

# Chapter 7

## “Baya Funda Kuthi, Nathi Siyafunda Kubo”: Transformative Community Engagement that Contributes to the Decolonisation Agenda of Higher Education

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### **Abstract**

Using a social constructivist approach, within the social action model of community psychology, this research explores how thoughtful community engagement (CE) programmes may promote the decolonial agenda of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and promote transformative learning for students and community partners. This research draws on the co-management model that the Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) division proposes, where partnerships between HEIs and communities are seen to be mutually beneficial. CE at Rhodes University (RU) spreads the breadth of what is termed the CE continuum, ranging from credit bearing service-learning activities to non-credit bearing volunteer activities. This research investigates a volunteer programme at RU, the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Residence Programme, as a case study. At the time of conducting this research, 15 community partners were part of the programme. Drawing on the ECD Residence Programme for case studies, this research used a reflective multiple case study design in attempting to answer the research question. Four partner groups (i.e., 4 community partners and 4 community

engagement representatives) were selected for this research. Each participant was interviewed twice (with a 6-month time gap) and also participated in two focus group discussions. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the findings.

CE at RU works from the asset-based community development (ABCD) approach, which recognises and draws on the skills, capabilities, and knowledge that all parties have and bring with them to a partnership. The preparatory work and training that community partners and student CE representatives undergo before engaging in a CE activity is an essential foundation to enable mutuality in the partnership. Additionally, drawing on the ABCD approach and reflecting on learning from CE activities facilitates an enabling environment in which transformative learning can occur. In promoting the decolonial agenda of HEIs, this form of transformative learning may lead to democratising the knowledge economy and allowing for epistemic and social justice to unfold; leading to the co-construction of knowledge in CE partnerships. This research provides valuable insight into how carefully managed CE partnerships in HEIs have the potential to contribute to the transformation agenda of HEIs, while promoting equitable societies as part of the decolonial agenda.

## **1. Introduction**

The sub-theme that this chapter seeks to explore is ‘what kinds of engagement are happening within the African higher education landscape, and how is this shaping the course of education?’ The author aims to do this through arguing that thoughtful community engagement programmes may promote decolonisation and transformative learning in higher education. The chapter draws on a community engagement programme that is run by Rhodes University (RU) as a case study.

Many definitions and interpretations of community engagement (CE) exist (Bender, 2008). In this chapter, CE is defined as an integral part of enriching teaching and research in higher education (HE) with a deeper sense of context,

relevance, and application (Lazarus et al., 2008). CE is about building inclusive and reciprocal relationships between higher education institutions (HEIs) and their local communities (Bender, 2008). For South Africa, this has stemmed from the recommendation of the White Paper of HE Transformation (1997) to make CE part of the HEIs' agenda (Bengu, 1997).

It is *community* engagement as HEIs seek to work with partners, based in other sectors such as education or social services, in meaningful ways; through co-defining the outcomes of the planned activities and co-identifying local assets to address locally defined challenges in sustainable ways. It is *community engagement* as the partnership needs to be based on collaborative relationships that are characterised by dialogue (Bender, 2008).

This research focuses on a volunteer programme at RU, as case study. It explores to what extent engaging in carefully planned CE activities may facilitate transformative learning for student volunteers and community partners. Additionally, this chapter explores whether engaging in CE activities of this nature may contribute to the decolonisation agenda of HE.

## **2. Transformative Learning**

Research in South Africa (e.g., Isaacs et al., 2016) and elsewhere in the world (e.g. D'Arlach et al., 2009; Levkoe et al., 2014) has shown that participating in CE activities may lead to transformative learning. This is because these activities are an opportunity for student volunteers and community partners to access experiences that allow them to enhance their reflections and encourage more introspection (Davis et al., 2017). Additionally, through participating in CE activities, student volunteers and community partners become better able to understand themselves and their communities, as well as social problems in general. This understanding may propel them to act in socially responsive ways (D'Arlach et al., 2009). With this understanding of CE activities having the potential to lead to transformative learning, this section defines what transformative learning is.

Transformative learning is defined as “learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change” (Mezirow, 2009, p. 92). This learning is based on the fundamental changing of fixed assumptions and calls for the formation of new frames of meaning (Şahin & Dogantay, 2018). This happens when people engage in constructive discourses with others, using these to reflect on their previously held assumptions that have been based on uncritical assimilation (Mezirow, 2000). When people do this, they start to critically question their assumptions about the world, opening up to different ways of knowing that they had not considered before (Jones, 2016).

Transformative learning may encompass six areas of transformation (Kiely, 2004). These are described as political, moral, intellectual, cultural, personal, and spiritual transformation. Political transformation is about expanding one’s sense of social responsibility, both locally and globally. Moral transformation encompasses developing mutually beneficial relationships that lead to building equitable partnerships. Intellectual transformation occurs when people start to question their previously held assumptions. Cultural transformation requires a person to rethink dominant cultural values and, in this context, includes the questioning of Eurocentric thinking. Personal transformation requires individuals to rethink their lifestyles, and spiritual transformation is a movement towards understanding one’s purpose in life in relation to the greater good (Kiely, 2004).

Whilst engaging in CE programmes may lead to transformative learning for those involved in them, practitioners may not always have the language for interpreting and theorising this practice (Holmes, 2015). Community engagement exists on a continuum, from charitable CE to transformative CE. Charitable CE runs the risk of reinforcing prejudices and may exaggerate imbalances of power, whereas transformative CE disrupts this through explicit exercises to enhance critical reflection (Bamber & Hankin, 2011). Transformative CE has the potential to facilitate

transformative learning for students and community partners, providing them with important skills that are critical in decision-making (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; Levkoe et al., 2014).

Transformative learning is not just about personal development; it is also about social change (Davis et al., 2017). Transformative learning alters students' and community partners' worldviews, aligning them to social justice goals of challenging dominant ideologies, deconstructing hierarchies, and critiquing biases. The long-term benefit is a new way of understanding the world and having an informed citizenry asking critical questions and working to eradicate injustice (Holmes, 2015). Through developing a critical awareness, individuals discover an awareness of the role of power and learn to act against oppressive practices (Bamber & Hankin, 2011).

Transformative learning is centred around learning through action and experience (Bamber & Hankin, 2011). For transformative learning to occur, activities need to be linked to critical reflection (Lee, Hong, & Niemi, 2014). Critical reflection is essential for transformative learning (Şahin & Dogantay, 2018) and enables people to gain insight, including becoming aware of and correcting any distorting beliefs they may hold (Karlovic, 1992).

While transformative learning is not clearly articulated as a goal within the programme explored during this research, this chapter proposes that the concept could be valuably examined in the programme, to question whether it does facilitate transformative learning. Drawing on the idea that reflection is key for transformative learning to occur (Bamber & Hankin, 2011), the programme makes use of structured and regular reflection. This reflection is done in order to ensure that learning is deepened (Lee et al., 2014).

To further support the ideas of transformative learning community partners in this research expressed how, at the onset of the programme that is explored in this research study, they thought that they had nothing valuable to contribute to student learning. They had the idea that students from RU

were there to teach them, since they were of the view that the students had more knowledge because they were university educated (Karlovic, 1992). However, this research will show that since engaging in the programme, community partners feel that they have a greater right to claim their voices in the CE space. They became convinced that they too hold valuable knowledge and that students from RU may learn valuable lessons from their organisations. They have become more confident in their dual roles as both teacher and learner. This supports the ideas of decolonisation that are expanded on below.

### **3. Decolonisation**

Decolonisation is described as “a process of undoing coloniality” (Oyedemi, 2018, p. 5). It is described as a process as opposed to an event and is a recurring discourse in Africa, as the reality is that inequalities still exist due to unequal access to resources because of colonisation. Although colonisation came to an end, mostly in the 1960s, the effects of it remain and are manifested in both cultural and economic spheres (Oyedemi, 2018).

European culture and ideas of producing knowledge, such as through formal education, were foregrounded and imposed on the colonised and indigenous knowledge creation and expression was relegated (Oyedemi, 2018). This led to a diminishing of the role and value of indigenous ideas and practices. A Eurocentric curriculum still prevails (Connell, 2017), however formal education is only one of many diverse ways to acquire knowledge (Şahin & Dogantay, 2018). There exist many other opportunities, such as learning for community partners, that might improve students' knowledge and skills that can be used throughout life (Şahin & Dogantay, 2018).

Through CE, democratic spaces of learning are created (Bazana 2019). Community partner voices are valued, opening participants up “to different bodies and traditions of knowledge and knowledge-making in new and exploratory

ways” (Heleta, 2016, p. 2); towards a more decolonised education. This process is two-fold: consisting of the epistemic project and the personal project, since hegemonic Eurocentric views about knowledge have resulted in a creation of “a hierarchy of superior and inferior knowledge and, thus, of superior and inferior people” (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 214). This is the essence of the decolonisation project, which seeks to challenge not only hegemonic knowledge generation, but also psychological enslavement and a sense of unworthiness that was perpetuated through colonisation (Timmis et al., 2019).

Strides need to be made to reduce injustices in knowledge production (Heleta, 2016), through foregrounding student and community knowledge and agency (Timmis et al., 2019). This makes HEIs “relevant to the material, historical and social realities of the communities in which universities operate” (Letsekha, 2013, p. 14). There is thus a valuing of different lived realities (Grant, Quinn, & Vorster, 2018). This is particularly relevant in South Africa, which has a history of exclusion and marginalization in education based on race (Oyedemi, 2018).

Increased collaborations between HEI and community partners leads to the reduction of barriers to transformative change (Fitzgerald & Zientek, 2015). CE encourages participants to have a broader understanding of what constitutes knowledge, valuing not just academic knowledge but also knowledge that resides within communities (Millican & Bourner, 2011). This is an important part of the decolonisation project, as all knowledge is equally valued. Through doing this, multiple stories and histories that shape Africa are acknowledged (Oyedemi, 2018).

#### **4. The Early Childhood Residence (ECD) Programme**

The programme explored in this research is the ECD Residence Programme. This is a volunteer programme that was started in 2016 by the Rhodes University Community Engagement division (RUCE). It is called a *residence* programme due to it being primarily for students living in both on-campus and

off-campus residential accommodation, referred to as halls of residence. Halls of residence, hereafter referred to as halls, are defined as groups of student residence accommodation buildings, ranging from 3–5, within proximity to one another that make up a hall.

During the period of research, the ECD Residence Programme comprised two processes; Siyakhana@Makana (S@M), and the Reading Programme. S@M is 19-week project planning cycle. The aim of S@M is to introduce students to community development processes, while working closely with community partners on a shared goal. S@M is a 19-week long process, with each week being dedicated to a specific project task (Rhodes University Community Engagement, 2020). The Reading Programme entails student volunteers engaging in reading and various literacy activities at the ECD centres for a minimum of one hour per week. (Rhodes University Community Engagement, 2020).

This programme runs as a year-long programme, following the cycle of the RU academic year. RUCE established this programme with two main aims. The first aim was to work in a co-ordinated effort in ECD in Makhanda, with a focus on addressing the crisis in education, as outlined above. The second aim was to provide structured opportunities for students to be involved in CE (Rhodes University Community Engagement, 2020).

## **5. Methodology and Ethical Considerations**

This research takes on a reflective multiple case study approach within a social constructivist framework, since this provides an opportunity to explore the developing community partnerships in this specific context as they have evolved over time (Preece & Manicom, 2015). The data collection was qualitative in nature, aiming to provide answers to questions by exploring a variety of social settings and the individuals within these (Berg, 2007).

This research is located in a social constructivist paradigm, which recognizes that individuals make subjective

meanings of their experiences. The goal of this research was to explore participants' subjective understanding of their situations, and how these are negotiated socially and historically. Research questions were thus broad, enabling participants to construct meaning about situations (Creswell, 2007).

The sources of information that this research used were data collected from interviews and focus group discussions, as well as observations that were recorded in the research diary. During the time of undertaking this research, there were 15 partner relationships in the ECD Residence Programme, however due to time and the interactive nature of data collection, a limited number of partner groups, four in total, participated in this research. These groups included both the community partners and the student volunteers, making a total of eight participants (as a community partner and student volunteer form one partnership).

The choice of which of the partnerships to focus on was strategically decided to try and maximise differences and possible answers to the research questions (Bryman, 2012). Sampling for this research was purposive in nature. Partners selected met certain criteria, to try and establish the different perspectives of these two categories. Firstly, some partners had joined the ECD Residence Programme from its inception, whilst others joined afterwards. A selection from these two groups was to try and establish whether there might be different perspectives, since they have had different experiences of the programme. Secondly, some partners had self-reported or had done noticeably well in their partner relationships, whereas others had self-reported or had struggled somewhat in their developing partner relationships.

Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted over time, exploring developments and to see how the partnerships evolve. An initial round of interviews was conducted with student volunteers and community partners respectively, followed by a second round of interviews that commenced after a period of six months had elapsed to

enhance reflection over time. Focus groups were used to present initial findings to participants, and to generate further reflection and discussion. The initial focus group discussion, and a follow-up after a period of six months, were held with both the student volunteers and community partners present. In addition to these interviews and focus group discussions, as a participant observer, a research diary (Nadin & Cassels, 2006) was kept recording meetings and informal observations of interactions between the student volunteers and the community partners. The researcher also used a process of reflexivity to guard against the influence of prior beliefs or assumptions (Neuman, 1997). These observations were subsequently cross-checked with the research participants through focus group discussions and follow-up interviews, to determine the accuracy of these perceptions.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the transcribed data, to identify, and report themes that occur in data (Braun & Clark, 2006). The six steps described by Braun and Clark (2006) were followed. Findings were presented to all participants for member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000) in follow up focus group discussions to prompt further reflection and discussions.

This research adhered to ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Participation in this research was voluntary, with all participants being high functioning adults who are 18 years or older. This research was granted ethical approval by the relevant ethics committee (PSY2017/52).

## **6. Findings**

What follows below are some excerpts from community partners (coded as CP 1, 2, 3 and 4), and student volunteers (coded as CE 1, 2, 3, and 4). The findings are grouped into two thematic areas: community partners and student volunteers learning from one another, and community partners learning from one another.

### **6.1 Community partners and student volunteers learning from one another**

“...so then I thought that Rhodes students come to help us, and then we have to sit back and look at what they are doing. When Nomaxabiso facilitated the workshop, she told us this is not all about students from Rhodes University who are here to help us, they are here to get experience and then we share with them experiences that we have. So, we work together.” – CP 2

Here, the community partner talks about the importance of the learning being bi-directional, in that the students do not have all the knowledge. Partners also have valuable knowledge that they can share with the students.

“...it’s not just about uhm giving back to the community but also you get to learn and benefit as a student just as the partners are benefiting from your involvement in the community engagement.” – CE 3

This student volunteer concurs, noting that community engagement relationships have the potential to impact one’s growth and development. This is also illustrated in the following excerpt from another student volunteer:

“...it’s not only about giving up your time it’s more than that, you can actually learn something from that, you can actually give something as you learn...” – CE 1

Student volunteers learn from community partners and experience reciprocity of giving and receiving. They recognise that they are part of a community that they learn from.

“...I learn something new every time. Every time I’m learning and gaining something.” – CE 2

This student volunteer concurs that learning occurs each time they engage in volunteer activities. What follows are excerpts from community partners, who also share that they are learning from this experience of hosting volunteers in their organisations.

“At the same time they also learn from us, I also learn from them.” – CP 1

Another partner concurs:

“I teach them that this is how we do things here, then they follow what I am saying...” – CP 2

Community partners during this research were given an opportunity to reflect on their role in community engagement, and through this began to recognize that they take on the role of teachers when student volunteers visit their organisations. They recognized that students not only have knowledge and skills but that students also learn at their organisations. In turn, students in this study began to value the knowledge that community partners have and respect this.

Students discussed having learnt lifelong lessons through their interactions in community engagement.

“So I think, one thing it taught me very, I think I’ll carry it forward going into life is to manage my time, plan my time...” – CE 2

Another student shares similar sentiments:

“Ja I think I learnt, I learnt not to have so many ideas but just only, like I said, starting out small. I’ve learnt that umh I couldn’t emphasise this more, but planning of our time” – CE 4

## 6.2 *Community partners learning from one another*

Having explored how they are teachers in their organisations, community partners also started to recognise that they are able to share their various skills, knowledge and capabilities with one another. Thus, the emphasis shifts from only a student volunteer and community partner only relationship, to that of further community interaction and collaboration.

“At first when I started it was not easy, because it is not easy to stand in front of people, you see? Then there was

this time I was presenting. There is this lady, Zizipho, she taught me how to stand in front of people then here I am today, I – I am able to stand in front of people and say anything...” – CP 2

This community partner reflects on how a fellow community partner assisted her to boost her confidence and interact with diverse groups of people, including standing in front of them and giving presentations. Another community partner reflects on what they have learnt in the group:

“I have learnt a lot. I learnt in the group, and where I am working that when you are doing something for people you need to involve them...once you leave there is a big gap, it’s not well.” – CP 3

This partner reflects on how she can improve her work in her organisation, stating that she learnt this through being part of the ECD Residence Programme.

## 7. Discussion

CE has the potential to lead to transformative learning (Davis et al., 2017), as evidence from this research shows. This is through its potential to shift preconceptions that people have, by forging partnerships between students and community partners in non-traditional settings (Akhurst & Mitchell, 2022). Findings in this research point to evidence towards transformative learning for both community partners and student volunteers. Reflection activities, embedded in CE activities, are designed to promote the development of new understandings for students (Akhurst et al.2016). Reflection was structured within the ECD Residence Programme, with community partners and CE representatives meeting every quarter to reflect on their activities and key learnings. Additionally, reflection and evaluation were structured into weeks 13 and 19 of the S@M project planning cycle. This process, facilitated by RUCE, took the form of meetings where students and partners were required to jointly engage in various reflective activities.

Six areas within which worldviews are disrupted are proposed by Kiely (2004) and are explored elsewhere in this chapter. Evidence in this research however only points to elements of four of these six areas. These are political transformation, moral transformation, cultural transformation, and personal transformation.

The first area of transformation, political transformation, refers to an expanded sense of social responsibility and citizenship, in moving away from passive volunteerism to more active involvement. It also refers to increases in the sense of awareness and understanding of the inequitable distribution of power and resources in a community (Kiely, 2004). One could say that political transformation appeared to be starting to emerge for the student volunteers who were part of this research. This is because these student volunteers reflected on having built close, personal relationships with their community partners; and due to having built these relationships, having the desire to continue being involved with the organisations beyond their involvement during the ECD Residence Programme. Community partners also expressed a desire to continue working with the student volunteers and building relationships with them. It is not clear however to what extent this happened subsequently. Further research would need to explore whether these aspirations indeed translated into action and to ascertain to what extent these experiences resulted in more in-depth political understanding in participants.

The second area of transformation, moral transformation, occurs when people develop relationships based on mutual respect leading to an evolving sense of solidarity. It occurs when community partner groups start to move away from understanding engagement as being characteristic of providing a one-way charitable service, where one is a benefactor and the other is a beneficiary; towards building reciprocal relationships where everyone's knowledge and skills are recognised and appreciated (Kiely, 2004). Within this research there was evidence of community partners being challenged in their preconceived ideas about what CE is and

what the role of student volunteers were. Community partners stated that initially they thought that CE was about students from RU lending a helping hand in their organisation. It was after the initial training that RUCCE provided and through consistent engagement in the ECD Residence Programme that they came to realise that the relationship was intended to be reciprocal, with both the community partners and student volunteers learning and benefiting from the engagement. Again, a longer-term focused research project would be necessary to ascertain the degree to which moral transformation was affected.

In addition to this, in reflection during the focus group discussions held during this research, the community partners realised that it was important to have collaboration amongst themselves as community partners. The aim of this collaboration would serve to strengthen their communities. However, whereas all community partners who participated in this research made a commitment to collaborate with one another going forward, there was no evidence of this having happened upon investigation in follow-up interviews.

In the third area of transformation, cultural transformation, the participant begins to rethink dominant cultural and social values, norms, and rituals. This rethinking includes the questioning of Western thinking. In addition to this, cultural transformation is about being critical of privilege (Kiely, 2004). There has been evidence of this in this research with the emergence of valuing the knowledge of community partners as equally important as 'formal, academic' knowledge. Social knowledge should be encouraged to emerge (Eskell-Blokland, 2012). However, the instances of othering noted in the data collected signalled that whilst bridges had started to be built, the cultural divide was still experienced by participants.

Evidence in this research points to a move towards decentring Euro-American hegemony (Oyedemi, 2018) through beginning to recognise and value community partner knowledge as important for student learning and development

(Şahin & Dogantay, 2018). This process is two-fold, consisting of the epistemic project and the personal project. While the epistemic project is about knowledge creation and the valuing of all knowledge, the personal project is a rehumanizing approach which allows students, and in the case of this research, community partners to claim their spaces equally in being part of shaping knowledge. The personal project is important in processes of dismantling cultural colonisation, which has been one of the most destructive aspects of colonisation as “it tends toward permanence in social understandings of self, social practices and knowledge creation” (Oyedemi, 2018, p. 4-5). This research demonstrates that strides may be made to reduce injustices in knowledge production (Heleta, 2016), through foregrounding student and community knowledge and agency (Timmis et al., 2019). However, there still appears to be further progress to be made.

Through being engaged in the ECD Residence Programme, community partners learnt more about themselves, which led to some changes in the way that they view themselves. Reflecting as part of this research, community partners stated that prior to engaging in this programme they perceived themselves as beneficiaries and did not recognise the valuable assets they bring to the partnership, as well as their agency to be influential. Over time, community partners developed an understanding that they contributed to student development. Additionally, this research provided an opportunity for them to reflect on how they could also contribute to the development of one another as well as others in their broader communities.

In the fourth area of transformation, personal transformation, learners begin to rethink their previous self-concepts, their lifestyles, their relationships and possibly their careers. Additionally, people begin to recognise their vulnerable sides (Kiely, 2004). For this research, community partners began to recognise and value their capabilities. They started taking up leadership roles, through designing and implementing training for students to be able to volunteer effectively in their organisations. Community partners

recognised that they could teach students how to work with young children, an experience that student volunteers may not have had previously. There is also anecdotal evidence that community partners also started sharing their knowledge amongst one another. An example of this is of one of the community partners who learnt presentation skills and confidence from another community partner involved in the ECD Residence Programme. It is important to note however that when looking more closely, it seems that these instances of community partners sharing knowledge with one another occurs anecdotally and not frequently.

While this research has investigated evidence of transformative learning for the participants, it is important to highlight that as the ECD Residence Programme runs for a 19-week period, it may be unrealistic to expect substantial transformation to emerge (Worrall, 2007). Additionally, this research has not examined the impact of this transformative learning on student volunteers and community partners over time. Therefore, in taking a more critical stance, further research needs to be done to determine whether transformative learning does occur in the context of this programme and to what extent, as well as the transfer of such learning to other aspects of academic study. In addition, it is important to look at the long-term effects of this transformation on student volunteers' (Kiely, 2004) and community partners' daily lives. This is because research (e.g., Akhurst et al., 2016) shows that there is possibly a hierarchical progression towards transformative learning as student volunteers and community partners continue being involved in CE activities. Individuals may experience different levels of transformation at different times in their journeys, with some not benefitting from transformative learning at all.

Due to the limited scope of this research, transformation in this research has been taken to mean the *intention* towards acting in more socially just ways, rather than the action itself (Kiely, 2004). Further research will need to investigate such aspects further. Additionally, this research has only investigated the positive aspects of the results of

transformative learning and has not focused on the internal struggles that student volunteers and community partners may face when re-evaluating assumptions that they hold (Kiely, 2004). Further research will need to be done in this area to develop this further.

## 8. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how CE activities have the potential to contribute to transformative learning of students and community partners, and in turn promote the decolonisation agenda of HE. This has been evident through how there is evidence of the emergence fundamental shifts in the position of community partners in CE activities. There is beginning to be a recognition that community organisations can be sites of student learning, and the community partners can impart valuable knowledge and contribute to students' learning. This leads to the breaking down of educational barriers, as well as the potential shift in power imbalances. Additionally, there begins to be a shift in how HE is perceived. This promotion of partnership and engagement with local communities breaks down the notion of HEIs being 'ivory towers' that are inaccessible, and places to be fearful of. Lastly, we begin to see the systematic shifts for community partners themselves, in that they start to recognise themselves to be valuable contributors to student learning and development.

Having said this however, while interactions in CE have the potential of being transformative, there must be an acknowledgement that for this particular research, fully transformative experiences are not yet evident. Further research needs to be conducted to gather more information about students' assumptions and beliefs that may have been challenged, as well as ways in which they consciously made and implemented plans towards new ways of making meaning in their worlds.

Work is done to redistribute power between community partners and students, leading to more authentic relationships in the community settings. Whilst the literature highlights

the potential for differences in power and positioning to complicate partnership-building (e.g. Mitchell, 2008), this was not fully evident in this research. Perhaps the preparatory training, and continuous reflection assisted these aspects. However, these elements may also be difficult to recognise by those of us too 'close' to the work; or perhaps any discomfiting responses are hard to articulate.

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