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THE ENABLEMENT OF SERVICE LEARNING CHAMPIONS

RECIPROCAL KNOWLEDGE SHARING FOR
ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE THIRD SECTOR
AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

While the remains of the apartheid legacy still challenge broader society, there are distinct possibilities for making constructive contributions when the third sector and higher education collaborate for democratic community engagement such as service learning. Knowledge sharing is a major driver in fighting social injustice in any society. Within our service learning community, which included partnerships that consisted of participants from the third sector, the higher education sector, the community sector and the global scholarly sector, we identified champions who were willing to 'rock the boat' in efforts to achieve societal change through reciprocal knowledge sharing. A qualitative research design within the constructivist paradigm was utilised. Semi-structured interviews were used to determine who the champions were and to explore the perceptions of the identified champions regarding the role of knowledge sharing in their development and enablement. We constructed a suggested framework of principles to guide the knowledge sharing process among current and future champions for the pedagogy of service learning.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Knowledge sharing between organised civil society (ie the third sector) and higher education is essential promoting community engagement. Community engagement became an integral part of higher education. Since 1999, community engagement has been implemented as one of the three core functions (with teaching and research) to enable transformation in higher education (Hall 2010:1). The appeal for social and educational change now urges scholars to determine whether engagement between communities and higher education institutions (HEIs) has advanced social and educational transformation (Albertyn & Daniels 2009:409; Hlengwa 2010:1; Stanton & Erasmus 2013:75). Through engaging with communities, researchers should aim to explore the value of community engagement as a crucial part of the South African research agenda (Hall 2010:27; Stanton & Erasmus 2013:84).

Community engagement has infused the teaching and research functions of academics within the ivory towers of HEIs with an expanded sense of context, relevance and application towards engagement. Academics are now urged and compelled to step out and connect with society. Community engagement as a scholarly activity is of critical importance in promoting dialogue through knowledge sharing between the various sectors of society and HEIs. For the purposes of this book the focus is on engagement between the third sector and higher education in producing knowledge that is relevant and useful in the South African context. Through a “scholarship of engagement” (Boyer 1996:148), academics and their external partners can create a partnership climate and collaborative space in which non-profit organisations of the third sector, HEIs and communities can share knowledge.

Service learning (SL), as a pedagogical strategy and curricular form of community engagement, facilitates the integration of community service with teaching and learning (Furco 2001:67; UFS 2006). The educational philosophy of SL is value-laden, synergist, dynamic, and highly complex, and enables individual and social change (Shumer 2000:77); therefore, SL researchers are challenged to find innovative ways of exploring the influence of SL on personal, social and academic learning development of students. In addition, enhancing the value of SL for HE staff and external participants also needs ongoing, focused attention from all concerned.

The study reported in this chapter was conducted within a SL community at the University of the Free State (UFS) where SL was influenced by global SL pioneers. Our SL community consisted of various groups who share knowledge within established SL partnerships, namely the non-profit arena within the third sector, the higher education sector and the community sector. A fourth group, the global scholarly sector, is included in this SL community to allow for benchmarking against

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the expert champion voices. Within these partnerships, academic SL was used as an educational tool to facilitate reflective knowledge sharing in order to develop globally responsible citizens working towards social and educational enhancement at the local level. Leaders in the mentioned groups were identified as champions who tend to 'rock the boat' in an attempt to achieve societal change for the common good of society (Narayanan 2010). These passionate and committed leaders act as champions for SL and serve as role models for others in the SL field (Jordaan 2013:221). Champions seem to play a crucial role in the SL community. Erasmus (2007:110) points out that the champions of SL work "not only at the chalkboard but also at the coalface most of the time" as they "dare to venture into the – for South Africa – uncharted waters" of SL. We understand that knowledge sharing takes place within a partnership context; however, there seems to be a dearth in the literature regarding the role of knowledge sharing in the development and enablement of champions for SL. Therefore the aim of the study was to gain a better understanding of the role that knowledge sharing has played in the development of champions.

Thus, we argue that a better understanding of principles to guide the knowledge sharing process could contribute to the development and enablement of current and future champions for active engagement between the third sector and higher education. We set out to determine who the champions in our SL partnership were. We explored the perceptions of the identified champions regarding the role of knowledge sharing in their development and enablement as champions for SL and identified principles to guide the knowledge sharing process.

Rather than presenting a theoretical framework, findings are integrated with a discussion of literature related to knowledge sharing for the development and enablement of SL champions. We introduce the context of the study, which is followed by the methodology and the findings from the data generated through semi-structured interviews. The chapter concludes with recommended principles to guide the knowledge sharing process between the third and higher education sectors, as well as with suggestions for future research.

2. CONTEXT

Within our SL community, the non-profit arena within the third sector, the higher education sector, the community sector and – from a distance – the global scholarly sector collaborated in democratic engagement through reciprocal knowledge sharing (see Figure 14.1).

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FIGURE 14.1 Broad context of the study

We used SL as a form of experiential learning (EL) to facilitate community engagement. Through reflective discussion we identified a definition of SL champions from participants from the four sectors. The contention was that champions developed and were enabled through reciprocal knowledge sharing to act as change agents who try to solve personal and societal challenges in broader society and the global world.

On a micro-level the study was conducted within a specific SL partnership context where professional nurses further their studies in nursing education at the UFS. The study population involved SL champions from the four sectors. This SL community reflected the well-known triad partnership model which was adapted to include the global SL champion community (Bender, Daniels, Lazarus, Naudé and Sattar 2006:93). However, for the purpose of this chapter we mainly report on the findings of the NPO voices as representatives of local communities as guided by literature urging researchers to get closer to the community voice (Alperstein 2007:59; Du Plessis & Van Dyk 2013:62, 73; Nduna 2007:69). The voice of one female academic engagement pioneer within our existing partnership was added, because this pioneer is an NPO member who has been actively engaged in NPO activities

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and is an academic who serves at our HEI. Voices of global pioneers are added for benchmarking purposes.

Students and academics from the higher education sector participated in academic service activities aimed at addressing identified learning needs (mostly health and education related issues) of volunteer care workers who rendered service at various NPOs within the third sector. Thereafter, volunteer care workers shared their co-constructed knowledge among their own communities. Eventually, partners from all the sectors reflected on the SL experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of the linkage between academic content and community dynamics, as stipulated in the *Community Service Policy* of the UFS (UFS 2006:9).

3. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design, within the constructivist paradigm, was used (Mertens 2010:11, 226). Participants for the study were purposefully selected (Mertens 2010:320) to represent all the groups within our SL community. The sample included champions from four groupings: three leaders from the third (NPO) sector, one community representative, four SL academics (including an academic community engagement pioneer and two nursing education students from the UFS), as well as five scholarly pioneers who were interviewed during a SL conference abroad. The voice of one female academic engagement pioneer within our existing partnerships was added, because this pioneer is an NPO member who has been actively engaged in NPO activities and is an academic who serves at our HEI.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. A step-by-step analysis was conducted as advised by Mertens (2010:424-426). During the first step, all the data was reviewed and transcribed. Steps two and three occurred in synergy where data were explored and reduced. Initial and focused coding was done and the data were sifted. After focused coding was conducted, a framework for a layout of the reporting of the study was planned. Categories, themes and subthemes of the analysed data were identified. Credibility of the analysed data was ensured through member checking (with research participants) and peer debriefing (with two other researchers) (Mertens 2010:431, 257). Thereafter, the data were interpreted. Data triangulation involved the inclusion of perceptions from a diverse representation, where even the voices of the least empowered were not lost. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with identified champions who represent the third sector and the community (Mertens 2010:429). To ensure rigour, the principles for ethical practice (axiology) of qualitative research were followed as

advised in literature (Mertens 2010:16-18). Practice of privacy, informed consent, confidentiality, honesty, no harm and the maintenance of ethical standards were respected (Chapdelaine, Ruiz, Warchal & Wells 2005:10-11). Ethical clearance was granted for the study by the Ethics Board of the Faculty of Education at the UFS.

The findings of the study will now be discussed and integrated with related literature.

4. FINDINGS

The findings are organised into three categories related to the research questions, namely SL champions, knowledge sharing and principles to guide the knowledge sharing process. We report on the data gathered from three NPO organisations from the third sector, and one female academic engagement pioneer within our existing partnerships. The data from the five expert champions – hereafter called global pioneers (GP) – in the global scholarly sector are included to benchmark the findings of the other participants. Their data are included at the end of each section.

To indicate which participant is the source of the verbatim quotation gained from semi-structured interviews, the referencing system used is P1, P2 and P3 for the NPO participants and P4 for the academic engagement pioneer. Translated quotes are indicated with a **t*. For the global pioneers we use GP1, GP2, GP3, and so forth.

4.1 Service learning champions

The idea of SL champions has gained attention in the last few years (Erasmus 2007:110, 123; Jordaan 2013:221). They portray certain skills and personal characteristics that distinguish them from others, through which they take action and lead others in society. In being asked who the champions were, the participants did not only refer to the identified champions in their partnership context but presented defining characteristics as well.

4.1.1 Partnership context

The participants identified champions from the third sector, the higher education sector, and the community. Within the third sector, volunteer care workers in NPOs were identified as champions: *“Caregivers in the organisations are the champions, because they have the practical knowledge to take care of the community”* (P2).

In the higher education sector, academics and students were identified as champions: *“The fuse in the gunpowder barrel was literally Professor (A). Other people who made an actual impact were students”* (P1 **t*). Champions were described as *“people from*

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the higher education institutions that are designing programmes” (P4). Champions also come from the community:

Without the community itself, one would not be able to implement those programmes and there are community members themselves that share and use knowledge. You need key people that will drive the work in the community – those would be people that are already participating in programmes (P4).

In summary, one participant stated:

[E]verybody can be a champion, it all depends on how far the person is involved, how knowledgeable the person is and, to be more specific, how prepared the person is to share knowledge. Everybody has knowledge – but you can only identify a champion from what the champion would be doing with it – in this case how far a person is able to share the knowledge; what type of knowledge that is and the benefit that comes out of that knowledge (P4).

In comparison to the other participants, the global pioneers also identified champions from the entire SL community. They also mentioned various names that represent early as well as young and upcoming academic pioneers in the SL field. The following was voiced by one of our global champions:

There may be big champions that have more profile, but everybody is a champion in their own backyard, and their own context. So if somebody in a small village in SA is making some change, they’re a champion. That is where the difference is made, not in the university classroom, not at the conference level, or when you are giving a keynote address, but when somebody does something with it. The local champions – they may do it in partnership with some bigger champions, but you always need the local champion. You can never do it without the local champion (GP1).

After identification of champions, the second aspect, namely defining characteristics of a champion, is addressed.

4.1.2 Defining characteristics

The participants spontaneously elaborated on the defining characteristics of SL champions. According to the participants, the champions adhered to an excellent standard of practice which portrayed characteristics of high levels of self-development. The champions rendered SL practice through a ‘whole person approach’ that surpassed the behaviour of other groups of people in the partnerships.

Champions have the ability to adapt to a situation; answer to a calling; care; commit themselves fully (with their heart and soul); co-create knowledge; persevere; serve beyond duty; share knowledge and expertise; and take responsibility towards the transformation of society (summary P1-4). The champions portrayed a positive attitude in their SL practice, because they were deeply devoted, fair, friendly, honest,

passionate, patient, trustworthy, stable, humane, positive, loving, loyal and show integrity towards others. They committed themselves to lifelong learning in order to gain knowledge and share it with other citizens (summary P1-4).

We can thus reason that champions used a 'whole person approach' within their SL practice, while others merely observed everyday social and educational challenges in society such as poverty and the quest for widened educational access. The champions took responsibility and acted as change agents.

Another characteristic that gained attention was the self-development level of the champions. The participants revealed that the self-development level of the champions displayed aspects of excellence. The self-development level of the champions displayed selflessness, self-confidence, humble self-pride and self-respect (summary P1-4). Therefore we argue that the champions possessed a positive personal self-concept, positive social self-concept and high self-ideal. Again, to benchmark our findings, one of the global pioneers noted: *"I was 'star struck' by them! They were just so welcoming and there was just this sense of: This is an important field and we're all moving forward in this together"* (GP3).

The next category of our report relates to knowledge sharing within a SL community.

4.2 Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing is defined as a process of exchanging knowledge, skills, experience and understanding among different people (Tsui, Chapman, Schnirer & Stewart 2006:5). Our SL community provided an arena for such knowledge exchange, where the various groups shared knowledge, skills and experience.

Within the constructivist paradigm (Vygotsky 1978) the knowledge, ideas, attitudes and values within our SL community were shaped through democratic knowledge sharing among adult learners. Adults are self-directed learners (Knowles 1990). They gain learning from experience, mostly through solving problems. In real life, adult learning is self-directed towards coping with everyday life challenges. An adult wants to use new knowledge and skills right away in solving real-life issues (Hughes & Quinn 2013:23). We mentioned earlier that we used SL as a form of experiential learning in the study. Dewey (1963) described the importance of experience in knowledge sharing (learning). He integrated theory and practice through emphasising the use of reflection on action, and also proposed that learning is a social process, hence leading to individual and social transformation. In line with the thoughts of Dewey, learning is seen as being developmental and that good citizenship rests on knowledge sharing (Eyler & Giles 1994).

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As mentioned previously, we noted in our study that knowledge sharing developed the SL champions as ‘whole persons’. Current learning and brain-based research found that experiential learning engages the ‘whole brain’. A recent study done by Nwokah and Leafblad (2013:92) found that SL, as a form of experiential learning, is one of the best ways to enhance ‘whole brain’ learning. They found that by providing challenges in real life, the whole brain was used to solve given challenges. The participants in our study revealed that SL champions could adapt to a situation, answer to a calling, care, commit themselves fully (with their heart and soul), co-create and share knowledge, persevere, serve beyond duty, share expertise and take responsibility towards the transformation of society (summary P1-4). These responses provide evidence regarding the development of the ‘whole brain’ of a SL champion who shares knowledge and solves problems through a ‘whole person approach’.

As engaged scholars in our SL community, we realised that we have co-constructed our own approach to knowledge sharing (as an element of learning). The approach invoked philosophical ideas linked to various well-known learning theories such as the adult learning theory (Knowles 1990), behaviourism (Skinner 1971), cognitivism (Piaget & Inhelder 1969), constructivism (Vygotsky 1978) and critical social theory (Merriam & Caffarella 1999:340). Our approach evolved into a possible ‘relational learning philosophy’ and is currently defined as follows:

In our SL community, knowledge sharing is an interactive process in a socially and culturally diverse context characterised by a collaborative, reciprocal, symbiotic partnership, driven by development and enablement of human abilities as reward.

Based on this philosophy, it was important to gain an understanding of the role that knowledge sharing played in the development and enablement of the knowledge sharers on themselves and others in their immediate community.

4.2.1 Role of knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing developed and enabled the champions to become responsible citizens. The acquired skills empowered the champions to become change agents who focus on solving real-life challenges in society. As a result of knowledge sharing, even the quality of the partnerships developed into a higher level of sustainability.

The role of knowledge sharing was categorised into two main themes: firstly, the development and enablement, and secondly the empowerment of champions.

4.2.1.1 Development and enablement of SL champions

Development and enablement of champions were classified under educational and human development as two subthemes that directed the knowledge sharing in our SL community.

In the introduction of the chapter, we stated that HEIs are compelled to create a learning environment which will facilitate the educational development and enablement of lifelong learning skills (Daniels 2013:193; Marjan & Peyman 2012:399). Therefore, lifelong learning skills were a focus area in our SL community, in order to develop and enable SL champions. These skills included critical thinking, analytical skills, communication, teamwork, and problem solving (Tempone & Martin 2000:3).

As a lifelong learner, a SL champion has the ability to integrate theory and practice: *"Knowledge sharing develops and enables champions to connect academic knowledge and practical experience"* (P2). Champions show expertise and are knowledgeable: *"A champion has experience and knowledge of their field"* (P3*t). Thereby a SL champion uses the whole brain as a cognitive knower to share knowledge. The findings regarding the SL practice and characteristics of the champions not only serve as evidence for the cognitive domain, but include the affective (attitude) and psychomotor (skills). It thus engages the whole person as referred to by Bloom (Hughes & Quinn 2013:107).

Human development of champions is evidenced by a change in their self-development and their ability to initiate social development. Self-development is depicted in the ability of a champion to change his or her behaviour:

There should be change in a person. When a champion's personality, their attitude, their way of thinking and their emotions change, those are the things that will indicate to us whether there is development or not. Champions should prepare themselves for the unknown within reality (P4).

With the focus on self-development, SL develops the personal, intrapersonal, interpersonal and social responsibility of citizens (as evidenced in a study done by McMillan 2013:50, 51). SL has the potential to influence a person's 'being' (McMillan 2013:34). The literature reports about development in students on personal, intrapersonal and interpersonal levels (Eyler & Giles 1999). In the light of knowledge sharing within our SL community, the same would apply to the personal transformation of identified champions. Therefore, they also developed the ability to initiate the social development of others in their immediate society. Social development is evidenced by the influence of knowledge sharing on social transformation in the following quote:

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I think it satisfies those needs of one to share your knowledge and experience with others. There are three things that result from knowledge sharing: You grow in knowledge, and you learn to understand more about yourself – your response to people whom you serve – you learn to understand other people (P3).

Therefore, we posit that knowledge sharing influenced the champions to care about and contribute to the development of other human beings in society. Our champions understood and observed the influence of previous oppression and injustices from the past on society. They aimed to contribute to the development of the previously oppressed in society. The critical social theory validates our assumption regarding social development initiated by SL champions (Merriam & Caffarella 1999:340). This theory places emphasis on the role of the broader society in knowledge sharing, in order to develop a sustainable society. The goal of the champions was therefore to change society to a sustainable place for themselves and others in society; their wisdom became the solution and hope for those in despair.

The third subtheme that was classified was barriers in development relating to social justice. One of the participants voiced that *“you should know how it feels to be poor and have a vision to leave the circumstances of poverty. Education is the route out of poverty”* (P2). Participant 1 advised that *“We should not share knowledge in one direction”*. Participant 4 agreed that there should be balance in knowledge sharing: *“We should have an equilibrium which actually says we need each other: I can’t do it without you and you can’t do it without me”*. Participant 2 summarised the enabling solution towards social injustice with two words: *“reciprocal empowerment”*. Thus in our SL community we strove to render SL practice towards eliminating social injustice within our partnership context.

The last subtheme, classified under development and enablement of champions, was SL partnership development. To strengthen the argument of social justice, a champion voiced evidence of educational and human development: *“The contribution of academics in the partnership was of immense value to us. They share their occupational experience and academic knowledge in a practical way with the community”* (P1*t). Additionally, Participant 2 suggested: *“Even if you are not with the others anymore, the legacy of the knowledge that you share should stay with them”*. Therefore one of our key challenges is to build sustainable partnerships that reflect knowledge sharing and mutual respect for each other. Sustainability of partnerships can be safeguarded through quality assurance indicators (Bender *et al* 2006:92-111). Quality indicators of effective SL partnerships include collaboration, maintenance, monitoring and evaluation, the future of the partnership and sharing through celebration.

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Collaboration is the key quality indicator of partnerships. Roles, benefits and expectations are clarified by means of written memoranda of understanding. However, within partnerships there is an element of relationship building that does not only focus on operational matters. Participant 1 indicated the heart of collaboration: *"They did not only do it out of their obligation as lecturers or out of charity, they connected with us at a much deeper level because they displayed humanity and caring, they poured their heart and soul in the project"* (P1*t). In this sense we agree with Bringle, Clayton and Price (2009) that partnership relationships possess qualities such as closeness, equity and integrity.

Maintenance as a quality indicator can build trust among the partners through informal communication. Formal communication such as regular meetings with the service sector and community representatives must take place on an ongoing basis. Participant 4 referred to the importance of reciprocal trust and honesty to maintain relationships.

Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of knowledge sharing should be done rigorously through analysis of artefacts (eg minutes of meetings). Participant 3 mentioned the importance of continuous feedback regarding the SL project outcomes and stated: *"The university must not be scared to terminate a partnership if partners do not reach their outcomes and if the partnership does not thrive"*. Results can be utilised to plan the expansion or discontinuation of the partnership in time for the next cycle.

The value of celebration must not be underestimated as seen in the following quote: *"I don't know how we are going to thank them; it is as if friendships developed and that was so precious. It is as if they were angels sent from heaven"* (P1*t). It is clear that celebration as a formal appreciation and showcasing event, or as an ongoing event, is irreplaceable. Celebratory events facilitate deepened relationships and closure and provide an opportunity to network through discussion and reflection to shape the future.

The use of quality indicators can foster an enriched SL experience for partners within stable, flourishing partnerships embedded in an educational environment. We experienced that knowledge sharing in our SL partnerships contributed to the development of the partnerships at a deeper level. At the onset of our partnerships, all the sectors in the partnerships agreed to take responsibility as co-servers, co-learners and co-educators who engaged in relevant SL activities, therefore modelling democratic engagement is a fundamental aspect of SL pedagogy (Bender *et al* 2006:1-12, 31, 92-111). A participant commented that *"our partnership developed into a deeper level. We developed friendships and that was very precious to me"* (P1*t).

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The second theme that was classified under the role of knowledge sharing was the empowerment of SL champions.

4.2.1.2 Empowerment

Knowledge sharing empowered the SL champions to become change agents towards educational equality, respect for human rights and sustainable community development as enablers towards empowerment. A champion believes that knowledge sharing is empowerment. The next subtheme of empowerment emphasises the importance of educational equality in a previously oppressed society:

*There is an old saying that states: Knowledge is power. If that power is transferred to the community, it would enable massive transformation. The previous years of oppression made us feel powerless. Knowledge empowered us to feel in control, because we could do something about the situation. You feel important, needed. However, I am sure this should not have been the case if we were not empowered with the necessary reciprocal 'free of charge' knowledge sharing within the relationship that we built with the university. Knowledge sharing prepared us to implement our knowledge in the community. That was more empowering than receiving money ... You should do something, even if it is small and seems insignificant, to initiate change in the correct direction to solve a problem (P1*f).*

Knowledge sharing brings empowerment, in a lot of ways – on a personal, educational and on a social level. I can take the knowledge and also empower my champions and it makes you a better person. My knowledge that I share within myself is coping. Knowledge makes me cope; the fact that I can know how to cope empowers me. (P2)

We used SL to create academic learning experiences in which students participated in service activities which were aimed at addressing identified service needs in community. For example, partners from all the sectors reflected on the service and learning experiences regarding health related issues, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the linkage between academic content and community dynamics. In essence, SL balanced service to society with academic learning in order to mobilise the champions, as advised by literature (Furco 2001). Community engagement has infused the teaching and research functions of academics within the ivory towers of HEIs, with an expanded sense of context, relevance and application towards engagement. As a higher education sector, we connected with the community.

Human rights equality emerged as another subtheme under empowerment of SL champions. A champion argued that we should understand the effect of oppression on society. This is illustrated by the following quote:

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*There are definitely human feelings involved. I must say that knowledge sharing has really helped us as an organisation to heal in that respect. At the beginning we were antagonistic and worried, because we obviously come from an age where we are biased in our thinking. We were impressed about the way that the academic staff and students connected with us. There were no biases and assumptions that we will get hurt in the process. We could literally bury our old cows in the trench. I think SL has a very important role to play to promote diversity at the university. To place students of different groups in a diverse community is better than to sit in a class and theorise about these issues (P1*f).*

Thus, we used dialogue through knowledge sharing between the third sector and higher education and aimed through this study to co-generate knowledge that is relevant and useful in the South African SL context. The goal of the collaboration went beyond the technical or individual development focus of most community projects, instead our goal was to focus on democratic engagement and lasting social change. It was important to one of the champions that his knowledge sharing should lead to sustainable changes:

*We should transfer the knowledge in such a way, that even when the project comes to an end – that the effect of knowledge sharing will remain successful, ongoing and sustainable. It is important that constructive tools are transferred towards the empowerment of the community (P1*f).*

The acquired skills empowered the champions to become change agents who dream and visualise society as a place where equal access to education, respect for human rights, sustainable community development, and eventual global sustainability exist.

We want to go a step further and propose that cultural harmony or congruence, policy driven community engagement and the internet can be powerful enablers towards sustainable societal development. Striving towards cultural congruency could enable citizens to overcome the hurt from the past and empower the community. Thus, we suggest that cultural congruence could be a possible enabler towards social transformation. The dynamics within the learning community speak of an appreciation of diversity of culture and sensitivity for social differences.

The last subtheme connected to empowerment relates to sustainable community development. The *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (RSA DHET 2014:39) states that many of the community engagement initiatives that are conducted by HEIs are fragmented. In our opinion these initiatives cannot be measured as academic research projects. Thus future policies should aim to shape community engagement that leads to measurable community development through the integration of academic projects with research and community engagement. One of the policy objectives of this *White Paper* (RSA DHET 2014:39) states that

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higher education should be responsive to the needs of individual citizens, employers in the public and the private sector, as well as broader societal and developmental objectives. Therefore, we should aim to meet these objectives.

One of the global pioneers emphasised the sharing effect in the development of champions: *"I think the most important part of knowledge sharing is making other people aware of your experiences and your insights"* (GP1).

Another global champion explained the dynamic influence of the SL field on the development of champions:

I think that knowledge sharing is both the biggest problem that SL can have and it is also the biggest opportunity. The knowledge sharing was always in one direction, from the experts at the university to the people in the community. So, SL, when it is done well, is knowledge sharing in two directions that we should honour. There was a whole community of knowledge out there that the literature didn't show (GP2).

Another global champion voiced the role of knowledge sharing as follows:

So the champions shaped my thinking around SL and made me feel as though there was something there in terms of my intuition that – this is something that I am excited about and there is actually a group of people thinking about it (GP3).

We learned from one of the global pioneers that the community plays an important role in the development of others in the SL field:

What we do in SL is all about the community; how we can integrate what we have learned from the community with community and to the community. I think SL is not talking about ourselves; it's talking about how we can share our knowledge. And then we create knowledge together (GP4).

The following section deals with principles to guide the knowledge sharing process.

4.3 Principles to guide the knowledge sharing process

The last category of the findings is that of principles to guide the knowledge sharing process.

We argued that if we understand the role of knowledge sharing among the champions within the SL community, it could contribute to the quality of current and future engagement between the third sector and higher education. Our knowledge sharing took place within a partnership context. Therefore, it is important to use the advice of the champions in order to establish quality knowledge sharing (See Textbox 1 for summary of quotes).

TEXTBOX 1 Third sector champions: Advice for quality knowledge sharing

- Start a relationship
- Do value clarification and work towards shared values
- Do a learning need analysis and clarify a common goal
- Have a mentor
- Share knowledge in different contexts: public, mentorship-apprenticeship
- Share your expertise
- Share guidelines to integrate theory and practice
- There should be balance in knowledge sharing
- Just use me as example, as a guide to create your own knowledge
- Act out knowledge to enhance change
- Evaluate the effect of knowledge sharing on sharer and recipient
- Evaluate the outcomes of set goals
- Recognise contribution

We used the findings of the study to shape our thinking, as advised by the third sector champions, literature and through reflection on our scholarship of engagement. Based on our co-constructed 'relational learning philosophy' we drafted our suggested conceptual framework of principles to guide the knowledge sharing process as illustrated in Figure 14.2.

If the knowledge sharing process in a SL community is guided by three main principles, namely connection, collaboration and continuous communication, it could lead to change towards reciprocal empowerment between the third sector and higher education. Connection entails the establishment of a SL network, either in the public domain or on a mentor–apprentice basis. The foundation of collaboration should be reciprocity and mutuality. Continuous communication through monitoring and evaluation shapes the knowledge sharing process where recognition of the knowledge contribution rewards all sectors in the SL community. The process can either continue if goals were not met, or can lead to reciprocal empowerment after change took place towards social justice for all in society. Therefore, these principles could initiate change towards the empowerment of a SL community characterised by mutuality and reciprocity between the third sector and HEIs. If we apply the suggested principles, we could then have the ability to build, share and utilise knowledge for mutual enablement and capacity building. Of essence is that we should all take responsibility to act as change agents towards the transformation of education, by

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respecting human rights to work towards a sustainable society. Eventually, we can therefore contribute to global sustainability.

FIGURE 14.2 Conceptual framework of suggested principles

It was important to benchmark our findings regarding principles to guide the knowledge sharing process, because the global champions set the example by showing integrity and exceptional commitment in their practice. This was transferred from early pioneers to a younger generation. The following is a summary of their perceptions:

So the question people were asking was: How did you survive? How did you improve your practice? And every single person answered: Because we have a network. It was a sharing network, a knowledge sharing network (GP5).

Try to connect higher education, secondary education and community by sharing a topic. We need to learn from young people, they share knowledge from the international context (GP1).

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We can have a local network, from local network we can have a regional network, and from regional network we can have an international network, somehow if we can make it a systematic development that will be very good for SL stakeholders (GP4).

We have to verify community knowledge and incorporate it into our own scholarship. The new knowledge we're producing is a synthesis of academic knowledge and community knowledge. So it is a co-production of knowledge (GP2).

There was earnestness. I think we hear more depth of knowledge sharing when that genuine connection is made. It's not superficial. It gets to a point of mentorship–apprenticeship kind of relationship that is going to stay for a long time (GP3).

5. CONCLUSION

We listened to the voices from the third sector and benchmarked our findings in relation to the perceptions of global pioneers, to gain a better understanding of who the champions in our service learning community are. They believe that champions can be found in the third sector, the higher education institutions and the community sector. It was clear that champions have distinct defining characteristics whereby they establish themselves as champions. A picture of a champion reflects an image of excellence; when champions participate in knowledge sharing, the service of champions surpasses those of others. They conduct service learning practices as a whole person and display characteristics that speak of excellence. They are inherently motivated to participate in knowledge sharing, driven by specific educational needs for the sake of social transformation. They also engage in knowledge sharing for the love of learning. Their participation in knowledge sharing leads to societal change and personal growth. When they deal with pressing challenges in society, they rely on their previous experience and shared knowledge.

When applying the recommended principles based on the voices of the champions in an attempt to overcome barriers that hinder the knowledge sharing process, we can contribute to the development and enablement of current and future champions for active engagement between the third sector and higher education. A global champion noted the following:

So to me they were the champions because they were really kind of lighting the path and welcoming people in the field. And I think to me, that's what is so important and I think that stayed with me too, as my own professional development has advanced and grown and deepened. I will never forget that, and so when people come into the field I feel that that is one of my responsibilities to say: "Come into the fray and join us and be part of this" (GP3).

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Therefore, both the third sector and the higher education sector can share knowledge and expertise, with an integration of theory and practice from a shared 'knowledge bed'. The knowledge can then be transferred to and shared in close collaboration with the community sector.

We gained a better understanding of principles to guide the knowledge sharing process based on our democratic engagement and listening to the advice of champions in our context. Our suggested conceptual framework could enable reciprocal empowerment in this sector. The findings of the study reported in this chapter contribute to the fields of community engagement and service learning with an authentic South African identity.

If we use the advice of a global champion, we will carry the knowledge torch in the correct direction:

I guess I would say that the research that you are doing now – to embrace the concept of service learning to study knowledge sharing and make knowledge sharing more broad-based, not just to modern champions but to treat all of the people doing this as champions, because they are – that can enrich the way forward (GP1).

The study can also serve as point of departure for future action research, creating the possibility that repeated action research cycles could assist in streamlining relationships between knowledge sharers and enhance the sustainability of service learning partnerships.

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● ACRONYMS

CDS	Centre for Development Support
CE	community engagement
CES	community-engaged scholarship
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHESP	Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CSI	Corporate Social Investment
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DETEA	Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs
DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoSD	Department of Social Development
EL	experiential learning
FGD	focus group discussion
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
GIS	Geographic Information System
GP	global participant
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
HEIs	higher education institutions
HoSL	Head of Service Learning
IFC	Industrial Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISTR	International Society for Third-Sector Research
NPO	non-profit organisation
NPOs	non-profit organisations
NRF	National Research Foundation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OT	Occupational Therapy
P	participant
PAR	participatory action research
ROC	Reach Our Community (ROC) Foundation
SoN	School of Nursing
SA	South Africa
SL	service learning
SNA	social network analysis
SU	Stellenbosch University
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
TS	third sector
UCT	University of Cape Town
UFS	University of the Free State
UK	United Kingdom
Unisa	University of South Africa
UP	University of Pretoria
UWC	University of the Western Cape