



Transforming teacher education: Using community mapping to read the word and world

Deidre Geduld

Department of Primary School Education: Foundation Phase, Faculty of Education, Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha, South Africa

Deidre.Geduld@mandela.ac.za

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6175-0508>

Heloise Sathorar

Department of Secondary School Education, Faculty of Education, Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha, South Africa

Heloise.Sathorar@mandela.ac.za

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4947-0885>

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Abstract

The development of critical pedagogical approaches in teacher education (TE) in the South African context is imperative given the deepening crisis in the public schooling system in the country. Public discourse and debates amongst scholars suggest that education for critical citizenship and the development of substantive democracy are under threat. In order to advance education in support of substantive democracy, TE requires critical reflection and engagement with teaching practices that promote the development of citizenship for critical engagement and participation in the socioeconomic transformation of South Africa. This paper argues for the development and application of innovative approaches to teacher preparation that challenge the neoliberal attack on public education and the suppression of emancipatory practices amongst teachers. These approaches include a conscientious examination and application of community mapping as a pedagogical instrument that acquaints student teachers with, and deepens their understanding of, the contextual realities of educational experiences in poor and working-class South Africa. Drawing on case studies of community mapping, our paper argues for critical engagement in the teaching academy with the theory and practice of teacher preparation towards transformative work and an exposure to educational praxes that better prepare student teachers for a vocation that embraces the philosophies, methodologies, and ethics of critical pedagogy. The main thesis of this paper is that community mapping is a critical and transformative pedagogical tool that should be integral to teacher preparation in South Africa.

Keywords: community mapping, critical participatory action research, teacher education, critical literacy

Introduction

Public schooling in postapartheid South Africa is in perpetual and deepening crisis characterised by poor throughput and high dropout rates, large student-to-teacher ratios, an increase in race and gender violence, a decline in teacher morale, conflict, and protests.¹ In addition to the above, privatisation of education in postapartheid South Africa has increased, our public schools have been stripped of resources, education is increasingly being aligned to the needs of the formal labour market, and widening inequality in South African society is reflected, amongst others, in the national quintile system for public schooling.

The decline in public education and the neoliberal attack on our public education institutions challenges critical pedagogues together with student teachers, community activists, and social movements to continually pursue pedagogical approaches that build educated resistance, hope, and reflective praxis (Baatjes, 2012; Giroux, 2007; Hall, 2018; Klees et al., 2012; Malott, 2016; Slaughter & Rhoads, 2004). As university-based scholars, we argue that our intellectual project should include the development of a cadre of critical student teacher² pedagogues. These pedagogues should be committed to education for liberation from our Western model of education that, consciously or unconsciously, remains patronisingly paternalistic, colonialist, and cognitively imperialistic—all of which stand as a barrier to the sincere teaching of critical consciousness (Johnson-Hunter & Risku, 2003) and the struggle for substantive democracy. We concur with a number of scholars of critical pedagogy who in recent times have highlighted the urgency to combine socially engaged scholarship with pedagogical approaches that have the potential to reorient teacher preparation towards critical pedagogical practices for social change (Deslippe et al., 2016; Haworth & Elmore, 2017; Ledwith, 2016; Malott & Ford, 2015).

This article argues for the introduction and greater use of participatory teacher preparation practices drawn from the twin theories and practices of community participatory action research (CPAR) and popular education. For us, CPAR serves as the research arm of popular education, and popular education provides the pedagogical approaches and tools for CPAR. In CPAR, we highlight the need to apply community mapping as an instrument within a larger philosophical and methodological repository. Community mapping assists students in the collective organising, refining, and summarising of spatial information in a particular area. It allows them to draw a geographical map of the area and walk through the area with community members to gather information of particular aspects that could be used in their classroom during teaching. It encourages the development of critical consciousness and reflection and the enhancement of student teachers' ability towards *reading the word and the world* (Darder, 2017a, 2017b; Freire & Macedo, 1987). Reading the word and the world

¹ Many public schools in South Africa have recently been the focus of protests. These protests ranged from issues related to poor (and a lack of) resources, acts of gender and racial violence, and teacher and student abuse. All of these occurred in the context of a broader socioeconomic crisis as highlighted by the Jobs Summit which took place in Johannesburg, South Africa on 4–5 October, 2018.

² Foundation phase schooling in the South African context refers to Grades R–3. The other three phases are the intermediate phase (Grades 4–6), senior phase (Grades 7–9), and further education and training phase (Grades 10–12).

involves inspiring students to embrace critical learning approaches that foster students' interest, curiosity, and appreciation of the contextual causes of their personal circumstances in the world as well as those of others. Community mapping encourages student teachers to draw on community realities to make their teaching relevant.

We believe that such methodological approaches are important in encouraging liberating praxis and building intolerance to oppression and against the increase of inequalities in society. These approaches, we argue, should be firmly incorporated into TE programmes so that teachers are better prepared to confront and respond to some of the challenges in public schooling. This involves the preparation of student teachers in relation to the theory and practice of literacy education (reading the word), the connection between literacy and reading the world, and finally, building networks of solidarity in advancing the struggle for emancipatory practices against the interconnected forms of oppression in society.

The context of humanising pedagogy in teacher education in South Africa

Teacher education (TE) in postapartheid South Africa has been the focus of ongoing restructuring. It has been the subject of rationalisation, improved resource utilisation, ongoing efforts to upgrade teacher qualifications, quality assurance, and efforts towards addressing the vast discrepancies in race-based participation in education (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2013). Various initiatives to address the challenges facing TE include the introduction of norms and standards for TE, policies, qualifications frameworks, and curriculum reviews (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011).

Universities in South Africa are compelled to engage with, and respond to, policy directives. The Nelson Mandela University—an institution borne out of a merger process of three historically advantaged and two disadvantaged institutions with different historical and cultural traditions—adopted humanising pedagogy as its philosophical, methodological, and ethical orientation in TE (Geduld & Sathorar, 2016). A significant challenge for academics was the transition from modernist paradigms and fundamental pedagogics to a humanising pedagogical approach as the new framing philosophical paradigm that underpinned TE (Cullen & Hill, 2013; Morrow, 2007). Humanising pedagogy is broadly understood to be “a deep commitment to the goal of building a better social world, and necessitates active resistance against oppressive structures, ideas, and practices” (Roberts, 2000, p. 2). Humanising pedagogy therefore connects education to the process of becoming more fully human and thus to be more conscious of the plight of those being oppressed and suffering from social injustices. A humanising pedagogy requires an internal educative process that encourages academic consciousness oriented towards educational practices for progressive outcomes in education.

Embracing humanising pedagogy requires critical examination and reflection on how academics consider the larger determinants of education—the purpose of education in the South African context, how we perceive our students, how we teach and learn with them as

collective agents of change. Humanising pedagogy demands from both the teacher educator and student teacher a commitment and dedication to contemplate larger meta- and meso-theoretical frameworks such as the political economy, political sociology, and eco-pedagogy—rather than a narrow focus on technocratic rationality.

Applying a humanising pedagogy can assist TE to build a new vision of democratic schooling and critical citizenship. It requires the adoption of a critical approach to curriculum implementation that encourages self-empowerment and a self-identity of students as active, responsible, and moral citizens of a community (Sathorar, 2018).

Community mapping underpinned by critical pedagogy

Community life and universities are two formidable sites where the local and the global converge. The university as an institution occupies an elite position in society and has the power to guide public opinion; universities have both a responsibility and an obligation to provide insight and guidance on matters that pertain to public life (Giroux, 2012, 2003). Student teachers are part of this elite and make up the few in society who are privileged enough to access this level of education. They are society's role models—both by virtue of their societal position, and by their influence on the youth in schooling communities. Accepting this, Alexander (2008) argued that it is within the university that student teachers need to reclaim the meaning and purpose of education. It is in universities that students should learn how to mediate critically between democratic values and the demands of a capitalist society. Thus, universities need to politicise TE within the broader relations of power to raise awareness and inform actions to address how such relations perpetuate inequalities.

A number of scholars in South Africa have argued for new conceptions of the university as a site of advancing critical citizenship and the adoption of critical engaged forms of scholarship (Badat, 2007; Baatjes, 2014). Swartz (2006) suggested a conception of universities as institutions that are more firmly and deeply embedded within society and that universities, *inter alia*, need to respond to societal demands, effectively engage within their immediate habitat, and reconfigure their curricula, research, internal organisation, and ways of processing “the intermediations of knowledge and the social” (p. 141). Fundamental to this argument is the need for universities to recognise how they are implicated in the crises of the poor and working-class and that “universities [do] not stand ‘outside’ of the social and, reflect the characteristics of their environment” (Swartz, 2006, p. 140). We argue that universities are indeed integral parts of the social, political, cultural, and economic life of the communities in which they are located. In South Africa, this refers to not just the immediate surroundings of the university but, rather, refers to the broader diverse context of the country. When critically engaged scholarship is responsive to pressing social issues such as the crisis in education, the possibilities for a genuinely democratic and caring society are enhanced (Haworth & Elmore, 2017; Khasnabish & Haiven, 2015; McIlrath et al., 2012; Munck et al., 2014).

Critical pedagogues involved in TE have an important role to play in advancing critically engaged scholarship in teaching and learning, research, and engagement. In this paper, we argue for community mapping to be employed as a tool to advance critically engaged scholarship. There are three key aspects to highlight. Firstly, central to our vocation, is Freire's concept of conscientisation, which has been the theme of much scholarly work (Allman, 2001; Darder, 2017b; Freire, 2003; Roberts, 2013; Torres, 2014). For Freire, conscientisation is a requirement of our human condition and has ontological, epistemological, ethical, and educational dimensions. From a critical perspective, conscientisation is one of the most important characteristics of authentic learning (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014). Freire (1970, p. 17) defined conscientisation as follows: "To learn to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality." The process of conscientisation occurs when students and their teacher "know that they know" and they act upon this knowing (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014, p. 80). Thus, conscientisation involves a type of knowing that includes understanding and also the ability to act on this knowing in such a way as to bring about change. This knowing is supported by a dialectical relationship between reading the word and reading the world; and its relationship to conscientisation is a non-linear and ever-changing process of cognition, reflection, and actions (Roberts, 2013). This takes place through critical dialogical education with teachers, fostering a better understanding for the students of the self in relation to others and society—enhancing a deeper awareness of ourselves and the world as unfinished. Thus, in a society of incessant change, conscientisation creates awareness and necessitate a restlessness, probing, and inquiring to know that there is always more to learn. Community mapping provides an opportunity for teachers to facilitate this critical dialogical education and encourages teachers and students to reflect on their relationship with each other and the world.

A second important role for critical pedagogues is the challenge to resist techno-bureaucratic techniques and the ideological demands of the cult of efficiency (Collins, 1991; Giroux, 2009, 2004). Collins offered a stern warning to educators about the "technicist obsession" in pedagogical practice which reduces learning to "situations managed by technical formulations, such as standardised pre-packaged curricula and preconceived needs assessment instruments" put together by "experts" (1991, p. 5). Collins (1991) further warned that such deficit practices get in the way of individual learners' ability to think critically and to evaluate everyday experiences on their own account. All of this serves to usurp "independent, reflective thought on the part of the individual learner" and to "subvert critical powers of insight and imagination" (Giroux, 2013, p. 5). One of the main problems with the technicist approach is its portrayal of teaching as a value-free, objective activity whose problems are solvable through the application of the rigorous procedures of scientific methods. However, choices of method, curriculum, language of instruction, and the timing and the location of classes might appear on the surface to be purely technical but they are, in fact, profoundly influenced by the political and economic contexts in which they take place (Youngman, 1990). For these reasons, community mapping is proposed to encourage teachers and students to question techno-bureaucratic techniques and curricula and their relevance to different teaching contexts.

Thirdly, Giroux (2013) drew attention to the connection between technocratic rationality and the deskilling of teachers that accompanies the adoption of management-type pedagogies. This management-type paradigm, he argued, seeks to “improve” education by “teacher-proofing” it. Teachers are then relegated to semi-skilled, low-paid workers in the massification of education (Giroux, 2009). In addition to this, Giroux argued, neoconservatives:

Want public schools and colleges to focus on “practical” methods in order to prepare teachers for an “outcome-based” education system, which is a code for pedagogical methods that are as anti-intellectual as they are politically conservative. (2013, p. 5)

Reed and Anthony (1992) contributed to this point indicating that:

All too often, the educational community has retreated into a narrow vocationalism which crowds out any sustained concern with the social, moral, political and ideological ingredients of education work. (p. 601)

Pedagogy is therefore reduced to teaching methods and data-driven performance indicators, which are said to measure scholastic ability and improve student achievement. The deskilling of teachers and the emphasis placed on instrumental rationality pose a serious threat to education as a democratising force, the advancement of critical and analytical thinking, and the development of critical inquiry and engaged citizenship. Community mapping provides teachers and students the opportunity to resist management-type pedagogies that prevent any engagement with the social political realities of the communities in which they work.

The importance of critical literacy in teacher education

Critical literacy is an important theme within TE and is integral to Freire’s construct of reading the word and the world. Anderson and Irvine (1993, p. 85) defined critical literacy as “learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one’s experience as historically constructed within specific power relations.” Barton (2006) and Street (1984) held the view that literacy, as social action through language, contributes to the development of students as agents inside a larger culture (Papen, 2005). Luke (2000) articulated that, essentially, it moves the reader’s focus away from the self in critical reading to the interpretation of texts in different environmental and cultural contexts. Educators and students are thus encouraged to read, evaluate, and reflect on texts, and to engage in the creative process of actively constructing or reconstructing these texts. Community mapping facilitates a process for students and teachers to creatively reimagine the text that they have read when they interact with society.

Critical literacy in Freirean terms challenges and moves away from the “utilitarian vocational meanings” commonly associated with the functionalist approach to literacy (Rassool, 2009, p. 8), towards a pedagogy that aims to develop understanding of our world and how to change it. As part of critical literacy, an exploration of the dialectical relationship between justice and injustice, power and oppression, and so forth, is necessary. Literacy, within this framework is

conceptualised as a symbol of power and is linked to a transformative project. In other words, for Freire, literacy was political and was no longer seen as a neutral technique as in the functionalist view.

Critical literacy provides opportunities for students to differentiate between the purposes of texts and also identify the ideologies, values, and beliefs presented in texts (Hamilton, 1996). Students, as they engage with the text, can accept, can reject, or reconstruct the ideologies presented (Cervetti et al., 2001) reflective of their own life experiences (Luke, 2000). Knowledge construction, deconstruction, or reconstruction allows students to examine their own conceptual understanding and meaning of perspectives and enables them to critically evaluate other aspects of their lives (Papen, 2005). As emphasised by Morrell (2011), some may interpret this engagement, examination, and critique of texts through the process of reading as a form of activism. Community mapping allows students to link the text that they are reading in their classes to what they observe and experience during the participatory engagements. It enhances their activism by allowing them to question the inequalities that they observe. Critical literate students develop the ability to examine their ongoing development and to reveal the subjective positions from which they make sense of the world and act in it. According to Street (2001), this implies, amongst others, a radical critique of elite culture, selective schooling, state or religiously controlled curricula, and existing unequal power relations among different social groups.

We grow up and live in local cultures that are set in global contexts where multiple discourses shape us. Critical literacy involves critical engagement with multiple perspectives and discourses (Searle, 1999). Listening to different perspectives does not necessarily mean changing or denying one's stance on an issue (Alford, 2001) but, rather, leads to an awareness that "truth" is really a partial and limited perspective (Harste, 2008), and that no single version of an event tells the entire story (Ciardiello, 2004). By engaging students in community mapping exercises, they become aware that not all perspectives are equally powerful, thus exploring multiple viewpoints on an issue, which enables student teachers to realise that there are no easy answers to complex problems (Harste, 2008).

Critical participatory action research and community mapping

Critical participatory action research (CPAR) has a long association with revolutionary pedagogical projects and practices, of which Paulo Freire's work has been the most influential (Camarota & Fine, 2008; Freire, 1982; Weis & Fine, 2004). Freire (2005, 2003)—focused on people's presumed need to gain knowledge and a process in which teachers engaged in mutual learning with their students. His approach to education and participatory forms of learning emerged as a practical expression of his sense of solidarity with those who experienced poverty. Torres (2014) mentioned that this experience brought home to him the powerful relationship between social class and knowledge.

CPAR involves a collaborative approach to research, which immerses all participants in and throughout the research process from establishing the research question, to developing tools to generate empirical material, to the analysis and dissemination of findings (Anyon et al., 2009). It is a research framework that aims to address the practical concerns of people in a community and fundamentally changes the roles of researcher and who is being researched (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). Community mapping is a tool of CPAR. First, it is understood as the process and product of a community getting together to map its own assets, values, beliefs, and knowledges (Anyon et al., 2009). It is about mapping by the community, for the community, using community-based tools such as dialogue and participation. It further emphasises dialogical participant engagement in generating empirical material about the contextual realities and lived experiences within a defined location (Lydon, 2003). Selvin and Buckingham Shum (2014) argued that community mapping is a methodology that encourages and empowers the community to explore itself and to advance on action. It is the opposite of mapping by institutional researchers for scholars isolated from the community using scientific methodologies. Second, it is an alternative educative and research tool—a participatory approach that provides effective ways of collectively eliciting and examining peoples’ experiences of creating new knowledge and understandings. It produces valid and reliable empirical material that helps community researchers and stakeholders to understand the strengths of a community and its ability to solve its problems (Carroll, 2012).

Third, it is a method that assists students in the collective organising, refining, and summarising of spatial information (Preece & Shneiderman, 2009). This collective experience positions students as co-constructors of knowledge in dialogical relationship with others in a community of practice. It further provides students with analytical tools that enable critical insight about the context of schooling, the development of teaching practices applied in diverse settings, and building solidarity in struggles to transform public schooling. Finally, it helps students to make links to the real world and contextualise theory. This form of collaboration with the community allows for the co-construction of knowledges with students in non-formal learning spaces, and contributes to the bi-directional learning experiences (Warren, 2010). The capabilities of academic staff to support these types of transformational learning processes are too often assumed. However, academic staff need to be more engaged in processes that advocate for transformational learning. Freire (2005, p. 129) was of the opinion: “[Teachers] have much to teach through the example of fighting for the fundamental changes we need, of fighting against authoritarianism and in favour of democracy.” Freire asserted that teachers, who dare to take even the smallest steps toward social justice, are “radical”; “we are,” he wrote, “political militants because we are teachers” (2005, p. 104).

Community mapping in practice

Community mapping is a participatory activity that enables the gathering of data together with the local people to explore environmental, economic, and social resources (van Staden et al., 2006). In brief, community mapping is a systematic walk along a defined route across a community together with the local people to explore socioeconomic conditions by observing,

asking, listening, looking, and producing educational responses that could assist in responding to socioeconomic realities. The purpose of a community mapping exercise is to organise and refine spatial information and to summarise local conditions in the area (Carroll, 2012). This experience positions students as co-constructors of knowledge via dialogue with each other, lectures, teachers, and community members as part of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Community mapping is not meant to teach student teachers new teaching strategies but to provide them with tools that will enable them, through participatory approaches, to reflect critically on their own perspectives and beliefs around what constitutes a school in the South African context for the majority of learners in this country. In addition, we believe that participating in community mapping exercises will advance a possible framework to prepare students teachers to teach in diverse schooling contexts.

The use of community mapping and participatory methodologies assists to shape and develop a contextual understanding of the multi-context of schooling (De Moor, 2013). Our aim through this exercise is to open up the formal educational environments so that the whole community in and around the school becomes a space for and of learning. It is our understanding that students need opportunities to critically problematise and reflect on issues of race, class, ethnicity, gender, culture, and language and how these issues enable educational opportunities—or not (Lydon, 2003). We argue that this is particularly important within the past, present, and future socio/economic/political landscapes of South Africa.

Unless students have access to diverse contexts that challenge conventional knowledge, and unless they engage in deep reflection and serious dialogue (Freire, 1970) about their own knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions as well as the curriculum they will teach (Apple, 1993), they will struggle to develop the practice of questioning mainstream knowledge and practices (Barnett, 2017). It is through community mapping, we argue, that students will be able to theorise the effects of these contradictions on the curriculum and pedagogical practices of schooling in a context in which they are increasingly being made aware of the conflicting values and beliefs that underpin schooling practices. As Bhaskar (1979) said, “to criticise a belief as false is *ipso facto* not only to criticise any action or practice informed or sustained by that belief, but also anything that necessitates it” (p. 80). The questioning and critique of mainstream knowledge and practices will contribute to the reinventing of critical pedagogy.

Case studies on community mapping: Insights from the field

The experiences of community mapping used in three research sites demonstrates the contribution that CPAR tools hold for building critical consciousness. In writing this paper, we carefully analysed three case studies in which community mapping was used for synthesising a thesis that argues why such a CPAR approach is beneficial to teacher preparation. The three case studies examined were the Winterveldt project conducted by Medunsa in the Northwest Province, the Roots Driven Rural Development Programme in the Bojanala Region of the North West Province, and the Community Education Project of the

Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training (CIPSET), Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth. In the sections below, we provide a brief overview of each of the case studies that we used to advocate for the introduction of community mapping into teacher education programmes.

Winterveldt

The Winterveldt project was one of the nine sites included in a national study to determine the livelihood strategies of youth with disabilities in South Africa (Lorenzo & Motau, 2014). Researchers used community mapping to describe the prevailing social environment of Winterveldt as well as to capture the public's awareness of disability and attitudes toward youth with disabilities. The community mapping helped participants to picture the surroundings of these youth and gave insight into their lives within their community. The mapping exercise assisted participants to identify the challenges and opportunities in the environment that could impact on the livelihoods of the youth. They were afforded the opportunity to know more about the places and spaces they inhabited and, at the same time, they had to address negative assumptions that they might bring to these spaces. It held the potential to raise awareness of opportunities available to youth with disabilities. This resulted in the establishment of partnerships between multiple stakeholders. More importantly, the empirical material highlighted that the community members of Winterveldt have initiatives and potential to change their status from being unemployed to being entrepreneurs. Participation and collaboration were strengthened amongst the local people and the university partners working on the Winterveldt project. This allowed for the co-construction of knowledge that was mutually beneficial to all participants.

Roots Driven Rural Development Programme

This case study was conducted by UNISA's Department of Geography in the rural village of Mathopestad, a farming community under tribal authority in the North-West Province. Participants were taken through exercises designed to make them aware of their existing social, human, cultural, and physical capital (expressed as assets; Panek & Flok, 2013). The process was meant to help communities to change their thinking from "this is what we lack" to "we are richer than we realised" (Panek, 2014, p. 23). Being "cartographers" of their own community, mapping added a sense of pride and belonging. Participants developed knowledge and skills in participatory development techniques such as community profiling, mapping, transect walks, and community calendars. Participants were enabled to best use the community's resources to promote self-sufficiency.

The participatory mapping process had three objectives for this case study. First, empirical material was generated to inform the research design including identifying community boundaries, describing geographic and social separation of communities, and identifying relevant matching criteria. Second, the empirical material from these exercises was used to inform the intervention design, to empower participants towards reducing their own levels of poverty and inequality, and to establish their own priorities for sustainable socioeconomic change. Finally, the third objective of the mapping process was to build relations in the

community so as to develop small sustainable business ventures. The UNISA Department of Geography, secondary school teachers specialising in geography at the high school, and community members participated in the study. Participants were able to examine a range of factors including perceptions of community development purposes, conceptions of community, practice methods, practitioner roles, and the context in which they were operating. Some of the participants stated the purpose of community mapping as empowering people “to take collective action to improve the quality of life in their community” (Nicolau & Delport, 2015, p. 7). The process enabled and enhanced understanding of the resources available for the development of community livelihood.

The Community Education Project

The Community Education Project (CEP) at Nelson Mandela University is a CPAR project initiated to support the development of non-formal education within communities (CIPSET, 2018). The project was conceived in response to the lack of education programmes in communities of the poor and urban working class that address their immediate needs and interests. Working in four communities surrounding the Missionvale campus of the university, a group of university-based educators combined with community participants to build a collective to investigate the issues and problems members of the local communities deemed important, what situations or circumstances they were interested in changing, and how non-formal community education programmes could be developed to address these circumstances.

Community learning and investigation circle (CLIC) activities such as combined planning, community mobilisation, transect walks, field note writing, coding, decoding, and dialogues were used to lay the basis for the development of non-formal education programmes. Community mapping through transect walks formed an integral part of the CPAR approach. During the 3-hour transect walks, members of the CLIC and community members recorded their observations, conducted interviews, took photographs, and constructed detailed narratives that captured key thematic issues within communities. Some of these included issues of housing, sanitation, water and water infrastructure, waste, recycling, livelihoods, safety of children, and impacts on the natural environment (CIPSET, 2018). Further meta-analysis, dialogue, and community learning events resulted in the production of resource materials that could be used as part of community education and social action programmes.

Implications for teacher education

The lessons drawn from these case studies are informative, and confirm the benefits that could be derived from the incorporation of CPAR methodologies into TE. First, CPAR provides student teachers with opportunities to collectively gain insights into the social and contextual problems affecting the lives of teachers and learners in public schools and to conceptualise actions toward addressing such problems. It therefore provides an opportunity to acquire the skills of critical enquiry within communities and educational settings. Second, CPAR encourages student teachers to work as a collective and involve members of

communities within which schools are located. Student teachers can learn that community-based research is a collective process involving data collection, analysis, dialogue, and reflection. Through this process, knowledge is co-constructed and the knowledge that already exists in communities is recognised and forms part of the new knowledge. This forms the basis for actions that offer the possibility for developing praxis for social change (Allman, 2001).

Third, exposure to CPAR could contribute to student teachers becoming more immersed in learning about complex power relations, historic and contemporary community struggles, and the consequences of structures and systems of oppression and marginalisation (Luckett et al., 2017). Such immersion could offer student teachers the opportunity for critical inquiry, unlearning, or denaturalising realities of the social worlds and help them to reconstruct new forms of knowledges for transforming systems and institutions for social justice (Luckett et al., 2017). Fourth, it will also allow student teachers to engage with the context within which schools are located and create opportunities for them to think more deeply about their practice. For instance, to problematise and reflect on social justice issues, develop a critique of policy in education, and learn to act in solidarity with others to bring about change. It is also through community mapping that student teachers are encouraged to analyse the many contradictions in the curriculum and pedagogical practices of schooling. We realise that the above might sound idealistic but we strive towards achieving this by providing students with assignments and activities that will encourage them to think about their experience. We also engage them in critical discussion about these experiences.

Fifth, knowledge constructed through CPAR is alive and constitutes fertile soil for the development of new ideas, actions, plans, and strategies to initiate social change (Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 2011). Student teacher involvement in CPAR could be a vital source of helping to shape the research orientation of teaching practice (Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 2011; Ledwith & Springett, 2010; Luckett et al., 2017).

Conclusion

In this paper, we highlight three areas of importance that apply to TE and their relationship with the use of participatory techniques. Student teachers should be encouraged to engage with epistemological curiosity—Freire’s construct of reading the word and the world. Returning to this Freirean construct is imperative in a context of neoliberalism, the ever-increasing vocationalism of the curriculum, an obsession with technocratic rationality, the cult of efficiency, and the embrace of technical and mechanical approaches to the teaching and learning of literacy. Freire insisted that we resist neoliberal inevitability and argued:

Teacher preparation should never be reduced to a form of training. Rather, teacher preparation should go beyond the technical preparation of teachers and be rooted in the ethical formation both of selves and of history. (2001, p. 23)

He further stressed the important relationship between literacy and politics, and argued that (critical) literacy involves critical perception, interpretation, and reflection. Freire’s critical

literacy was committed to a vocation of all human beings to become humanised (Roberts, 2013).

The second key theme is the development of reading the world, which is dialectically related to reading the word. Freire (2005) suggested that student teachers should be encouraged to develop a critical analysis of their historical and contemporary experiences. He emphasised that reading the world involves stimulating critical learning approaches that foster students' interest, curiosity, and appreciation of the contextual antecedent causes of their personal circumstances in the world as well as those of others (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freirean pedagogy encourages an exploration of the broader context in which schooling takes place, together with an investigation of the immediate environment in which education of students is provided. For many student teachers, a critical examination of the historical, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts becomes an important discussion of how they relate to the political economy of education and society. In this paper, we propose community mapping as a tool to facilitate these critical examinations.

The third important theme is the need to link TE to action to transform student teachers' contexts. Reading the word and the world combines textual and contextual knowledges that create the potential for student teachers to develop a "disposition to question a constructed reality and subsequently promote a democratic world through praxis" (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010, p. 99). Community mapping allows student teachers to link theory to practice and creates the opportunity for them to contribute to societal change in collaboration with community members.

We argue that TE should be based on Freire's critical literacy of reading the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). This, we believe, is fundamental for critical pedagogues committed to the struggle to reclaim public education for critical citizenship in the South African context. Based on Freire's (2003) theory of consciousness, we argue for greater use and exploration of participatory approaches such as community mapping in TE. We believe that community mapping offers student teachers a variety of benefits essential to building transformative practices in education. Including community mapping in the curricula for TE could further nurture critically engaged forms of scholarship amongst student teachers, and the production of knowledge that addresses more directly pertinent issues in public schooling.

Finally, we believe that the use of participatory approaches can contribute to the development of solidarity and praxis that confront the oppressive forces that reproduce marginalisation and exclusion in our society.

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