A Practical Framework for a Flourishing Praxis of Engaged Scholarship in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

This empirical article offers a practical framework to complement Sandmann's integrated theoretical model for advancing the praxis of engaged scholarship in higher education institutions. The article introduces a newly developed integrated service-learning praxis (ISLP) approach, which served as a research context for constructing the practical framework. The ISLP approach combines community-engaged service-learning as pedagogy, appreciative inquiry as a research-and-change model, and the strategies of appreciative leadership to deliver praxis. Through a qualitative action research design, six international community-engaged service-learning champions participated in an appreciative inquiry to coconstruct the practical framework. They drew on their reflective practice and expertise within a study grounded in generative and social constructionist theories. The resulting practical framework includes actions to advance the careers of future engaged scholars and to guide the institutionalization of engaged scholarship.

Keywords: appreciative inquiry, engaged scholarship, community–higher education partnerships, integrated service-learning praxis, community-based participatory research

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Across the globe, higher education institutions (HEIs) have institutionalized community engagement and, by implication, community-engaged service-learning (CESL; Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2023; Shumer et al., 2017; Stanton et al., 1999). The practice of CESL can promote professional learning and development and, consequently, the praxis of engaged scholarship (Boyer, 1996/2016; Erasmus, 2014; Ma & Tandon, 2014; Sandmann et al., 2016; Shumer, 2017; Wood, 2020; Zuber-Skerritt, 2015).

Using CESL is embedded as a transforming pedagogy to develop engaged scholarship in community–higher education partnerships (CHEPs)(Duley, 2017). The pedagogy of CESL integrates meaningful service with instruction or teaching and reflection for learning. This type of integration enables whole-person (holistic) learning and teaches active citizenship to achieve social justice and community development for a more humane world (Duley, 2017; Stanton et al., 1999).

However, continuous change in society and higher education poses challenges for the sustainability of CESL practice, such as a lack of structural and institutional support that could inhibit engaged scholarship's praxis (Sandman et al., 2016). Sandmann et al. developed a theoretical integrated model (hereafter called the *theoretical model*), which proposes two axes to advance engaged scholarship as the socialization of engaged scholars/faculty and the institutionalization of engaged scholarship. The theoretical model also has four significant integrative elements, comprising (1) academic homes and development areas of graduate education for preparing future engaged scholars around the scholarship of engagement; (2) academic departments as the locus for engaged scholarly practice and understanding of institutional change toward sustainable support of engaged scholarship; (3) institutions, the intersection of scholarly practice

of engagement and institutional structures; and (4) disciplinary associations to shape both promising practices of institutional engagement for engaged scholars and institutional structures and administration for defining the role and practice of engaged scholars. However, this model lacks a practical framework of actionable steps to deliver praxis.

Intending to address this gap, the article introduces a newly developed integrated service-learning praxis (ISLP) approach (Venter, 2022). Promising the flourishment of engaged scholarship in CHEPs, the ISLP approach served as a research context for constructing the practical framework to complement the theoretical model. The newly developed ISLP approach combines the pedagogy of CESL, the strengths-based action research genre of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Stavros & Torres, 2018), and appreciative leadership strategies for delivery of praxis (Whitney et al., 2010). "Praxis" in this context refers to the "interdependence and integration—not separation—of theory and practice, research and development, thought and action" (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009, p. 113). Additionally, praxis within the appreciative inquiry unlocks the thoughts and actions of the oppressed so that they can liberate themselves with a pedagogy of hope to create a common good for all in greater society (Freire, 1970/1993, 1994; Wood, 2020).

We used appreciative conversations driven by a 5D process protocol—define, discover, dream, design, destiny/delivery—to engage with six international CESL champions for data generation. The practical framework drew on their shared best practices for advancing engaged scholarship, after exploring the main research question: How can the ISLP approach enable the flourishment of engaged scholarship in CHEPs?

The following sections share the literature review, action research methodology, and findings that offer the practical framework and discussion. The article concludes with a reflection on learning from the findings, namely the practical framework, as well as the research's significance, limitations, challenges, and contradictions.

Literature Review

The literature review clarifies relevant concepts and the context underpinning the research: community engagement, community, engagement and community-engaged scholarship, ISLP approach, CHEPs, CESL, appreciative inquiry, and appreciative leadership.

This article follows the definition of the Carnegie Foundation, which describes "community engagement" as "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, and global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2023). Community engagement aims at enriching teaching–learning and research, and fosters education about citizenship, democracy, and social responsibility to address societal issues for the public good.

The literature explains that "community" refers to a group of people united by at least one common characteristic, such as geography, shared interests, values, experiences, or traditions (Tandon & Hall, 2015). Being part of a community provides a "sense of belonging" (Tandon & Hall, 2015, p. 1) in relationships and can also refer to a place or an institution, such as a university.

Engagement involves academics who build relationships, for example, in a CHEP with a community to accomplish shared goals. This engagement can include learning, researching, knowledge sharing, or creating new courses with the community. Engagement can include educational interaction with community practitioners and social innovation with students to address societal challenges.

When community–university engagement is research-driven, the engagement leads to community-engaged scholarship. Many definitions have evolved from the original model of community-engaged scholarship (Boyer, 1996/2016). Tandon and Hall (2015) provided a clear and concise definition: "Community engaged scholarship is the teaching, discovery, integration, application, and engagement that involves faculty members in a mutually beneficial partnership with the community" (p. 13). Tandon and Hall added to this definition that "community engaged scholarship" should be characterized by "clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation, reflective critique, rigor and peer-review" (p. 13). Therefore, community-engaged

scholarship embraces an integrated, reciprocal, and mutual two-way exchange of resources (Zuber-Skerritt, 2015).

Serving as the research context, while focusing on CESL as an enabler of an integrated engaged scholarship, the newly developed ISLP approach (Venter, 2022) draws from the first author's self-reflection on best CESL practices, working as a doctorate engaged scholar and head of a CESL division at a South African HEI. Some HEIs still tend to practice teaching–learning, research, and community engagement in silos (Wood, 2020). In contrast, the newly developed ISLP approach offers to integrate these functions by combining CESL (Duley, 2017; Stanton et al., 1999), appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Stavros & Torres, 2018), and appreciative leadership (Whitney et al., 2010)—for flourishment of engaged scholarship in CHEPs (Venter, 2022).

Like CESL, the newly developed ISLP approach requires a CHEP for implementation. In South Africa, CHEPs involve a triad partnership model representing three sectors: communities, HEIs, and service (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013). Within this triad partnership, engaged scholars share mutual learning with others from diverse cultures and disciplines (Shumer et al., 2017; Stanton et al., 1999). Long-term partnerships are underpinned by four practices: having guiding principles (shared accountability, equality, equity, responsibility, reciprocity, and respect); quality processes (communication, evaluation, and feedback); accomplishment of meaningful outcomes (flourishment for the common good and well-being of society, the economy, and the environment); and transformative experiences (CCPH Board of Directors, 2013). Before starting the collaboration in a CHEP, engaged scholars should agree on logistics, such as drafting an agreement, clarifying a shared set of values (e.g., appreciation, integrity, honesty, openness, and mutual trust) and philosophy, vision, mission, goals, roles, and responsibilities, to ensure the sound implementation of the ISLP approach.

The practice of CESL has made significant contributions to the implementation of engaged scholarship (Furco & Root, 2010; Shumer, 2017; Stanton et al., 1999), as described in the following definition by Bringle and Clayton (2012; adapted from Bringle & Hatcher, 1996):

A course or competency-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in mutually identified service activities that benefit the community, 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. (pp. 114–115)

The practice of CESL involves a bidirectional integration of "thinking and acting, linking service to the community while reflecting on experiences in a conscious and disciplined way . . . as a pattern for lifelong learning" (Ramsay, 2017, p. 46). Thus, the ISLP approach finds structure in the pedagogy of CESL, through which it aligns with learning theories that emphasize reflective learning, such as constructivism, experiential learning, progressive education, self-efficacy, social justice, and action research. These pedagogies advance the development of the praxis of engaged scholarship (Stanton et al., 1999). Additionally, principles for good practice guide engaged scholars to respect CESL activities that allow those in the community with learning needs to define their needs; engage people in responsible and challenging actions to promote the common good; and articulate service and learning goals for all stakeholders involved in CESL partnerships (Sigmon, 2017).

As with CESL, the ISLP approach is rooted in three foundational pillars: service or action to achieve the common good; engagement in civil society; and moral, value-driven experiential learning. Therefore, the ISLP approach demands infinite reflection on service or action, to gain a deeper understanding of the linkage between curriculum content and community dynamics and achieve personal growth and a sense of social responsibility. Furthermore, the ISLP approach shares three common strands with action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Both designs involve reflection on service or action to enable learning from experience; have the practical aim to cocreate positive change in society; and support collaborative learning and inquiry to develop praxis. As mentioned previously, the newly developed ISLP approach combines CESL as pedagogy with the appreciative inquiry methodology in pursuit of praxis.

Appreciative inquiry is a contemporary, strengths-based genre of action research that is primarily applied in business environments. As it is embedded in positive psychology (Fredrickson, 2006; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2011), appreciative inquiry encourages strengths-based organizational research, development, and change management (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Appreciative inquiry identifies best practices and enables designing and implementing development plans. For example, research participants who engaged in an appreciative inquiry on the topic of global sustainable development generated solutions for related challenges in the so-called triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015; Whitney et al., 2010). The most practical definition of appreciative inquiry involves

> cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organisations, and the world around them. It involves the discovery of what gives life to a living system when it is most effective, alive, and constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 3)

Also forming part of the ISLP approach, the continuous practice of appreciative inquiry can encourage engaged scholars to develop the five appreciative leadership strategies: inquiry, illumination, inclusion, inspiration, and integrity (Whitney et al., 2010). When applied in CHEPs, these appreciative leadership strategies can guide the creative potential of engaged scholars to cocreate knowledge that can effect change. These strategies help to develop character strengths, such as confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance, to "make a positive difference in the world" (Whitney et al., 2010, p. 3). The strategies of appreciative leadership are described by creative phrases, indicated in italics. First, to develop the *wisdom of inquiry*, engaged scholars should ask positive and powerful questions; using the *art of illumination* requires an engaged scholar to focus on the best practices that other engaged scholars deliver in CHEPs. By applying the *genius of inclusion*, engaged scholars can collaborate to cocreate actions that improve future practice. To demonstrate the *courage of inspiration*, engaged scholars can awaken a creative and positive spirit of scholarship in CHEPs. To follow the *path of integrity*, engaged scholars

can make wise choices about their practice that contribute to the common good of all. The excellent practice of CESL scholars who have championed an engaged scholarship can portray "practical wisdom" (Duley, 2017, p. 33). In turn, mentorship by CESL champions can spawn new champions in triad CHEPs (Venter et al., 2015).

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative action research design by performing an appreciative inquiry, following a transformative paradigm that argues for democratic, socially just, action-oriented knowledge cocreation in partnership (Mertens, 2015; Wood, 2020).

When using appreciative inquiry, the action research is rooted in the learning theories of social constructionism and generativity (Bushe, 2007; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Gergen, 2015; Gergen & Gergen, 2008; Grieten et al., 2017; Ludema & Fry, 2008; Stavros & Torres, 2018; Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008). *Social constructionism* involves the idea that a social system, such as a group of engaged scholars, collectively creates its reality. In turn, *generativity* involves the collective discovery and cocreation of new things, thereby positively altering a collective future. These two learning theories provide a significant theoretical grounding for understanding the coconstruction of knowledge and the importance of social context in shaping best practices and practical implications for engaged scholarship.

The appreciative inquiry not only allowed for the integration of theory (i.e., the knowledge shared by the participants) and practice (research into practice; Reed, 2007), but also broadened the scope of research, enabling the convergence of "theory, measurement, design and practice" (Bringle et al., 2013, p. 342).

The authors purposively selected six internationally recognized CESL champions as participants. This study's inclusion selection criteria of the international CESL champions comprised expertise in theory, practice, and research in the CESL field and involvement in institutionalizing engaged scholarship at HEIs. Four of the CESL champions (males; Participants 1, 2, 4, and 5) are recognized as renowned senior CESL pioneers who started the CESL movement in the United States of America (Stanton et al., 1999). To contribute to the rigor and relevance of the study, the profiles of the participants are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Research Participants

Participant	Gender, ethnicity	Age group	PhD—discipline	Geographic
1	Male, White	70–80	Education	USA
2	Male, White	70–80	Human and organization systems	USA
3	Male, White	60–70	Educational administration and policy	USA
4	Male, White	70–80	Social psychology	USA
5	Male, White	70–80	Community development	USA
6	Female, Asian	50–60	PhD in social sciences	Asia– Pacific

Participants 1, 2, 4, and 5 have retired but still work as senior engaged scholars to date, conducting research and guiding scholars and institutions to advance the CESL field. Participant 3 is a higher education professor, a global CESL network director, and former associate vice president for public engagement at a HEI. His work focuses on advancing the institutional engagement of stakeholders in community-based research, teaching, and learning to advance the public good through mutually beneficial university–community partnerships. In addition, he conducts research on the impacts of engaged scholarship on students, faculty, the institution, and communities. Participant 6 established a CESL center at a HEI based in the Asia–Pacific region and currently works as an associate professor and heads a program at another HEI. She is also a Senior Fellow for CESL at the Centre for Experiential Learning. True to the CESL field, all the participants' cultural foundation is rooted in commitment to social justice, diversity, and inclusivity while focusing on fostering reciprocal university–community partnerships and adapting engaged scholarship to address global challenges toward positive societal impact. Despite the involvement of their diverse disciplines, the participants had a common denominator: a commitment to advancing the praxis of engaged scholarship, and this element contributed to the study's validity (Mertens, 2015).

The ethical committee of the university's Faculty of Education Board granted ethical clearance to conduct the research. The participants were individually invited via email to engage in the appreciative inquiry. We applied ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and fairness/justice by ob- taining their voluntary informed consent (Mertens, 2015, p. 61). Before the onset of the appreciative inquiry conversation, the idea of the newly developed ISLP approach serving as research context was explained to each of the participants.

Ideally, due to its collaborative action research design, an appreciative inquiry requires a process of collective data generation by a group of participants in one setting and employing one-to-one paired conversations among the group members (Cooperrider et al., 2008). However, the entire partnership logistics proved to be a challenge for full participatory engagement due to the demographic distance, differing time zones, and high-profile work schedules of the participants, who were situated across the globe.

As a result, the first author facilitated appreciative inquiry conversations with each of the six participants to obtain their career-life stories for data generation. A 5D appreciative inquiry process-driven protocol—define, discover, dream, design, destiny/delivery—guided the data generation to ensure the validity of the findings.

In Phase 1, the inquiry was defined by the main research question: How can the ISLP approach enable the flourishment of engaged scholarship in CHEPs?

Phase 2, the discovery, explored the participants' positive core: their best practices, values, and strengths, in answer to three prompting subquestions: (1) Share a story about your best practices regarding CESL partnerships; (2) Describe your top two strengths and share an example in your present role as CESL champion, when you have successfully used one of these strengths

in CESL partnerships; and (3) Share the things you value deeply about yourself and successful practice in CESL partnerships.

Phase 3 required the participants to dream by reflecting on the positive core (as identified in Phase 2). The prompting subquestions asked in Phase 3 involved the following: Imagine that we are meeting on this day next year and reviewing the progress made through the practice of the ISLP approach to strengthen professional learning and development in CHEPs. Could you list these envisioned successes?

In Phase 4, the design, the participants had to build on the positive core (as identified in Phase 2) and the collective dream (cocreated in Phase 3), driven by this subquestion: Please share three actions that partners could use for the ISLP approach to flourish professional learning and development in CHEPs.

Phase 5, the destiny of an appreciative inquiry, is an ongoing phase that aims at continuing and sustaining "the dynamic learning cycle into the future" (Grieten et al., 2017, p. 102). Phase 5 identifies how the designed actions can reach the desired destiny of the appreciative inquiry. Hence, Phase 5 can alternatively be referred to as the delivery phase. The subquestion that guided Phase 5 was "Given no constraints, how will you advise current and future CESL champions to implement the ISLP approach to flourish their professional learning and development in CHEPs?"

Regarding data analysis, the appreciative inquiry methodology ideally also requires a collaborative analysis process by all the participants in one setting (Grieten et al., 2017). However, as already mentioned, this aspect of the methodology could not be realized due to partnership logistics. Alternatively, a qualitative thematic data analysis was followed (Mertens, 2015). The first author transcribed and analyzed data under the supervision of two experienced researchers (doctoral study supervisors) and member-checked with each participant via email (Mertens, 2015).

For triangulation of the findings, we integrated the six expert voices of the participants to form a "prism" of collective perspectives (Mertens, 2015, p. 518) and drafted an article. Finally, as Mertens suggested, each participant conducted a peer review of the drafted article for member checking. All the participants agreed on the data analysis and findings while providing collective, constructive feedback (as an appreciated benefit), which we applied toward completing the article.

Findings

We only report on the appreciative inquiry's findings of Phase 4 (Design). As explained, the 5D phases of the appreciative inquiry are built on each other. However, the other phases' findings are reported on elsewhere due to limited space and relevance to the article's title.

The Practical Framework

The findings offer a practical framework to advance the praxis of engaged scholarship (see Figure 1).

As depicted in Figure 1, the theoretical model (Sandman et al., 2016) has two axes (socialization and institutionalization) that form four quadrants which offer aligned academic homes and four integrated overlapping circles of development areas: (1) graduate education for preparing future engaged scholars around the scholarship of engagement; (2) academic departments as the locus for engaged scholarly practice and understanding of institutional change toward sustainable support of engaged scholarship; (3) institutions, the intersection of scholarly practice of engagement and institutional structures; and (4) disciplinary associations to shape both promising practices of institutional engagement for engaged scholars and institutional structures and administration for defining the role and practice of engaged scholars.

The research context of the ISLP approach is beneficial to both axes, for the approach combines a pedagogy (CESL) for scholarly socialization and to practice engaged scholarship; appreciative inquiry as an institutional change model; and the strategies of appreciative leadership to advance both the socialization of engaged scholars and the institutionalization of engaged scholarship.

The findings revealed a practical framework that includes two sets of actions: actions for the socialization of engaged scholars and actions to flourish the institutionalization of engaged scholarship at HEIs.

The actions are set in italics and supported by verbatim quotes from the CESL champions, referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, and so forth. These actions, the authors' discussion, and confirming literature are presented in an integrated manner.

Figure 1. Practical Framework to Advance Engaged Scholarship in Higher Education Institutions, Complementing the Theoretical Model of Sandmann et al. (2016)
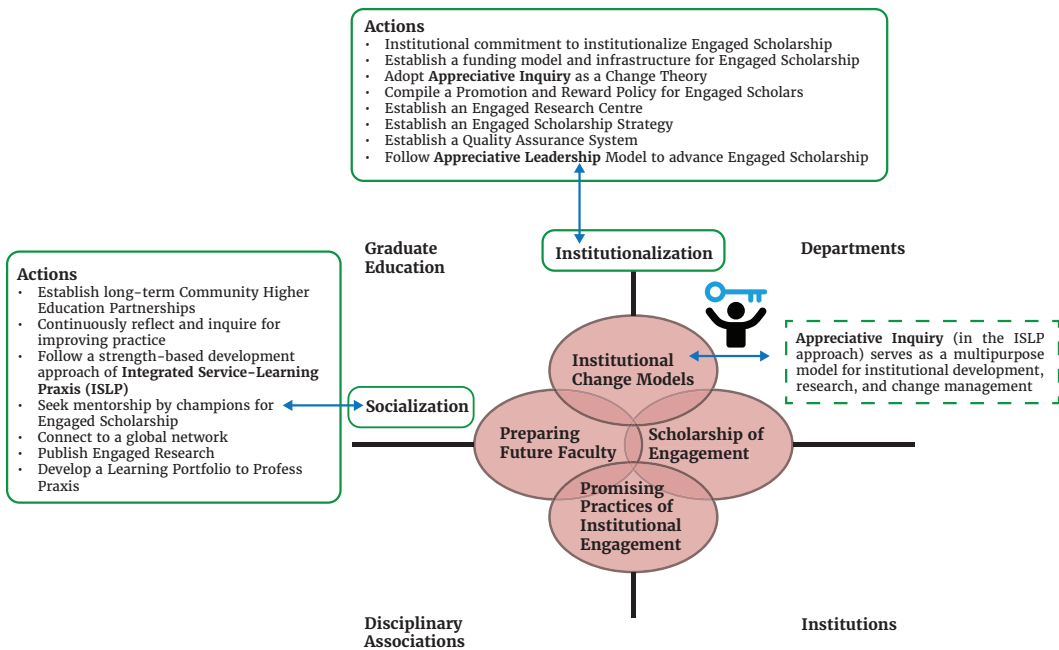
Note. Adapted from "An Integrated Model for Advancing the Scholarship of Engagement: Creating Academic Homes for the Engaged Scholar," by L. Sandmann, J. Saltmarsh, and K. O'Meara, 2016, *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 20*(1), 157–174. https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/article/view/1264

Set 1: Actions for Socialization of Engaged Scholars

As the first action, Participant 2 suggested that *establishing long-term CHEPs* is necessary to advance the praxis of engaged scholarship. Keeping the intent and environment for engaged scholarship in mind, Participant 2 recommended that "if we are serious about service and development, we must invest in this work with our partners for the long term."

Our engaged scholarly practice tends to become too much of a quick, one-sided student, educational, and personal development offering. Therefore, Participant 2 expressed the following:

> I am concerned that our [CESL] field may be losing its community development focus in the mad rush to institutionalise it in the academy. In this social innovation/entrepreneurship time, there seems to have developed a lack of interest in and focus on the importance of long-term relationships in development and change. Quick in-and-out proj-

ects benefit our students and campuses more than communities and skim the surface of what students need to know and understand about community change and development.

In contrast to quick engagement, a long-term commitment requires that HEIs allow for broader CESL practice underpinned by collaboration and partnership values. For this reason, Participant 2 advised that "engaged scholars should return to the roots of CESL to allow for engagement in their surrounding communities." To enable active learning, "engaged scholars should plan how to negotiate with different communities with different ways of thinking and knowing" (Participant 3). A CHEP provides a collaborative learning platform where engaged scholars can learn and develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes in action to profess praxis.

Suggesting that we move away from once-off projects, Participant 3 specified: "We need to move to the establishment of partnerships, for it serves as an anchor to think about big issues, a broader agenda, goals and objectives to work on together over

an extended period for many years maybe, even decades." In the same vein, Participant 1 voiced: "In a partnership, engaged scholars can learn with and from each other how to address global societal challenges." Participant 4 highlighted the importance of future research on partnerships in CESL, proposing that "scholars should identify cognate theories that can contribute to research on partnerships and demonstrate how these theories can contribute to advance practice." He concluded that "future champions would need to continue stressing theory in research and practice to advance the CESL field." Participant 6 underlined the value of trust development in partnerships, expressing that "trust and understanding form the partnership's foundation."

Societal challenges are currently addressed by the proposed 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. More specifically, Goal 17 speaks to partnerships for addressing the goals (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015). Engagement can become the means to and goal of engaged scholarly learning (Shulman, 2002). Engaged scholars should also develop the courage to enter a "constructive enlarging engagement" (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 63) with the community— across the margin of their tribe of comfortable isolation within HEIs or the community. Such engaged practice allows scholars to continuously reflect on and inquire about their service experiences.

As the second action, to *critically reflect and inquire continuously*, both Participants 1 and 2 indicated that "engaged scholars could find an opportunity to learn how to develop" (Participant 2). Participant 1 specified that "research projects should require scholars to reflect critically and ask them to think about how they gain wisdom." For learning to be transformative, critical self-reflection (habits of the mind) is needed for the specific attitudes and assumptions engaged scholars may hold. Such reflective practice is needed to enable higher order thinking, which, in turn, is required for making wise decisions that facilitate the delivery of praxis (Shulman, 2002; Zuber-Skerritt, 2015).

Regarding the third action, Participant 3 proposed to *follow a step-by-step asset-based development approach* to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship. Participant 3 further advised that "active, engaged scholars should know that true reciprocity is the core principle of engaged scholarship and that we should value it." In this sense, "all engaged scholars in CHEPs have something they can contribute to guide engaged scholarship" (Participant 3).

In line with reciprocity, appreciative inquiry (within the ISLP approach) can motivate engaged scholars to cocreate knowledge that can address societal challenges and bring positive change. When scholars in CHEPs use appreciative inquiry, they do so on the assumption that the topic they study can grow in the direction of the change they desire (called the heliotropic principle; Cooperrider et al., 2008). Therefore, Participant 3's vision for developing dynamic scholarly praxis confirms the appreciative intent embedded in the ISLP approach: "To be successful, everyone must contribute. We need to tap into all the partners' talents, experience, knowledge, and expertise."

However, Participant 3 warned engaged scholars to avoid establishing the approach from an advanced state. They should be aware that "a developmental learning process might take many years to cultivate because high-quality practice requires adequate skills development" (Participant 3). Participant 3 recommended "that engaged scholars develop the ability to balance the complex convergence of diverse skills, attitudes, and perspectives shared by various stakeholders in CHEP, and that, in practice, that is part of the learning." Participant 3 further advised: "It would just need time, and they must navigate and swim in that sea of uncertainty for a while before knowing how to swim well and navigate the ocean because it could feel like drowning." Participant 2 confirmed the importance of development, asserting that "unless our institutions are truly committed to community development, we cannot hope to teach our students how this works." This participant added that "engaged scholarship should return to its roots, which came from a commitment to engaging the resources of HEIs (students, faculty, other) to assist with community change and development."

As the fourth action, Participant 6 pointed to the importance of *seeking mentorship* from CESL champions, stating: "I hope that in the future, CESL champions can work together to promote the values we embrace." Additionally, mentorship by champions for engaged scholarship is required during the implementation of the ISLP approach.

Knowledge-sharing in CHEPs can provide a platform for engaged scholars to learn in action. Participant 5 advised: "The learning content could include elements of the history, heritage, practices, principles, and future of the approach." Participant 6, furthermore, suggested, "Champions of engaged scholarship should connect globally to promote ethical values for training the next generation."

The fifth action guides engaged scholars to focus on challenges and *connect within a glocal network* from local to global contexts, sharing best practices. Both Participant 5 and Participant 1 suggested that a network can support engaged scholarly learning and development, with Participant 5 stating: "There is a global world now for CESL, so present your work at conferences and network in global community engagement networks." Participant 1 voiced the "need for a communication network for sharing information and best practices on engaged scholarship."

These networks include the Campus Compact Network, the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, the Talloires Network of Engaged Universities, Global Service Learning (globalsl.org), the Higher Education Service Learning Listserv, and the Global University Network for Innovation. In addition, by using global networks and conferences to share best practices, the union of strengths can do more than merely help engaged scholars to perform in practice; it can transform their practice and help them to move into large-scale applications of engaged scholarship. By applying the strengths-based ISLP approach, engaged scholars can move away from a problem-based approach and address trauma, anger, and fear (Grieten et al., 2017). They can then apply the strength of mindfulness to develop resilience (Fredrickson, 2003). Such networking can elevate, magnify, and refract strengths (Cooperrider, 2012; Cooperrider & Godwin, 2011; Grieten et al., 2017) and flourish engaged scholarship.

The sixth action, namely, to *publish engaged research*, was confirmed by Participant 4, who suggested that "more work on best practices of engaged scholarship should be published in journals and books and presented at conferences." Participant 5 confirmed the importance of publication, expressing that "it was important to share projects and principles of what worked and what didn't work."

In addition, there is a need for students and community partners to coauthor publications on engaged scholarship. Participant 4 recommended that "existing publications become information resources that generate improved, good-quality research and promote the generation of better quantitative research on CESL." Therefore, the literature advises that quality research should reflect a convergence of theory, measurement, design, and practice (Bringle et al., 2013). Moreover, conducting research and evaluation studies on the impact and development of CESL should advance its evolution to keep up with the rapid and dynamic global change that characterizes the 21st century (Permaul, 2017). The ISLP approach has appreciative inquiry as a methodology, allowing for reframing evaluation studies (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). Drawing from its integrative and praxis nature, it seems that the ISLP approach may enable the convergence of all the above recommendations to deliver quality research.

As the seventh action, *developing a portfolio that guides reward and promotion* is essential to capture the hard work involved in learning and the development of engaged scholarship. Participants 5 and 6 indicated that a reformed reward and promotion structure and system is needed to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship. Participant 6 referred to this need as follows: "We are still not on the main track for ranking because, most of the time, management ignores the practice of service-learning and, by implication, engaged scholarship." Engaged scholars should, therefore, develop a portfolio of work. This approach even makes it possible to "acknowledge the often-hidden positive core of engaged scholars, who specifically engage in the complex and dynamic process of walking the village" (Participant 5).

The literature has long debated the quest to reform promotion, the reward of engaged scholarship, and how to promote and reward engaged scholarship (Giles, 2016; O'Meara et al., 2015; Sandmann et al., 2016). Moreover, many discipline-specific professional organizations have started to include the attribute of public service in their graduate requirements (Sandmann et al., 2016). This requirement provides an opportunity to advance the scholarship of engagement as a required graduate attribute and a criterion for reward and promotion.

In addition to the first set of actions for the socialization of engaged scholars, the practi-

cal framework proposes a second set of actions to institutionalize engaged scholarship.

Set 2: Actions for the Institutionalization of Engaged Scholarship

The participants suggested that the following actions should be taken to enable the institutionalization of engaged scholarship.

As the first action, *genuine institutional commitment to engaged scholarship* was pointed out by Participant 2, who additionally stressed the underpinning intent of community well-being, development, and social justice. Participant 2 stated: "Unless our institutions and programmes are genuinely committed to and engaged with communities to help ensure their long-term health and development, we cannot hope to teach our students how this works." In the same vein, Participant 6 alluded that it is essential "to have the whole university buy-in, for you need to ensure that everyone understands why we need to do an engaged scholarship."

University leadership is crucial in shaping and molding the engaged scholarship agenda. Leadership should inspire, guide, mentor, and support the engagement process by providing the proper orientation for all efforts and activities related to engaged scholarship (Tandon & Hall, 2015). Conversely, if the commitment to engaged scholarship relies solely on the support of leadership, what could happen when leadership changes or leaves? If the commitment to engagement is internalized into the identity and culture as the core of HEI and ingrained into the epistemology of HEI (Schön, 1995), then engaged scholarship can withstand the test of time and change and even lead to an infinite process of new engagements (Shulman, 2002). Nevertheless, institutional change is complex because HEIs encompass a confluence of functions, systems, processes, and structures (Sandmann et al., 2016).

The second action involves *the adoption of a change theory*. Participant 6 advised that "establishing the notion of engaged scholarship should ideally have the buy-in from the whole university for institutionalisation." Participant 5 bravely stated that he "had a mission to change higher education."

The reason for this second action is that engaged scholarship requires whole-system change. Examples of where change is needed are curricula, pedagogies, research epistemologies, ontologies, designs, methodologies, and methods of data collection and dissemination, as well as a change in infrastructure and funding models (Hall & Tandon, 2017; Sandmann et al., 2016; Wood, 2020).

The ISLP approach offers the influential positive change theory of appreciative inquiry to enable such change (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Appreciative inquiry promises to deliver changes to institutional culture through a whole-system approach. Moreover, as a genre of action research, it fits the new epistemology required for the praxis of engaged scholarship (Schön, 1995).

The third action requires the *development of an engaged scholarship policy*. Participant 6 suggested:

> The university should align an engaged scholarship policy with development policies on international, national, provincial, and local levels and with the institutional vision, mission, and strategy for practice, as well as related teaching–learning, research, and governance policies. The policy should address adequate resources, infrastructure, and funding allocation.

According to Participant 5, this policy should be "supported by clear promotion and reward indicators, which should provide criteria for guiding the praxis of engaged scholarship." Such action can support engaged scholarship across the institution and disciplines and revise institutional culture and structures (Sandmann et al., 2016). By placing engaged scholarship at the core that complements research and teaching functions, HEIs worldwide can become "dynamic forces" for transformation in their societies (Talloires Network of Engaged Universities, 2018).

As a fourth action, Participant 6 suggested *setting up an engaged research center* "for enabling learning and developing engaged scholarship." Coordination and teamwork are essential for collaborative learning and inquiry. Participant 5 proposed that HEIs "establish and fund such a training and research center in the community, driven by the community." In these centers, engaged scholars can "share information, write about it, and learn from one another" (Participant 6). Such shared resources can provide a "new architecture of knowledge that allows co-construction of knowledge

between intellectuals in academia and in-tellectuals located in community settings" (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 17).

Regarding the fifth action, Participant 6 emphasized the importance of *establishing an engaged scholarship strategy*. By empha-sizing the undertaking of strategic plan-ning, Participant 6 advised that "we need to have a detailed action plan of what you want to achieve." Because the ISLP ap-proach includes the appreciative inquiry model, it provides an alternative approach to strategic planning. By using the ISLP ap-proach, engaged scholars can make use of the SOAR analysis (strengths, opportuni-ties, aspirations, and resources or results; Stavros et al., 2003) instead of the usual SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, op-portunities, and threats). To ensure effective planning, ample time should be set aside for purposeful and productive meetings. Participant 6 mentioned: "Actions should be well planned, practical, and measurable; therefore, a sound quality assurance system is required."

As the sixth action, Participant 6 rec-ommended *establishing a quality assur-ance system*, advising "the need to ensure quality in the whole process." Participant 6 underlined three elements needed for adequate quality assurance: "Delivering a high standard for programmes; continu-ous communication and feedback between faculties and departments and internal and external stakeholders; and acknowledging and supporting the hard work of engaged scholars." Participant 5 further suggested that "leadership can coordinate such praxis at the research centres proposed for the ISLP approach."

For the seventh action, Participant 5 indi-cated the importance of *following an inclu-sive leadership model*, "valuing the notion of inclusion and integrity." Participant 1 confirmed the need for this action, "high-lighting the values of inclusion and col-laboration to make a difference." Since engaged scholars from different sectors and disciplines deliver the praxis of engaged scholarship, an inclusive leadership model, such as appreciative leadership, is required. Literature advises that engaged scholars should broaden their perspectives and think from outside "simply a service-learning orientation" (Permaul, 2017, p. 99)—this is what the ISLP approach aims to achieve when the appreciative leadership strategies of inquiry, illumination, inclusion, inspira-

tion, and integrity are followed (Whitney et al., 2010, pp. 1–2). Appreciative leader-ship enables interconnection, interdepen-dence, and positive relationship-building, even globally. Combined with the core CESL values of reciprocity, social responsibil-ity, and citizenship, appreciative leader-ship can contribute to action that achieves social change and creates a balance between the so-called triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit (Whitney et al., 2010).

Discussion

The practical framework complements the theoretical model by providing actionable steps to implement and operationalize the concepts outlined in the theoretical model.

With regard to socialization of engaged scholars, the theoretical model empha-sizes the development areas necessary for engaged scholars and institutions, such as graduate education and institutional struc-tures. The practical framework takes these concepts further by outlining specific ac-tions for socializing engaged scholars. Such actions include establishing long-term CHEPs, promoting reciprocity and collabo-ration, and emphasizing continuous reflec-tion and learning.

The theoretical model highlights the need for institutional commitment and change theory for the institutionalization of en-gaged scholarship. Complementing the latter, the practical framework offers ac-tionable steps to institutionalize engaged scholarship in HEIs. The actionable steps include developing engaged scholarship policies aligned with institutional vision and strategy, establishing engaged research centers, and implementing quality assur-ance systems.

The actions for socializing engaged scholars correspond to the quadrant focusing on pre-paring future engaged scholars, whereas ac-tions for institutionalization align with the quadrant focusing on promising practices of institutional engagement. This align-ment ensures a comprehensive approach to advancing engaged scholarship within HEIs.

The practical framework integrates relevant theories, such as appreciative inquiry, to facilitate institutional change and support the practice of engaged scholarship. By in-corporating established change theories and leadership models, the framework enhances the effectiveness of the proposed actions

and ensures alignment with the theoretical underpinnings of engaged scholarship.

The theoretical model provides a conceptual understanding of engaged scholarship, and the practical framework translates these concepts into tangible actions. This emphasis on practical implementation enables HEIs to move beyond theoretical discussions and actively promote engaged scholarship through concrete strategies and initiatives.

In summary, the practical framework expands upon the theoretical model by providing actionable steps for socializing engaged scholars and institutionalizing engaged scholarship within HEIs. By aligning with the theoretical axes, integrating appropriate theories, and focusing on actions for implementation, the practical framework aims to flourish the praxis of engaged scholarship within HEIs.

Conclusion

Continuous change in society and higher education may challenge the future sustainability of CESL and its contribution to developing engaged scholarship praxis. Literature recently shared a theoretically integrated model to advance engaged scholarship, offering to prepare engaged scholars for professional development and socialization while fostering the institutionalization of engaged scholarship (Sandmann et al., 2016). However, the theoretical model of Sandman et al. does not include a practical framework for the delivery of praxis. To address this challenge, the article reported on a qualitative action research study—more specifically, an appreciative inquiry—that explored how an ISLP approach in CHEPs can enable the flourishment of engaged scholarship. The significance of the ISLP approach is rooted in integrating CESL, appreciative inquiry, and appreciative leadership strategies.

Drawing from data generated through appreciative inquiry conversations with six pioneering international CESL champions, guided by a semistructured 5D process-driven protocol, a practical framework was coconstructed. The framework complemented the theoretically integrated model (Sandman et al., 2016), providing two sets of actions for a promise to flourishment: the socialization of an engaged scholar, and the institutionalization of engaged scholarship.

The first set of actions offering to guide the socialization of engaged scholars comprises the establishment of long-term CHEPs for reciprocal engagement in high-quality collaborative learning; continuous reflection and inquiry for improving practice; following the ISLP strengths-based development approach to achieving holistic development; seeking mentorship by champions for engaged scholarship to guide and support the implementation of the ISLP approach; connecting to a glocal network for sharing best practices to strengthen and scale up practice; publishing engaged research to legitimize the field; and developing a learning portfolio to portray praxis and achieve reward and promotion.

Concerning the second set of actions for the flourishment of institutionalization of engaged scholarship in HEIs, appreciative inquiry is a multipurpose model for bringing about institutional development, research, and change management. The following set of actions emerged from the findings: Genuine institutional commitment to the institutionalization of engaged scholarship; adopting a change theory (such as appreciative inquiry) to address curricula, pedagogies, research, as well as infrastructure and funding models; development of an engaged scholarship policy; setting up an engaged research center; compiling an engaged scholarship strategy; establishing a quality assurance system; and following an inclusive leadership model (such as appreciative leadership) to advance engaged scholarship.

By employing a qualitative action research design, the study not only explored the experiences and perspectives of participants, but also involved them actively in the coconstruction of the practical framework. This participatory approach to research is valuable in addressing the gap between theory and practice, by incorporating the insights and expertise of CESL champions directly into the research process.

In final reflection, it seems that practical wisdom can come to life only at the nexus where positive habits of the mind (reflective practice) and heart (values of social justice) meet, primarily when it is aimed at a lifelong commitment to the development of the identity of both engaged scholars and HEIs that profess the praxis of engaged scholarship.

However, moving through "the open door" for engaged scholarship (Sandmann et al., 2016) calls for interdependent and integrated thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Therefore, HEIs must rethink and reframe their house structures to provide academic homes that include a heart for engagement, with open doors for engaged scholars to enter (Butin, 2010). Then, engaged scholars can inhabit multiple academic homes and profess the praxis of engaged scholarship, which is the *raison d'être* (reason for the existence) of higher education learning and development. Participant 2 framed this action in a significant way by sharing the following proposal:

> Perhaps a reframing of higher education is needed—from a commodity one needs for financial and other personal achievements—to training and development for socially responsible citizenship in a just and democratic society.

Significances, Limitations, Challenges, and Contradictions

The research offered a valuable knowledge contribution, enabling the newly developed ISLP approach to come to life through a practical framework for the flourishment of engaged scholarship. As South African authors, we inquired into six international champions' diverse expertise, resources, and networks. The research can address local challenges in South Africa and contribute to global knowledge on how scholarship can effectively engage with societal issues. This inquiry also fosters cross-cultural exchange, promotes capacity building, and ensures that the research has long-term relevance and influence across multiple contexts. The research benefit was mutual because the participants achieved their goal of stewardship for advancing the field while their practical wisdom informed the research purpose. From a broader perspective, engaged scholarship benefits humanity by addressing social challenges for the public good (Boyer, 1996/2016), whereas the ISLP approach offers to advance both the development of engaged scholars and the institutionalization of engaged scholarship in an institutional context.

The inquiry was restricted to the voices of pioneering international CESL champions, which could be considered a limitation of the study. However, the approach taken here was to benchmark praxis with these individuals successfully. In this way, engaging with those who were the first to experience and know the complex and dynamic process of walking the village (Participant 5) regarding the practice of CESL for engaged scholarship was possible.

During the development of the ISLP approach, some internal contradictions arose through the awareness of current challenges concerning the ideal destiny that champions strive to achieve. These contradictions are manifestations of external ideological limitations placed on what could be deemed utopian ideals in all sectors of society. The concept of praxis infers that unequal societies will require a political struggle against power and privilege to achieve social justice. However, through the positive, appreciative ISLP approach, it becomes possible to turn contradictions into creative tensions by reimagining society and the role of higher education. Doing so requires ideologically coordinating with the utopian ideals through constantly invoking a positive vision of the future, where actual actions become drivers of change through mechanisms created by collaborative engaged scholarship (Erasmus, 2014).

The ISLP approach is complex and requires much time and transformation to implement. Therefore, a step-by-step development process is required to scale up best practices, guided by mentors and shared in a global network. However, flourishment for the praxis of engaged scholarship could be enacted by complementing the theoretical model (Sandmann et al., 2016) with the practical framework presented in this article.

By using this practical framework, engaged scholars can "legitimize not only the use of knowledge produced in the academy, but the practitioner's generation of actionable knowledge" (Schön, 1995. p. 34). By keeping in mind that the practical framework can contribute to the eventual coconstruction of societal wellness (Whitney et al., 2010), it can inform policies needed for flourishing the praxis of engaged scholarship.

What next? . . . Dreaming into the Future

When asked to envision future successes after applying the approach for one year, Participant 5 said: "Well, clearly the global spread of the ISLP approach." We share this dream to achieve further development and glocal implementation. Therefore, the future action research cycle aspires to include voices from South African community-engaged CESL scholars to benchmark the ISLP approach at higher education institutions.

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