, and that was to supply computers to the school. No training or support was supplied to the school's teachers on how to use the computers

or how to use it in their teaching and thus, the computers remained locked and unused in a designated room."

After many years in different leadership roles in schools, we proceeded on our academic journey within the Faculty of Education at the now Nelson Mandela University. Our journey has allowed us to experience the university within the schooling context as teachers and finally, now as academics working at the university and preparing student teachers to teach in our schools in South Africa. Our journey makes us aware of the important role that university partnerships with schools and communities play in the preparation of these teachers. We have become conscious of how the knowledge of the community and the schools can assist the university to prepare teachers to work in these communities that in turn could contribute to transformation within the university and the community. We are of the opinion that schools and communities should be recognized as equal partners in the creation of knowledge. This notion of developing equal partnerships for sustainable transformation is constantly challenged by prescriptions, deadlines and attaining objectives. We live the contradiction, and the struggle continues in being persistent, and by challenging the dominant beliefs.

Bruce as head of an engagement entity at the university has to deal with these contradictions from time to time.

"Now having moved into the University space as head of an engagement entity, I find myself struggling to deal with these same contradictions of not wanting to impose knowledge but rather co-construct knowledge to improve the lives of not only schools but communities as well. Some of the programmes, especially the funded programmes, have clear agendas of what they would like to achieve, and little space is provided to value the knowledge of the community. It is these tensions that ensure that I have to navigate a daily contradiction of serving my institution's objective sometimes at the expense of my own ontological beliefs of wanting to value the voice of the community."

Likewise, Deidre reflects how her beliefs about community engagement is challenged through the practice within the institution.

"When I joined the institution in 2011, I claimed to have generated a living theory of learning to engage for social justice. I thought I found my own voice through pursuing my research into my practice. However, I came to realize that my practice of community engagement was monotonous and contradictory to my initial purpose for joining the university – that is: wanting to make a meaningful difference in the community."

Heloise reflects on the important role of the community in education and explicates her struggle about wanting to engage in collaborative consultation with communities but having to adhere to prescribed content and attaining certain objectives.

"The African proverb states: that it takes a community to raise a child. In my role as teacher educator, I strive to collaborate with the community regarding the teacher preparation and

education programme. This is important as the students are in fact being prepared to go and work in these communities. In my view, it is important that the communities share their knowledge and experiences with the university. In return, it is equally important that students and the university get to know what these communities are about and what they know. Prescribed content and time constraints make this collaborative consultation extremely difficult in the current context of Higher Education. Furthermore, the traditional view of the university as the knowledge creator and problem solver further complicates matters, as those within the university position themselves as knowers during collaborative consultations; while the community members feel that they have nothing to contribute. A radical mind-shift is required regarding community engagement and involving the community voice in university activities."

The above expositions give an indication of the contradiction we live as university academics regarding community engagement. This paper is our way of sharing the contradiction we experience as well as seeking ways of dealing with it. As such, we turn to the literature regarding community engagement for reference and guidance. A brief literature review follows.

3. Literature review

The White Paper on the transformation of Higher Education (Department of Education, 1997) sets out broad national goals, and refers to community engagement as an integral and core part of Higher Education in South Africa. The White Paper makes specific reference to the role community engagement can play in transforming the Higher Education system. HEIs are called on to "demonstrate social responsibility and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes" (1997: 10). This statement in itself seems to suggest that HEIs are the knowers within communities without acknowledging the contribution communities can make to knowledge. This position is further complicated by universities having to position themselves as credible institutions within the international space as well as the need to generate additional income to support university activities.

As public universities increasingly seek to generate 'third stream income' to supplement resources, this has often resulted in, "the commercialization of universities; which means business in education at the expense of organic, meaningful community engagement" (Nayyar, 2008). Alongside this, globalization is exercising an influence on the nature of institutions and on the ways and means of providing Higher Education. Furthermore, globalization is shaping education both in terms of what is taught and what is researched (Nayyar, 2008: 7, Duderstadt, Taggart & Weber, 2008: 275). Resulting in re-enforcing the status quo of teaching and research first and subsequently risk reproducing social inequities and Eurocentric practices in our approaches to engagement (Dempsey 2010).

Lazarus (2007) mentions that, while most HEIs at the time included the concept of community engagement in their mission statements, only one out of the then 36 institutions operationalized it, in their three-year rolling plans submitted to the Department of Education. This was highlighted by the outcomes of the thirteen institutional audits completed by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) between 2004 and 2008.

These audit reports indicated that universities are at different stages in conceptualizing community engagement practice:

> "Some institutions had done no more than conduct internal audits or compile inventories of on-going community engagement activities. There were few databases available and no monitoring systems. Community engagement was sometimes driven by volunteerism and foreign students were queuing up to come to South Africa to involve themselves in community engagement" (Lange in CHE, 2008).

Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna & Slamat, (2008) further claim that South Africa's post-1994 Higher Education system, of policy and quality assurance in the area of community engagement and the outreach programmes to bring about social upliftment of impoverished communities, can be one of the success stories of the universities. However, looking at the sustainable impact of these engagements one realizes that these outcomes further highlights the contradictions – change for whom, a better life for whom, whose knowledge is being recognized, and what are the lasting effects of these engagements?

Where community engagement does take place, these activities are organized around research and teaching and these activities are in most cases uncoordinated and are the result of individual initiatives, rather than of strategically planned, systematic endeavours of the university as a whole (Mtawa, Fongwa & Wangenge-Ouma, 2016). In order to ensure a more coordinated approach to community engagement, a two-way model to community engagement is needed instead of the one-way model, as it is currently being practiced (Weerts and Sandmann, 2008). They further suggest that a one-way model focuses on the delivery of knowledge and service to the public; whilst the two-way model motivates for the interactive exchange of knowledge between HEIs and the communities in the context of a partnership, reciprocity and mutual learning. Community engagement is increasingly shifting from being seen as supporting communities to being positioned in the university knowledge function (Mtawa, et al. 2016). This statement results in a number of definitions and theoretical positions being proposed and adopted.

At our own institution, engagement is defined as a reciprocal process of mutual sharing of knowledge, skills and resources between the university and the broader community (both internal and external) to enrich scholarship, research and creative activity. Furthermore, its intention is to enhance teaching and learning; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; contribute to public good and transformation as well as to enhance social, economic and ecological sustainability. The definition provided above distinguishes four elements that are common to engagement at Nelson Mandela University. The first is that it is reciprocal and mutually beneficial. It involves a two-way flow of knowledge and there is a high potential for joint learning that deepens the understanding of all participants, strengthens scholarly activities, and contributes to the development and empowerment of communities. Secondly, that it should be informed by scholarly activity that is practice-based and grounded in the contextual realities of communities. Thirdly, that it should be integrated and embedded into the core functions of the university, and finally that there is mutual planning, implementation and assessment among collaborates which includes external stakeholders, students and university staff[4].

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[4] http://caec.mandela.ac.za/Engagement-Information-and-Development

This view of our university seems to be in alignment with Bender's (2008) view that community engagement thus, is embedded in the process of knowledge exchange between universities and communities through co-inquiry (jointly undertaking research activities), co-learning, interdisciplinary activities and the use of knowledge, which solve real community/societal problems. After reviewing policy, legislation and literature including institutional policy on community engagement we agree with Bender's (2008) understanding of community engagement. However, despite the clear directive regarding community engagement, we perceive discrepancies in how these policies are implemented at institutional level. It is in this contradiction that we stand, and it thus serves as a catalyst for us to explore our own living theory regarding community engagement.

4. Methodology – Living theory to reflect on our own experience

In constructing this paper, we framed our reflection and interaction around a critical emancipatory paradigm (Montero, 2000), and it is further informed by our lived experience. For the methodology, we draw on the living educational theory, which states that:

> "In living educational theories, the explanations are produced by practitioner researchers in enquiries that are focused on living values more fully in the practice of enquiries of the kind "How do I improve what I am doing here?" Whitehead (in McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 2003:165).

The need to improve on our present practice is premised on the notion that we do have a theory, and we have a right to make some claim to knowledge (Whitehead and Mcniff, 2006). This paradigmatic and methodological approach is important for us as academics, especially within the context of our country that is in a constant state of flux. This ontological stance is further supported by Whitehead and Mcniff (2006: 30) stating that: 'Living educational action researchers believe that their theories constantly need revisiting and reforming as the circumstances of their lives (and society) change, so their theories are always in a state of lived modification'. In addition, Zuber-Skerrit (2011) states that we need an action leadership, through engagement with others in an active, collaborative and shared way. As academics, we have used these paradigmatic underpinnings and methodological approach in postgraduate studies and other engagement projects. However, these ontological beliefs were further disrupted when we attended an Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) conference in June 2017.

5. A moment of tension that disrupted our ontology

As indicated in Section 4 above, we share a common experience in living a contradiction regarding university partnerships and community engagement. All three of us agree that the role that the community plays within the university needs to be enhanced and the community voice needs to be acknowledged. We also highlighted several aspects, including, policy, university structures and regulations, prescribed content and time constraints that hamper effective community engagement and in turn sustainable transformation. The contradiction that we

live was further disturbed by a common experience shared during a conference we attended in Colombia. Below is a brief reflection of our experiences and learnings while attending the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) International Conference held in Cartagena, Colombia from the 12-16 June 2017.

The narrative of the following reflection is influenced by our numerous engagements during the conference as well as through the synergies of the Latin American struggles and our own. Cartagena, like our hometown Port Elizabeth, has at the superficial level a beautiful aesthetic appearance. However, after a bus tour and conversation with some of our Colombian colleagues' we were reminded that this was the tourist face, and in the underbelly the majority of the citizens were facing a daily struggle to survive, as is the case in our home town. A tale of two cities, a reminder of the comparable geo-political struggles of the countries of the South. It is these contradictions, which reinforce the need for active agency, to deal with these inherent contradictions in our societies.

Multiple speakers and engagements during the conference reminded us that we are not just pedagogic workers but that we should be active change agents in our communities and spaces of work. A clear example of living this theory was the action of the keynote speaker Boaventura de Sousa Santos. During one of the conference days, he took time-off to address striking teachers and community members in a local town square. This notion challenges us as academics to 'come down from our pedestals and join the masses' and to 'reclaim our souls', which one conference speaker claims we as academics have lost.

Furthermore, some of the points that were made, with regard to epistemology during the conference, which further encouraged collective interrogation of our ontological assumptions include: dialogue is the purest form of new knowledge; recognition that personal experiences are significant; recognizing the emergence of alternative paradigms and knowledge democracies; different forms of knowledge emerge from different knowledge's; knowledge can produce false consciousness; recognizing the dissonance of difference; and the need to move to a intersectionality of discourses. These epistemological reflections created a discomfort around our way of being and our methods of engagement.

6. Living the contradiction – Validation of knowledge

Subsequent, to the ARNA conference, we collectively grappled with the question: How do I/we improve our pedagogy and practice of community engagement. Like most teachers we have worked with, we did not intellectually engage with, or unpack the concept of community engagement. The discussions at the conference stimulated an eagerness to learn further and interrogate this ontology of community engagement and created a burning desire to reposition ourselves within our lived contradiction, discussed earlier in this paper. We wondered if our work in academia still positioned us as the gatekeepers of knowledge and perpetuated the disenfranchising of communities. Differences between worldviews become explicit and turn into sites of struggle when alternative notions of relationships to knowledge's (De Sousa Santos, 2007) threaten the integrity of these collectives. We feel most vulnerable knowing that to produce knowledge in collaboration with our communities is to accept the risk of putting to the test our beliefs and our ignorance's. Yet the challenge is to not reduce what we do not know to what we already know and without dismissing as irrelevant what we cannot describe because

we ignore it. The challenge is to remain mindful when dealing with that which we do not know yet and to remain open and receptive to the knowledges held by our communities and to authentically value the contribution that this knowledge adds to the community and our own learning.

Because we framed our reflections and interactions within a critical emancipatory paradigm, we were able to adopt an interrogative stance. In the course of our journey, we asked and actively sought answers to questions. We were faced with a need to match our personal beliefs and values with our professional practice to avoid a situation that Whitehead (1989) refers to as a living contradiction. Validation of knowledge could be applicable in a postmodern, critical emancipatory enquiry such as this one. Kvale (1995: 19) postulates that the "modernist notion of true knowledge as a mirror of reality is replaced by a postmodern understanding of knowledge as a social construction". The validation of our qualitative action research enquiry focused on the following prerequisites.

The first prerequisite is the participation of critical friends who aid the validation process by scrutinizing our thinking and it is the validity. It is through conversations with our critical friends that we endeavoured to validate our truth. Kvale (1995: 22) further postulates, "Truth is constituted through dialogue; valid knowledge claims emerge as conflicting interpretations and action possibilities are discussed and negotiated among the members of a community". The second pre-requisite, namely the triangulation of knowledge claims was supported by drawing on different data generation strategies including, personal reflections, and presentations at the ARNA conference as well as our on-going participation in community engagement projects. The third prerequisite refers to accountability that is strongly influenced by personal and social validation. Personal validation is mostly informed by self-evaluating practices such as self-reflection. Social validation involves discussion with critical friends or validation groups through presentation at different conferences and discussions with our community of practice.

This further magnifies our living contradictions that stems from the inconsistencies we identified between our beliefs and our practices, our identities as teachers and our positioning as academics, holding visions for community engagement and becoming aware of the vision of others. Continuous dialogues occur as we are trying to understand how our lived identities as teachers, scholars, and community members are reflected in our practices. This only highlighted more the contradictions we are living and how our values translate into practice and compels us to reimagine community engagement.

7. Re-imaging Community Engagement

It is clear that it is not possible to have a neutral stance regarding community engagement, especially in a country like ours with so much contradiction. We realize that we need to take a more critical stance regarding the plight of the people who share their souls with us on a daily basis, through the various projects we engage in. Drawing on our living theory, and the lessons learnt at the conference, we would be exploring a different set of guiding principles for a possible re-think to our methodological approach to community engagement.

Firstly, there is the need to combine the work of the heart with the work of the head and this requires that thinking must be supported by doing. Doing in the sense of actually implementing what we sometimes so eloquently write, especially about community transformation. This combination of heart and mind will require of us to integrate the voice of the disenfranchised into elements of our practice, be it in the lecture halls, meeting spaces or conferences. However, as many of the conference delegates, especially from the South articulated that beyond the integration as academics we have to get involved in the struggles of the people, by living and experiencing the daily struggles of our communities. It is through this active agency and developing the ability to listen, as one speaker put it at the conference, the silent voices, that we can truly develop the purest form of knowledge.

It is through the valuing and authentic validation of the voices, which our people already have, and not constantly attempt to create a new voice, which excludes the voice of the people with who we engage with, that we believe organic community engagement can occur. We advance that this vulnerable agentic stance that we need to take, should actually ensure that we realise the vision of government, our institution and expectation of society as emphasised by Bender (2008). This ontological review of community engagement is influenced by our lived theory and by our desire to be true agents of change. The change we recognise has to occur in the mutual and different spaces, which we occupy within the University.

We remain mindful that there are some of our colleagues, in our Faculty and across the university who are actually, living the experience we desire, sometimes at great expense to themselves. Therefore, these colleagues become living examples on this journey of new epistemological 'enlightenment'. We will have to become bold enough to stake a stance, which is closer to our ontological desire, to truly serve our people and bring about change in our most vulnerable communities. Through this stance, we suggest that we might influence more effective pedagogies to emerge that will make our students more competent and confident to engage with the challenges that will confront them when they graduate as teachers.

8. Conclusion

In this paper, we address our own lived contradictions to community engagement. The paradoxes and challenges attending to the notion of community engagement in South Africa emerges from the engagement of these contradictions. Community engagement efforts should address multiple levels of the social environment, rather than only individual behaviours, to bring about desired changes. Re-thinking the artificial split between mind and body, so dominant in the Eurocentric approach to engagement, offers an arena of enquiry on knowledge's and ways of knowing, which is increasingly turning attention to practice-based knowledge's.

A critical academic force is required to give attention to this scholarship, which does not only focus on institutional outputs, but focuses on the development and upliftment of vulnerable communities, especially in the South. This requires academics who are not afraid to align with the important social justice issues requiring not only research but also engagement, which will bring about a better life for all. Community engagement thus presents the ideal platform for institutions and their staff to be engaged in these types of projects, which advocate for true societal transformation. Even if it does require present day academics to interrogate their living

contradictions as they embark on an epistemological journey that will bring in the authentic voices of members of society. It is through embracing this knowledge into the DNA of the University, that we will be able to claim that the University truly serves the purpose for which it has been established.

Finally, we argue that the scholarship of community engagement requires agents capable of creating an environment where dialogue amongst people can flourish. This dialogue and participation should involve people helping each other articulate their lived experiences and using the emerging knowledge to become active agents of community change and transformation. This type of engagement with communities can then contribute to the establishment learning communities where new knowledge is generated resulting in articulation of the concept community engagement, which could indeed then be authentic.

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