

Participations: Rethinking South African universities' development-oriented community engagement

ABSTRACT

Currently the dominant form of universities development oriented community engagement is based on an institutional project-based theoretical framework. This framework has been criticised in the scholarly discipline of Development Communication and Social Change for being diffusion-based in nature, for its rigid linearity and subsequent hierarchically unequal power relationships, and for its uncritical validation of a particular form of knowledge. Against the background of this critique, paired with the current pronounced global awareness regarding the role of public universities in society, this conceptual article critically investigates a range of options for development-oriented community engagement by South African public universities. These options are based on different theoretical frameworks that already exist in the field of Development Communication and Social Change, namely: modernisation; dependency disassociation and social movements; Freirean dialogical pedagogy; UNESCO's media system approach (that foregrounds access, participation and self-management); and participatory communication for development and social change. In so doing, the article suggests that universities should critically consider the following aspects when embarking on development-oriented community engagement: 1) evaluate the main assumptions of the framework, 2) consider the complex interplay between internal and external factors that cause problems of development, 3) consider the epistemology of knowledge, 4) reflect on the purpose and nature of community participation, and 5) consider aspects related to expressions of voice and identity in the public sphere instead of focusing only on measurable and material aspects as outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Public universities are primarily funded by taxpayers' money and should therefore offer a service to the citizenry (Cuthill et al., 2014:36). Their established way of serving the public is through teaching and by generating knowledge through research (Lazarus et al., 2008:57-62).

This role of public universities is currently being re-assessed in ways unprecedented in history. Questions about the role of a public university include: What is meant by assuming that the task of the university is to advance the public good? What is the nature and purpose of knowledge production? What is meant by research for the benefit of society? What forms of engaged scholarship are available? and what does collaborative knowledge generation and exchange entail? (Cuthill et al., 2014:36; Barber et al., 2013; Christensen & Eyring, 2011). These questions suggest a critical assessment of the traditions of thinking about the purpose of a university, and most importantly, how these views came to be dominant and on what assumptions they are based. In short, epistemological and ontological questions regarding the role of a public university in society are presently being raised, and it is suggested that universities should be more responsive to the needs of society instead of focusing on teaching theory or the established international canon of each discipline (Barber et al., 2013). Raising epistemological questions suggests a critical reflection on the nature of knowledge, the power relations in knowledge production, and the traditional power hierarchy between universities and society. Subsequently, a pronounced focus on the social dimension of a university is suggested. More specifically, the issue of an "open university" that invites non-elites into processes of producing and sharing knowledge is interrogated (Miller & Sabapathy, 2011). In this vein, arguments are made in favour of an "innovative university" (Christensen & Eyring, 2011) and a "socially engaged university" (Petter, 2010).

Furthering this social orientation, universities are encouraged to shift their focus to the big challenges of the twenty-first century instead of confirming disciplinary domains and boundaries (Barber et al., 2013), and in this way be both locally responsive and have an international focus at the same time (Cuthill & Brown, 2010:129). Deepened social engagement points to collaboration with other social institutions – such as third sector organisations and civic groups – to construct knowledge that answers current pressing questions in a particular locality without neglecting the international context (Nongxa, 2010). This leads to a shift from the academy as "expert producer of knowledge" to "collaborative knowledge" production, doing research "with" the community (Cuthill & Brown, 2010:129).

Indeed, the present sees a renewed interest in a viewpoint that dates as far back as 1200 AD that public universities should work towards the public good as this justifies "public funding on the grounds that they serve this public good" (Cuthill et al., 2014:36).

A further focus in reconceptualising the role of a public university falls on ways in which universities can contribute towards social justice, and in the global South, much of the discussion focuses on developmental issues (Kajner, 2013). Locally, in furthering the developmental agenda, the

South African Higher Education Act (101/1997) ties public higher educational institutions to community engagement by calling on universities to “demonstrate social responsibility”, to show “their commitment for the social good”, and to “promote and develop social responsibility and awareness amongst students of the role of higher education in social and economic development” (Ministry of Education, 1997). In fact, the notion of development features frequently in local policy documentation, as the Council of Higher Education (CHE, 2004:130) underlines the need for a “strategy in the transformation of higher education in relation to community development”. This emphasis on development leads Favish (2003) to suggest that development should be central to considerations of quality evaluations of public universities.

In other words, in the global North it is suggested that the role of the public university be reconceptualised against the backdrop of an agenda of public good and power relations embedded in knowledge transfer and production. However, in the global South, especially in South Africa, the notions of social and public good are even more complex due to an added development agenda. In this vein, Hall (2010:2, 5-11) identifies an under-theorisation of the nature of community engagement focused on development. Hall (2010) goes on to suggest that theorisation should consider the epistemology of knowledge and the construction of socially relevant knowledge used for the social good. To ensure that universities are socially relevant, the complexities of the developmental state (Muller, 2010) should be considered, and this suggests collaboration with other sectors of society such as the third sector (Favish, 2010; Slamet, 2010).

This wave of thinking demands that South African public universities rethink their model of community engagement. Currently, at least four broad forms of community engagement by universities are evident in the country. Firstly, based on the assumption that the core activities of a university is teaching and research (Lazarus et al., 2008:57-62), one view is that teaching is by implication a form of community engagement since a segment of the community (students) is benefitting from university teaching, and since research is beneficial to the larger community, it is also by implication community engagement (Hall, 2010:1-2). Secondly, scholarly disciplines with a direct vocational orientation are by implication engaged with the community – especially in terms of student internships, practical experiential learning of education students, community service of medical students, legal and small business or entrepreneurial development initiatives, and service learning in general (Hall, 2010:7-9). These activities benefit communities, and, at the same time, familiarises students with the realities of marginal segments of society. Thirdly, another form of community engagement is found in offering a service to the student community by creating spaces where students can stay during their studies, where they have access to the internet, where they feel at home, and where they can deliberate on topics important to working towards the social good. Fourthly, adult education and short courses offered to the public can be viewed as a form of community engagement (Snyman, 2014:12). In this way, expert knowledge is transferred to a community through adult education, and in poorer communities these are often offered as free services.

Aside from these general forms of community engagement embedded in the core activities of a public university, many universities have separate community engagement projects that are

development oriented. These projects are primarily modelled on the project-based framework (see for instance reviews of South African universities' community engagement projects by Jonker, 2016 and by Snyman, 2014). In the scholarly discipline of Development Communication and Social Change, this framework has received substantial criticism 1) for being diffusion-based and linear, thus confirming hierarchically unequal power relationships, and 2) for uncritically validating a particular form of knowledge.

Against this background, this conceptual article critically discusses the key assumptions of the main frameworks in the scholarly discipline of Development Communication and Social Change in order to indicate that universities have a wider range of frameworks on which they can base their development-oriented community engagement initiatives. These are read against the foil of the current renewed critical reflection on the role of public universities in society.

1. DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE FRAMEWORKS

Over the last 70 years, a diverse range of frameworks has evolved in the scholarly field of Development Communication and Social Change.¹ The scholarly discipline of Development Communication and Social Change was established at the time of the rebuilding of Europe after the Second World War, and drew on those experiences to conceptualise the development of the global South based on modernisation. Modernisation embedded in development aid was severely criticised for inculcating structural and conceptual dependency, just as colonisation had, and this gave birth to the dependency disassociation framework.

1.1 The modernisation framework

Modernisation-oriented development aid took root when Harry Truman, US president at the time, announced that the development of the Third World could be solved if modelled on the post-war reconstruction of the pre-war infrastructure of Europe (Melkote, 1991:20-21). In subsequent years, this framework became a blueprint for international development aid, lending to it a tone of modernisation (Cambridge, 2007:189-190). At the time, this model was supported by the assumptions of diffusion evident in the work of American scholars: Daniel Lerner (1958) investigated how traditional communities could be persuaded to adopt modernist behaviour and practices, whilst Wilbur Schramm (1964) investigated the role of the mass media in national development. These ideas were aligned with Walt Rostow's linear stages of development, which assumes that reasons for underdevelopment lie inside the community, as the community lacks education, information, technology, infrastructure, finance, democracy, and so forth (Melkote, 1991:36). Based on Rostow's assumptions, the development task is to help a community to speed up its development to "catch up" with industrial countries by modelling themselves on the global Northern industrial regions (Waisbord, 2001:1). In other

¹ Due to limited space, this article does not intend to provide a comprehensive explanation of the complexities of each framework, but restricts itself to exploring key aspects relevant to public universities' development-oriented community engagement.

words, the complex process of communication is simplified to diffusion of information, as is described in Lasswell's (1948) linear model of communication: "Who says what, through which channel, to whom, with what effect?" In this way, traditional societies could be modernised by "catching up" with the industrial west, placing considerable emphasis on the mass media as amplifiers of modernity. However, interpersonal communication was later used to supplement mass communication as it was thought to be more effective in bringing about social change (Mowlana & Wilson, 1990:58; Mefalopulos, 2005:150-152). This led to the formulation of the two-step flow of information, describing the flow of information from an expert to opinion leaders, who then disseminate the information further to the rest of the community. Building on Everett Rogers' (1962) description of the adoption of new innovations, more recent models of modernist development investigate complex processes of behaviour change that do not view the individual in isolation but consider socio-cultural, historical and other contextual factors that may impact on models of the adoption of behaviour change (Hemer & Tufte, 2005:14).

As was the case in the European rebuilding after the war, the focus of this form of development aid is on tangible, material or measurable progress (Obregon & Mosquera, 2005:234-237), such as building infrastructure, introducing technological innovations, transmission of information to raise knowledge and literacy levels, and increasing the GNP.

Due to its global Northern roots, this framework became prominent in the humanitarian and development aid offered by the global North (mainly Anglo-American–European). However, during the Cold War period, this diffusion-based orientation was used by both the USA and the USSR to deliberately influence other countries and to expand their own ideologies in search of greater political support (Cambridge, 2007:189-190). Nevertheless, despite the political and ideological expansionist tendencies from the USSR, development aid built on this model came to be known as a modernisation project that was not culturally or ideologically neutral, but instead, influenced especially cultural aspects beyond the scope of the development project.

If a modernisation framework is used as the point of departure for universities' development-oriented community engagement initiatives, such initiatives will tend to:

- Assume that the reasons for development problems lie within the developing community
- Have the purpose of "catching up"
- Focus on linear education, without questioning the main assumptions of knowledge
- Be oriented towards persuasion or behaviour change
- Be authoritarian and paternalistic
- See communication as an instrument to persuade
- Invite strategic community participation, and
- Have outcomes that tend to be material or tangible, and often measurable (e.g. infrastructure, knowledge levels, literacy levels).

This form of community engagement can be criticised for being linear, as it assumes a universal path of development that is ideologically neutral, paternalistic or top-down; for being instructional, strategic and persuasive instead of being interested in gaining the views of the community; and for neglecting the non-tangible aspects of development. Furthermore, this form of community engagement would be owned by the university and transmit knowledge to the community as a way of offering aid to it. From this perspective, community participation is thus seen as an instrument to obtain community buy-in for adopting modernist views and practices.

1.2 The institutional project-based framework (based on strategic communication and strategic participation)

The methodology used by ideologically expansionist development aid, such as modernist development projects, is most often project-based, since an organisation outside the recipient community initiates and orchestrates the project. The methodology of institutional, project-based development projects, is usually diffusion-oriented and hence uses communication and community participation strategically to persuade a developing community to change. It is important to note that the institutional project-based framework is not necessarily modernist, as current-day institutions foregrounding other ideologies also use this methodology.

In a diffusion-based project framework, the assumption is that development initiatives should diffuse information from an authority who owns the needed information to a community who lacks information and is subsequently underdeveloped – often in their levels of technology, infrastructure or knowledge. By implication, the control over the project, and most probably the funding, reside outside the developing community and someone needs to coordinate the process (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009:1). Characteristically, project-based development functions within set parameters, such as clear project goals, timelines, budgets, and thus limits the project to tangible outcomes that can be reported in the boardroom meetings of donor organisations, governments, NGOs, and the like (Jacobson, 2012). Conventionally, such development projects are confined to fairly set pre-determined phases, such as data gathering, planning, execution and evaluation of the project before reporting to the donor organisation (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009:1-4). Most often, in the corporate sector, developmental aid of this nature often qualifies for tax rebates, explaining why many projects correspond with the financial year. Project-based development is the norm for many institutions in the NGO sector, governmental development communication projects, and in companies' corporate social responsibility projects. Development projects are often restricted in size, since it is more manageable and easier to determine the level of community engagement, adoption and ultimately success of the project (Al.-Zoubi & Rahman, 2014:93). Projects are usually based on sharing information, as knowledge levels are measurable and that can signal the success of a project to a donor organisation. Key characteristics are: 1) that material development is seen as success as it is fairly easy to measure the level of success, and 2) that community participation is strategic and persuasive. From this perspective, community empowerment is closely tied to adoption of new information or innovations, based on the assumption that the reasons for underdevelopment resides within the developing community.

Project-based development initiatives often form part of the “development industry” that aims to coordinate behaviour change through communication projects (Tufte & Mefalopoulos, 2009:1-3). Many institutional project-based development work, especially in the health and agricultural sectors, rely on transmitting expert scientific information (e.g. regarding better yielding crops or preventing the spread of a disease) to a community with the aim of encouraging the adoption of new practices or changing behaviour.

One mechanism to stimulate community buy-in for a development project is to use community participation as a strategy or mechanism to stimulate the adoption of a new idea, practice or behaviour. In this way, strategic communication has become commonplace in diffusion-oriented project-based development projects. To illustrate, following a lecture on HIV/AIDS communication, schoolchildren may be asked to design a communication campaign capturing their newly acquired information on paper and diffusing it to their parents and the rest of the community when they take their schoolwork home. In other words, community support or buy-in is achieved through strategically crafted persuasive communication and community participation (Jacobson, 2012; Thomas, 2006:476). The assumption is that the greater the degree or level of community participation (strategically engineered), the greater the chances that the community will adopt the new information. The degree of community participation was first detailed by Arnstein (1971:19) in the “ladder of participation”, and contemporary scholars refined this model by mapping it on a continuum ranging from minimal tokenist participation to full-scale community ownership and adoption (Mefalopoulos, 2008:91; Biggs in Narayanasamy, 2009:6; Tufte & Mefalopulo, 2009). The latter is achieved when the community signals that they own the newly acquired information, for instance, by suggesting adaptations to the project or by changing behaviour. Participation thus signals success of the project (Al.-Zoubi & Rahman, 2014:93; Nikkhah, Redzuan & Abu-Samah, 2012:41) and from this perspective, participation is conflated with empowerment (Mefalopoulos, 2008:91; Biggs, in Narayanasamy, 2009:6). In order to be even more persuasive, the language, culture, norms, beliefs, and communality versus individuality is strategically respected, as sensitivity to these aspects are assumed to have a better chance of adoption of the project. In other words, from an institutional project-based framework, persuasive techniques such as strategic community participation and sensitivity to the local context are used to engineer acceptance of a development project.

Today, many different strands of strategic participation are evident, such as “social marketing” often used in the health communication sector, and some forms of “development support communication” (DSC) and “program support communication” deliberately aimed at behaviour change (Tufte & Mefalopoulos, 2009:1). Examples of this framework in the health communication environment include a range of models, such as Bandura’s health belief model, the Aids risk reduction model (ARRM), the social ecology model (SEM), and the newer social ecological model of communication and health behaviour (SEMCHB) (Kincaid et al., 2007; Fisher, 2012:291-294). Within the health communication field, especially HIV/AIDS communication, claims are made that this framework reaps substantial results in persuading recipient communities to change their behaviour. However, these projects usually function

on a small scale and do not always tally with national and international figures about new HIV infections.

Based on the methodology of the institutional project-based framework, universities' development-oriented community engagement initiatives will tend to:

- Be institutional, rely on external funding and be orchestrated from outside a developing community and are often “top-down”, authoritarian, diffusion-based, or paternalistic
- Invite and encourage a community to participate in a developmental project, as community participation is pivotal, and is often instrumental and strategic
- Use persuasive, instrumental and strategic communication
- Assume that participation can be measured on a sliding scale and that participation is desired
- Use participation that signals ownership of a project, and
- Manage the project according to set time-lines, budgets, and goals.

Similar to the critique of the modernisation framework, the institutional project-based framework as a basis of community engagement can be criticised for being authoritarian and institutional, and thus externally initiated and controlled, persuading a community to adopt pre-determined and externally controlled development. In other words, community engagement is strategic to the university, and community engagement projects do not necessarily address the developmental needs of the community.

1.3 The dependency disassociation and social movement framework

The dependency disassociation framework originated as a critique of the ideology of the modernisation framework, and instead suggested social movements as a methodology to bring about the desired development and social change. In order to illustrate the dependency disassociation framework a historic understanding of the evolution of the trajectory is necessary. Furthermore, a historic contextualisation situates this framework within the current resurfacing of the debates around the legacy of colonisation and the subsequent call for decolonisation.

The dependency disassociation framework evolved around the time of political decolonization, from the work of a wave of scholars of the global South arguing for social movements that strive towards political independence and equal human rights (Obregon & Mosquera, 2005:234-237; Eriksen, 2005:27-28; Hemer, 2005:59). This intellectual revolution, largely informed by critical theory and world systems theory, criticises the underlying power dynamics between the west and the rest of the world (that is, industrial-developed countries in the global North versus semi-peripheral and peripheral developing countries in the global South) (Shah & Wilkins, 2006:558; Eriksen, 2005:27-28). It is in essence a critique of modernisation and Western and global Northern dominance (Cambridge, 2007:189-190; Habito-Cadiz,

2006:427; Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:93; Mefalopulos, 2005:158-159; Waisbord, 2001:3-15). In opposition to the modernist argument attributing problems of development to a lack of modernity in developing communities, dependistas argue that problems of development are structurally caused by unequal geopolitical power relationships (for instance colonisation), and that most development aid inherently preserve the interests of the powerful and reinforce their dominance (Shah & Wilkins, 2006:558; Baum et al., 2006: 854; Sawhney, 2002:39-40).

In addition to seeking tangible change (such as the establishment of human rights, democracy, and freedom from oppression) the dependency disassociation framework is associated with non-material or non-tangible aspects such as identity, framing, and mind work (Ascroft & Masilela, 2006:425). In this vein, it is argued that long after subjugation has been legally eradicated, the effect lingers in the minds of the formerly subjugated (Gaonkar, 2001:2-23). For this reason, it is argued that a conceptual re-orientation (a decolonisation of the mind, or re-framing and a re-centering) of viewpoints should take place to replace the idealisation of the former coloniser as the centre in the minds of the formerly colonised (cf. Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999:88; Fanon, 1952:10; Biko, 1987:107; Shah & Wilkins, 2006:558). For the formerly colonised, this implies that both inner work and work on the social level are needed to address the "inferiority complex" held by the formerly colonised (Fanon, 1952:69, 74; Biko, 1987:107; Mbembe, 2015). This entails taking charge and taking ownership of the process of defining the self anew (Ngũgĩ, 1994:93). In other words, instead of being defined by someone else, a new self-concept that refuses to be defined by centre-peripheral or unequal power relationships is the task (Ngũgĩ, 1994:93; Mbembe, 2015). By implication, the formerly colonised need to create a new identity using self-definition and self-creation as fundamental steps to develop a fully human self-concept (Ngũgĩ, 1994:93; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999:88).

Even though this point of view was not popular in the west, the impact of subjugation on the self-concept was fiercely discussed in the 1970s and 1980s by UNESCO. This prompted the large-scale UNESCO (1980) commissioned investigation that resulted in the MacBride Report, *Many voices one world*. This report confirmed a predominant North-South flow of information, and went on to suggest actions towards establishing a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) (Obregon & Mosquera, 2005:234-237; Eriksen, 2005:27-28). To further disassociate from a conceptual dependency on the Global North, the newly independent states in Africa and Asia, alongside with successful socialist and social movements in Cuba, China, Chile and other countries, took action and formed a new unit, the Non-Aligned nations to define development as a political struggle on the path of self-determination, self-sufficiency, self-development and self-definition (Riaño, 2006:447-450; Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:93; Obregon & Mosquera, 2005:234-237). In this drive, communication and the media should be used to vocalise popular concerns to redress subjugation by: 1) pointing out hegemonic power relations, and 2) by taking action towards social change often through disrupting dominant perceptions of inferiority and to redress the external causes for developmental problems by putting alternatives in place (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi, 2006:466-468).

Against the background of this perspective, the role of universities, education and empowerment is foregrounded. By drawing primarily on the work of African scholar Frantz Fanon, Brazilian adult educationist Paulo Freire, suggested empowerment education to create awareness-raising of structural reasons for oppression (Baum et al. et al., 2006:854; Thomas, 2006:476-477). In other words, empowerment education is a power struggle towards liberation between the citizenry and the oppressors (often the colonisers); or between the oppressed and a social system such as the patriarchal system that oppresses women; or a system that favours the urban; or the system of elite knowledge that protects the elite's power position – such as a university (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi, 2006:466; Riaño, 2006:448). To address oppression, Freire (2003b:354; 1992:89) suggests consciousness-raising (*conscientisao*, or conscientisation) amongst the oppressed about their oppression, the reasons for it, the implications of it, and collectively finding solutions. He suggested adult education as a mechanism to do so, hence proposing that instead of a “banking” model of learning that entails rote learning and information transmission, education should raise a critical consciousness about unequal power relationships and oppression (Freire, 2003b:354; Freire, 1992:89). Such consciousness-raising (conscientisation) is “the process by which students, as empowered subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives and discover their own capacities to re-create them” in a process of reflections and action through dialogue (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003:15-16; see also Thomas, 2006:476-477). Instead of theoretical investigation, education should be embedded in the real-life situation of marginalised people to activate consciousness, and education should identify talents within the community and seek alternative solutions to problems (Freire, 1992:89; Freire, 2003a:66). Furthermore, Freire insists that both the educator and learner bring valuable information and skills to the learning process, with the result that educator and student should work *with* each other to learn, instead of the one acting on the other (Smith, 2002). The process of education thus entails both speaking out, and reflective listening (Figuroa et al., 2002:5). The latter does not mean harmony at all cost, in fact, it often entails voicing conflicting opinions as opportunities for growth and reassessment of positions and is productive as this raises the level of awareness of possibilities (Figuroa et al., 2002:5). From this perspective, education is closely tied to issues of identity, liberation and self-empowerment (Freire, 1992:89; Freire, 2003a:66; Freire, 2003b:354), and to taking action to address real life problems in order to bring about change instead of illustrating theories with real life examples (Baum et al., 2006:854). However, Freire (1970:85) warns, “if action is emphasized exclusively, to the detriment of reflection [it] negates the true praxis and makes true dialogue impossible. Either dichotomy, by creating unauthentic forms of existence, creates also unauthentic forms of thought, which reinforce the original dichotomy”. A critical engagement with both the study material and the process of learning is thus suggested (see for instance Riaño, 2006:451). In other words, based on the dependency disassociation framework's liberatory social movements, a trajectory of questioning power relationships embedded in knowledge and the transfer of knowledge a new stream of thinking evolved. This aspect speaks directly to the current decolonisation discussions about the epistemology of knowledge at South African public universities.

Rethinking the epistemology of knowledge implies a critical reflection on approaches to and methods employed to generate knowledge. It is suggested that positivist research does not sufficiently facilitate critical reflection on power relationships embedded in dominant knowledge production (Wicks et al., 2008: 18-25). Knowledge production is political and not true or neutral, and such positivist knowledge is often constructed to maintain unequal power relations (Wicks et al., 2008: 18-25). This line of thinking supports a methodology such as participatory action research that redefines the positivist roles of researcher and the researched and suggests collective self-experimentation, collective fact-finding trajectories, collective learning, and collective reflecting about a particular problem to gain knowledge in order to bring about social change (Baum et al., 2006: 854; Wicks et al., 2008:25-38). This method does not only blur the lines between researcher and researched, but is empowering and liberating both to the researcher and researched, as they do not need to uphold research conventions but are free to experiment and generate new knowledge collectively (Baum et al., 2006: 854). It is precisely in collective enquiry where renewal of thinking is situated (Baum et al., 2006: 854). Even though many strands of participatory action research exist, the shared assumption is primarily that university research should be practice-based and should not be done "on" a community, but either "for" or, rather "with" a community, as the aim is to bring about substantial social change that will improve the life of, or address a specific problem of, a community (Chevalier & Buckles 2013). This means that research is to be used to bring about social change levels by deliberately constructing research that is critical of a particular regime or oppressing situation with the purpose to further the community's social change agenda. By implication, this means that education and research in this trajectory is used to raise consciousness about unequal power relations and address such power relations. Research should therefore be socially relevant and socially engaged as it strives to address real-life social problems.

If a dependency disassociation and social movement framework is the point of departure of universities' development-oriented community engagement initiatives, such initiatives will tend to:

- Assume that the reasons for development problems lie outside the developing community, most often due to unequal geopolitical power relations caused by colonisation or other forms of oppression
- Identify and critique unequal power relations that work to the detriment of subjugated groups and thus cause developmental issues
- Take actions to raise consciousness regarding the existence and effects of oppression
- Use empowerment education (instead of rote learning that "banks" information) and horizontal tutor-learner relationships that advance conscientisation about oppression
- Assume that knowledge is constructed and hence aim to do research "with" (instead of "for" or "on") a community.
- Redress the power relationship between the community and the "other"/oppressor through social movement activities
- Focus on the lived realities of a community

- Foreground both material change and non-material issues, such as identity, the public sphere, decolonisation of the mind and decolonization of the archive and knowledge are important, and
- Question western education and knowledge production, as they are constructed to be biased towards external (western) ideas and preserve the privilege of dominant groups.

Since the distinguishing characteristic of this framework is awareness raising and anti-oppressive action, a criticism of this framework could be that the end result is not well defined (as is the case with modernist and project-based community engagement). Since community engagement of this form assumes more a social movement than a developmental project, the university cannot predict whether or not the community engagement initiative will have a positive outcome. However, such unpredictability can be set against the gains of collaborative knowledge creation and subsequent action that addresses the real needs of a community – in a way that exhibits tangible social change.

As is indicated above, the early frameworks of Development Communication and Social Change juxtaposed the modernisation and dependency disassociation frameworks, juxtaposing *strategic participation* with *mass democratic participation* “from below” through the mechanisms of social movement, and attributing a different meaning to the term participation. In addition to these two interpretations of *participation*, two more key views came to the fore, as formulated by Paulo Freire and by UNESCO.

1.4 The Freirean framework dialogue and community participation

Paulo Freire furthered the ideas of scholars working within the dependency disassociation framework, formulating a framework of *dialogical pedagogy* emphasising the lack of respect for the subjugated in hegemonic power relations. Freire (2003b:354; 1992:89) suggested that through research and education respect for otherness will be gained, and the oppressor will experience a normalisation of the “other”. Freire formulated this view by drawing on the early Marxist utopian hope that the “human species has a destiny which is more than life as a fulfilment of material needs” and hence emphasised non-material aspects such as respect and identity (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:96). The mechanism to instill respect is *dialogue* that is respectful of the subjugated but will not shy away from conflicting opinions, as diverging views may be immensely instrumental in finding solutions to development problems (Freire, 2003b:354). Freire supports the Marxist collective solution trajectory by stressing that “general situations of poverty and cultural subjugation should be addressed collectively through community participation” (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:96). Freire has subsequently been praised by supporters and criticised by elites – in both the global North and global South – as he encourages the formation of social movements “from below” through the mechanism of *community participation* (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:96).

Despite this critique, today it is generally accepted that the Freirean conception of *dialogic communication* is a normative theory for most of the newer participatory communication development and social change initiatives – and is an option to consider for community engagement in the higher education context.

Community engagement initiatives by universities that are based on a Freirean dialogical pedagogy will tend to focus on dialogue that:

- Ensures the respectful treatment of a (formerly) subjugated group
- Normalises the subjugated group's views in the public sphere as legitimate and not as the "other"
- Seeks collective solutions through dialogue, and that
- Encourages the formation of social movements "from below", through the mechanism of participation.

In other words, universities' initiatives towards community engagement based on this perspective would probably entail establishing or supporting existing community dialogues, and dialogue between different social and public groups. Similar to the dependency disassociation and social movement framework, critique against this form of community engagement can be voiced from a project-based framework in terms of concerns regarding the outcome of the initiative.

1.5 The UNESCO framework of access, participation and self-management of media systems

The UNESCO debates in the 1970s identified an unbalanced flow of information from the global North to the global South, and suggested a New World Information and Communication Order to bring about equality. Based on this premise it is suggested that both the international media system and the national media systems should be critically investigated to ensure democratic mass participation in the media system.

In this way, another interpretation of the term *participation* was formulated: the UNESCO ideas of *access, participation and self-management* of media systems (UNESCO, 1978). With the term *access* UNESCO demands that all people should have access to information and the media, and have the same opportunities to voice views through the media (UNESCO, 1978:3-4). UNESCO assumes public involvement in the public media and communication systems (from production, to planning and management), and public access to means of self-expression (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:96). With the term *participation* UNESCO suggests that the public should be involved in the communication systems and that their ideas should impact decision-making processes around the media. Citizenry should be active participants in the public sphere where opinions are assessed and stronger views will impact on public policy (UNESCO, 1978:4-5). UNESCO assumes the most advanced form of public

participation as *self-management* of the media. This means that the public exercises the power of decision-making within communication enterprises (most notably public media and flow of information), and are fully involved in the creation of communication policies and plans for the country (UNESCO, 1978:5-6). In contrast to the Freirean call for immediacy of change, the UNESCO formulations allowed for gradual change towards the ultimate goal of self-management of the media system (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:96).

Today, widespread acceptance of the UNESCO understanding of access to the media and participation in media systems has become the foundation of newer community participatory frameworks that are built around access to the public sphere (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:96). If this viewpoint is applied to a university's development-oriented community engagement, the prime focus would be to use the mass media as a catalyst for public self-expression.

If universities' development-oriented community engagement initiatives are based the UNESCO conception of access, participation, and self-management of media systems, they will tend to focus on the media system. For this reason, such initiatives will tend to:

- Foreground access to information and knowledge
- Foreground access to the means of self-expression – that is expression of views and identity expressions in public and most probably through the media
- Value authentic participation in formulating views and identity expressions in public, and
- Gradually institute mechanisms providing for the self-management of media systems that will facilitate access, and participation in mediated activities and hence the public sphere.

In other words, universities will engage communities primarily on the policy level, working towards changing public policy to allow people greater access to information and expressing their own voices. Little – if any – critique against this form of community engagement can be formulated.

1.6 The participatory communication framework for development and social change

The participatory communication framework for development and social change resists the simplistic dichotomy of early frameworks, such as modernist development (attributing development problems to a community "lacking something") and the dependency disassociation and social movement framework (attributing problems of development only due to geopolitical inequalities). Instead, the participatory communication framework for development and social change is based on the principles of multiplicity, diversity and complexity. It assumes that the cause of developmental problems is a complex interplay of a number of variables – that are neither solely external (such as geopolitical unequal power relations or colonisation, injustice, exploitation, hegemonic power relationships), nor solely internal (such as the community lacking education, discipline, literacy, or infrastructure) (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:93). For

this reason, this framework does not view a developmental situation in isolation, but considers the interplay of contextual, geopolitical and historical aspects that have shaped communities. This principle of multiplicity emphasises the social, political, economic and environmental interdependence of people around the world, suggesting that it is beneficial for everyone to solve developmental problems (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009:10). Consequently, from this perspective, *community participation* involves sharing political and economic power, and this most often means a decrease in the advantages held by elite and powerful groups, and the redistribution of power on the local, national and international levels through structural change (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:97-98).

The sharing of power is gained through Freirean dialogical communication, that is, horizontal communication (called "true dialogue" or "open and free dialogue" by Bolivian Luiz Ramiro Beltrán) to raise consciousness about a problem (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009:10-11). In other words, the purpose of this framework is to ensure that a voice is given to marginalised groups, providing them the space to articulate concerns, to define problems, to formulate solutions and to act on them, along the lines suggested by UNESCO and the Freirean dialogue frameworks (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009:11). Such dialogue is not without conflict and tension, as *authentic expression* is the only path to investigate multiple solutions that may finally be employed to address real problems cannot be attended to if authentic expressions are not part of dialogue. For this reason, participatory communication is based on authentic dialogue – where all parties involved in a developmental process are authentically and genuinely concerned with dialogue and where a liberating pedagogy is followed (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009:11). This dialogue is extended on the public level to access to information and platforms to voice views and raise concerns. In this way the "other" (the oppressed, under-developed) is given a mainstream position and the oppressed group is not marginalised but normalised. Subsequently, the opportunity to voice marginalisation is prime, and action is informed by reflection, which in turn leads once more to action (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009:11). In fact, as Freire (1970:85) argues, consciousness-raising (conscientisation) should be combined with reflection, otherwise it is mere activism and no real productive action is forthcoming. In this way, the real or "felt needs" (cf. Moemeka, 1991:23) of a community can be addressed if maximum community participation is achieved (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:93; Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009:10-11). In other words, even though a deliberate process of raising consciousness about subjugation is suggested, this process is aware of its own assumptions and suggests a critical self-awareness. Drawing on the work of the Latin-American Juan Somavia, and in line with access to information and the right to communication, Servaes and Malikhao (2005:98) suggest a participatory communication model where:

- 1) Communication is a human need, and people have the right to inform and to be informed and have the right to communicate, both individually and collectively
- 2) Communication is a delegated human right, closely linked to cultural, political, economic and historic contexts and for this reason each society has to be able to define independently the concrete form in which it wants to organise its social communication process or processes, but this should be participatory and democratic

- 3) Communication is a facet of the social conscientisation, emancipation and liberation process with the implication that the social responsibility of the media in the process of social change is large as the media are most important educational and socialisation agents, and
- 4) That the communication task involves rights, responsibilities and obligations within a framework of social and judicial responsibility.

By implication, this means that the freedom and right to communicate should provide a community with opportunities to express themselves in productive ways to facilitate development that “[lifts] up the spirits” of a community and allows it to “take pride in its own culture, intellect and environment” (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:98). From this perspective, much of the work of development falls into an *identity paradigm* to overcome the effects of subjugation on the individual and the group (Tufte & Mefalopulos; Huesca, 2006:75; Bordenave, 2006:421). In fact, in many cases, it seems that “identity is the locus of action” (Castells, 2001:62). The contestations around competing identity options are bound up with normalised media representations of subjugated groups, and part of the task of development and social change is to subvert these. The implication is that this inspires participation in public spaces, allowing people to express new opinions and publicly engage with identity in a process of establishing new self-presentations, instead of being represented by someone else or the media elite. Crucially, *participation* of this form gives meaning to peoples’ lives, and social movement activities, public identity work and inner identity work are often interwoven (Castells, 2001:62-63). In the current period of globalisation, the pressures and always shifting realities cause people around the world to feel unanchored, unwelcome and “not at home”, and these feelings drive members of a social movement to publicly engage with their identities (cf. Appadurai, 1996:4-21). However, the public identity engagements of subjugated communities are much more pronounced – due not only to globalisation but also to their subjugation (Gaonkar, 2001, 2-23). Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the act of expressing the self may be empowering – and for subjugated communities this effect is much stronger than the well-described therapeutic ethos of affirmation that accompanies the validation of being a guest in reality television or talk television: “I am worth listening to” or “Someone wants to hear my story” (see for instance, Hill, 2006 59-61; Huff, 2006 13-21).

For these reasons, the task of development and social change activities is not only to critique oppressive views or to effect policy change, but to add more and plural viewpoints in the public sphere, and to use the public sphere and public spaces for public identity work to normalised formerly subjugated groups and their cultures. This enlarges the conventional notion of the public sphere (seeking platforms to express and debate a range of opinions), to also be a space for public identity work. By implication, this means that the focus of the Habermasian rational public sphere, defined as the quality of arguments in the public sphere, has shifted to the quantity of self-expressions, and these often deal with identity (Carpentier, 2011:22-26). Such public identity work is thus closely tied to self-actualisation, well-being, feeling worthy, and a sense of purpose and meaning (Carpentier, 2011:25).

Furthermore, participatory communication for development and social change most often entails forming partnerships between a developing community and outside groups. Many influential action-oriented calls such as the UN's Millennium Goals and the newer UN formulation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, call for the formation of partnerships amongst social groups, the public sector, NGOs, third sector organisations, and the business sector (UN, 2016). In such partnerships it is assumed that the pooling of resources, skills, and knowledge sets are beneficial to the project. The nature of such partnerships can be described by drawing on Bourdieu's notion of social capital, arguing that economically strong people have the right kinds of social capital (Gauntlett, 2011:2). Instead of only having horizontal ties (heart-warming groups of social connections) Bourdieu insists that strong social capital should entail vertical relations that include the economically powerful. By incorporating people of different social capital groups into a single system, the prohibitive mechanisms on the inclusion-exclusion axis are minimised (Bourdieu, 1986). Similarly, Coleman argues that social capital can be used by the powerless and marginalised, as it is not a resource that can be given to anyone else, but lies in the formation of relationships with people of unrelated social groups (Gauntlett, 2011:4-5). In this vein, Putnam (1995; 2000) argues that a community who share values, norms and culture possess "bonding" social capital, but that in order to be upwardly mobile they need to acquire "binding" social capital – social relations with people who are different to themselves and who possesses other skills sets and social capital that they do not have. In other words, "bridging" social capital is relationships amongst dissimilar people in terms of age, socio-economic situation, race and ethnicity, linking social capital to the extent to which individuals build relationships with institutions and individuals who have relative power over them such as the state, potential employers and those with resources that might be needed (Woolcock, 2001; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Consequently, even though linking social capital results in weak relationships it is likely to have the most valuable outcome as it provides access and connection to power structures and institutions (Hawkins & Mauer, 2010:1780). Social bonding provides familiarity, but it is bridging and linking with social actors who are dissimilar to a developing community that generates new ideas that might be useful in a developing context (Woolcock, 2001; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Based on this trajectory, partnerships or collaboration between people with different forms of social capital will result in a developmental social network with a range of differing skills and knowledge sets or social capital and resources (including finances) – a network working towards addressing a particular situation or problem (Gauntlett, 2011:2). However, it is essential that the centre of power resides in the community that seeks developmental social change.

In summary, the participatory communication framework suggests that developmental problems are complex instead of singular; developmental problems result from a combination of internal and external factors; are most often unique to a particular community instead of being universal; most often involve the liberation of subjugated people depending on the specificities of the situation; are liberatory in the sense of addressing unequal power relations; can be addressed through partnerships; could be systematic along the lines of being project-based but should avoid being prescriptive and paternalistic; and involve

authentic participatory and Freirean dialogical communication. On a media level, what is needed is access to information, access to platforms of voice and self-expression, and the self-production and management of media content. This implies not only the kind of media representations, but also the volume of media-representations and self-(re)presentations and self-presentations.

Initiatives by universities for development-oriented community engagement that are based on participatory communication for development and social change will tend to:

- Be socially oriented and socially engaged
- Be based on the principle of multiplicity that assumes multiple reasons for problems of development and hence multiple and unique solutions for each development initiative
- Value the importance of historic geopolitical events creating inequality, as suggested by the dependency disassociation-based social movements
- Emphasise Freirean dialogue, since it is assumed that it will normalise opinions and identity expressions in the public sphere
- Value collective identity-projects in the public sphere, as suggested by Freirean dialogical pedagogy
- Value access to information and means of expression along the lines of UNESCO suggestions
- Address the real felt needs and the lived realities of the community, as is suggested by the dependency disassociation framework
- Be either liberatory or institutional project-based – however, if project-based, the voice of the community should be definitive
- Assume that knowledge is constructed, and hence aim to do research “with” (instead of “on” or “for”) a community
- Be based on the premise that education should address the real needs and lived realities of a community and not be only theoretical
- Form partnerships and collaborations with a range of groupings who have different sets of social capital, and
- Be aware of and engage critically with the assumptions on which these initiatives are based.

Universities' community engagement based on this framework will thus seek to provide opportunities for voice and public identity work, will address developmental problems at the structural level, and will favour real dialogue instead of merely the transmission of information. Knowledge production within this framework is non-hierarchical, blurring the hierarchical lines between the researcher and the researched, as both work together to address real-life problems. In this way the university becomes socially engaged.

2. RETHINKING SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES' DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Against the background of the main frameworks of Development Communication and Social Change outlined above, it is suggested that public universities' community engagement initiatives should: 1) clarify and define the main assumptions of the underlying framework on which the development initiative is based, 2) consider the complex interplay between internal and external factors that cause problems of development, 3) be aware of the politics and epistemology of knowledge, 4) be sensitive to assumptions about the purpose and nature of community participation, 5) be aware of the communication assumptions of the initiative, and 6) aside from measurable or material aspects of development, focus on aspects of voice and expressions of identity in the public sphere.

The framework borrowed from the field of Development Communication and Social Change that fits the above critical reflection, the suggested action, and the parameters of an institution is the participatory communication for development and social change. The prime reason is linked to the research imperative of a public university to generate new knowledge that addresses real needs of society in collaborative ways. In other words, doing research *with* a community instead of performing research *on* a community by extracting information from the community and devise developmental plans for them from "the outside". Doing research with a community will ensure that researchers and communities should collaboratively work together to seek solutions to problems. It should be realised that all parties bring certain social capital towards finding solutions to problems experienced in society. In other words, the development-oriented community engagement of a university should not be viewed in isolation as a project of charity or passing on of information. Real social connections should be formed between groups with different social capital (skills sets, knowledge, experiences) so that solutions can be found collectively. Such collaboratively generated new information could be supplemented with the existing broad knowledge base of a public university to offer an even greater understanding of the complexity and multiplicity of each developmental situation. Since the task of the academy is critical reflection, this would be done sensitively in order to understand that the existing canon is not more valuable than the newly generated information, or vice versa. Furthermore, a university has the existing channels to publish this information – both via the popular press and conventional research dissemination channels – in order to gain traction, to open up opportunities to voice views, to open up opportunities for dialogue, to open up opportunities for identity self-expressions. Based on the Freirean notion of empowerment education, this could imply a blurring of the lines between teaching, research and community engagement, as the one task of the university could potentially feed into the other. This will mean that what is taught at a university would be socially engaged in terms of teaching the problems of the locality. In this way the real life circumstances and problems of society would feed into questions investigated in the classroom, ensuring that students' learning is socially embedded instead of only theoretical. And lastly, since public universities are largely funded by taxpayers' money, they have the opportunity to use the newly gained information through their community engagement to inform teaching and to publish the new information through research output. Most importantly, this can be done in ways that are institutionally located and coordinated without being authoritarian.

In other words, the participatory approach calls for the blurring of lines between teaching, research and community service, much in the same way as it calls for the breaking down of power hierarchies. In this way public universities in this country can use their community engagement activities towards taking action towards social change by addressing developmental issue. It is suggested that future research builds on this premise and investigates the applicability of the framework of participatory communication for development and social change in different contexts.

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