

Towards a Scholarship of School-Based Teaching and Learning That Embraces Hope, Change, and Social Justice in a South African University

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Abstract

In this commentary, the author presents an argument for embracing a critical southern paradigm and framework for a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) that advances decoloniality, social justice, and conscientisation. The kind of scholarship that is argued for in this paper proposes a SoTL that goes beyond the recognition of classrooms as sites of inquiry and teaching, but a SoTL that is generative, context responsive, carries moral and pedagogical imperatives, and can influence institutional and societal change. This commentary draws on the experiences of a Dean of Faculty through self-reflexive qualitative impressions. She frames her personal experience of implementing a School-Based Learning placement approach within a theoretical discussion of agency, conscientisation, and transformative learning.

Introduction

This commentary builds on scholarly work done by others who argue that SoTL should move beyond an evidence-based instrumentalist paradigm and seek transformation that recognises education as a vehicle for social change and a catalyst for social justice. It furthermore advances attention on what the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) could mean for the South. It focuses on implications for the development of conscientisation to advance a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action. Reflection and action, as advanced by Paulo Freire (1990), assist us to meaningfully and actively participate in changing the reality by problematising and contextualising the social and political locations in which teaching and learning occur.

Research in transformative educational experiences and critical pedagogical theory has been rehearsed in literature over the years. In particular, Freirean pedagogies have been documented by educational scholars as they have been concerned with pedagogical practices that promote banking and systemic constrictions that limit the development of humanistic approaches (Salazar, 2013). Freire (1990) argued that people are in the world, with the world, and with each other, while contemplating restlessly and impatiently the contradictions, ambiguities, and inequalities in society. Therefore, education must assist in enabling inquiry and thinking that is critical in the quest for problem posing and problem solving.

Before democracy, South Africa was governed through apartheid laws that segregated people according to where they lived, worked, and received their education. To actualise the apartheid policies, the education system was divided into 19 departments of education that encouraged curricula based on race for the different racial and cultural groups (Maher, 2009). Since the dawn of democracy, many policy reforms have been introduced in basic education as well as in higher education in South Africa. There are, however, concerns raised about the slow progress and the non-implementation of these policies (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). The Bantu education system and the apartheid policies entrenched an education system that was fraught with inequalities and unfairness across racial lines, while enforcing colonised education with Eurocentric ideologies at the centre of education. Since the end of apartheid, teacher education in particular has gone through changes with regard to policies for teacher development. This has required faculties and schools of education to recurriculate and review their programmes to align with the Higher Qualifications Sub Framework (HEQSF) to comply with the required pedagogical content, knowledge, and skills in order to prepare student teachers for the teaching profession. On the other hand, basic education has had its fair share of curriculum development changes.

The Faculty of Education at Nelson Mandela University aims at developing teachers to become agents of hope, change, and social justice in diverse, multilingual classrooms via a curriculum that is underpinned by a humanising pedagogy. The humanising pedagogy recognises the student at the centre of the teaching and learning process. By extension, student teachers are taught that they must understand their learners and the material conditions in different schooling contexts, and they must incorporate situational and contextual elements to develop competences to deal with diversity and transformation.

Employing conscientization as a theoretical framework, I reflect through autobiographical accounts on matters strategically aligned to social justice, agency, and action in the placement of student teachers in different schooling contexts for their teaching practice. This placement approach is consciously aimed at macro-levels of influence to disrupt the status quo in the quest to conscientize preservice teachers.

I briefly provide the background and context to the reflections. As a point of departure, I situate the study within a self-reflexive qualitative research approach. I thereafter provide some background on the origins of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. I then continue to outline the approach of SoTL I have taken using a social justice, agency-oriented, and decoloniality lens. I then illustrate how Paulo Freire's concept of conscientization is a catalyst for agency. Through reflexivity, I reflect on my own experiences and history in order to make sense of the world and the word. I further employ Pantic's (2015) conceptual model in order to understand the experiences of my students.

Background and Context

When calls to decolonise the higher education curriculum were made during the FeesMustFall movement between 2015 and 2016, the Faculty of Education at Nelson Mandela University had already embarked on a process of rearticulation. This process was necessitated by the calls from the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to align the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) with the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). Teacher education qualifications had to be reviewed and aligned to the policy on Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ). So, all teacher education qualifications had to undergo curriculum renewal within specific timeframes.

FeesMustFall was a protest movement that started in October 2015, led by students who were fighting for a fee-free higher education in South Africa. Earlier that year, students from the University of Cape Town led a RhodesMustFall protest that was caused by their dissatisfaction with Cecil John Rhodes' statue that was in the middle of their campus (Mavunga, 2019). To the students, the presence of this statue on campus was a symbol of colonialism and a constant reminder of the colonial past. The FeesMustFall movement did not only protest against fees, but against matters that they had been agitating about for a number of years. Among the plethora of issues that were raised by students, the language of instruction policies and the Eurocentric curriculum in higher education came under scrutiny. Students were arguing that the curriculum did not recognise their Africanness and the Africanness of universities in South Africa. Therefore, a decolonised higher education was a necessary aspect of transformative learning.

Citing Tamburro (2013), Sathorar and Geduld (2018) argue that
a decolonised curriculum is one that recognises and prepares student teachers to work in the different contextual realities of teaching and learning in the range of different schools in South Africa, taking into account aspects such as privilege, inequality, poverty, unemployment, demographic under representation and racism. (p. 2)
Furthermore, Fataar (2018) contends that decolonisation calls for the reframing of education and for the centring of the Africa-centric epistemologies.

Part of the teacher education curriculum consists of School-Based Learning (SBL), which requires student teachers to be placed in schools where they practice their teaching and get mentored by experienced teachers. The calls for a decolonised higher education curriculum gave us the opportunity to reflect once again on the content of our curriculum, as well as the practice that we expected our students to embody. Moreover, our Faculty mission states that we would like our students to become agents of hope, change, and social justice. Therefore, in our attempt to prepare them as future teachers, we expose them to approaches and opportunities that are designed to enable them to live out the Faculty's mission. We thus believe that this exposure can be done through our SBL module that prepares students to teach in schools. Furthermore, we believe that the knowledge, skills, and values that students need to acquire in the school environment should be experienced in different social contexts (Department of Education, 2015).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) talks about the danger of telling and hearing only one story. According to her, such a process is dangerous as it excludes all the other stories and with them the story tellers, along with their recognition as human beings not just to be heard but also to make further contributions to this world. Moreover, as Santos (2014) argues, in order for us to fully participate and belong in this world, we need to create a more just world where all shall share the space and have legitimacy. That is what “decolonization: is about: being at home in this world. It is about us, our students, and teaching and administration staff being at home in our lecture rooms and faculty. Yet, whilst it is necessary, decolonization is nonetheless fraught with challenges. It is at once exciting, but it is also a terrifying experience for all involved (Zahar, 1974). And whilst it is a necessary process, decolonization will not happen, as Fanon says, by “magic.” It requires a commitment and action.

Through the SBL placement, students are encouraged to be responsive citizens, who understand their role as change agents and their responsibility to teach for social justice (Francis & Le Roux, 2011). It is my view that as conscientized agents, students are able to interact with their social contexts, observing and recognising social, political, and economic contradictions, and taking action against the oppressive elements of reality (Jemal, 2017). By so doing, they work individually and collaboratively to examine how biases, assumptions, and cultural worldviews influence perceptions, thereby developing their agency to foster hope, change, and social justice (Jemal, 2017).

Furthermore, these students receive the theoretical foundations in their modules in order to understand social issues in education. Some of the content that they are exposed to is the following:

- Theory and practice of shaping democratic schooling
- Paulo Freire and the humanising pedagogy
- Social justice in education and the implications for South African schooling
- Emancipation and empowerment in the context of schooling
- Teaching in diverse classrooms
- Teaching in a linguistically diverse classroom

In responding to the call for a SoTL that embraces critical southern paradigms and frameworks in higher education, it is important to embrace a SoTL that promotes an inquiry that encourages a praxis that questions the status quo. In this article, I argue for what Samuel (2017) refers to as a southern SoTL that recognises contestations, trouble, and uncertainty as necessary ingredients for finding solutions. He refers to “a SoTL syntax for the South” (p. 20) that deliberately seeks to disrupt our comfort zones, our habits, rituals, and routines, which usually harden the boundaries of knowledge. He further contends that a SoTL of the South is a political and theoretical commitment, which is aligned to Fanon’s assertion that decolonisation will not happen by magic.

When I became the Dean of the Faculty of Education at Nelson Mandela University in 2015, I arrived when the Faculty had just completed a rigorous recurriculation process that involved courageous conversations. These conversations interrogated the knowledge promoted by the curriculum, the way in which the curriculum was designed and developed, who the student was, and who the academic was at the pedagogical encounter. Most work was done and all that was left was to complete the forms for internal and external programme approvals. What was left was to translate the philosophical underpinnings of a humanising pedagogy and the programme outcomes into module content that must be taught to students. During the first year of my arrival, I sat in meetings and workshops where I consistently heard academics talking about the importance of placing students in different contexts of schools. School principals were in some of these workshops and agreed that this is an important thing to do. However, I noticed that every year, the SBL placement office would give students a choice of where they would like to do their practice, and they would choose schools that they were familiar with. When I challenged this practice, there were arguments from academics and students about safety and transport costs, and questions about what a different context meant. These concerns were legitimate, and I welcomed them as they helped my management team and me to prepare a strategy for SBL student placement.

Consultations with academics, students, and schools took place, and in May 2018, a School-Based Learning (SBL) community of practice (CoP) that was comprised of academics, students, mentor teachers, and principals was established. The intention of the SBL-CoP was to strengthen the relationship between the Faculty and the schools. It was also to give voice to our student teachers in an environment that is generative and supportive. Furthermore, it was to share ideas and hard truths about how our preparation of student teachers was perceived and experienced in schools. The SBL-CoP meets twice a year and became a space where students, academics, and teachers could reflect on their experiences and in the process plan for improvement. Due to Covid-19 regulations in 2020 and 2021, the SBL-CoP met online once each year.

A Self-Reflexive Qualitative Approach

Reflexivity is the awareness of oneself, as well as the critical awareness of one's practice and its context (Nash, 2011). The reflexive researcher makes a critical connection between their own life experience, their professional learning, and what they are doing, with the intention to improve their practice (Nash, 2011). For researchers, these experiences include their biographies, their histories, their life issues, and beliefs, which provide them with a lens through which they can view, understand and interact with the world (Nash, 2011). Furthermore, researchers are more than just scholars. They have a voice which, Wall (2006) asserts, is important as the individual is best placed to articulate their own experience. Researchers are multidimensional human beings who are impacted by and impact upon the world around them (Marx, 2017). Bochner (1997) argues that one seldom finds a scholar whose work is not connected to their personal history because research does not happen outside of historical and cultural interests.

In this commentary, my experiences are analysed and contextualised using relevant theory and literature in order to explain connections between my lived experience and the world around me (Marx, 2017). Stigter (2016) calls the lived experience a reflexive stance, which he argues allows for strategic action, possible adjustments, and in-between decisions. The central argument of this paper is therefore that a SoTL that is critical and transformative can help us reflect on our autobiographies and histories in order to improve our practice. Regarding student teachers, they are encouraged to reflect on the world in order to intentionally effect hoped-for changes. For the researcher, reflexivity is an ethical process that requires us to be honest about events. These events, Mayaba (2018) argues, are based on personal experience. Lived experience brings us to a dialectical view of life, which emphasizes the interplay rather than the identity of things (Jackson, 1989). It is this dialectical view of life that Freire (1990) emphasized we should observe when we are conscientized. In this regard, the researcher as a reflective practitioner is in dialogue with the world.

Theoretical Framework

The scholarship of teaching and learning and conscientisation

In his seminal work on the priorities of the professoriate, Ernest Boyer (1990) looked at how academic time was rewarded and what activities received more recognition. He was concerned about the narrowness of the academic reward system and how that perpetuated a system of inequality. To refer to the work of an academic holistically, he argued that one should use the term scholarship because it brings legitimacy to the full scope of academic work. He then developed a model (Figure 1) that would recognise the activities of an academic and brought them in alignment with the functions of the university. In his model, scholarship is at the centre and the forms of scholarly inquiry overlap and are interrelated. He argued that integrated disciplines look at the whole of a human body, the mind, and the spirit. Therefore, knowledge was to be brought into reality of life. He thus maintained that the scholarship of discovery leads to the scholarship of integration, which must be applied so that it is useful and relevant. In addition, the scholarship of sharing knowledge (teaching) was introduced in the model, as he contended that scholarship is a communal act, and knowledge must be shared so that it can make sense (Boyer, 1996, p. 6-7).

His proposition was that of recognising teaching as serious intellectual work (Hutchings et al., 2011). The SoTL encourages academics to critically reflect on learning to improve their teaching and share insights with others so that they can build on their work (Hutchings, et al., 2011). Furthermore, as a transformative concept, SoTL should be considered and undertaken on the following levels as argued by Gale (2009) in Leibowitz (2010, p. 2):

Level One Scholarship

asks questions about student learning focused on pedagogical observations: what we value and need to understand as teachers and as scholars.

Level Two Scholarship

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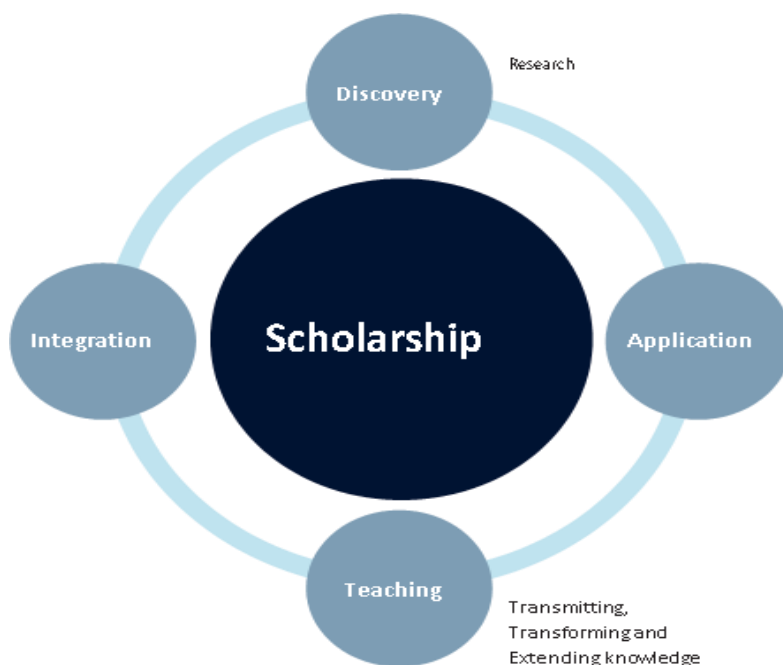
asks questions about student learning that inform *and* support broader institutional agendas, speaking to shared questions of value and what we need to understand as members of an academic community.

Level Three Scholarship

asks questions about student learning that speak to and influence issues of significance to society; critically reflect on what we need to understand as members of a local, national and global community.

Leibowitz and Bozalek (2018) argue that the “confluence of material and cultural factors require particular attention to how SoTL is engaged in the global South” (p. 982). SoTL thus allows for dialogue about questions of social justice, agency, and conscientization. Habermas (1971) argued that the university must shape the political consciousness of the students and transmit, interpret, and develop the cultural traditions of society. In their study in which they analysed SoTL literature, Gilpin and Liston (2009) investigated whether SoTL addresses the socio-political realities of education that contextualise and problematise educational inquiry. I would argue that if, as scholars, we can move beyond the instrumentalist function of SoTL as a scholarship that only investigates teaching and learning, while disregarding the context in which it occurs, then we would have started to address socio-political realities of education.

Figure 1: Ernest Boyer's model of scholarship (1996)



Conscientization involves the possession of critical knowledge that equips the individual to intentionally effect the desirable changes in the world in which they exist (Freire, 1970).

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Through problem-posing, students explore critical dialogue, action projects, and reflective questions in order to promote committed involvement and develop critical consciousness (Jemal, 2017). The social world is understood to be a world of connection, contact, and relationship (Bochner, 1997). In the social world of school and community, student teachers have connections, contact, and relationships with teachers, parents, and learners. They therefore become part of that world.

Furthermore, the fundamental principle of SoTL is reflection, which is also required for conscientisation and social justice. In SoTL, scholars reflect on their practice in order to improve learning. Therefore, for social justice to be achieved there must be a level of reflexivity and consciousness, which go beyond just being reflective but are accompanied by actions. Freire (1990) argues that education is not neutral as it either functions as an instrument that enables conformity or the means by which people critically and creatively participate in the transformation of their world. Accordingly, Jemal (2017) claims that merely reflecting on reality without intervention will not lead to transformation. Furthermore, Bochner (1997) contends that the social world in which education takes place is a “world where consequences, values, politics and moral dilemmas are abundant and central” (p. 435). Therefore, placing student teachers in different schooling contexts gives them the opportunity to begin to analyse their social conditions with the intention to change them and break the silence surrounding injustice (Freire, 2020). I therefore argue that SoTL has the potential to transform society toward the ideals of equality and justice (Gilpin & Liston, 2009).

Social justice in a decolonial context

It is almost three decades since South Africa was declared a democratic country, yet we are still discussing matters of social justice, inequality, and transformation. Social justice is preserved and protected in the constitution of South Africa and is the foundational base of our university’s Vision 2030. Debates about the creation of a socially just society in a post-colonial context are still valid. These debates are shaped by decolonization and decoloniality, which call for the recentring of Africa as a legitimate epistemic base from which Africans view and understand the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). It is from this perspective that student teachers from Nelson Mandela University are expected to learn to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions in context and to be ready to take action against oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 2021). In essence, students are asked to not only read the word, which is theory, but to also read the world, which is practice (Freire, 2000). They are thus exposed to a plurality of knowledge forms in order to establish dialogical platforms of transdisciplinarity (Fataar, 2018). This exposure helps them to avoid the singular and exclusive epistemologies that will restrict them in making meaning, viewing, and explaining the world (Mdzanga & Moeng, 2021). This is necessary since communities in post-colonial South Africa continue to feel the effects of colonialization and apartheid (Ntshoe, 2020).

Leibowitz (2017, p. 95-97), however, cautions about the limitations of current thinking about teaching and learning in higher education in South Africa. She argues that very few discussions about the decolonisation of the curriculum are linked with educational theory. Secondly, educationists in South Africa are mainly middle class and are informed by Western perspectives,

which restrict them from thinking outside of the hegemonic form. Thirdly, she maintains that many interrelated phenomena are often considered as bounded and separate from one another. For example, knowledge is seen separate from learning and separate from language, the personal as separate from the social, and curriculum as separate from pedagogy. This, she asserts, denies the embeddedness and contextuality of coming to know. She further argues that learning is not only cognitive, but active, affective, and experiential. The reflexive methodology chosen for this paper thus speaks to these concerns and attempts to contribute to the scholarship that views knowledge creation and learning as interrelated. The intention is also to consciously reflect on the intersection between theory, practice, and context (Samuel, 2017, p. 25).

Agency and a model for social change

Moore (2007) argues that agency is action-driven and is critical to effect positive social change (cited in Francis & Le Roux, 2011). The interaction between the individual and the social context allows the individual to continuously reflect upon the context and reconstruct it based on particular circumstances (Francis & Le Roux, 2011). Acting as an agent implies that the individual has the ability to effect change and make a difference. Therefore, such agency has intentionality to reflexively act on and evaluate both the self and the social context (Pantic, 2015).

Pantic (2015) proposes a conceptual model that positions teacher agency for social justice. She suggests interdependent aspects of agency that can help us understand how teachers can direct their individual and collective professional agency:

- **Sense of purpose**

Teachers' transformative power inside and outside the classroom link their agency to a moral vision and the desire to make a difference in their learners' lives.

- **Competence**

Competence of teachers as agents might involve efforts to transform the structural and cultural contexts that might impede or encourage such practices. Therefore, competence can be described as being "knowledgeable" of rules and ways of practical behavior in the environment in which they participate. These agents might also have the political awareness of being able to navigate and mobilize allies to change their schools in order to better meet their commitments.

- **Autonomy**

A competent agent will act differently in different contexts and at different times depending on how they perceive the locus of power at a particular time and place.

- **Reflexivity**

Teachers are social actors who possess, apply and produce relational and tacit practical knowledge in their daily encounters. They articulate and transfer such professional knowledge and use it to justify their practices. Through reflexivity, they can transform

structures and cultures to exploit the degrees of power and to re-evaluate their own practices and motivate each other. (see Pantic, 2015, p. 765-772)

Discussion

Meeting the school principals, mentor teachers and students

A proposal to place Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students in different schooling contexts in the second semester of 2018 served at the Faculty Management Committee (FMC) meeting and the Faculty Board in the first term of 2018. Overall, the majority of colleagues were supportive of the proposal, but some were concerned about having to go out and assess students in “unsafe” communities. There were also concerns about how students were going to travel to schools, since the majority of students use the university shuttle to go to class. Students needed transport that would take them closer to where schools were located, since the shuttle had a dedicated route along which all university students were taken. A concern that was not shared widely was that some of our students would not get enough support from some of the schools.

These uncertainties were part of the unwritten rules and the hidden curriculum, which our students had to deal with to make sure that they could cope in different schooling contexts. Over and above that, each student had to do a situational analysis of their school so as to understand the context and see how they could use their agency in that school. They were reminded that our Faculty mission is to prepare students who are agents of hope, change, and social justice.

Meetings to inform school principals and mentor teachers were held through a special SBL-CoP. Some school principals were in support of the change of context, and others were not happy at all. As Dean, I received letters from some disgruntled principals, who had concerns about losing students that were helping them with extra mural activities. Some concerns from school principals were not explicitly racist, but reflected their reluctance to have black student teachers as part of their staff. A letter had to be written to all school principals explaining the rationale of the context change in detail and indicating that the decision was final. There was support from a handful of principals and mentor teachers, who assured me that they would support our students regardless of their backgrounds.

There were 342 BEd Foundation Phase (FP), Intermediate Phase (IP), and Senior Phase/Further Education and Training (SP/FET) students, as well as 117 PGCE SP/FET students, who were placed in different schools across the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality. Meetings were held with each fourth year BEd and PGCE programme group with their respective Heads of Programmes (HoP) and the SBL coordinator to inform students about the decision and to listen to any concerns they might have. One black student walked out because he was very upset. I later found out that he was afraid to go to another school, as he feared that he might not be welcomed at that school. Three white students scheduled an appointment with me and tried to “reason” with me because they feared for their lives in township schools. Some BEd SP/FET could not move to other schools because their specialisations were not offered in some of the

schools. They had to move to schools where their specialisations were offered, even if it was the same context.

Some parents were concerned for the safety of their children, and we had to make sure that we took the necessary precautions for the safety of our students. We also had to be honest with parents and students and explain that we could not guarantee their safety, just as we could not guarantee their safety when they were traveling to campus. However, we understood that the concerns were genuine and reasonable. As a matter of fact, learner-to-teacher bullying had risen since the 1990s, and this had been something that student teachers had been concerned about (Woudstra et al., 2018).

Arrangements for special transport were made at the expense of the Faculty. The SBL coordinator responded to queries as and when they arose from students. He visited all schools that were willing to take our students just to put them at ease and to make sure that our students would receive the support that they needed from their mentor teachers.

Feedback from school principals and students

In May 2018, another SBL-CoP was held. The intention was to listen to teachers and students and get a sense of their experiences as they were preparing to start in their different contexts in the second semester. By that time, most of their concerns had been addressed, but there were still a few of the students who were concerned about their placements. Their HoPs and the SBL coordinator dealt with their concerns on a case-by-case basis.

In August 2018, another SBL-CoP was held to find out how things were going in schools. Things seemed to be under control, except for isolated incidents that were not out of the ordinary but were typical cases that we would have had under normal circumstances.

In November 2018, programme groups had feedback sessions arranged by the HoPs. All of the feedback from students was positive. Students reflected on their experiences in the curriculum as well as in general. Some shared their agency projects that they started in their schools. These feedback sessions allowed for students to critically reflect on their own assumptions and how those assumptions were either confirmed or disproved. School principals sent emails and called me to thank the Faculty for sending them dedicated students, who were very helpful inside and beyond the classroom. One of the three white students came to see me in my office and said she had never felt so welcome in any of the schools that she had visited over the four years. As a result, she started a small project with learners in the school.

As we listened to the student feedback, I could relate their experiences to Pantic's (2015) conceptual model. Students were talking about how they had to be *competent*, as they had to take over some of the classes when teachers got ill or had a bereavement in their family. They had to be knowledgeable and understand their content in order for them to take over the classes. Furthermore, many students felt a *sense of purpose*, as they were able to help learners who needed extra help with homework or with a challenge they were facing at home. Others helped out with extramural activities, such as sport, music, and dance. Some also helped out with the

feeding scheme in the school kitchen. Another aspect of the conceptual model they shared during feedback was *reflexivity*. They could assist with making communication easier by simply starting WhatsApp groups or introducing videos in their teaching and using other interactive teaching aids. Some set up Maths and Reading clubs for their grades. These could then be taken over by the class teacher when they left. Many students were disturbed to learn that in some schools corporal punishment was still meted out. Students were willing to use their agency in making the district office aware of such unacceptable behaviour. The overall experience was positive, and students reported that they had learnt a lot with regard to values that they could not put in words. Some said that the theory they learnt over the years made sense, especially theories on the following topics:

- Social justice in education and the implications for South African schooling
- Emancipation and empowerment in the context of schooling
- Teaching in diverse classrooms
- Teaching in a linguistically diverse classroom

Conclusion

In this paper, I have reflected on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and how we can embrace it in the South and ensure that it helps us to critically reflect on issues that have societal impact. I have demonstrated how SoTL allows for dialogue about questions of social justice, agency, and conscientization. This is evident in how, through the conceptual model, students were able to critically reflect on their agency. I as the researcher was able to reflect on my own decisions and practice, as well as that of others, in order to make meaning. I was thus able to consciously reflect on the intersection between theory, practice, and context (Samuel, 2017, p. 25). Students were also able to reflect on the theory they learnt in class, the practice (teaching in school), and the context in which their schools were located. As conscientized agents, students were able to gain awareness about what was going on around them and were also able to effect the changes within their environment.

Reflexivity is a very useful methodology to provide a personal encounter about teaching and learning matters that require scholarly in-depth criticality. Examining my own experiences while reflecting on the experiences of my students and colleagues using the same methodology highlights the interdependence and interrelatedness of these experiences.

Further studies can be conducted where mentor teachers and school principals give feedback on their experiences of the change of context that can be collected for scholarly purposes.

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