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Towards an appropriate pedagogy for community psychology: the University of South Africa experience

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This article describes a new approach to teaching community psychology. Rather than attempting to "transmit" a body of knowledge, students' intellectual and creative abilities are drawn upon to recruit them for the project of "re-imagining" communities and community psychology. The article describes the development and implementation of new courses at second- and third-year, as well as honours levels. Students are encouraged to move from experience to theory, rather than from theory to experience, in order to develop their own authentic voice in contributing to the sub-discipline, and to become part of a collaborative network of community psychology students and practitioners.

Op weg na 'n toepaslike leerbenadering vir gemeenskapsielkunde: die ervaring van Universiteit van Suid-Afrika

Die artikel beskryf 'n nuwe benadering tot die doseer van gemeenskapsielkunde. In stede daarvan om inligting direk aan studente te probeer oordra, word gebruik gemaak van studente se intellektuele en skeppende vermoëns om hulle te werf as aktiewe deelnemers aan die projek om gemeenskappe en gemeenskapsielkunde te her-bedink. Die artikel skets die ontwikkeling en implementering van nuwe kursusse op tweede jaar, derde jaar en honneursvlak. Studente word aangemoedig om van belewing na teorie te beweeg (eerde as anders om), om hulle eie, outentieke stem te ontwikkel as 'n bydrae tot die subdissipline, en om deel te word van 'n medewerkingsnetwerk van gemeenskapsielkunde studente en praktisyns.

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Community psychology has long functioned as the conscience of the discipline (Iscoe 1987).[1] It attempts to provide a corrective to psychologising and individualising tendencies in psychology, drawing attention to real-world problems such as poverty, and to the need to address these problems by means of broad-based social transformation rather than by means of one-on-one therapy (Nelson & Prilleltensky 2005). In South Africa, in particular, community psychology has played an important role as a rallying point for psychologists opposed to social injustice. Seedat *et al* (2001: 4) describe community psychology's historical role as follows:

> Community psychology came to be associated with broad democratic movements seeking to dismantle oppressive state structures and ideological state apparatuses [...] and [...] embraced a radical challenge to the discriminatory foundation, theory, method, and practice of psychology.

Between 1983 and 1988, community psychology was the second most frequent focus of articles published in Psychology in Society (PINS), a journal devoted to publishing psychological critiques of apartheid, and of psychology as it was practised under apartheid (Seedat 1990).

In the immediate aftermath of apartheid, community psychologists actively participated in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Dowdall 1996, Godobo-Madikizela 1997, Hamber 1998). In the post-apartheid years the sub-discipline gained further prominence and stature. One indicator of this is that community psychology courses are now taught at most tertiary psychology departments in South Africa, even though efforts to provide postgraduate training aimed specifically at prospective community psychologists, and to define categories of registration that would allow for more effective community-based practice, have thus far had only limited success (cf Elkonin & Sandison 2006: 562). Another indicator of community psychology's growing prominence is the local

1 We wish to acknowledge our colleagues in the Psychology department at Unisa, in particular, Johan Kruger, Matshepo Nefale, Lesiba Molepo and Juan Nel, who have all played an important role in the development of a distinctive community psychology pedagogy, and who have contributed to previous formulations of the material presented in this article.

publication of a range of new community psychology textbooks, such as those by Seedat *et al* (2001), Visser (2007), and Duncan *et al* (2007). In addition to these texts, there has also been a rapid increase in the number of local psychology texts dealing with social and community issues (for instance, Duncan *et al* 2001, Hook 2004, Ratele & Duncan 2003, Shefer *et al* 2006). To a lesser or greater extent, these texts all challenge Euro-American conceptions of psychology as an academic discipline and as a profession. Whereas in the past, issues such as structural oppression, poverty, globalisation, and patriarchy received relatively scant attention, in these texts individual subjectivity and group processes are consistently understood as embedded in larger political and ideological systems.

The turn to community psychology is partly a response to the fact that there are far too few qualified psychologists (approximately 8000, according to Louw 2002: 6) to meet the mental health needs of South Africa's more than 40 million people. However, despite the growing symbolic importance of community psychology, on a practical level community psychology projects remain in many cases focused on ameliorating the mental health damage caused by social inequities rather than on the more fundamental task of transforming unjust social structures (Fox & Prilleltensky 1997). Community psychology practice, in South Africa and elsewhere, finds it difficult to give substance to the theoretical promise of the sub-discipline and to become more than conventional clinical psychology "practiced in the community".

Similarly, in many cases, the teaching of community psychology continues to proceed along conventional lines. Too often, students are expected to learn about concepts such as empowerment and transformation in a pedagogical context that is far from empowering or transformative. Even in those instances where community psychology is taught by means of direct immersion in community projects (for instance, Dunne *et al* 1999), the danger remains that students will perceive community psychology as a second-class psychology, intended for "poor, black people" (Carolissen *et al* 2007, Hamber *et al* 2001).

With community psychology firmly entrenched in local psychology curricula, the challenge now is to develop an appropriate pedagogy for the sub-discipline, a pedagogy that goes beyond simplistic "transmission" models of learning and effectively practises what it preaches. Consequently, this article outlines the key features of such a pedagogy and describes how to instantiate these features in three community psychology courses at the University of South Africa (Unisa).

1. Towards an appropriate pedagogy for community psychology

Since its official founding as a sub-discipline at the Swampscott conference in 1965 (Ngonyama ka Sigogo *et al* 2004: 81) community psychology has developed a considerable body of theory and expertise, and the obvious purpose of university courses in the sub-discipline is to convey something of this accumulated knowledge to students. However, a central premise of community psychology is that hierarchical, expert-driven approaches – in which the supposed beneficiaries' "naïve" understanding is overwritten by a more "informed" perspective – exacerbate rather than resolve social problems. What is required, therefore, is a pedagogical approach that does not treat students as passive recipients of knowledge, but enlists them as active partners in the learning enterprise.

Beyond this basic requirement, community psychology's specific perspectives on the relationship between individual subjectivity and social structures – as explained, among others, by Naidoo (2000) and Heller (1990) – imply a variety of other pedagogical principles which psychologists have tried to apply in their teaching. These are outlined below, followed by a description of three courses as attempts to give effect to these principles.

1.1 Learning involves active engagement

It is commonly accepted that learning, even in relatively simple domains, involves more than memorising information. Becoming knowledgeable in a complex field such as community psychology

demands the kind of fundamental transformation from the learner that can only be achieved by means of active, holistic engagement. Grabinger & Dunlap (1995: 12) maintain that learning is more likely to be transferred from complex and rich situations. Rich learning activities help learners think deeply about content in relevant and realistic contexts.

The first challenge in teaching community psychology is therefore to design rich environments for active learning. These entail comprehensive instructional systems that evolve from and are consistent with the values and theories of constructionism which, according to Lebow (1993: 14), include collaboration, personal autonomy, generativity, reflectivity, active engagement, personal relevance, and pluralism. Instead of transferring knowledge to students, learning activities should engage students in a continuous collaborative process of building and reshaping understanding as a natural consequence of their experiences and authentic interactions with the world.

1.2 Learning is about creating new knowledge

In addition to many other learning theorists, Grabinger & Dunlap (1995) argue that learners are "constructors" of knowledge in a variety of forms. They take an active role in forming new understandings and are not merely passive receptors of received wisdom. This "constructionist" approach to learning is based on the premise that one learns through a continual process of building, interpreting and modifying one's own representations of reality based upon one's experiences with reality. According to Gurney (1989), one of the key characteristics of the constructionist view of learning is the notion that knowledge is not a product to be accumulated, but an active and evolving process in which the learner attempts to make sense of the world. Gurney (1989) suggests that another major characteristic of the constructionist view is the notion that people "conditionalise" their knowledge in personal ways; they acquire knowledge in forms that enable them to use that knowledge later.

In the context of community psychology, a constructionist perspective is, as argued earlier, particularly appropriate as the sub-discipline is founded on the principle that an understanding of social

problems has to be generated "from the ground up", in collaboration with those most closely involved, rather than derived from all-embracing theoretical abstractions. In addition, community psychology is a fundamentally creative enterprise in the sense that it is more than a social critique as it is constantly concerned with re-thinking social situations, and with intervening in an attempt to change them.

1.3 Learning is a collaborative activity

Besides many other theorists, Grabinger & Dunlap (1995) maintain that learning is a collaborative process. Students learn not solely from experts and teachers, but also from one another. They test ideas and help one another build, elaborate, and refine knowledge structures. Conceptual growth comes from sharing one's perspectives and testing one's ideas with others, and modifying one's internal representations in response to that process of negotiation (Bednar *et al* 1991). In the context of community psychology this can be taken further to include not only fellow students, but also the theories, understanding, and practices among a variety of role players and stakeholders.

For learning to be effective in such a collaborative context, McLaren (2004) argues that a climate of trust is essential – there should be a degree of openness, spontaneity, mutual support, acceptance, warmth, respect, and purpose. Such a learning climate emphasises self-knowledge through interaction, introspection, and risk-taking. A parallel concept from community psychology is that of "sense of community". The idea of a "sense of community" was initially introduced by Sarason in 1974 and was later adopted and used by Mcmillan & Chavis (1986: 18), who define it as a feeling that members have of belonging to a larger collective. Sense of community implies that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together. Sense of community entails a feeling of belonging and identification, a feeling of being empowered to have influence over what a group does, a feeling of being valued, and a shared history which becomes the story of the community that can be symbolised in many ways, for example, in art.

1.4 Learning is about the interplay between the specific and the general

Both community psychology and constructionist learning theory emphasise the importance of personal and local understandings, and of valuing what is unique about specific contexts. It is equally important, however, to be able to draw on more general understandings that apply across contexts. The pedagogical challenge, therefore, is not only to help students understand abstract principles, but also how to apply them in specific contexts.

One response to this challenge would be first to ensure that students have a good grasp of theoretical abstractions, and then gradually to introduce them to "real-world" contexts in which the theory may be applied. However, Grabinger & Dunlap (1995) argue that instead of trying to abstract and teach a set of decontextualised general knowledge and skills, psychology teaching should be as contextualised as possible in order to provide as many links with other domains as possible. Educators are inclined to present students with clearly structured, "ready-made" understandings, which are often assimilated in a very superficial manner. For students to achieve profound understanding, they must make the journey from "messy" reality to relative (abstract) clarity for themselves. Such an approach to learning allows students to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning, not only in a particular course, but also as lifelong learners of what community psychology is and could be.

The process of learning is therefore as important as the content of learning, and in community psychology an experiential approach is the most appropriate type of process. In experiential learning students work from experience to theory rather than from theory to experience, and they do so in the context of continuous self-reflection and sharing of learning with others.

However, learning develops in the interplay between bottom-up and top-down understandings, and an experiential approach to learning does not exempt educators from the responsibility of helping to introduce more general theoretical understandings into the learning process. It can be argued that three types of theoretical

material is important, namely core concepts and principles (such as prevention, participation, sense of community, and empowerment) derived from the international community psychology literature, specifically South African and African perspectives on community, and theories about how global relations of ideological, economic, and political power manifest in local contexts.

While each of these types of theoretical material is necessary, a specifically African perspective is particularly important. In the words of Naidoo (1996: 9):

> During the past decade, a renewed interest and activism for a psychology with an Afrocentric feel has begun to emerge more vigorously to contest the Eurocentric substrate of psychology and benign pretensions of universality.

Such Afrocentric re-imaginings of community psychology and of psychology in general are becoming an increasingly prominent part of the academic landscape — as illustrated, for example, in a forthcoming textbook[2] — and is an essential part of the nature of community psychology in South Africa.

1.5 Authentic learning requires authentic assessment

As facilitators of a learning process, lecturers have two key responsibilities. First, as outlined above, they have to design a learning process (including the provision of theoretical and other materials) that enables students to explore, take risks, and become deeply engaged in their own learning. Secondly, they have to manage the process through assessment. This second responsibility is often experienced by lecturers and students as incongruent with the first, and as an imposition of convergent, restrictive criteria onto a divergent, open-ended process.

However, this apparent incongruence can be overcome by focusing on more realistic and holistic forms of assessment, for example by making use of projects and portfolios and de-emphasising standardised testing. Assessment can also explicitly be designed to focus

2 Will be published as Mkhize N, D Cooke, A Nwoye & T Sodi, *Rhythms of an African psychology*, Pretoria: Van Schaik.

on open-ended outcomes. Barnett (2004: 247) argues that learning is no longer about achieving a clearly-defined set of competencies, but about learning for an "unknown future", and assessment should be directed towards this type of future:

> The way forward lies in construing and enacting a pedagogy for human beings. In other words, learning for an unknown future has to be a learning understood neither in terms of knowledge or skills, but of human qualities and dispositions. Learning for an unknown future calls for an ontological turn.

It is difficult to formulate outcomes and design evaluative mechanisms that are appropriate to such an open-ended view of learning, especially when one is accustomed to working with more convergent definitions of what learning is supposed to achieve, and one's own efforts in this regard are still tentative. In our view the three major outcomes to strive for in teaching community psychology are that students should gain insight into the act of making knowledge about selves in communities; the discourses, ideologies and cultures that shape communities and inform how they are understood, and change processes in the increasingly complex interaction between global and local communities. Each of these outcomes can be further unpacked and translated into practical assessment strategies. By way of example, fine-grained outcomes for the first major outcome (gaining insight into the act of making knowledge about selves in communities) could include the following:

- Students can participate actively in knowledge creation processes in a situated collective context.
- Students can multiply and provisionally place, position, map and situate themselves in specific community psychology settings.
- Students can engage with and integrate existing theories, understanding and practices common among a variety of role players (stakeholders) in the context of community psychology.
- Students can uniquely and creatively articulate and present experiences, understandings and theories of changing communities.

2. Three courses in community psychology

Thus far the article has sketched the current status of community psychology in South Africa and provided a provisional outline of an appropriate pedagogy for introducing students to the field of community psychology. Three community psychology courses that have served as test beds for developing and applying one's growing understanding of what it means to be a "student of community psychology" will now be described. The three courses are an introductory second-year course (Re-imagining Community), a third-year course (Community Psychology Intervention Strategies), and an Honours course in community psychology which is in the process of being re-curriculated.

This article will focus primarily on the courses themselves, rather than on the iterative process of developing the courses (these will be described in a separate article). Each of the three courses will be described in turn, and elements in each course will be related to the theoretical principles outlined above. Rather than following a systematic approach indicating the degree to which each course embodies each theoretical principle, this article will focus on the most interesting and innovative features in each course in order to more powerfully convey the possibilities for innovation in community psychology.

2.1 Re-imagining community

Re-imagining community, which for most Unisa students represents their first encounter with the subdiscipline, starts not with an overview of the history or principles of community psychology, but with students' personal histories and circumstances. As outlined in the previous section, it is believed that the process of learning is as important as the content of learning. Therefore an experiential learning approach is followed with an emphasis on experiences, stories, attentive listening, and continuous reflection and sharing of learning with others. Activities form an integral part of the experiential learning cycle by introducing a theme and (hopefully) arousing personal interest and involvement – this also serves as preparation for the next experience.

Students are invited to explore their own names, surnames, and nicknames and what they might mean – both "objectively" and to them personally. They are further invited to remember a place that was magical and special to them as a child. While engaged in personal exploration, students also continuously engage with academic reading (currently Ratele *et al* 2004 is used as prescribed book), for example creating a mind-map where they diagrammatically show the discourses that emerge from two case studies on HIV/AIDS as reported in the reading.

Moving to family, culture, and history, students are invited to remember a family meal, and to share these memories with a family member or friend. After reading a chapter on Psychology: an African perspective, issues of culture and world views are explored. Students are invited to create a mind-map where they explain what they see as their culture and world view, using food and a funeral of a family or community member and the rituals involved.

Making and mapping community forms the third unit, where students are invited to go on a "walkabout" and describe and reflect on the things experienced and sensed during the walkabout, by making a map of the geographical community through which they walked, as well as of the wider community within which it is embedded. They are invited to expand their horizons by looking and listening to different voices and theoretical understandings of race, class, gender, and sexuality (for instance, chapters on colonialism and post-colonialism, feminist critical psychology in South Africa, and heterosexuality). Students are then invited to revisit their stories and map and develop them further in light of the understanding gained through the readings and activities. They are also asked to consider alternative pathways through the story and map, that is, positive ways in which people in the community interact with each other, resources that are available to people, and future possibilities that are open to them.

In the next unit, Community psychology: the philosophy of *ubuntu*, students are invited to list *ubuntu* practices in their community (for instance, practices that reflect unconditional respect, dignity, value, and acceptance). While joining with the reading on

Critical reflections on community and psychology in South Africa, students are asked to reflect on the values of liberatory community psychology. In the final unit, Celebrating community, students are invited to organise an event to celebrate and share what they have done and learnt through this journey with their community, the community of learners, and with us – the facilitators.

Students are thus invited to bring many different kinds of understanding into the course, and to find their own ways of integrating these. They are encouraged to work on their own, but also to invite others (inside and outside of the academe) to work with them in reflecting on how communities (and society as a whole) function, and how our personal subjectivities and identities emerge from this.

Students typically respond with enthusiasm to the course once they have come to terms with the fact that teachers do, seriously, want them to use their creative faculties rather than merely their capacity to absorb and reproduce textbook knowledge. However, some students struggle with aspects of the course, in particular the abstract academic nature of some of the readings. Some students, especially those from privileged backgrounds, also feel uneasy about what they perceive as the overly politicised and "preachy" tenor of some of the course material. These are challenges to be faced as the course evolves from year to year.

The key discovery for students enrolled in this course (as it also was for the teachers in developing the course) is the pedagogical principle outlined earlier, namely that learning involves active engagement in the process of creating new knowledge. Students come to the course expecting to learn "about" community psychology, but then discover that what is in fact required is to find their own voice "within" community psychology. Some of the activities require them to listen to and share their perceptions with community members, reflecting another of the pedagogical principles outlined earlier, namely that learning is a collaborative activity. Similarly, as some of the activities in the course emphasise tracing links between local experience and global phenomena, there is a clear attempt to encourage students to explore the creative interplay between specific and general (the fourth of the pedagogical principles).

We certainly do not claim that the course represents the epitome of what can be achieved if the pedagogical principles we espouse are applied in practice. However, we do have a sense that in most respects the course is at least on the right track if judged against these principles. One possible exception is the principle that authentic learning requires authentic assessment. Whereas the various forms of formative assessment used are congruent with the open, creative spirit of the course, the final summative assessment (in the form of a final examination) still, for the most part, requires that students demonstrate familiarity with a certain body of knowledge, rather than a capacity to engage with and contribute to it. This is a shortcoming that we are actively working to overcome as we continue to develop the course.

2.2 Community psychology intervention strategies

In Community psychology intervention strategies, students are similarly encouraged to become actively involved in the material, rather than approaching it from a distant perspective. In this course students are invited to join a community organisation or group, to participate in and observe the work of the organisation or group, and to share their understandings — again while simultaneously engaging with academic readings.

This course shares many of the features of the second-year course, but rather than engaging in an array of smaller activities (going "walkabout", talking to family members, and so on), in this case students are expected to engage in just one, larger activity, namely to join a community organisation of their choosing and to participate in its activities. There are minimal constraints on the type of organisation and on the role students play within the organisation — as long as they actively work with others, over a period of time, in an organisation aimed at bringing about some form of social change.[3]

3 List of organisations and groups joined by learners during 2005 and 2006: *Deo Gloria* (attending to the welfare of street children by providing food & clothes); Women Agricultural Society (youth work and orphanages); Reiki (Ancient Japanese practice that centres around creative energy); SALT programme

Students negotiate their involvement in a manner suitable to them and appropriate to the organisation or group. Students are given a letter of introduction to give to a formal organisation as part of agreeing with the organisation what their role should be. Students may also stay with an organisation for which they are already doing volunteer or paid work. They may also join government departments and business organisations. Apart from organisations that do counselling or welfare work, students are reminded that there are in fact many other kinds of community organisations where they can make a useful contribution, for instance, labour unions, environmental organisations, worker cooperatives, community economic development organisations, advocacy organisations for people with disabilities, public interest research groups, feminist organisations, anti-racism organisations, support groups, and so on.

Students are required to write short narrative accounts describing and reflecting on the process of joining the organisation, and each account is circulated – via the Unisa assignments system – to three other students. These students comment on the accounts (they are encouraged to provide feedback in the form of a supportive peer conversation rather than as an evaluation), and the comments are then returned – again via the Unisa assignments system – to the students

(provides food parcels to a government clinic for distribution to HIV-infected women); Methodist Church (distributes food parcels to people with HIV/AIDS); Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA – fundraising in rural area); Phambili Centre (abused women); Inter Trauma Nexus (assistance to trauma victims); The Samaritans (Befrienders International in Rome, Italy) (suicide prevention) ; 'Together we will overcome this' (support group for women who come from abusive environments); Malibongwe (focus on social and economic development of black women in rural and urban areas); Headway Natal (Stroke and Brain Injury Support Group); Darling Focus (Community Development Centre); Mmata counselling and support group (a group formed by people living with HIV/AIDS); The Rietvlei Home Owner's Association (strives to create a safer community to work and live in. It was established after the rape of a 14-year-old girl); Mayfair Community Programme (promoting reading, writing and storytelling to educate the community on the subject of HIV/AIDS); Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) (promote HIV/AIDS awareness); Belvedere Hindu Youth Society (clean and tidy temples, and do voluntary work at nursing homes and hospitals).

who wrote the accounts. Thus each student has an opportunity to share ideas with other students — usually students who are geographically distant from them, and who may be working in very different types of organisations, but who struggle with similar issues.

Once students have joined an organisation or group, it is suggested that they remain with the organisation, trying to understand it better and playing whatever role they have negotiated with the organisation. There is really only one way for students to get to know something as complex as an organisation, and that is to immerse themselves in its processes and activities. Students are encouraged to spend as much time as possible in the organisation, to observe, ask questions, and above all, to participate in the organisation's activities.

Students are required to look out for the following: the special history of the organisation, changes the organisation might have gone through, and the people involved in the organisation in the past. Students are reminded to take their cue from the readings and to try and work out what the broader history is that gives rise to organisations such as the one with which they have become involved. They need to understand who the stakeholders in the organisation are, including the intended beneficiaries, the staff, and the funders. Students are also encouraged to ask questions such as: Is the organisation taking an ameliorative or a transformative approach to bringing about change? Which values does the organisation focus on? While working with and observing the organisation or group, students are encouraged to continually try and relate what they experience to what they encounter in the readings.

As in the second-year course, it is suggested that students share something of what they have learnt with people outside the course. Once again it is up to the students to decide with whom they wish to share their understandings, but ideally it should be one or more people in the group or organisation with which they have been working. Students are encouraged to listen to how people in the organisation respond to what they have to say about community intervention strategies, and to use these insights in order to deepen their own understanding.

As in the previous course, students are encouraged to combine their practical experience with academic reading, and to find ways of synthesising these two sources of understanding. In this case, the synthesis takes an unusual form. Students are required to create, and iteratively develop, a three-panel poster reflecting, in an integrated way, what they learn from participation in an organisation and from their reading. This poster forms part of their final examination.

The three panels of the poster cover the following issues related to intervention:

- Panel 1: what needs to be changed (how to go about identifying "needs", "problems", and possibilities for growth).
- Panel 2: making change happen (what types of intervention strategies and techniques can be used).
- Panel 3: noticing signs of success (tracking the outcomes of interventions).

Some of the readings focus on change at a purely local level, and on interventions intended merely to ameliorate distress, while others focus on processes operating at the national and global levels and on more fundamental, transformative change. There are also readings that problematise psychology's readiness to identify "needs" and "problems", and its willingness to offer solutions. Examples of the topics covered in the readings are liberatory psychology in South Africa, activity theory, participatory action research, interventions with "street children", HIV/AIDS interventions, and interventions aimed at opposing various forms of violence.

As completing the second-year course is a prerequisite for entry into the third-year course, students in the third-year course have already had an opportunity to become used to the unusual (and sometimes quirky!) style of community psychology teaching at Unisa. There is thus typically less initial uncertainty, and more willingness to accept that they have to actively engage with a range of knowledge sources in order to produce their own understandings. However, as in their second year, students do complain about the academically advanced nature of the readings, and often struggle to properly integrate these with their practical experience.

Most students enjoy constructing the three-panel posters, and appreciate the opportunity to use a format other than the usual grey academic prose (cf Figure 1 for some examples). Most students also seem to effectively use the poster as a device for structuring their thinking throughout the course, and for iteratively recording and refining their understanding of community psychology intervention strategies.

It is interesting to note that it is not the posters but a relatively minor aspect of the course — the brief initial accounts of joining community organisations — that seems to have most captured students' imaginations. Students clearly relish the opportunity of collaborative exploration and learning with other students, who struggle with similar issues across a wide range of different communities. Most students take considerable care in providing comprehensive and constructive comments in responding to their fellow students' accounts, and take other students' advice very seriously in plotting their way through the course.

As discussed earlier, our second role as facilitators is to manage the learning process through assessment. It is therefore gratifying that the formative peer assessment mechanism built into this course is so well received by students. For purposes of summative assessment, we at first considered a variety of standard assessment techniques, such as essays and short questions, that are typically used in final examinations. However, despite our best efforts to formulate examination questions in ways that would reflect the spirit of the course, we found it impossible to devise a standard examination that would be congruent with the learning process students engage in for the course. We therefore resolved to base our assessment directly on what students are expected to produce in the course, namely a three-panel poster. This poster is, quite simply, what students have to produce for the examination. Posters are assessed by means of a set of clear-cut criteria that are communicated to students in advance.[4] Feedback from

4 Outline of assessment criteria for the Intervention Strategies poster:
1. General structure and appearance
1.1 The poster should be "messy" (it should contain many short bits and pieces).

students suggests that they do indeed experience this as authentic, or at least as more authentic than assessment procedures in most other courses. They also experience this as a deceptively challenging means of evaluating their learning, and appreciate the transparency of the assessment process.

As with the second-year course, we are satisfied that, to some extent, we have been able to apply our ideas about teaching and learning in this course. The course represents an advance over the second-year course in that the last of the pedagogical principles, namely that authentic learning requires authentic assessment, is more fully instantiated. However, we also recognise that much more is possible and that the process of developing the course (and with it our understanding of productive forms of teaching and learning) is far from completed.

2.3 Honours in community psychology

Finally, we are also involved in a community psychology honours course, which follows after the two undergraduate courses. This course was developed before the undergraduate courses and in its present form has a far more conventional academic character, with the usual essay-style assignments and examination requirements.

1.2 The poster should be more than just words-words-words (visually interesting).
1.3 Some individual entries should be clustered together and labelled.
1.4 Relationships should be shown among entries, clusters and labels.
2. Use of information sources
2.1 Each panel should clearly display that the following have been used –
2.1.1 The student's own (previous) understanding.
2.1.2 The student's practical experience in the course (including the views of stakeholders).
2.1.3 Material from the readings has been (appropriately) used.
2.2 The above three sources of information have been integrated.
3. Minimum content requirements
For each of the three panels ("problem" identification, intervention strategy, and evaluation) we specify minimum content requirements representing what, in our view, constitutes the core "content" of community psychology.

Figure 1: Examples of posters produced by students

However, the department is in the process of re-thinking the course in order to bring it more in line with the ethos of the undergraduate courses. As a substantial majority of Unisa postgraduate students now have internet access, our intention is to use the internet to build on the interactive elements of the undergraduate courses and, in particular, to draw on the principle, discussed in the previous section, that learning is a collaborative activity.

Our vision for the honours course is not only to radically enhance the possibilities for interaction between lecturers and students, and among students, but to break away from the "walled garden" approach typical of academic courses. Traditional "walled garden" courses contain cohorts of students within narrowly defined limits, preventing them from interacting with people not formally participating in the course, or with students who have completed the course in previous years. It also defines learning products created by students as purely for educational purposes and without any practical utility or lasting value.

In our opinion and as a counter to this, the course could be embedded within a larger community of practice, consisting of, among others, community psychologists and activists, past and present students, and lecturers. Novice students will learn by at first engaging in "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger 1991, Wenger 1999, Wenger *et al* 2002), and then gradually progressing to more central roles in the community. Rather than only two possible roles in the learning relationship (lecturer or student), participants will be able to occupy a diversity of different roles, to switch between roles, and to contribute to the community's work in a variety of different ways.

Students will also not create isolated learning products such as essays or posters that are discarded once the course has been completed, but will be expected to create material that persists after they are no longer part of the course and that extend and refine work done by previous students. For example, we plan on having students contribute to and maintain a collection of resource listings covering geographical communities throughout South Africa, to collect, organise and interpret audiovisual material from around the country,

and to comment extensively on the contributions of other participants' in the network.

In time, we hope to build this into a widely-used nexus providing information, contacts, and support for community practitioners and students from around South Africa.

The key shift we have made in our thinking since the initial development of the two undergraduate courses is that each of the five learning principles is best applied in the context of real-world knowledge creation processes. Thus we foresee that students will not create new knowledge purely for their own consumption (as is presently the case in the undergraduate courses), but in the form of material that is useful to a larger community of practice. Even more challenging, we are now beginning to understand principle five, which relates to authentic assessment, as requiring assessment (including summative assessment), not by us, but by a wider circle of practitioners in the community of practice.

3. Conclusion

This article described attempts, in terms of both theory and practice, to move towards an appropriate pedagogy for community psychology in South Africa. A definitive "solution" was not arrived at, but it is hoped that the tentative conclusions will contribute to similar work already being done both by colleagues at other universities, and by students and community psychology practitioners.

One lesson we think we have learnt from our experience in community practice, research, and teaching – and from our reading of community psychology texts — is the importance of approaching communities (and that includes our students) with an open mind, but not empty-handed. In other words, we need, first, to keep reminding ourselves, that most of what is of value in human interactions is not about content but about process, and requires an ongoing openness to what may ensue. At the same time, we should also remember that we cannot, and do not, enter processes empty-handed. Part of what we bring to community processes, and to our interactions with students, is in the form of unnecessary baggage from the

past, which might as well be jettisoned, but part of what we bring is in the form of valuable "intellectual capital", accumulated over long periods, which we have an obligation to share with others. The challenge lies in continually re-discovering the optimal balance between letting events unfold as they may, and attempting to steer them in specific directions.

Another lesson we think we have learnt, or are learning, is that community is not a fixed issue that is waiting to be discovered and analysed, but an unfolding series of possibilities — a combination of what really is 'out there' and our ability to imagine it otherwise. The same holds for community psychology, and for the process of teaching and learning in community psychology. We always need to try and foster a learning climate which emphasises self-knowledge through interaction, introspection, and risk taking, within which our students and us, can discover communities as they are, imagine them differently, and work together to narrow the gap between how things are and how they might be.

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