

# Retrospective experiences of a rural school partnership: informing global citizenship as a higher education agenda

## **HE-CE PROVIDES HUMAN CAPITAL SUPPORT TO A MARGINALISED COMMUNITY**

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# 1. Introduction

- Higher education (HE) aims to contribute to society through community engagement (CE) partnership as it constructs and transfers new knowledge and develops responsible global citizens (Shultz, 2007; Hayden, 2013)
- Global citizenship is becoming the focal point in the HE agenda (teaching and learning and research)
- **Global citizenship** as understanding the common humanity and problems of injustice and inequality in the global world (Shultz, 2007; Frey & Whitehead, 2009; Osler, 2011)

## 2. Background to the study



**Figure 1.1:** The rural school is located in Mpumalanga province, on the Swaziland border

- Flourishing Learning Youth (FLY) collaborative CE partnership: 2005 between the UP (Centre for the Study of Resilience) and a rural secondary school
- National Research Foundation (NRF) – integrate research on resilience in rural schools
- Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) and qualitative survey studies: community challenges and facilitate social change (Ebersöhn, 2013)
- Collaborated in the data generation - five PRA and qualitative survey studies (parents, teachers, student-clients, academic service-learning (ASL) students and researchers)

### 3. Rationale for the study

- Relates to current work at the research level
- To compare the often silent voices of non-researcher partners in CE in order to inform global citizenship practice as a HE agenda
- To make a contribution to the body of scientific knowledge in global citizenship as manifested in HE-CE, given its role to contribute to the:
  - local, national and global economy
  - development of a democratic society and
  - production of responsible global citizens

## Continued ...

- South Africa is among the most unequal countries in the world (Brazil and China)
- Black students received an inferior education in inadequately resourced settings
- Existing research remains limited in trying to understand CE partnership from the perspective of partners in a range of voices, i.e. parents, teachers, student-clients, ASL students and researchers

## **4. Research purpose**

- To compare cases of cohort perspective on one CE partnership in order to build knowledge on global citizenship

## **5. Research question**

- How do the experiences of partners compare regarding:
  - i. Benefits of HE-CE partnership

## 6. Paradigm lenses

### Philosophy

**Idealism** (Immanuel Kant – modern idealism)

- All exist – dependent on cognition
- Phenomena exist in many different forms (pluralism)

### Meta-theory

**Phenomenology** (Edmund Husserl 1859-1938)

- Behaviour is determined by phenomena of experience
- Knowledge is socially constructed – multiple realities (lived experience – partners' perspective)

### Research methodology

**Qualitative research**

- Human experience within natural environment
- Contextualise and interpret experiences, feelings and thoughts from the participants perspective

### Paradigm

**Transformative-emancipatory**

- Context of globalisation and renewed research into social justice for addressing inequalities in society
- Assumption - change - collaborative effort of community partners (researcher – agent for change)

## 7. Literature review

- CE prominent in the USA - adopted in Australia and South Africa
- USA - entrenching CE and reviewing progress made in the past decades (O'Meara et al., 2011; Pike, Kuh, McCormick, 2011)
- Ernest Boyer's vision of connecting universities' resources to real-world social and economic needs (Boyer, 1996)
- South African HE is developing and growing in the CE field for the benefit of poor and marginalised communities

## **Continued...**

### **Gaps in literature**

- Use new knowledge to reduce the persistent poverty that impede social justice and political stability in society
- Does students' engagement with communities produce the expected and desired results (Caputo, 2005)?
- What does global citizenship mean to the HE-rural school partners?

## 8. Research methodology

- **Research design:** Comparative qualitative secondary data analysis
  - ❖ Aim to produce in-depth descriptions and interpretations of a contemporary phenomenon for illumination and understanding (Creswell, 2003)
- **Advantage:** Qualitative secondary data - very large amount of data
  - ❖ Capitalised on data collected by co-researchers (more time for analysing and comparing)
- **Limitation:** secondary data are gathered by other researchers
  - ❖ Data may not be appropriate for a different research purpose

## 8.1 Data analysis procedure

- Cross-case comparison: Inductive thematic analysis and comparison of PRA and qualitative survey partner-cohort data
- ❖ 1<sup>st</sup> Analyse qualitative data of cohort partners separately
  - Use words and phrases for coding
  - Categories and subcategories - cluster as themes
- ❖ 2<sup>nd</sup> Compare the findings of the cohort partners to examine commonality, differences and relationships (Harding, 2013)
  - Use relating themes to propose theories

## 9. Limitations and delimitations

- Retrospective - experiences of the cohort partners
- Longitudinal study - social conditions and context changed
- Qualitative secondary analysis - generalisability

## 10. Findings

- CE benefits HE students by increasing academic performance, self-efficacy, broadened values and career choices
- CE stimulates active learning and encourages students to be critical, creative thinkers who value lifelong learning
- Teachers' support in career development - HE-CE partnership is important to prepare teachers for a difficult and challenging world
- High social status motivates students to pursue particular profession
- ❖ Participants reported that low social status of rural students motivated them to pursue HE qualifications

## 11. Conclusions and recommendations

- A significant insight - range of CE-partners experienced HE-CE as beneficial for human capital development
- Teachers benefitted from the support they received from the HE partner
- The non-researcher partners contribute knowledge and skills to their colleagues, in other non-partner schools
- Assess the quality and the impact of knowledge and skills transfer by the rural partner school
- Students should be exposed to global citizenship interventions from first-year level
- Rural communities are progressive, therefore open to contributing their knowledge and for achieving social transformation



THANK YOU