

# Service-Learning in the United States and South Africa: A Comparative Analysis Informed by John Dewey and Julius Nyerere

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*As the prevalence of service-learning within higher education institutions grows across the globe there is value to explore, discuss, and describe the similarities and differences between the various expressions that are emerging. Such comparative analysis can deepen understanding of service-learning pedagogy, improve practice, and create a framework for future research. This paper compares service-learning in the United States and South Africa to understand Western-oriented and Africanized expressions of this promising teaching strategy. The analysis identifies three dimensions derived from the educational theories of John Dewey and Julius Nyerere and finds there is mutual agreement as to the value of developing civic-minded graduates. However, in the U.S., service-learning is supported primarily by nonprofit associations and stakeholders within higher education, whereas in South Africa, service-learning is a part of state mandated transformations for higher education.*

Service-learning is a teaching strategy increasingly used within higher education (Campus Compact, 2005) both in the United States and abroad (e.g., Australia, Egypt, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea). The International Partnership for Service-learning and Leadership (IPSL), a non-profit organization advocating for service-learning experiences linked to study abroad, states that “the idea behind service-learning, of linking the classroom with the larger world, theory with practice, is an idea of worldwide potency” (Tonkin, 2004, p. 5). This paper explores the similarities and differences between service-learning in higher education in the U.S. and South Africa and offers an explanation, based on two theories of education, as to why these similarities and differences exist. Three macro-level dimensions are derived from the work of John Dewey (1916; 1927) and Julius Nyerere (1974) for comparing the U.S. and South African expressions of service-learning in higher education. Finding common ground in these educational philosophies is important for purposes of stimulating constructive dialogue, yet exploring the unique approaches taken in different contexts is an equally important step toward creating a framework for cross-national studies.

## Background of Service-Learning in Higher Education

As a relatively new pedagogy (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999), service-learning has gained prominence

in American higher education since its emergence in the early 1990s. The growth of service-learning in the U.S. is due, in large part, to (a) the work of Campus Compact, a national coalition of more than 1,100 college and university presidents supporting student education for responsible citizenship (see [www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)), and (b) the funding of program and course development grants awarded by Learn and Serve America, a program initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service, (a U.S. agency of the federal government; see [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org)). The leadership and work of these two organizations coincided with changes within higher education that focused on (a) an increased emphasis on engaged pedagogies (Edgerton, 1994) and active-learning strategies in undergraduate education (Marchese, 1997; Shulman, 2008) and (b) a resurgence of the public roles and responsibilities of American higher education (Boyer, 1994, 1996; Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2000; Maurrasse, 2001). Service-learning has a presence in all institutional types and across all fields of study in American colleges and universities (Campus Compact, 2005; Zlotkowski, 2000), and has been said to have its roots in “the long established American belief in voluntary service... and in the conjunction of education and practice that lies behind the land-grant colleges of the nineteenth century, yet it has many genealogies in many traditions across the world” (Tonkin, 2004, p. 6).

Corresponding growth of service-learning has taken place in South Africa since 2000 (Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna, & Slamati, 2008). This growth was initiated by the Joint Education Trust (JET), a private sector initiative comprised of leading South African companies, through the Community-Higher Education Service Partnerships (CHESP) initiative which began in 1999 (see [www.chesp.org.za](http://www.chesp.org.za)). Sponsored, in part, by the Ford Foundation and the government of South Africa, the CHESP program funded the development of more than 100 service-learning courses, or modules, across eight institutions of higher education in South Africa (Lazarus et al.).

Service-learning was introduced in South Africa as a well-defined pedagogy at the time that South Africa was undergoing a “comprehensive agenda for higher education transformation” (Badat, 2003, p. 12) to commit resources to engage more meaningfully with the communities the higher education institutions served. Through the CHESP initiative, teams of South Africans visited selected campuses in the U.S. to learn about successful service-learning programs. Subsequently, practitioners from the U.S. traveled to South Africa to offer faculty development workshops, campus consultations, and advice on program evaluation and research. These academic experts enthusiastically guided South African colleagues in exploring, evaluating, and advancing service-learning (Erasmus, 2007, p. 29). However, critique of and skepticism about the relevance of what was perceived as a distinctly U.S. pedagogy was often heard among South African academics. A recent reference to such skepticism is the contention that some academics in South Africa still suspect that service-learning is “an intellectual McDonald’s burger that has travelled to Africa as a consequence of Americanization and/or globalization” (Le Grange, 2007, p. 4).

Since 1997, there have been a number of national mandates and accountability structures in South Africa, established through the Department of Education (DoE) and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), which promote the development of service-learning courses. Service-learning is valued as a means to cultivate social responsibility and prepare graduates equipped to work across racial and economic differences in post-apartheid society (Council on Higher Education/Higher Education Quality Committee, 2004; Department of Education, 1997, 2002). These national initiatives have strengthened the resolve of academics to use service-learning pedagogy and continuously adapt it to reflect and accommodate uniquely South African contexts and realities.

An important starting point for this comparative analysis is to define the term service-learning. Service-learning is defined as a “course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility” (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995, p. 112; see also Lazarus et al., 2008, p. 62). This definition reinforces the importance of reciprocity with the community, reflection by the students, and emphasizes civic learning outcomes as key.

At the inception of the CHESP initiative in South Africa, the Joint Education Trust (JET) reinforced aspects of this definition in program documents by stating that service-learning is a “thoughtfully organized and reflective service-oriented pedagogy” and added that it is “focused on the development priorities of communities through the interaction between and application of knowledge, skills and experience in partnership between community, academics, students, and service providers within the community for the benefit of all participants” (Joint Education Trust, 2001). The inclusion of references to “development priorities” and “service providers” as partners signaled essential shifts from the U.S. definitions to a more localized expression within the South African context.

The JET definition of service-learning and CHESP Implementation Grant Strategy “places a strong emphasis on the partnership of the three stakeholders, that is the higher education institution, the community (local recipients of the service), and the service sector partner in the development and the delivery of the service-learning courses” (Mouton & Wildschut, 2005, p. 122). In South Africa this approach to service-learning partnerships is commonly known as the CHESP triad partnership model, in contrast to the U.S. examples that typically refer to a dyad of campus and community or campus representative and community agency partner. The CHESP triad model is advocated as having “the added value of a third partner whose presence could diffuse power struggles” (Higher Education Quality Committee/Joint Education Trust, 2006a, p. 93) that may exist between the campus and community members or between the service sector partner and members of the local community.

One example of how this triad partnership model is emphasized in South Africa is to be found in the definition of service-learning held by the University of

## John Dewey's Philosophy of Education in a Democracy

the Free State which explicitly states, in addition to the standard elements, that service-learning “requires a collaborative partnership context that enhances mutual, reciprocal teaching and learning among all members of the partnership (lecturers and students, members of the communities, and representatives of the service sector)” (University of Free State, 2006, p. 9). It is noteworthy that the U.S. definition (from Bringle & Hatcher, 2004, p. 127) quoted in *A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for the Development and Managing the Quality of Service-Learning* (Higher Education Quality Committee, 2006a) no longer mentions “community needs” but instead refers to “community goals” (also cf. Lazarus et al., 2008, p. 62). This reflects awareness within the developing country context of the desire to steer away from deficit approaches in community engagement toward an asset-based approach that builds upon community strengths (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Fourie (2003) notes that in developing nations such as South Africa, regarding community development needs and goals as a priority in the design of service-learning modules is of great importance due to the historical inequities that have existed between those in higher education and the society at-large.

U.S.-based definitions of service-learning are well accepted in the literature yet there is common agreement that a wide range of models and implementation strategies are used in the U.S. (Jacoby, 1996), South Africa (Mouton & Wildschut, 2005), and across cultural contexts (Thomson, Smith-Tolken, Naidoo, & Bringle, 2008; Tonkin, 2004). So, although there is little variability in definitional and conceptual approaches, there is much more variability in the implementation of service-learning courses and modules.

Each of the above-mentioned definitions, however, help to differentiate service-learning from other types of educational experiences that take place in the community, and also differentiate service-learning from volunteering (see Furco, 1996; Perold, 1998). This distinctive nature of service-learning is similarly endorsed in the U.S. and South Africa. Unlike many other forms of practice-based learning (e.g., cooperative education, work-integrated learning, extension service placements, field-education, internships, practica) service-learning is linked to a course and has the intentional goal of developing civic skills and dispositions in students (Bawden, 2000; Hatcher & Steinberg, 2007). In service-learning in the U.S. and South Africa, academic credit is not given for engaging in community service; rather, academic credit is based on the academic learning that occurs and is demonstrated as a result of the community service experience (Howard, 1993; Perold, 1998).

The educational philosophy of John Dewey is valued as the bedrock for service-learning in the U.S. (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Hatcher, 1997; Saltmarsh, 1996). As an active learning strategy, service-learning is framed by the experiential learning theory of David Kolb (1984). Kolb's four-phased experiential learning cycle (i.e., concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation) is based primarily on the psychological and philosophical work of John Dewey (1916). Inspired by both the emerging field of psychology and the political discourse at the turn of the 20th century in the U.S., Dewey was an impassioned advocate for the social function of education in a democracy. He expressed concerns in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) that local communities were being displaced by a mobile, impersonal society. Dewey predicted that this displacement would lead to citizen apathy and disengagement. Education should therefore develop the capacities of all citizens to be active contributors to their communities.

The role of education in a democracy is most explicitly defined by Dewey in *Democracy and Education* (1916), and specifically within chapter seven, “The Democratic Conception in Education.” Dewey describes three educational theories of Plato, Rousseau, and the Germanic nation-state, and argues that none of these models is appropriate for a democracy. The Platonic model places too much of an emphasis on classical and stagnate knowledge; the intention of this model is to preserve a class-based society. Education theories of Rousseau and the 18th century enlightenment focus on humanity; however, they fail to articulate ways that individual development can and should benefit society at-large. And, the Germanic nation-state models are clear on social aims, but these are achieved through the subordination of individuals; compliance, rather than competence and creativity, is the hallmark of the nation-state model.

The challenge of education in a democracy is to find a balance between the tensions of social aims and individual development. Dewey (1916) poses two rhetorical and pivotal questions in chapter seven: “Who, then, shall conduct education so that humanity may improve?” and, “Is it possible for an educational system to be conducted by a national-state and yet the full social ends of the educative process not be restricted, constrained, and corrupted?” For Dewey, the challenge is to ensure that education contributes to social intelligence that will yield improvements in society and individuals who can develop to their fullest potential, in ways that ultimately benefit society.

There are a number of purposes of education in a democracy which align with Dewey's educational philosophy (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007) and the pedagogy of service-learning (Hatcher, 1997; Saltmarsh, 1996). Education must develop individual capacities to engage citizens in association with one another to promote humane conditions, habits of mind that transmit cultural values from one generation to the next and contribute to a stable society, and citizens who can readily adapt to the future, "for we do not live in a settled and finished world, but in one which is going on, and where our main task is prospective" (Dewey, 1916, p. 151). Dewey's educational philosophy has been called "pragmatic" and about "practical knowledge" because it "integrated liberal and useful knowledge into action for the purpose of transforming the environment" (Nkulu, 2005, p. 21). Dewey's pragmatism can be interpreted as a form of action intended to engage the learner in both critical reflection and problem-solving to improve social conditions (Westbrook, 1991). The civic outcomes of service-learning resonate with Dewey's emphasis on the responsibility of all citizens to take an active role in their community (Dewey, 1927; Hatcher; Saltmarsh).

The educational philosophy of Dewey has gained increased attention in the United States (Ryan, 1995; Westbrook, 1991), particularly with the renewed emphasis on civic responsibility and service-learning in higher education (Ehrlich, 1996, Eyler & Giles, 1999; Saltmarsh, 1996). For this comparative discussion, however, it is critical to question how the work of Dewey resonates in developing nations. A recent book by Nkulu (2005), *Serving the Common Good: A Postcolonial African Perspective on Higher Education*, explores this question of the relevance of Dewey's philosophy to postcolonial higher education in the African context. Nkulu reinforces the importance of Dewey's philosophy in emerging democracies and concludes that Dewey

... affirms the importance of both liberal and useful knowledge in enhancing progress in a democratic society and building human capacity for reasonable action upon the environment. Dewey appears to have acknowledged the fact that ability for analytical and creative thinking (which liberal education promotes) and acquisition of skills (which occurs through useful knowledge) are equally important and complementary. (p. 21)

Dewey developed his educational philosophies at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century during a time of fundamental social transformation in America. To what extent does his philosophy resonate with developing nations undergoing

more contemporary social transformations, such as South Africa, or resonate with young, postcolonial governments that have gained their independence in recent history? Can his educational philosophy help to explain similarities and differences between service-learning in the U.S. and South African contexts?

### Julius Nyerere

Nkulu (2005) builds an important conceptual bridge between the philosophy of Dewey and the educational positions endorsed by Julius Kambarage Nyerere (1922-1999), the former president of the Republic of Tanzania. Nkulu describes Nyerere as a "politician-scholar" and concludes that:

Like John Dewey, Nyerere hoped that combining critical analysis with positive action would not only ascertain the link between education and real issues, but also help to solve the problems of society. Both Dewey and Nyerere hoped education would enable individuals to understand and to relate to the world in which they live with the purpose of contributing to its transformation for the better. (p. 86)

Nyerere is described as "living out the ideal of an educated person as a philosopher, a leader, and a servant of the common good" (Nkulu, preface). Often referred to as "Mwalimu," which means teacher in Kiswahili, Nyerere is considered to be one of Africa's most respected leaders. It is common for many teachers to be affectionately called "mwalimu" with a small "m;" the fact that the title of "Mwalimu" with a capital "M" is a testimony to the exceedingly high regard bestowed upon Nyerere by his fellow citizens.

Nyerere attended Catholic school as a young boy and was the first Tanzanian to study at a British University (University of Edinburgh) in the mid-1950s where he was introduced to the work of John Locke, Plato, and Fabian thinking (Nkulu, 2005). His early career focused on leadership positions in the Tanganyika African National Union which led to his election as President of the independent republic of Tanzania in 1962. He used this public platform to advocate for educational change for youth and adults. Nyerere did not formally write about education; rather, he spoke about the role of education, and higher education in particular, in many public addresses (Nyerere, 1974). He instituted compulsory education for children in the early 1960s and defended the value of life-long learning for adults, which was counternormative to the existing colonial forms of higher education in Africa at the time.

In many speeches on the role of education in the developing nation, Nyerere (1974) often told a story

to highlight his educational philosophy. According to Nkulu (2005) the story can be summarized in the following way:

A rural village had its food supplies depleted and its people began starving. The villagers agreed to pool their meager resources and select a few capable individuals to send as messengers to a distant village to purchase more supplies... Nyerere wanted educated Tanzanians to develop abilities similar to those of the messengers from the village: an awareness of everyday life conditions in their society and the ability to reflect critically and to act upon such conditions for the well-being of many, if not all. (pp. 82-83)

Smith (1981) describes Nyerere's philosophy of social responsibility in the following way:

Those who receive this privilege of education have a duty to return the sacrifice which others have made. They are like the man who has been given all the food available in a starving village in order that he may have the strength to bring supplies back from a distant place. If he takes this food and does not bring help to his brothers, he is a traitor. (p. 23)

From Nyerere's perspective, education places a very personal responsibility upon the educated to ensure the well-being of other community members.

The personal responsibility advocated by Nyerere's educational philosophy sought to (a) inspire a desire for change, (b) increase understanding that a change is possible, and (c) equip people to make decisions to improve their society. Nkulu attributes "the fact that educational leaders in the United States are now calling for increased commitment to community service" as evidence that Nyerere's vision of higher education for the 21st century could also be regarded as relevant to the West (Nkulu, 2005, p. 129).

The themes in Nyerere's speeches on education are quite consistent with the educational philosophy of Dewey. Both reiterate how developing personal capacities can ensure the advancement of society. They both value the importance of personal experience as the bedrock for further skill development, regard knowledge as a common good to be used to make improvements in daily life, and call for social responsibility to be a by-product of education.

Nyerere envisioned an educational system that would produce well-trained individuals who would critically analyze problems in society and resolve them with an attitude of service to their fellow human beings. With a commitment to serve the public good, Nyerere stands out as an example of an educated person in post-inde-

pendent Africa... In the context of newly independent Tanzania, Nyerere wanted education, higher education in particular, to prepare not just philosopher-rulers but civic-minded intellectuals who would acquire the ability to reflect critically and to act upon daily-life conditions in society, and who would develop the attitude to serve and not only to rule that society. (Nkulu, 2005, pp. 80-81)

These educational goals, embodied by the policy of education for self-reliance that Nyerere advocated, align well with Dewey's insistence that society should conduct education to improve humanity (Dewey, 1916).

Although they lived during two different eras and on two different continents, Dewey and Nyerere articulate the value of education in social and democratic transformation. The rural village life in the developing nation of Tanzania in the 1960s was quite different than the urban realities in America that shaped Dewey's thinking at the turn of the 20th century. However, each was clear on the social role of education and called for education to develop civic-minded intellectuals (Nkulu, 2005) and civic-minded professionals (Dewey, 1927). This role for education is equally relevant in times of social transformation and social stability. The similarities between the educational ideals advanced by both Dewey and Nyerere create a common ground for service-learning expressions in the U.S. and South Africa. Instead of regarding the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of U.S.-based conceptualizations as foreign roots that shape the South African expressions of service-learning, South Africans may benefit by examining possibilities of how these two philosophies intersect to "imagine new educational systems in Africa's own philosophical foundation and social environment" (Assié-Lumumba, 2005, p.19).

### Exploring Similarities and Differences Across Three Dimensions

This overview of the educational philosophy of Dewey and Nyerere provides a theoretical framework for exploring some of the similarities and differences between service-learning in the U.S. and South Africa. This comparative analysis focuses primarily on the macro level of society and educational policy, although a comparative analysis could occur at any one of three levels including the macro level, meso level of the college or university, or micro level of the curriculum or courses (Bawden, 2000). Comparative analysis at the meso and micro level is not within the scope of this paper; however, future analyses at these levels would be important to advance understanding, practice, and comparative research on service-learning.

Service-learning in higher education in both the U.S. and South Africa is shaped by three dimensions: the degree to which there is

1. an explicit endorsement for higher education to prepare civic-minded graduates,
2. a transformational role of higher education in society supported by stakeholders both within the institution and among nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations,
3. a federal or national initiative to achieve such a transformation within higher education.

Both Dewey and Nyerere likely would agree upon the importance of the first and second dimension; the third dimension, however, would likely yield differing views. Nyerere valued both democracy and socialism and endorsed the strong role of the state in developing nations reeling from colonial rule to independence (Nkulu, 2005). Dewey, on the other hand, cautioned against strong nation-state controls for education in a democracy (1916). Further discussion on this point will follow. Each of these three dimensions will be discussed and serve to compare the macro context that shapes service-learning in the U.S. and South Africa.

*Dimension 1: Service-Learning is shaped by the degree to which there is an explicit call for higher education to prepare civic-minded graduates.*

A similarity in the discourse on service-learning in both the U.S. and South Africa is tied to preparing students to be active citizens and better equipped to bridge cross-cultural and economic differences in an increasingly diverse and global society (see Figure 1). In the U.S., developing civic responsibility has always been part of the definition of service-learning (Battistoni, 1997, 2001; Bringle & Hatcher, 1995) as students “serve to learn” to “learn to serve.” This emphasis on civic responsibility in higher education (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Edgerton, 1994; Hersh & Schneider, 2005) coincides with wider discussions in American society on the decline of participation in social and civic life (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton, 1985; Putnam, 2000). Initiatives such as the American Democracy Project, sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and the Greater Expectations report by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2002), call for higher education to develop the civic skills of undergraduates. This emphasis on the importance of developing civic skills is endorsed by an increasing num-

Figure 1:  
*Service-Learning in the U.S. and South Africa: Three Macro-Level Comparative Dimensions.*

Service-Learning in the U.S.	Service-Learning in South Africa
1. Explicit endorsement for higher education to prepare civic-minded graduates.	
Emphasis on student learning outcomes as goal of service-learning. “Civic responsibility” is key learning goal. Service-learning aligns with emphasis on active learning and engaged pedagogies.	Emphasis on collective good of society as goal of service-learning. “Social responsibility” is key learning goal. Service-learning aligns with Generic Competencies/Critical Cross-field Outcomes.
2. A transformational role of higher education in society that is supported by stakeholders both within the institution and among nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations.	
Associations and nonprofit organizations (e.g., Campus Compact, AACU, Carnegie Foundation) in higher education support civic engagement and service-learning. Site supervisors at nonprofit organizations partner with faculty on design and implementation of courses.	Joint Education Trust and Ford Foundation began the CHESP initiative, which is now supported by the national government. Service-sector providers and community residents partner with faculty on design and implementation of modules.
3. A federal or national initiative to achieve such a transformation within higher education.	
Federal agencies fund grants to support service-learning programs in selected colleges and universities. President’s Higher Education Community Service Award and Honor Role recognizes excellence in service-learning programs.	National mandates endorse community service programs including service-learning. Higher Education Quality Committee has an accountability structure to monitor community service programs.

ber of academic administrators and faculty who are committed to civic engagement as an explicit goal of higher education (Campus Compact, 2005; Langseth & Plater, 2004).

There is a similar call for civic skills in South Africa; however, this call initially came from the national government, rather than higher education associations and nongovernmental organizations (Thomson et al., 2008). As a rationale for including a service-learning component in the curricula of students in South Africa, the objective stipulated in the following subsection of Education White Paper 3 (Department of Education, July 1997) is often cited with reference to preparing civic-minded graduates: "To promote and develop social responsibility and awareness amongst students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes" (Department of Education, 1997, p. 10). An explicit and more recent policy directive from the South African government is the mandatory inclusion of responsible citizenship as a competency to be developed through purposefully structured learning opportunities within each academic program. These mandatory Generic Competencies or Critical Cross-field Outcomes include developing a macro-vision of the world as a set of related systems, identifying and solving problems, effective team work, effective communication, and cultural sensitivity, and that it should be the underlying intention of any program of learning to make students aware of the importance of "... participating as responsible citizens in the lives of local, national and global communities" (Council on Higher Education, 2002, p. 11). The national mandates in South Africa, largely stemming from "the phenomenon of globalization as well as the relatively recent democratization of the South African society, has compelled government to reconsider the role of higher education institutions in the reconstruction and development of the country" (Erasmus, 2005, p. 2).

A difference between the U.S. and South Africa is that the call for the development of civic skills in South Africa appears to be, in the first instance, tied to the national mandate for transformation in society, and secondly to the learning outcomes for students, per se. Social responsibility is seen as a national public good and a strategy to reconcile and make amends for the past inequities that existed under apartheid (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). In the U.S., the emphasis for the development of civic skills is essentially tied to the learning outcomes for students (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Colby et al., 2003; Thomson et al., 2008) and the development of individual capacities (Dewey, 1916) which will in turn have benefits for society at large. This emphasis is consistent with the American ethos that highly values individualism (Bellah et al., 1985; Edwards, 2004).

This distinction between focusing on societal goals and individual student learning outcomes may have implications for the way service-learning is valued or scrutinized within higher education.

*Dimension 2: Service-Learning is shaped by the degree to which there is a transformational role of higher education in society that is supported by stakeholders within the institution and among nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations.*

A similarity in both countries is that service-learning contributes to defining the broader mission and transformation of the university's role in society. In the U.S., there has been a rich yet checkered history of the role of higher education in society (Maurrasse, 2001; Thelin, 2004), and this is true within all types of institutions, including land-grant universities (Peters, Jordan, Adamek, & Alter, 2005). The ivory tower portrayal of colleges and universities as removed and cloistered from society was the norm for most of American history, with modest exceptions over time. However, in the past 15 years there have been consistent calls for higher education to become engaged institutions in their local communities (Boyer, 1994, 1996; Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999; Maurrasse). Associations (e.g., American Association of State Colleges & Universities, Association of American Colleges & Universities, National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges) and nonprofit organizations (e.g., Campus Compact, W. K. Kellogg Foundation) have supported this call for engagement through programs and grant-sponsored activities. In the U.S., the engagement agenda has been advanced through service-learning. For example, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning has established a new voluntary Carnegie classification for "Community Engagement," and one of the key indicators for a college or university to receive this type of classification is the presence of service-learning in the undergraduate curriculum.

This same call for a transformational role for higher education in society to move beyond the ivory tower has been made in South Africa by educators and national leaders (Fourie, 2003). In South Africa, this link between service-learning and the broader role of the university in society is best captured in Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education (Department of Education, 1997) and other policy statements, which have identified service-learning as an important teaching strategy to transform the institution's role in society.

Curriculum content and structure carry high symbolic value for countries engaged in the transition from one social system to another.

Just as the National Party had used state schools to reinforce the ideology of apartheid and to sustain white privilege, education policy makers in the new democratic government understood the importance of sending powerful signals that the state education system had broken with this discredited past and entered a new era... first instruction had to reflect the social values that define the new South Africa - values that Nelson Mandela summarized in his inaugural address as 'peace, prosperity, nonsexism, nonracialism, and democracy'... second the content of the new curriculum had to be nonauthoritarian, ... third the new curriculum needed to be delivered in a democratic fashion. (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 154)

Service-learning is a teaching strategy consistent with each of these national goals for the curriculum in South Africa, and at the same time it demonstrates responsiveness to the local community which had traditionally been excluded from higher education.

A difference between service-learning in the U.S. and South Africa lies in the role of nonprofit organizations or service-sector providers in the implementation of service-learning classes. In the U.S., it is typical for faculty to work directly with nonprofit site supervisors on the design and implementation of the service-learning course. The nonprofit organization serves as a proxy for identifying and responding to community needs. In the U.S. there is a high level of trust that nonprofit organizations have the best interest of their clients in mind (Anheier, 2005; Fukuyama, 1995). Trust, in terms of civil society, is defined as "the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms on the part of other members of that community" (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 26). Norms of such trust in civil society and among nonprofit organizations are culturally-specific (Edwards, 2004) and culturally-determined (Fukuyama).

In the African-centered ethos of more communal development goals for service-learning, there is an elevated importance of all external partners including service-sector providers and community participants. At least in terms of the CHESP expectations, the voice of community representatives was of primary importance in the design, implementation, and evaluation of each service-learning module. In South Africa, the recipients of the service (e.g., teenagers who receive the literacy training at the library, parents whose children participate in health education programs, residents who work alongside college students in the community garden) are regarded as partners who should bring voice and direction to the design and implementation of the service-learning course.

As described by Edwards (2004), the civil society of many African countries contains two strong tradi-

tions: "cultural and religious institutions that express collective identity based on clan or tribe" and "newer, cross-ethnic forms of association that have emerged in response to urbanization, education, and the development of the market economy" (p. 31). He describes that "on the ground in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa ... societies are developing a richer tapestry of association life containing threads from both these traditions" (p. 31). The involvement of both service-sector providers and community members in service-learning reflects the value of both of these traditions in South Africa. Yet the emphasis on community voice may also be evidence of a lower level of trust that exists in South Africa between individuals and mediating organizations such as service-sector providers and universities (Badat, 2003).

*Dimension 3: Service-Learning is shaped by the degree to which there is a federal or national initiative to achieve such a transformation within higher education.*

One of the major differences between service-learning in the U.S. and the South African context is the strategies taken by the federal (U.S.) and national (South Africa) government. In the U.S., the federal government does not have direct control over higher education; rather, that is left to private organizations (e.g., churches) and individual states. Oversight of the quality of higher education resides within regional accrediting associations (e.g., North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges). This decentralized system of higher education has contributed to a vast array of institutional types, including both public and private colleges and universities (Thelin, 2004). While federal policies have significant influence regarding the public funding of higher education (e.g., Federal Loans, Federal Work-Study, Morrill Act for Land-Grant Colleges and Universities), accountability in terms of curriculum and teaching rests with the professional or regional accrediting associations, not the federal government. Some accreditation associations have made civic engagement an explicit requirement for documentation for reaccreditation, but they have not required service-learning per se.

In the U.S., federal agencies (e.g., Corporation for National and Community Service, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) have supported the growth of service-learning through grant-sponsored programs (e.g., Learn and Serve America, Community Outreach Partnership Centers) that provide incentives and public recognition for the work. The federal government established the Office of University Partnerships through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and expected grant-funded programs to deliver and sustain service-learning pro-



grams as an integrated aspect of campus-community partnerships. However, there is not a federal mandate to support or require service-learning in higher education. Some states (e.g., Maryland, Pennsylvania) and cities (e.g., Atlanta, Charlotte) have required service-learning for graduation from high school, but this type of mandate rarely occurs within higher education, except in isolated cases, and at the choosing of the institution. Since 2005, the federal government has sponsored the President's Higher Education Community Service Award and Honor Role to recognize outstanding college and university commitments to community service and service-learning; while important, this is far different than national mandates for community engagement, including service-learning, as currently exists in South Africa.

The national mandates in South Africa have led the way for numerous transformational changes in higher education in the past 18 years (Badat, 2003). This was necessary because of the traditional emphasis on higher education as a commodity of the white elite (Nkulu, 2005).

Generally speaking, higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa has continuously been confronted with the legacy of the colonial model that emphasized the pursuit of intellectual excellence and leadership. Emphasis on intellectual excellence gave the impression that colonial higher education sought to inculcate the attitude of superiority in the mind of university graduates, making them assume they were a special class of individuals entitled to increased power and privileges over the rest of the society. (Nkulu, p. 60)

The national government in South Africa has sought to redress the former national policies of superiority and separate types of higher education from its apartheid past and at the same time transform universities in light of new economic and social goals in the current era of globalization (Badat).

This strong role of the national government in this transformation has been justified by the following argument, which reflects the current situation in South Africa:

The building by government of democratic consensus around change is important and is in principle to be favored, for it optimizes the prospects of successful change. Yet there are also concerns about the danger of acquiescence in the status quo and the consequences for transformation in higher education of delays in or, worse, paralysis of decision-making in situations where consensus is elusive since it knocks against deeply vested interests. In a situation of policy conflict in a democracy, government is ultimately the instrument by

which the particular interests of civil society are taken beyond themselves and lifted to the general interests of the state... government, therefore, faces a major challenge in mediating diverse social and institutional interests and making difficult yet decisive choices. (Badat, 2003, p. 16)

To expedite and ensure change, South Africa has relied on a strong state model of control for higher education. This urgency has focused on three pillars of higher education transformation in South Africa, including (a) the broadening of democratic participation, (b) through responsiveness to societal challenges, and (c) inclusive partnership-building (Department of Education, 1997). Therefore, the renewed focus on community engagement as a national policy is consistent with this phase of democratic practice in higher education in the post-apartheid era.

In several documents produced by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) (2006a; 2006b) service-learning is featured as a preferred strategy for the integration of community engagement into the curriculum, thus providing a strong impetus for higher education institutions to adopt this educational approach. A 2007 external program review of the CHESP initiative found that CHESP achieved its original objectives and is now located permanently within the higher education sector. In September 2008 the CHESP initiative was placed under the Quality Promotion and Capacity Development Directorate of the HEQC as part of the broader community engagement initiative.

Bringle and Hatcher (2007) suggest that civic engagement and service-learning should be considered against the backdrop of the contribution they can make toward addressing the challenge for higher education "to understand its history, articulate and accept its role with regard to diverse constituencies in society, and create an appropriate future within its social context" (p. 79). Whether or not the strong emphasis originally placed on service-learning by state structures, together with the prominent role that the CHESP initiative played, will assist colleges and universities in South Africa to "create an appropriate future within its social context" is yet to be seen. Or, might the strong state support undermine service-learning in higher education in South Africa? This is a hypothesis that Dewey likely would support. The question remains: What is likely to be the long-term implication for service-learning in South Africa?

## Conclusion

Societies can organize collective action and change primarily through: (a) rules or laws enforced by the power of the state, (b) unintended conse-

quences of individual decisions in the marketplace, or (c) social mechanisms embedded in voluntary action, discussion, and agreement (Edwards, 2004, p. 11). Each society has a different balance between these three factors. In terms of supporting changes in higher education, and specifically in terms of supporting the pedagogy of service-learning, the strategies undertaken in the U.S. and South Africa will shape service-learning in unique ways.

Three dimensions have been proposed, based on the educational perspectives of Dewey and Nyerere, to explore the similarities and differences between service-learning in the U.S. and South Africa. Service-learning will be shaped by the degree to which (a) there is an explicit call for higher education to prepare civic-minded graduates, (b) there is a transformational role of higher education in society that is supported by stakeholders both within the institution and among nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, and (c) there is a federal or national initiative to achieve such a transformation within higher education.

Faculty and institutions in both the U.S. and South Africa are highly committed to this endeavor, for service-learning is a valuable pedagogy to prepare graduates to enter the complexities of an increasingly diverse world. However, the extent to which service-learning is either supported or mandated by public policy may have important implications in terms of the future of this pedagogy in higher education internationally. Edwards (2004) questions the efficacy of the state taking too much control in implementing and or mandating initiatives such as service-learning. He notes that:

Civic education, service-learning, community service and expanded modes of informal political participation can certainly be useful, so long as they are not state-controlled or used as a substitute for reforms in formal politics or the other interventions already recommended that get at the broader factors underlying low rates of participation by low income and minority groups. These measures can help to build the preconditions for effective interaction between associational life, the public sphere and the good society, but they rely on capacities and connections among associations that must also be developed. (p. 101)

Tonkin (2004) takes an alternative approach, noting that one of the three conditions that are the “ingredients for success” for service-learning internationally is that “the idea of community service is supported by public policy at the national level, and institutions are expected to engage with the community, and it is also a part of the larger culture” (p. 338). The degree to which national policy influences

the integration of service-learning in higher education is not yet resolved. Through comparative research and further dialogue, it will be important to gain a better understanding of how the state can, and if the state should, play an active role in supporting service-learning in higher education.

In addition, and as viewed from a South African perspective, dialogue between those engaging in service-learning in the U.S. and South Africa could contribute to critical reflection on the implications for a “developing” country to receive a well-defined teaching strategy such as service-learning from an international power. At the heart of this lies the challenge to develop contextualized expressions of service-learning through free selection of aspects that will support self-definition and uniquely South African aspirations for social development. This is a prerequisite for Assié-Lumumba’s (2005) proposed “fusion by choice” that could inform the forging of “a new philosophy of education for social progress” within African higher education contexts. In the words of Assié-Lumumba, “fusion then becomes a tool for permanent alignment and enrichment, as the search for improvement is solidly rooted in an African ethos, epistemology and knowledge production, while borrowing when appropriate” (p. 53). It is our view that finding common ground and inspiration in the work of visionaries such as Dewey and Nyerere could facilitate constructive dialogue between service-learning proponents in the U.S. and South Africa, and assist us in efforts to transcend perceived and real differences by searching for shared values grounded in ideals about education for the common good.

As the interest in service-learning extends across the globe, there will be a need to better understand the similarities and differences between U.S.-based and the various new emerging expressions of service-learning. In addition to looking for more contextualized paradigms to support service-learning, higher education institutions should identify appropriate strategies and support from each sector of society (e.g., nonprofit, business, government) to endorse and support this promising change in teaching and learning.

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