



# **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

## **PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE**

**HOSTED BY**

THE HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COMMITTEE  
OF THE COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**AND**

THE COMMUNITY – HIGHER EDUCATION – SERVICE  
PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE OF JET EDUCATION SERVICES

HELD IN CAPE TOWN FROM 3 TO 5 SEPTEMBER 2006

\* PLEASE MAKE USE OF THE HYPERLINKS (UNDERLINED) TO NAVIGATE THESE PROCEEDINGS.

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## PUBLICATION DETAILS

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**The Council on Higher Education (CHE) Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) and  
JET Education Services (JET) Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships  
(CHESP)**

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The JET-CHESP staff for their dedication and commitment to making the conference a reality.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CE	Community Engagement
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHESP	Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships
CRD	Centre for Rural Development
COPC	Community Outreach Partnership Center [USA]
DC	District of Columbia
DoE	Department of Education
DVC	Deputy Vice Chancellor
DVT	Deep Vein Thrombosis
FSRDPP	Free State Rural Development Partnership Programme
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HELTASA	Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HESA	Higher Education South Africa
HGMP	Human Genome Mapping Project
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
ISSNET	International Science Shop Network
IT	Information Technology
IUPUI	Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
JET	JET Education Services (formerly Joint Education Trust)
NAFCOC	National African Federation of Commerce and Industry
NDA	National Development Agency
MA	Massachusetts
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MRC	Medical Research Council [United Kingdom]
MUCPP	Mangaung University–Community Partnership Programme
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSS	National Service Scheme [India]
PILOTs	Payments In Lieu Of Taxes [USA]
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council [Ghana]
PRAG	Policy Research Action Group [USA]
QA	Quality Assurance
R	Research
R&D	Research and Development
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SA	South Africa
SAARDHE	South African Association for Research and Development in Higher Education
SANGOCO	South African National NGO Coalition
SAUS	South African Union of Students

SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SHAWCO	Students' Health And Welfare Centres Organisation
SHG	Self-help Group
SK	Scientific Knowledge
SRC	Student Representative Council
SRHE	Society for Research into Higher Education
TTFPP	Third Trimester Field Practical Programme [Ghana]
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDS	University for Development Studies [Ghana]
UFS	University of the Free State
UGC	University Grants Commission [India]
UK	United Kingdom
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
US	United States
USA	United States of America
UWC	University of the Western Cape
VC	Vice Chancellor

## INTRODUCTION

The White Paper on the transformation of higher education (Department of Education, 1997) sets out broad national goals, and refers to community engagement as an integral and core part of higher education in South Africa. The White Paper makes specific reference to the role community engagement can play in transforming the higher education system, and HEIs are called on to "demonstrate social responsibility [...] and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes" (1997: 10). The White Paper further states that one of the goals of higher education is to "promote and develop social responsibility and awareness amongst students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes" (1997: 10).

One of the priorities in the National Plan for Higher Education (Ministry of Education, 2001) is the enhancing of "responsiveness to regional and national needs, for academic programmes, research, and community service" (White Paper, Department of Education, 1997: 19).

The Founding Document (2001) of the HEQC of the CHE identified "knowledge based community service" as one of the three areas – along with teaching and learning, and research – for the programme accreditation and quality assurance of higher education. Subsequently, the HEQC incorporated community engagement and its service-learning component into its national quality assurance systems. In June 2004 the HEQC released its *Criteria for Institutional Audits*, including criteria on service-learning (Criterion 7) and community engagement (Criterion 18). In November 2004 the HEQC released its *Criteria for Programme Accreditation*, including minimum requirements for service-learning (Criterion 1).

Since the release of the White Paper, JET Education Services (formerly Joint Education Trust) has been actively involved in research and development initiatives to advance community engagement in South African higher education. During 1997 and 1998 JET conducted a survey of community service in South African higher education resulting in the release of two publications. In 1999 JET launched the Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships (CHESP) initiative. The aims of this initiative are: (i) to support the development of pilot programmes that explore the potential of community engagement as an integral part of the core academic functions of HEIs; (ii) to monitor and evaluate these programmes; and (iii) to use the data generated through this process to inform higher education policy and practice at a national, institutional and programmatic level. To date numerous South African HEIs have conducted their own internal audits of community engagement activities. Some HEIs have developed institution-wide policies and strategies for community engagement, allocated resources for the implementation of these strategies and developed academic programmes that include community engagement, particularly in the form of service-learning.

Given the inclusion of community engagement as a core function in South African higher education and the proliferation of academic programmes that include community engagement/ service-learning, it was considered both timely and appropriate to host a major conference on the subject. The conference was attended by more than 200 delegates including nominated representatives from all public and numerous private HEIs, local Councillors, local government officials, non-governmental organisations and business leaders. Speakers included the Minister of Education, the Premier of the Western Cape, the Mayor of Cape Town, and vice chancellors and community engagement scholars from Ghana, India, Mexico, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and South Africa.

## **CONFERENCE GOALS**

The overarching goal of the conference was to promote an enabling environment for the conceptualisation and implementation of community engagement in South African higher education. Specific goals were:

- To promote dialogue among senior academics and local authority/ community/ business leaders regarding regional development through teaching, learning and research;
- To explore the implications of community engagement for HEI Governance and Management;
- To explore the potential of Partnerships as a vehicle for community engagement;
- To explore the potential of community engagement in Teaching and Learning;
- To explore the potential of community engagement through Research;
- To identify the enabling mechanisms for and key challenges to community engagement in higher education;
- To identify critical issues for managing the quality of community engagement; and
- To develop strategies and recommendations for the implementation of community engagement.

## **CONFERENCE THEMES**

Within the broad conference theme of Community Engagement in Higher Education the conference focused on the implications of community engagement for each of the following four vertical themes:

- Community engagement through HEI Governance and Management;
- Community engagement through Partnerships;
- Community engagement through Teaching and Learning; and
- Community engagement through Research.

In addition, the following four horizontal themes, which cut across the above vertical themes, were woven into each vertical theme:

- The idea of community engagement;
- A conceptual framework for community engagement;
- Key challenges to, the enabling mechanisms for and the quality management of community engagement; and
- Key strategies and recommendations for implementing community engagement.

## **CONFERENCE FORMAT**

The conference included a mix of Plenary and Concurrent Workshop Sessions.

### **Plenary Sessions**

Each Plenary Session addressed one of the four horizontal themes and served as a broad introduction to this theme. Plenary Sessions also provided an opportunity for Concurrent Workshop Chair Persons to report on issues emerging from their particular Workshop Sessions and recommendations emerging from their workshop.

### **Concurrent Workshops**

A Concurrent Workshop was dedicated to each of the four vertical themes. Each Concurrent Workshop consisted of three separate Workshop Sessions interspersed between Plenary Sessions. Each Concurrent Workshop explored the key issues pertaining to its particular vertical theme and all four horizontal themes. Each Concurrent Workshop Session was designed around a set of key questions addressed by participants. The final Session of each Concurrent Workshop was intended to generate recommendations for the implementation of a particular vertical theme. A Chair Person, Group Facilitators, Resource Persons, Scribe and Speaker/s were identified for each Concurrent Workshop. In order to facilitate continuity of discussions delegates were requested to remain in the Concurrent Workshop for which they registered for the duration of the conference.

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## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

**Sunday 3 September 2006**

### SESSION 1: OPENING PLENARY

<i>Theme</i>	The Idea of Community Engagement in Higher Education	
<i>Key Question</i>	Why Community Engagement in Higher Education?	
<i>Welcome</i>	<b><u>Helen Zille</u></b> Executive Mayor of Cape Town, SA	<b>14</b>
<i>Opening Remarks</i>	<b><u>Mala Singh</u></b> Interim Chief Executive Officer Council on Higher Education (CHE), SA	<b>17</b>
<i>Speaker</i>	<b><u>Michael Gibbons</u></b> Honorary Professor, Science and Technology Policy Research University of Sussex, UK	<b>19</b>
<i>Respondent</i>	<b><u>George Subotsky</u></b> Executive Director, Planning and Analysis University of South Africa, SA	<b>30</b>
<i><u>Plenary Discussion</u></i>		<b>35</b>

**Monday 4 September 2006**

### SESSION 2: PLENARY

<i>Theme</i>	The Engaged University: A Conceptual Framework	
<i>Key Questions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What conceptual framework could be used for community engagement in higher education?</li><li>• What is an engaged university?</li><li>• What are the implications of community engagement for HEI Governance and Management; Partnerships; Teaching and Learning; and Research?</li></ul>	
<i>Speaker</i>	<b><u>Frederick Fourie</u></b> Vice Chancellor University of the Free State, SA	<b>36</b>
<i>Respondents</i>	<b><u>Mario Fernández de la Garza</u></b> Director of Outreach, University of Veracruz and General Coordinator, Vasconcelos Project Ministry of Education, Veracruz, Mexico	<b>51</b>
	<b><u>Rupa Shah</u></b> Former Vice Chancellor SNDT Women's University, India	<b>52</b>
<i><u>Plenary Discussion</u></i>		<b>53</b>

**SESSION 3: CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS** (See Concurrent Workshops section below)

- HEI Governance and Management
- Partnerships
- Teaching and Learning
- Research

**SESSION 4: PLENARY**

<i>Theme</i>	The Engaged University: Key Challenges, Enabling Mechanisms and Quality Management	
<i>Key Questions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the key challenges to community engagement?</li> <li>• What are the enabling mechanisms for community engagement?</li> <li>• How can the quality of community engagement be managed?</li> </ul>	
<i>Speaker</i>	<b><u>Rupa Shah</u></b> Former Vice Chancellor SNDT Women's University, India	<b>55</b>
<i>Respondents</i>	<b><u>Mario Fernández de la Garza</u></b> Director of Outreach, University of Veracruz and General Coordinator, Vasconcelos Project Ministry of Education, Veracruz, Mexico	<b>66</b>
	<b><u>John Kaburise</u></b> Vice Chancellor University for Development Studies, Ghana	<b>67</b>

**SESSION 5: CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS** (See Concurrent Workshops section below)

- HEI Governance and Management
- Partnerships
- Teaching and Learning
- Research

**SESSION 6: CONFERENCE DINNER**

<i>Theme</i>	The Importance of Community Engagement in Higher Education	
<i>Introductory Remarks</i>	<b><u>Ebrahim Rasool</u></b> Premier of the Western Cape	<b>68</b>
<i>Speaker</i>	<b><u>Naledi Pandor, MP</u></b> Minister of Education, SA	<b>71</b>

**Tuesday 5 September 2006**

**SESSION 7: PLENARY**

<i>Theme</i>	The Engaged University: Key Strategies for Community Engagement in Higher Education	
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<i>Key Question</i>	What are the key strategies for implementing community engagement?	
<i>Speakers</i>	<b><u>Mario Fernández de la Garza</u></b> Director of Outreach, University of Veracruz and General Coordinator, Vasconcelos Project Ministry of Education, Veracruz, Mexico	<b>75</b>
	<b><u>John Kaburise</u></b> Vice Chancellor University for Development Studies, Ghana	<b>81</b>
	<b><u>Susan Stroud</u></b> Executive Director Innovations in Civic Participation, USA	<b>89</b>
<i>Respondent</i>	<b><u>Frederick Fourie</u></b> Vice Chancellor University of the Free State, SA	<b>92</b>

**SESSION 8: CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS** (See Concurrent Workshops section below)

- HEI Governance and Management
- Partnerships
- Teaching and Learning
- Research

**SESSION 9: PLENARY**

<i>Theme</i>	Recommendations for Community Engagement in South African Higher Education – Reports from Concurrent Workshops	
<i>Key Question</i>	What recommendations are proposed to advance community engagement in South African higher education?	
<i>Reports from Concurrent Workshop</i>	<b><u>Saleem Badat</u></b> Vice Chancellor Rhodes University, SA	<b>104</b>
<i>Chair Persons</i>	<b><u>Thandwa Mthembu</u></b> Deputy Vice Chancellor, Partnerships and Advancement University of the Witwatersrand, SA	<b>128</b>
	<b><u>Magda Fourie</u></b> Deputy Rector, Academic Planning University of the Free State, SA	<b>153</b>
	<b><u>Ahmed Bawa</u></b> Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research, Knowledge Production and Partnership University of KwaZulu-Natal, SA	<b>180</b>
<i>Respondent</i>	<b><u>Nasima Badsha</u></b> Advisor to the Minister Ministry of Education, SA	<b>94</b>

<u>Plenary Discussion</u>		97
Conference Summary and Close	<b><u>Mala Singh</u></b> Interim Chief Executive Officer Council on Higher Education (CHE), SA	99

## CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS

Conference Sessions 3, 5 and 8 consisted of four Concurrent Workshop Sessions. Each Workshop addressed one of the four conference themes identified below.

<b><u>Community Engagement through HEI Governance and Management</u></b>		<b>103</b>
<i>Speakers and Resource Persons</i>	<b>Mario Fernández de la Garza</b> Director of Outreach, University of Veracruz and General Coordinator, Vasconcelos Project Ministry of Education, Veracruz, Mexico	
	<b>Frederick Fourie</b> Vice Chancellor University of the Free State, SA	
	<b>John Kaburise</b> Vice Chancellor University for Development Studies, Ghana	
	<b>Rupa Shah</b> Former Vice Chancellor SNDT Women's University, India	
	<b><u>Workshop Report</u></b>	<b>104</b>
<b><u>Community Engagement through Partnerships</u></b>		<b>112</b>
<i>Speaker</i>	<b><u>Armand W. Carriere</u></b> Executive Director Worcester UniverCity Partnership, USA	<b>113</b>
	<b><u>Workshop Report</u></b>	<b>128</b>
<b><u>Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning</u></b>		<b>138</b>
<i>Speaker</i>	<b><u>Luzelle Naudé</u></b> Senior Lecturer, Department of Psychology University of the Free State, SA	<b>139</b>
	<b><u>Workshop Report</u></b>	<b>153</b>
<b><u>Community Engagement through Research</u></b>		<b>168</b>
<i>Speaker</i>	<b><u>Philip Nyden</u></b> Professor of Sociology and Director, Center for Urban Research and Learning Loyola University Chicago, USA	<b>169</b>
	<b><u>Workshop Report</u></b>	<b>180</b>

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## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & CONCURRENT WORKSHOP REPORTS

(Listed alphabetically by surname of speaker/s.)

### Conference Presentations

Victor A. Arredondo & Mario Fernández de la Garza	<u><i>Higher Education, Community Service and Local Development</i></u>
Nasima Badsha	<u><i>Response to Concurrent Workshop Reports</i></u>
Armand W. Carriere	<u><i>Community Engagement through Partnerships</i></u>
Mario Fernández de la Garza	<u><i>Response to Frederick Fourie</i></u>
	<u><i>Response to Rupa Shah</i></u>
Frederick Fourie	<u><i>Towards a South African Scholarship of Engagement: Core and Supplemental Tasks of a University?</i></u>
	<u><i>Response to Victor A. Arredondo and Mario Fernández de la Garza, and to John Kaburise</i></u>
Michael Gibbons	<u><i>Engagement as a Core Value in a Mode 2 Society</i></u>
John Kaburise	<u><i>Community Engagement at the University for Development Studies</i></u>
	<u><i>Response to Rupa Shah</i></u>
Luzelle Naudé	<u><i>Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning: Introductory Notes</i></u>
Philip Nyden	<u><i>Moving beyond the Last Century's Academic Traditions: Promoting Community Engaged Research</i></u>
Naledi Pandor, MP	<u><i>Keynote Address</i></u>
Ebrahim Rasool	<u><i>Introductory Remarks</i></u>
Rupa Shah	<u><i>The Engaged University: Key Challenges, Enabling Mechanisms and Quality Management</i></u>
	<u><i>Response to Frederick Fourie</i></u>
Mala Singh	<u><i>Opening Remarks</i></u>
	<u><i>Conference Summary and Close</i></u>
Susan Stroud	<u><i>The Talloires Declaration and Talloires Network</i></u>
George Subotsky	<u><i>Response to Michael Gibbons</i></u>
Helen Zille	<u><i>Welcome</i></u>

### Concurrent Workshop Reports

Saleem Badat & Kalawathie (Bella) Sattar	<u><i>Community Engagement through HEI Governance and Management: Workshop Report</i></u>
Ahmed Bawa & Judith Favish	<u><i>Community Engagement through Research: Workshop Report</i></u>
Magda Fourie & Gerda Bender	<u><i>Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning: Workshop Report</i></u>
Thandwa Mthembu & Priscilla Daniels	<u><i>Community Engagement through Partnerships: Workshop Report</i></u>

## Welcome

**Helen Zille**

Executive Mayor of Cape Town, SA

Dr Singh, Dr Taylor, distinguished academics, administrators, colleagues: again, all protocols observed. It is a very great honour for me to be here to welcome you to Cape Town; and to thank you for choosing Cape Town for this very important conference, on Community Engagement in Higher Education, and for asking me to say a few words. Please consider yourselves really warmly welcomed.

I would like to say a few words, with a specific angle on community engagement, and that is the *city's* engagement with higher education – because, of course, that is my very specific area of interest at the moment. I have been doing a lot of reading on this theme, because in Cape Town, specifically, we have three universities and one university of technology and so we are particularly richly endowed with higher education institutions; it would seem a very serious waste for us not to make use of that enormous resource. I am amazed to see how much literature there is, precisely on the subject of the engagement between town and gown and the mutual benefits of that engagement.

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* – which many of you may know, as it is a publication brought out in Washington DC, but covers higher education issues around the globe (and I had, once, the privilege of being their South African correspondent) – recently had a very interesting and comprehensive article, on the university as “economic saviour”. “Higher education,” they said, “replaces industry, in some cities”. Now, of course, that really got my attention because, as you know, our number one problem is poverty and the need to create sustainable jobs; and so I read this with great interest. They started out with a story on George Eastman, the founder of a company that was first known as Eastman Kodak, and then became known as Kodak; he was the inventor of rolled film and the founder of that company, in what was rather a *dorp* in America at the time, called Rochester. And Rochester, in fact, became the home of Kodak, which in turn became the entire backbone of Rochester's economy.

In fact, Mr Eastman was passionate about education. And one of the things he is quoted as saying, a quotation that is often repeated – and it really makes a big impression on me, because I believe it so strongly – is: “The progress of the world depends almost entirely on education”. I completely agree with that: “The progress of the world depends almost entirely on education”. No small irony; the fact that he himself was a high school dropout, but, nevertheless, he had the insight to see that. And certainly, when he left his millions, he left them mostly to the University of Rochester, in the town that had made him so wealthy. Today, in fact, because of his foresight and because of his understanding, that university has taken over where Kodak left off, because Kodak, obviously with the invention of digital cameras, is now in decline and no longer a competitor. (It would be like the horse and carriage trying to compete with the automobile.) So now the university, with the endowment that George Eastman left it, has become the major employer and the major generator of new industries in Rochester.

Another thing that really grabbed my attention was *Newsweek* magazine recently, on what they called “second cities”; the new up-and-coming cities of the world. I was very pleased to read that Cape Town, specifically, got an honourable mention in this context. It was termed “one of the rising urban stars”, and not because of its mayor, I promise you! It was termed “one of the rising urban stars”, placed alongside others like Dubai and a place called Talin (which I'd never heard of) and Las Vegas; and the article says that these places have not only improved their internet backbones, but often have tech parks and universities that turn out a kind of talent that populates ‘growth’

industries. And it is primarily because of our universities and tertiary education sector that we are named one of the rising urban stars in that article.

All of the literature talks about the role of university as employer, university as skills-producer, and then, critically, a new role – not new to you, but certainly new to me in understanding the way we should drive the city – the university as an engine of research and development for growth, and especially growth industries. And I just want to read you some of the fascinating things that came out of this research that was reported in this *Chronicle of Higher Education*. They conclude by saying: “Now, more than ever, higher education is seen as the key to helping manufacturing-based cities catch up and compete in a highly-skilled global economy”. And then they quote somebody called James J. Duderstadt, who is President Emeritus of the University of Michigan, at Ann Arbor (and I know that UCT always works very closely with the University of Michigan – a very sensible choice as well), who argues that the knowledge infrastructure provided by higher education institutions and, in particular, “research” universities, is as important, if not more so, than the “sweetheart” tax breaks and the real estate deals conventionally used to attract and retain corporate headquarters and new factories. Now how do you like that? That is an absolutely key insight, and any person trying to run a city, who ignores information like that, would be stupid indeed! Now, of course, they have the other side. They say: “The role of the university, as the automobile factory of the modern economy...” Listen to that! “The role of the university, as the automobile factory of the modern economy, is not embraced by all, on campuses or in City Hall.” And they go on to argue that that is a very stupid position to take, if you don’t embrace that view. But then, of course, they say: “Universities are a necessary, but not a sufficient condition”. And that is what we also have to understand.

But we really have to get to the first point, of understanding the critical role that good partnership between the city and its tertiary institutions can play in becoming the new engines for economic growth; and we really have not begun to scratch the surface. And in your talking about ‘community engagement’, really interrogate this word ‘community’. It is one of the most abused words in South Africa: primarily because two or three people get up in any context, without a mandate, self-appointed, call themselves ‘the community’, and act as a gatekeeper on any interaction with a particular group of people, in any particular area. So be careful of this concept of ‘community’ – it is *the* most abused gate-keeping word in South Africa – and don’t use it to define political correctness, or a political point of view that happens to accord with some line in government. Often it is the dead opposite.

The *Chronicle* carries on and does fantastic case studies in Akron, Ohio; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; Kalamazoo, Michigan; Richmond, Virginia. And they go on and on, showing just how critical the role of the universities has been, in the economic regeneration of those cities. I thought Akron, Ohio was a really fascinating example – they, of course, were right at the forefront of tyre manufacturing, with Goodyear and so on. As competitors, internationally, started overtaking the American tyre industry, they had to find new things. What did Akron do? They used the university, which was at the cutting edge of chemistry and polymer research in chemistry – and have now taken the lead, internationally, based on the excellence of their university. They have become the national centre for polymer research and innovation, supporting small and mid-sized polymer companies. And, of course, polymers are now critically important, because – let me see what the definition of a polymer is again, so I don’t get it wrong, considering all the distinguished professors around here – polymers are long strands of interconnected molecules, which are used in rubber and such varied other products as plastic wrap and flat-screen televisions. You can see why it is critical to have that kind of cutting-edge polymer research in chemistry that can give you all kinds of new industries, when your tyre industry has been overtaken by other countries in the world. This is the most fascinating concept: of the university as the engine for economic growth.

Now, obviously, I believe in research for research’s sake – so-called ‘blue skies’ research. And I believe in it because we have to push back what we call the ‘boundaries’ of knowledge all the time. But often, when we push them back, we find uses for that knowledge that we never anticipated in

the first place. And that is why it is so important to take our universities seriously, to fund them adequately, and to encourage them to engage in the kind of thing that *relevant* universities do all over the world. It is very strange to me that the more upper-class and English (in Britain) universities tend to be, the more they run away from this concept of relevance. Well, I love the concept of relevance. I love research being useful and relevant, and adding value in society. And I hope we South Africans will go the way of engagement, not the way of disengagement, which is often a sign of status, I think, in the best British universities; but which is something that I do not agree with one bit.

The big challenge for us really is to engage the debate with our tertiary institutions. We have not even begun the debate yet, but I am delighted that the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC) in this part of the world is really engaging the city in the way that it is. I am also delighted that UCT, Stellenbosch and UWC have engaged us, with a view to having serious meetings to look at:

- “What are the up and coming economic growth sectors?”;
- “How can we make sure that research at universities is on the cutting edge of those growth centres?”; and
- “How can we build partnerships to drive economic growth, and Cape Town’s cutting-edge role in those areas, throughout the world?”

Now obviously I have spoken about Cape Town, both because that’s where I am the mayor, and because this conference is in Cape Town; but of course these general rules apply to everywhere in South Africa. We have to really engage our tertiary education sector; we have to make sure that it remains world-class, or becomes world-class where it isn’t. Because this is not only in the interests of some elite, upper class, but critically in the interests of growth and development for everybody. So: everything of the best for your conference, and thank you very much.

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## Opening Remarks

**Mala Singh**

Interim Chief Executive Officer, Council on Higher Education (CHE), SA

Let me briefly locate the subject of community engagement within a larger societal framework and, more specifically, within the framework of quality assurance for South African higher education developed by the HEQC. I would like to start by referring to four possible framing conceptions. As a first set of ideas, Gibbons<sup>1</sup> locates the concept and practice of community engagement within the prevailing social contract between universities and society. A second set of ideas: in this country, government sometimes represents its restructuring agenda and its various initiatives and interventions in many areas of social provision, including education, as part of the strategies of a developmental state. More specifically, in higher education in South Africa, and certainly in the early days of the restructuring, the aspiration of many of us was not just for change in higher education, but for transformation – a form of change that was not just tinkering at the edges but was emancipatory for the individual beneficiaries of higher education, for South African society as a whole, and for new forms and modalities of knowledge, and the innovative applications that would follow. My last set of concepts from higher education reform initiatives in both developed and developing countries, relate to strong notions of accountability and responsiveness required of higher education institutions, and the use of funding, quality assurance and planning levers to get universities to deliver what governments and societies require of them.

These four sets of ideas – the social contract between universities and society; the strategies and requirements of a developmental state; the demands of transformatory change in higher education; and university accountability and responsiveness – are powerful analytical and organising notions that we could invoke to illuminate the idea of community engagement in South African higher education. This is so especially in relation to some of the crosscutting themes outlined for this conference, e.g. the idea of community engagement, and a conceptual framework for community engagement. I believe that we will not be able to reflect rigorously enough on these themes without going back to these four sets of ideas that I have outlined at the beginning.

The idea of community engagement and the various contents that we choose for it will impact on the four vertical themes identified for this conference: What are the implications of community engagement for governance, management and financing in higher education? What are the implications for partnership between higher education and communities, variously defined? And if community engagement is postulated as a key component of institutional identity, how can it become a design principle for reshaping the other two core functions: of teaching and of research?

While my first set of observations was to outline a larger societal frame of reference for our deliberations, my second set of observations has to do with the position of the CHE and the HEQC in this discussion on community engagement. As you may have noticed from some of the documentation for this conference, but also from the general CHE/ HEQC documentation on quality assurance, the HEQC very early on in its Founding Document (2001), signalled its intention to include the three core functions of higher education – including community engagement – in its quality assurance framework, both for institutional audits and for programme accreditation. This focus, as many of you know, has now been translated into criteria as well as examples of what could count as indicators of achievement in relation to community engagement. The reasons for the HEQC focus on community engagement in higher education had to do with issues of academic reconstruction, and wanting to bring the three core functions much more explicitly into the

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<sup>1</sup> For the full conference paper, see these Proceedings, SESSION 1: OPENING PLENARY, Speaker: Michael Gibbons – *Engagement as a Core Value in a Mode 2 Society*.

restructuring framework. This framework had focused to a very large extent on issues of socio-political reconstruction: issues of governance, financing, institutional landscape etc. In addition to wanting to prioritise the three core functions in higher education, there was already in the HEQC a clear awareness that the issue of community engagement was a potentially powerful way of giving content to the transformation agenda in higher education, through new partnerships and relationships between higher education and its multiple communities. Our observation – from this early phase of implementation of our new quality assurance frameworks and systems – has been that many higher education institutions in the country are moving quite rapidly to integrate community engagement into their planning, resourcing and quality assurance frameworks, and that they are seeking to identify what counts as community engagement at their institutions – a range of activities spanning a spectrum ranging from the philanthropic efforts of committed individuals, to individual programmes of service-learning, to community research support, and to much more systematic institutionalised forms of community engagement.

The work of CHESP, in strengthening and supporting service-learning at the institutions, has been immensely valuable in this enhanced university focus on community engagement. From our side, the partnership between the CHE and HEQC and JET and CHESP will continue in the area of community engagement, in what has been, from our point of view, an excellent and model partnership that has yielded many benefits for us, JET and CHESP, and the institutions concerned.

This conference, from the point of view of the HEQC and CHESP, is also a signal that there is now a greater leadership and strategic role for those who work in community engagement within higher education institutions. New directions and modalities for the work on community engagement now have to be charted and taken forward by those who work within the institutions – keeping in mind all the time the severe capacity constraints that we all face as we deepen and widen the transformation agenda in higher education. Both the HEQC and CHESP have great expectations of this conference – great expectations within the requirements of rigorous debate, on the one hand, and a feasible set of follow-up activities, on the other.

Let me now, ladies and gentlemen, introduce our speaker for this evening. It gives me great pleasure to welcome Prof. Gibbons to the podium to make his presentation. He has spent many years in the world of science policy research. We know him, most recently, as Secretary-General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities. But I suppose we know him most famously – or perhaps infamously – as the author of *New Modes of Knowledge Production*, which had a tremendous influence on policy debates in higher education in South Africa, and which was sometimes, unfortunately, taken up in a rather uncritical and un-nuanced fashion. It may be that, in addition to illuminating our debates about the idea and role of community engagement, Prof. Gibbons will also trigger off a new round of, hopefully much more sophisticated, debates about Mode 2 approaches in higher education.

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## Engagement as a Core Value in a Mode 2 Society

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### ABSTRACT

This paper begins with an analysis of the emergence and breakdown of the prevailing social contract between society and science. It moves on to highlight the principal features of a new contract, the dimensions of which include the strengthening of the reverse communication between society and science, the contextualisation of research, and the role played in these by boundary objects, trading zones and contact languages. The paper concludes that the new context presents significant challenges to the traditional notion of the university's engagement with society and provocatively suggests that the optimum way for universities to maintain their autonomy is through a broad platform of engagement with their communities.

### KEYWORDS

*agora*  
boundary objects  
contextualisation  
engagement  
Mode 2  
social contract  
transaction spaces and trading zones

### INTRODUCTION

The determination of the nature and extent of the engagement between society and universities depends upon the terms of the prevailing social contract between them. To the extent that a society has some requirement for scientific knowledge, there will exist a social contract between that society and the institutions that produce it. It is from the lineaments of that contract that the normative meaning of engagement can be derived and from which one might be able to gauge whether, and how deeply in a particular instance, it touches institutional practice. In this paper, it is presumed that, if engagement is a core value for particular universities, this will be manifest as differences in practice compared with those institutions where this is not the case.

In what follows, it is proposed to examine the mode of engagement between society and the university through the lens of research. Accordingly, a key premise of the paper is that an understanding of engagement depends crucially on the nature of the social contract that is believed to exist between society and the university in this sphere. From that basis and within that context, it is possible to determine what it means for an institution to have embraced engagement as a core value. But, equally, if that contract, that basis of understanding, between society and the university should change, then the meaning of engagement changes and, *a fortiori*, entails a different notion of engagement as a core value.

More concretely, under the prevailing contract, engagement has been discussed primarily in terms of linkages between relatively discrete institutions, principally government, industry and the universities. These institutions now form a more permeable system and, accordingly, engagement is now more profitably discussed in terms of processes of the extent of communicative interaction, rather than of formal linkages, between them. The expansion of communicative interaction derives from the need in both government and industry to address complex problems, the provenance of

which is often far removed from the world occupied by academics. As will become clear, the shift of emphasis from linkages to patterns of communicative interaction alters substantially what it means for universities to embrace engagement as a core value. In particular, the current language of linkages that characterise contemporary techno-science no longer captures the imperatives of the new context.

The argument presented here unfolds in three parts. First, the prevailing social contract between science and society will be adumbrated in order to provide an initial point of contrast for discussing a new contract. Second, the main elements of a new contract will be set out on the premise that the research practices governing the production of knowledge now need to take account of a number of new elements that reflect rather deeper changes that are associated with the more open, complex society in which universities currently participate. Third, it will be argued that, as a consequence of these changes, knowledge is now produced within the myriad of transaction spaces that populate a new type of public space, denoted in this paper as the *agora*. Expressed in terms that will be developed more fully below, research is increasingly being contextualised. This, in turn, reflects a social demand for knowledge that is more socially robust than that produced within the context of specific laboratory conditions. The implications of this for engagement as a core value will be explored in the final part of the paper.

## **THE PREVAILING SOCIAL CONTRACT WITH UNIVERSITIES**

Science, along with other institutions of industrial society, has the particular shape it has and is able to function as it does because of an underlying agreement between its practitioners and the rest of society. There are many different social contracts in any particular society. For example, there are social contracts between society and government, between society and industry and, of course, between society and science. The contract also sets up relations of trust that the agreement will be adhered to on both sides. More specifically, the social contract between society and science, particularly university science, has been structured primarily in terms of a certain form of knowledge production (basic science), education and training. Thus, in return for public funding, the science of the universities would provide new knowledge; that is, provide a flow of discoveries, techniques and methods for society generally. In addition, the universities would train succeeding generations of scientists, most of whom would go out into the world of work, mainly in industry. By contrast, industrial R&D was to provide for the application of science and carry the knowledge of basic discoveries into product and process innovations, on which economic growth was perceived to depend. Government science was meant to fill the gap between the public good of the university science and the private good of industry; that is, to carry out research in relation to principal functions of government, defence, public sector utilities, public health, safety standards, and so on. Thus, the specific social contract between society and science was supported by three major social institutions – government research establishments, industrial laboratories and the universities – between which there were relations of complementarity. In some countries, science was further supported by a research council system intended to supply the financial resources to universities for specific scientific projects. These institutions had distinct functions and were, to an extent, separate; each possessing its own resource bases, set of research practices and characteristic modes of behaviour.

It is this system of relatively separate institutions – each associated with a specific type of knowledge production process – that underpins much current thinking about the university's engagement with society. Under the terms of this contract, universities are expected to engage with society through its principal institutions, but rather at arm's length. In research, for example, the current contract, which enshrines an element of institutional autonomy for universities, implies that research agendas will be set by university scientists, even though the expectation is that the outputs of research need to be communicated to the wider society, whether industry, the health sector or the social services. Under this social contract, engagement with society is primarily about

communicating the *results* of research to organisations *beyond* the university, although precisely how this is to happen has been, until recently, left unspecified.

In this mode of engagement, the information to be tendered travels primarily in one direction, from university science to society. In this, science has been spectacularly successful and few are in doubt that the outputs of scientific discoveries from universities have contributed greatly to the maintenance of international competitiveness and the enhancement of the quality of life. But, because the pertinent social institutions have tended to be relatively impermeable, engagement has been seen, and to a degree fostered, primarily in terms of linkages. Strengthening engagement has, therefore, been a matter of increasing the numbers of particular linkages; with industry, for example, through establishing technology transfer centres to bridge universities and industry. In these cases, the belief is, rightly, that science has much to communicate to industry; but the creation of technology transfer centres acknowledges that the exchange is far from automatic and that, from the point of view of a potential user, knowledge being communicated might need not a little 'development' before it can be used effectively in another context.

From this viewpoint, the extent of engagement could be measured in terms of the numbers of linkages that a university has with research programmes supported by government or industry. For any particular university, these may be extensive, but if engagement is to be a core value more is required. At the very least, one would expect research linkages to have altered somewhat institutional practices, not least in terms of what research is carried out. To the extent, however, that communication has been primarily one way – from universities to society – there has been little reverse impact on universities, their organisation or ethos. Rather, universities have struggled to preserve what they perceive as their autonomy in research matters against the transgressivity of other groups and interests, where autonomy means the absolute right to be able to pursue unfettered scientific inquiry.

Alas, it is precisely this transgressivity that characterises the types of social changes taking place in what we shall call a Mode 2 society and that is altering the fundamental terms of the prevailing social contract.

## **THE EMERGENCE OF A MODE 2 SOCIETY**

During the twilight of the Cold War, if not before, the relative institutional separation between societies' major institutions had begun to break down. First, this was evident in government research with the privatisation of the system of government research establishments. Second, as governments gradually moved their priorities to the maintenance of international competitiveness and the enhancement of the quality of life, many long-established industries were de-nationalised and, in many countries, firms that had been dependent upon government for R&D support were forced to find these resources internally. Third, in universities, too, the massification of higher education moved universities into a market place for students but this was accompanied by the introduction of a culture of accountability and a mounting social demand for 'value for money', which soon reached into the heart of the research process. And finally, the research councils, themselves – created initially to support basic research in the universities – were transformed into instruments for attaining economic and social priorities through an increase in programme and project funding. These trends are observable in virtually every country in the world, although the timing and rates of change have varied with historical circumstances.

The upshot of this decades-long series of changes is by now evident. The once clear lines of demarcation between government, industry and the universities, between science of the universities and the technology of industry, between basic research, applied research and product development, between careers in academe and those in industry, seem no longer to apply. Instead, there is movement across established categories, greater permeability of institutional boundaries, greater blurring of professional identities, greater diversity of career patterns. In sum,

the major institutions of society have been transgressed as each has crossed into one another's terrain. In this, science has been both invading (the outcome of one-way communication with society, described above), but also invaded by countless demands from the side of society. These changes were not primarily the result of the policies of impecunious governments, of greedy industrialist trying to take over the universities, or of a disgruntled citizenry disappointed by the performance of science, though some elements of each can be discerned in their histories. Quite the contrary, it is because institutional leaders, industrial managers, and people generally understand very well the importance of science that they have responded to the growing complexity of the contemporary world by wanting to draw the research capabilities of universities into their interests and concerns. Given these pressures, it is hardly surprising that some scientists now participate in more open and complex systems of knowledge production.

The phenomena that we have described in the case of research reflect, and are reflected in, society more generally. Contemporary society, too, is characterised by a pervasive uncertainty, generated by the same processes of transgression that science is experiencing. Here, too, the formerly clear boundaries between the State, the Market and Culture have become more permeable. And here, too, uncertainty, in its turn, is generating greater willingness to explore alternatives, whether in organisational forms, or inter-institutional co-operation, which in turn affects the jobs people do and those with whom they are prepared to work. The upshot is that societies now comprise more open, exploratory systems. In society and science, this openness and exploratory orientation is both a cause of, and a response to, growing complexity and uncertainty of the problems and issues that need to be addressed. The open, exploratory systems often take the form of networks.

### **Contextualisation**

As we have seen, the prevailing contract between science and society is premised on a degree of separation between them. By and large, science was understood to be the fountainhead of new knowledge and was always prepared to communicate its discoveries to society. Society, for its part, did what it could to absorb these messages and laboured to transform the results of science into new streams of products, processes and defence applications. In this, science was eminently successful and, for as long as science could deliver the goods, the existing social contract could be maintained.

Yet, this very success has had the effect of changing the relationship between society and science. It has had the effect of drawing science into a larger and larger number of problem areas, outside traditional disciplinary structures. This is the root of the growing complexity and the pervasive uncertainty that confronts science as well as the institutions and individuals that want to engage with it. To put the matter somewhat differently, whereas under the prevailing social contract science was able to speak to society, now, in the regime of increasingly permeable institutions, society can, and does, 'speak back' to science. The growing intensity of this reverse communication denotes what is meant by the contextualisation of scientific knowledge. (The term 'contextualisation' describes the process, and 'contextualised knowledge' the outcome of this reverse communication.)

What is less often appreciated is that society, in thus speaking back, is also transforming science. As a process, contextualisation affects scientific activities in many different ways; for example, in its forms of organisation, division of labour and day-to-day practices. Industrial R&D, governmental research and the strategic policies pursued by research councils have each successively opened up to a wide variety of socio-economic demands, have admitted more and more cross-institutional links and have altered the balance of funding of academic research by drawing funds from industry, government agencies, charitable foundations and other sources. Thus, society speaks back not deferentially but by demanding innovation in a variety of ways – whether through the medium of government-formulated national objectives or the emergence of new regulatory regimes, or in the multiplication of user–producer interfaces.

## **Socially Robust Knowledge**

Contextualisation also affects science deep down in its epistemological core. With regard to the deep structures of scientific practice referred to above, historical research has amply shown the relatively rapid shift within science from the search for truth to the more immediate and pragmatic aim of providing a provisional understanding of the working of complex systems, whether they be atomic or molecular structures, the functioning of cities or the performance of whole economies.

Scientific authority is now based less on the results achieved (these are recognised to be provisional) than on the methods that have been used to obtain them. This much, at least, is uncontested by most scientists. But if methods determine 'what works', 'what works' has itself moved on; it has now acquired a further dimension, which includes knowledge that seeks to be effective in specific contexts and therefore could, in a sense, be described as knowledge that is valid 'outside the laboratory'. Through contextualisation, then, social demand enters the agenda setting process, influencing the problem formulation, implementation and evaluation phases of the research process. To capture this shift, it may be useful, if a little provocative, to describe contextualisation as a process that shifts research from the production of merely reliable knowledge (knowledge valid in the experimental context) to the production of socially robust knowledge (knowledge valid, because tested in a range of other contexts).

It is sometimes asked whether robustness in the sense in which it is being used here adds to the validity of knowledge or, simply, to its acceptability, and so its usefulness. In other words, is robustness ultimately a concept in epistemology? These issues can be addressed by regarding the production of socially robust knowledge as the outcome of a process, in just the way that the production of reliable knowledge is.

In the production of reliable knowledge, problem formulation and problem resolution are pursued by the relevant peer group within the carefully controlled context of replicable laboratory conditions. Transparency of the methods used, and of the conditions under which data are produced and interpreted, is the hallmark of empirical science. For the scientists involved, there is often a precise understanding of the limits of particular research findings. Because the scientists understand the context, they appreciate just where the limits of research findings' 'validity' lie. It is perhaps for this reason that the public are often irritated by scientists, who keep returning to the limits of their knowledge, because the public want to know the implications of particular findings and this often involves extrapolating, if only imaginatively, beyond the limits where the results are believed to be valid. Reliability then is closely tied to the experimental context and in science this context is often that of the closed environment of the laboratory. In terms of the language used above, reliable knowledge is reliable, to be sure, but only in this particular context.

In socially robust knowledge the 'environment' is more complex, in the sense that to be socially robust knowledge it must be valid; that is, tested and re-tested in a range of environments. Similar methods and techniques might be employed but the sources of information and the contexts in which they are applied differ.

Consider, for example, the case of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT), a condition that has been linked to the cramped conditions that passengers have to endure when they take long flights. DVT is a well known medical condition. Many of its characteristics, for example, its relation to genetic makeup of individuals, have been investigated in laboratory-based research. Still, the link between the onset of DVT and changes in the nature of aircraft travel apparently went undetected. In the early years of air travel, the question of whether air travel might induce DVT, or indeed other medical reactions, was investigated. But links with the onset of DVT were set aside because on the basis of the tests then carried out – mainly on military personnel, making relatively short flights in aeroplanes travelling at 6 000 feet – no correlations emerged. Alas, passengers now fly at 35 000 feet for 10 to 15 hours at a time, and possess a great variety of medical histories. It now seems

that human physiology can be adversely affected by flights under these conditions. One could say that the initial research produced reliable knowledge; reliable in the context in which the tests were carried out; there are no symptoms of DVT at low altitudes and on short flights, involving healthy young people. But to be socially robust, such tests would need to be replicated not only in a range of different flight environments, but also taking into account the fact that many more people now fly and, therefore, each flight is now more likely to contain a medically much more diverse population. Both these conditions need to be met. To put the matter simply, in this case each new context involves at least two elements; the flight environment and the medical histories of the passengers. The greater the extent to which it is accepted that the design of research protocols depends critically on knowledge 'possessed' by passengers – that is, their medical histories – the closer one will move towards socially robust knowledge. But the knowledge that passengers have can only be effectively accessed and assessed by involving them at the formative stages of the research design. Further, the greater the extent to which society is aware that the relevant individuals have contributed to the design of the testing procedures, the more acceptable will be the results when they finally emerge and, therefore, the more socially robust will be the knowledge produced. In the production of socially robust knowledge, then, epistemology – research design – and the acceptability of results are closely linked. To the wag who once asked, somewhat rhetorically, whether it would be preferable to travel in an aeroplane designed on the basis of reliable knowledge or socially robust knowledge, the answer is obvious; the aeroplane designed on the basis of socially robust knowledge will always be, by far, the safer vehicle!

### **Participation in the *Agora***

A further outcome of the co-evolution of Mode 2 society and Mode 2 science is that the sites of problem formulation and negotiation have moved from their previous institutional domains in government, industry and universities into the *agora*. The *agora* refers collectively to the public space in which 'science and the public meet', and in which the public 'speaks back' to science. It is the domain (in fact, many domains) in which contextualisation occurs. Neither state nor market, neither exclusively private nor exclusively public, the *agora* is the space in which societal and scientific problems are being framed and defined, and where 'solutions' are negotiated. It is the space, par excellence, for the production of socially robust knowledge.

The archaism of the *agora* has been deliberately chosen to embrace the political arena and the market place – and to go beyond both. The *agora* comprises the problem-generating and problem-solving environments in which the contextualisation of knowledge production takes place in a Mode 2 society. The *agora* is populated not only by arrays of competing 'experts' and the organisations and institutions through which knowledge is generated and traded but also variously jostling 'publics'. It is not simply a political or commercial arena, in which research priorities are identified and funded, or an arena in which research findings are disseminated, traded and used. The *agora* is in its own right a domain of primary knowledge production – through which 'people' enter the research process and where 'Mode 2' knowledge is embodied in people, processes and projects. It is the domain where controversies in realising scientific potential are played out.

To summarise, the prevailing contract between society and the universities rests upon the presence of relatively impermeable institutional structures. The new contract is being built in the context of more open institutional structures, where science and society interact more strongly. The prevailing contract is built around large categories, with 'society' linked to 'people' through the 'institutions' of representative government and the rules of bureaucratic accountability. The new contract will allow more diversity, be self-organising, and generate its own audit systems. Decision making, therefore, will be both more disaggregated and more participative. In the prevailing contract, science made discoveries and offered them to society. The new contract will be based upon the joint production of knowledge by society and science. The prevailing contract produces knowledge, reliable in the restricted context of specific laboratory conditions; the new contract must produce socially robust knowledge; knowledge demonstrably reliable in a broader range of contexts.

## TRANSACTION SPACES: THE 'HOW' OF IT ALL

The interaction of contextualisation, and the production of socially robust knowledge in the *agora*, are the outcome of broad changes in society as well as in the production of knowledge. As has been explained, these changes are linked in a process of co-evolution. But it is contextualisation that provides the most direct route to discovering the implications of these broad changes for engagement between society and universities. Accordingly, we turn to examine the 'how' of contextualisation and to work out the practical impact of the intensification of reverse communications between society and the universities. There are three elements that need to be considered: degrees of contextualization; boundary objects; and transaction spaces and trading zones.

### 1. Degrees of Contextualisation

Three different degrees of contextualisation can be distinguished: weak, middle range and strong contextualisation, depending upon the strength of the reverse communication. In weak contextualisation, society speaks back largely through the voices of its institutions that, with the advice of experts, interpret social concerns for the wider society. Paradoxically, most government-funded programmes are of this type. Programme funding typically sets research in the context of some social or economic objective. Yet, the process of contextualisation is weak because social demand – say for more research into road safety – is still communicated through the filters of bureaucracy to which, in due course, the scientific community is expected to 'respond'. The programmes originate at one remove, so to speak, from the concerns of either non-scientists or scientists. Contextualisation in the middle range is the home of transaction spaces, about which more later. Finally, in strong contextualisation, communications not only from experts but also from the wider society enter at an early stage into the identification and formulation of problems and issues. In sum, each level of contextualisation – from weak to strong – describes a mode of knowledge production in which problem formulation is increasingly open to communications from society.

A thought-provoking example of strong contextualisation has been described by Latour (1997), in his analysis of the development of research into muscular dystrophy in France. Here, a group of individuals – scientists, administrators and most importantly *patients* – initiated the discussion. One underlying assumption was that muscular dystrophy could be advanced if more of the knowledge that patients had about their condition was taken into account in formulating research questions. Indeed, this idea was taken forward and can be seen, perhaps most dramatically, in the design of the administration building where there is a definite 'space' for patients and where their inputs could be constantly fed into the research process. This initiative was neither driven by government policy nor funded by government; rather, muscular dystrophy was, initially at least, funded from the public through a series of telethons. Patients, it seems, were unwilling to wait until muscular dystrophy came to the top of somebody else's research agenda. They acted independently and, it must be said, with great effect. Strong contextualisation is evident here in the close interactions between patients, scientists and administrators/ fundraisers. Interestingly, attempts to cure muscular dystrophy in France now include a research programme in medical genetics. But the research being undertaken has been contextualised, in part, by knowledge about the disease that has been drawn systematically from the experience of large numbers of patients. It would be interesting to investigate whether research pursued in this way opened up avenues of exploration or made different discoveries from those that emerged through the conventional operation of France's national research system.

### 2. Boundary Objects

In the process of contextualisation a way must be found to allow experts and others, each of whom may inhabit different social worlds, to interact effectively in transforming an issue or problem into a

set of research activities. In this, two things – boundary objects and transaction spaces – are the essential entities if co-operation is to be promoted and consensus generated.

The notion of a boundary object is simple enough and can be elucidated using a very mundane example. Consider a man and a woman walking in Hyde Park, in London. Socially, it is still very awkward for the man to approach the woman, or *vice versa*, with the aim of striking up a conversation. It is not impossible, but it is awkward and, because the intent of the ‘first move’ is ambiguous, defensive mechanisms can be expected to be brought into play. However, if both parties happen to be walking their dogs, then, of course, a conversation might originate, around the ‘dogs’, while other issues remain in the background, for the time being. In this example, the dogs constitute a boundary object: neutral entities around which information can be exchanged, and this helps to create the conditions of the possibility of a dialogue on other, more serious matters, in due course. Boundary objects help in the constitution of ‘spaces’ where debate can begin and relevant information can be exchanged.

Typically, a boundary object is an analytic concept, which refers to those scientific objects that both inhabit several intersecting social worlds and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them.

Boundary objects are objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. They are weakly structured in common use, and become strongly structured in individual site use. These objects may be abstract or concrete. They have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognisable, a means of translation. (Star and Griesmer, 1989: 393)

### 3. Transaction Spaces and Trading Zones

Not every boundary object will generate an effective transaction space. In the early stages, these ‘spaces’ provide an important framework in which still tentative, and as yet inadequately institutionalised, interactions can take place. However, these interactions are more than random encounters. To the extent that they do develop into genuine transaction spaces they have some of the essential features that Peter Galison (1997) has described for the ‘trading zones’ he came across when analysing the history of nuclear physics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this work, we are made to encounter *within the disciplinary structure* of one sub-field the fascinating exchanges and intense collaborations among three sub-cultures of the nuclear physics community – theoreticians, experimentalists and engineers (who build the machines used in nuclear physics). These traditions remained intact, preserved inside the collaboration, while the coordination of exchange took place around the production of the two competing instrument cultures of ‘image’ and ‘logic’, which ultimately joined.

Taking his lead from anthropological theories, Galison observes how the often asynchronous exchanges between the various sub-cultures of physics can be compared to the incomplete and partial relations that are established when different tribes come together for trading purposes. Nothing in the notion of trade presupposes some universal notion of a neutral currency. Quite the opposite: much of the interest in the category of trade is that things can be coordinated (what goes with what, for what purposes) without reference to some external gauge. Each tribe may bring to this interaction and take away from it completely different objects as well as the meanings attached to them. An object that may have a highly symbolic or even sacred value for one tribe may represent an entirely banal or utilitarian object for another. Nevertheless, interaction and trade are possible and actually take place – to the obvious benefit of all because, if this were not so, dialogue would have ceased. Trading may also give rise to the emergence of contact languages, like ‘pidgin’, as a means of communication, which is inevitably incomplete and truncated. Galison’s insight was that physicists and engineers were not engaging in translating knowledge from one sub-culture to another as they pieced together their microwave circuits, nor were they producing ‘neutral’ observation sentences. *They were working out a powerful, locally understood language to*

*coordinate their actions*. Despite obvious limitations, some kind of understanding and exchange does occur in such situations.

For Galison, then, the crucial question was not “how different scientific communities pass like ships in the night”. It was rather

...how, given the extraordinary diversity of participants in physics – cryogenic engineers, radio chemists, algebraic topologists, prototype tinkerers, computer wizards, quantum field theorists – they speak to one another at all. And the picture...is one of different areas changing over time with complex border zones that sometimes vanish, coalesce, and even burgeon into quasi-autonomous regions in their own right. (Galison, 1997: 63)

The idea of transaction spaces, as developed in this paper, is an extension and generalisation of the concept of a trading zone beyond interaction among scientific sub-cultures to wider exchanges that take place across both disciplinary and institutional boundaries. The idea of ‘transaction’ implies, first, that all partners bring something that can be exchanged or negotiated and, second, that they also have the resources (scientific as well as material) to be able to take something from other participants. Of course, the meanings attributed to exchanged objects may differ greatly for different participants. But the success of these exchanges depends upon each participant bringing something that is considered valuable by someone else – whatever that value might be. Participants usually will return to their ‘home base’ with their gains, thereby re-enforcing, in typical Mode 2 fashion, the links and exchanges that have already occurred by sharing with others.

It has been argued above that Mode 2 knowledge production and Mode 2 society are linked through a process of co-evolution. Co-evolution in this context implies that from the side of science new research practices are emerging, in part as a response (from the side of society) to new questions that society wants to be taken seriously; but also, in part, from a greater understanding on the side of society of the importance of research in delivering solutions to problems of many different kinds. The notion of transaction space makes the evolutionary aspect of the process more specific, because transaction spaces become visible as the sites where the first tenuous interactions between society and science take place. They are spaces (both symbolically and very concretely) where potential participants can decide what might be exchanged or traded and also establish the lines of communication necessary to sustain discussion of potential to the point where constraints become visible. Of course, if the constraints are too severe the transaction space may disintegrate. But, through further interaction, ways may be found to overcome constraints; and when this happens a more robust research activity may emerge. So, the growth in the numbers of transaction spaces, some of which will persist while others will be transitory and temporary, is characteristic of Mode 2 society’s interaction with Mode 2 knowledge production and, in a sense, forms the loci of co-evolution.

As may already be becoming evident, the twin notions of transaction spaces and boundary objects can be used to underpin a new language of engagement. In other words, rather than depicting the movement across boundaries as one of translation (from theory to experiment, or from military to civilian science, or from one theory to another) it may be more useful to think in terms of work at boundaries, “where local languages grow, and sometimes die in the interstices between sub-cultures” (Galison, 1997: 842). As has already been indicated, under the prevailing social contract the language of engagement is largely about moving knowledge across boundaries, in particular from universities to society.

This point can be illustrated by reflecting on the mechanisms that are currently in place to render more efficient the translation of scientific discoveries from universities to industry. Working, silo-like, with the discipline-based structures of science and scholarship, it is often presumed that the knowledge produced by universities is in some way primary. For example, scientific discoveries are commonly regarded as essential ingredients for successful technological innovation and not infrequently universities have assumed that they are the prime source of many of these ideas. Accordingly, we tend to think it important to move this knowledge *across* boundaries. This language is perpetuated at several levels: with regard to cognitive boundaries in the translation

from pure to applied science, to institutional boundaries in the translation from universities to industry, and so forth. Given the prevalence of the idea of translating knowledge across boundaries, it is perhaps not surprising to find that many universities and government agencies have put in place administrative structures – technology transfer offices, innovation incubators, science parks etc. – to help with the translation of knowledge across boundaries.

The notion of a transaction space shifts the metaphor from translation across boundaries to dialogue *at* boundaries. This shift underscores precisely that it is dialogue at the boundary that makes it possible to access knowledge held by others and appropriate it by promoting the search for a common language, within which to formulate a problem or issue. As Galison has argued, common languages, when and if they occur, provide the ‘evidence’ that some sort of common understanding has been achieved. By contrast, simply moving information ‘packages’ across boundaries leaves too much unsaid and, not surprisingly, it is often the case that such translations are not successful.

The idea of boundary work in transaction spaces captures very well what is actually taking place in Mode 2 research, and underscores the point that Mode 2 is less the application of the results of Mode 1 than it is the absorption of Mode 1 into new frameworks and languages, which make the pursuit of complex problems – problems that lie outside of the disciplinary structure – possible. Star and Griesmer are surely correct when they observe that it “is not normally appreciated just how often it is the case that the objects of scientific work inhabit multiple social worlds”. All science, not only Mode 2 science but Mode 1 as well, requires inter-sectoral work (Star and Griesmer, 1989: 392).

To conclude this section, the creation and management of boundary objects is a key process in developing and maintaining coherence across intersecting social worlds. The ‘how’ of contextualisation, then, is about generating and managing boundary objects in the context of transaction spaces.

## CONCLUSION

The opening paragraphs indicated that the aim of this paper was to look at engagement through the lens of research. In the final few paragraphs, the image that has come into focus is one in which universities need to behave differently; facilitating and managing the boundary work that is so crucial in sustaining transaction spaces on which effective co-operation in the formulation and solution of complex problems depends. In a Mode 2 society, universities that have embraced engagement will, therefore, have broadened the base of their operations to include the production of socially robust knowledge. This could be expressed otherwise by saying that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century universities will need to learn to build on their strengths in disciplinary research and manage the tensions between Mode 1 to Mode 2 forms of knowledge production.

In conclusion: (i) a new social contract between society and science is emerging; (ii) it will be constructed upon the opening up of the universities to contextualisation of research, their participation in the *agora*, and their involvement in the production of socially robust knowledge; and (iii) these elements can provide a framework within which to ascertain whether or not individual institutions have embraced engagement as a core value.

These factors will bring to light the apparent paradox that, unless the universities become more involved in, and devote more resources to, the production of socially robust knowledge, they will be unable to maintain their part of the bargain under the new social contract; that is, they will not be able either to sustain the autonomy they seek or to put on a sound footing their role as the conscience of society and protector of the public good. In the new context, institutional autonomy implies social embeddedness, not the reverse.

Fuller participation in the *agora* requires that universities, if they wish to maintain the autonomy they seek, need to make it clear that it is their intention to serve the public good. That universities should serve the public good has been at the core of the social contract with society and the universities since their inception, though it has been reformulated many times to reflect changing social circumstances. In our day, it is being reformulated once again, this time to meet the exigencies of a Mode 2 society.

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## Response

**George Subotsky**

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I wish to thank the organisers for inviting me to this very honoured opportunity to respond to Michael Gibbons, and to participate in this conference. This very important conference has brought together a wide range of leaders, policy makers, scholars and practitioners. It brings me back to a very treasured line of research of my own, and to the CHESP project, and I want to commend JET and CHESP – and Jo Lazarus, in particular – for pioneering this work. Coming to the conference, it is commendable to see evidence of the way in which community service-learning has been institutionalised in really impressive programmes and research on scholarship in service-learning. I wish to commend also the CHE, for taking this seriously and embedding it innovatively in the quality assurance framework in South Africa.

Just for a moment, before I turn to the address itself, I want to pick up on a point that Dr Singh made earlier; and that is to indicate the enormous impact that the work of Michael Gibbons has had in South Africa. I think that this is an interesting phenomenon, which merits reflection. He may not be fully aware of this, but I – along with many or even most South African higher education policy analysts and practitioners – have a long association and engagement with his work, which goes back about 12 years to the watershed year of 1994. The release of the Gibbons *et al* 1994 book, *The New Production of Knowledge*, was more or less synchronous with the first democratic elections, of course, and the setting up of the National Commission on Higher Education. As it happened, the book had an enormous impact on the work of the National Commission. The book came at a particular moment, when, with our policy discourse framed as it was with RDP-type aspirations, the idea of applications-driven, new knowledge production was very appealing, and took rapid root. In fact, it took *disturbingly* rapid root, as Dr Singh indicated; in many ways, it was rather uncritically taken up and crudely interpreted. There is a lot of evidence of that, but it spurred a very lively debate. In talking to Prof. Gibbons at various times about it, that was the original intention: it was a heuristic device to spur debate (which it certainly did in South Africa) and was never intended as a blueprint for implementation, as it was taken up by some. That impact has been enduring and very powerful in South African higher education policy.

My own involvement with Prof. Gibbons's work really centred on seeing a link between community service-learning and Mode 2. Looking at that phenomenon, it became apparent to me that research-based community service work was Mode 2 in character, and that it should be encouraged for that kind of reason. But it held a wider significance for me, particularly in that it provided what I began to call a complementary alternative to the very strong influence on market-type links, and links with industry, which has an ideological frame to it – although I am not going to engage with that now. The important thing is that community service-learning constituted a complementary alternative to that market drive. That was very important in this country and, I believe, in other countries as well. That was the real significance of it for me. And there were subsequent links, in a project in which I was involved; Prof. Gibbons was invited to and honoured us by being keynote speaker at the Globalisation conference in Cape Town, which we organised with the SRHE: *Globalisation and Higher Education: Views from the South*. We invited Prof. Gibbons to a panel symposium and shared with him some ideas that were a research project in which I was involved, with Prof. Ari Rip and Prof. Johann Mouton and others. The case studies provided a lot of evidence of a very wide range of Mode 2-type activities in South African higher education institutions; in fact, one of the case studies in particular, which I'll talk to later, provides a very interesting example of transaction space, in the local context.

The main point of my response is really to look at the ideas that we've heard this evening, and to place them and interrogate them within the local context. And in so doing, I want to find out what Prof. Gibbons has said that is new and could take the debate in South Africa – which has been a very fruitful and rigorous debate – forward. I believe he has done that; I think that the discussion of engagement as a core value does take us forward. And it does so, as he has done in his talk, by focusing on the HOW of engagement. In this way I think that his paper does go beyond a heuristic device for debating the issue. Through characterising engagement practices in terms of managing and facilitating *transaction spaces*, the paper claims to provide a diagnostic tool by which to determine whether institutional practices actually constitute engagement. That is the challenge and the claim that is central to the paper.

There is an interesting issue, I think, of the normative and empirical elements. I had made a note in reading the paper, and the question was: to what extent are these observations based on actual empirical observations, and to what extent are they normative? During the talk, Prof. Gibbons mentioned a couple of times the grounding in terms of empirical observation for what he was arguing. But I think that the issue still stands, in respect of what is empirically observable, in the conditions of the North, and what becomes normative in the South. This is a tremendously important consideration. For that reason, what I want to do is to examine the validity and implications of the claims in relation to the local context. In particular what I want to do is to delineate how we could interpret, elaborate and apply some of the key elements in his argument to the local context. In so doing, if I might venture this, I think that what I am trying to do here is to create a kind of transaction space in my response. And I am sure that the conference as a whole will create a transaction space to engage dialogically with Prof. Gibbons's contribution – and that, by examining and expanding its relevance in the different local contexts this offers a form of contextualisation.

Now, within the limited time that I have available, I am going to focus mainly on one key aspect of this. And that has to do, in fact, with what Mayor Zille mentioned: the definition of community. I'll come to that in a moment. So, the idea is that Mode 2 knowledge production – socially robust knowledge – is premised on greater permeability and cross-institutional linkages between institutions; in particular, higher education institutions and society. It implies greater participation by the public in shaping research agendas and key questions, and indeed contributing towards joint production of knowledge, aimed at the solution of complex problems. This occurs, according to Prof. Gibbons, through the two-way flow between science and society that constitutes the strong contextualisation of knowledge production in the new Mode 2 society context. And it occurs within these transaction spaces created by boundary objects, and inhibited by experts, but increasingly also – so the argument suggests – by the public.

Now the key issue, as I said, in considering the context of North and South, I think, is how we understand and disaggregate the notions of society, public and people. And in the sense generally used by Prof. Gibbons and shaped largely, I think, by the conditions of the North, these terms connote relatively homogeneously and evenly developed social realities. This is in spite of the greater social diversity, in terms of participation, that he mentions, as compared to the Mode 1 knowledge regime. The transaction spaces in the Northern context, as described, tend to be inhabited primarily by different kinds of disciplinary and sub-disciplinary experts, involved in solving problems related to innovation and competitive market advantage. When they do include the public and address issues of wider social problems and concern, the point I want to make is that the participants can be assumed to comprise pro-active, well capacitated and well organised social agents, with access to sufficient relevant resources and freed of the pressures of basic needs and survival. By contrast, in South Africa, as is well known in our highly polarised society and social structure, the public comprises both the minority – which conforms to those attributes I've just mentioned – and the largely disadvantaged majority, whom we refer to, of course, as 'the community' – that vague, but central element of our transitional discourse. And in this context, 'community' refers, mainly, to the marginalised, impoverished majority of the population, who form the target of, and are participants in, developmental initiatives and partnerships – and that's putting

aside the opportunistic use that Mayor Zille mentioned earlier. It is for this reason, of course, in the CHESP model, that *community* constitutes one of the key partners in the tri-partite partnership model. I think, in contrast to the Northern sense of society and its publics, the majority of the members of the community in the South – in South Africa – comprise the urban and rural, uneducated poor, who are generally under-resourced and incapacitated individuals, and who are largely occupied with the pressures of basic needs and daily survival.

Now the involvement of the community, in *this* sense, in the process that Prof. Gibbons describes, obviously presents different kinds of organisational and epistemological challenges. As just mentioned, Prof. Gibbons *does* address the issue of social diversity – he makes the point very clearly, in the concluding section of the paper – and he alludes to the need for accommodating a more diverse range of social worlds in the research process. And this arises from the extension of the research process to involve non-expert people in boundary work. Boundary work needs to be facilitated and managed – I think that is a key point – rightly it is argued, in order to align different interests, and this requires special skills and knowledge. However, boundary work is seen mainly in terms of aligning different disciplinary and sub-disciplinary participants.

Now in the Southern context, with a far more diverse range of social agents, the need for facilitation and management takes on much greater complexity, with a variety of organisational and epistemological implications. I believe that many of these will be addressed during the course of this conference. In light of this greater polarisation of capacities and resources, we must therefore assume even greater social diversity than that suggested by Prof. Gibbons. The agents involved cannot be assumed to be equal, in their capacities and access to resources. Indeed, in this way, I think it is somewhat problematic to refer to *partnerships*, which connote equality and mutuality among partners; that is, perhaps, another theme that might be taken up in the course of the conference.

Thus, the point I am making is that, in the local context, the transaction spaces are inevitably going to be characterised by far more social contestation and contrast and more sharply divided patterns of dominance and submission. Significantly, I think also that participants will bring with them into the process different *types of knowledges* – and I'll come back to that in addressing the case study.

In light of this, there are two key metaphors mentioned in the paper; and I think that in the Southern context they need to be somewhat reframed. The first is that Prof. Gibbons describes the process of alignment and management in terms of the metaphor of an orchestra. And the process is to take groups of musicians, who all are vying to be the conductor, and to mediate that process and harmonise them, as it were. In the Southern context, I would venture, we cannot even assume the homogeneity of a single classical musical tradition, in which the classical European orchestra has evolved. A more appropriate metaphor would be the process of attempting to harmonise musicians from completely different musical traditions, sometimes represented in music as so-called 'fusion' – although I don't know that that word is accurate in this context. What comes to mind is trying to get a *vuvuzela* player together with a trumpeter. (A *vuvuzela*, for the foreigners, is the raucous plastic trumpet that soccer fans of South Africa cherish, and will no doubt give notoriety – worldwide notoriety – to our 2010 World Cup hosting.) Now likewise: the 'agora', the other key metaphor: I think that the political nature in that would need to be highlighted, in our context. In the paper, it is represented in somewhat ideal terms, reminiscent, in fact it struck me, of a Habermasian domain of ideal free speech, inhabited by equally empowered agents. Now, while the extent of engagement between science and society has, in general, increased, and is characterised by more institutional permeability, these interchanges will continue to be shaped by particular kinds of interests and dominances, mainly in the market. So I think that the notion of the agora, itself, is a very interesting one, but it would be much more politicised – contested – in our context.

Now it would seem that the CHESP model – turning to that for a moment – with its three intercepting components, of higher education practitioners, public and private service providers, and the community, actually provides an excellent example (and opportunity, really) for actual and

potential transaction spaces. And within this, higher education practitioners, researchers and teachers have a crucial role to play in the facilitation and management of these transaction spaces. To achieve that, I think that the complexities – both the organisational and epistemological complexities – that I mentioned, need to be taken on board. I think that organisationally, as I have already mentioned, the key issue is the politics of partnerships; given the uneven and unequal agents involved in the transaction space, inevitable patterns of domination and subservience will arise. And these require careful facilitation and management. These are more political and epistemological in nature; and epistemologically, as suggested, the key question relates to the interface between the various knowledges of the participating agents – not only the disciplinary variants, which would characterise the Northern transaction spaces more but, in the Southern community context, also shaped by democratic ideals. It is often assumed that different knowledges are equal, complementary and commensurate. However the epistemological complexities involved here belie such a simple-minded aggregation of the issues, and the democratisation of the knowledges, in interfacing in these transaction spaces. On the one hand, I think that a more complex view suggests that the more vertical hierarchy of knowledges must be recognised. On the other hand, the key challenge for participating academics in these transaction spaces is to recognise the difference in value of the different – but not necessarily strictly equal – contributions. As Prof. Gibbons indicates, the nature of the transaction space is that all participants bring something of value, which must be recognised by all – it doesn't mean strict equality. And in the local context of application, technical, tacit, local and practical knowledge all have a role to play in the implementation of policy and in the achievement of solutions to complex problems.

I want to end by drawing all the points together and sharing with you one of the case studies from the study that I mentioned earlier. It comprised a UWC-based public health intervention, in a remote and impoverished area of the Eastern Cape. Here, the problem was that a health clinic presented the anomaly, if you like, of increased infant mortality. Nutritional supplements were being supplied, but the results were counter-productive. An initial diagnosis of the situation, by the higher education institution involved, revealed a number of inter-related obstacles and problems. First, the nurses were found to have inadequate technical knowledge within the conventional bio-medical framework. In addition, traditional medicine, being practised there, suggests that infants presenting certain symptoms should be made to regurgitate, in order to cleanse the system. However, in that context, this resulted in greater dehydration, which exacerbated the problem. So traditional medicine, knowledge and practice, in this regard, were contradicting technical, bio-medical knowledge and practice. The community had to be re-educated, in that regard, through the assertion of the validity of the bio-medical knowledge – and this is what I mean by the vertical hierarchy of knowledge – through proven clinical trials, and so on. In addition, there were problems in getting the nutritional supplements to the clinic, as a result of local conditions – roads, rain etc. – and this required the intervention of local knowledge. To add to this, there was corruption among the local tribal authority and leadership, and that presented further barriers to the effective distribution of the supplements. So this required the intervention of a kind of political knowledge. Thus, with all that, in order for the problem to be solved and for an effective public policy intervention to be implemented, the alignment and interface of a number of different agents and knowledges were required. The boundary object, in this case, was the problem itself, and the transaction space was successfully managed and facilitated by the higher education programme itself. It is noteworthy that within the transaction space, the task was not only to align the knowledges, but also to establish the primary validity of the conventional bio-medical practice, over an erroneous element within another knowledge domain. And that space was initially characterised by discord, with obvious political ramifications, which had to be carefully managed and mediated. This, in my view, was an extraordinarily fascinating case, and I think it pulls together a lot of the threads of the kind of context that we're dealing with in terms of complexities. I think it also provides a local, contextualised bit of evidence for the kind of space that Prof. Gibbons is talking about, but it also highlights both the organisational and epistemological complexities.

Thus, to conclude: engagement is a key issue for higher education within contemporary South Africa, faced, as it is, with its formidable development, skills development, employment, growth and

redistribution challenges. Engagement is central to the realisation of the nation's democratic and socio-economic development goals and, as has been said, to the contribution of higher education towards the public good. I believe that Prof. Gibbons has provided us with a very useful elaboration of the Mode 2 debate, focusing on the ideal of transaction spaces within a shifting social contract between science and society. And this will no doubt spur much debate. As indicated, I think that the key elements of the framework – notably the community – need to be rethought in this context. I think that the CHESP model and other community development initiatives provide interesting opportunities for the creation and management of these transaction spaces. And within these, higher education institutions have a crucial role to play. Thus, in alerting us to this conceptual framework and its elaboration, I think that Prof. Gibbons has made, once again, an important and influential contribution. We are grateful for that, and for the opportunity of creating, here, a mini-transaction space, in which to further debate and elaborate his ideas in the local context.

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## Plenary Discussion

*Following the response to Michael Gibbons's paper by George Subotsky, the Chair Person opened discussion to the floor. The following are the notes taken by the Scribe for this Plenary Discussion.*

Saleem Badat underscored that the ideas presented by Michael Gibbons were indeed 'seductive' and appealing, but that the conference participants should be open to the idea that – through no fault of Gibbons – there had been some unpleasant outcomes of the Mode 1 and 2 debates in South Africa. While the concept of engagement is highly appealing (rather like 'transparency' or 'democracy'), he pointed out the danger of abstracting it from issues of power and who captures the university agenda. He pointed out that the 'community' – the disempowered, poor etc. – are limited in the extent to which they can engage in those boundary debates. He argued that locating such ideas in context – South Africa and generally – is crucial. With regard to Gibbons's idea of permeability, Badat argued that it is necessary to consider the effects of community engagement on programmes and traditions of universities and that it is important to *protect* even as we become more *engaged*.

Gibbons responded by arguing that he had no basic disagreement with the responses of Subotsky and Badat. He expressed himself sympathetic and sensitive to the idea of differences of equality between North and South, but doubted the extent to which the plight of a single mother in Edinburgh might be so very different from that of a single mother in South Africa, for example. He expressed himself not sympathetic to the idea that South Africa is unique, and emphasised that he would not wish to foreground such uniqueness.

Gibbons emphasised that Mode 2 is not about partnerships only on paper, or the closed dialogue between discipline specialists but about transdisciplinarity. He argued that the idea that he was trying to suggest is that in our society, scientific research has almost singular authority; with the idea of boundary objects, he was trying to work out how to take a common problem and make it researchable (and thus fundable, and able to add weight to those behind the research).

He also emphasised that in a trading zone, different people bring different things. He didn't see the difficulty of acknowledging it – a challenge but not a problem. He argued that the trade goes on *because* people are communicating.

Referring back to his earlier example of the Australian university to which the MP thought the public would be too frightened to come, Gibbons suggested that an approach would be to get some mutually valuable work going, as a means of recognising the dignity of community players.

As Chair Person, Mala Singh thanked Gibbons for putting across powerful and compelling ideas on community engagement in higher education in South Africa. She urged participants – in the interests of supporting the idea of socially robust knowledges – to engage with the ideas presented while also being open to focusing on other issues.

## **Towards a South African Scholarship of Engagement: Core and Supplemental Tasks of a University?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

It is imperative that universities participating in community engagement programmes spend time and effort evolving a commonly understood conceptual framework for such engagement. This is not a luxury; rather, it helps the institution to avoid institutional resistance as well as inappropriate choices. In considering whether community engagement *belongs* in universities, the paper looks at what might be considered the ‘core’ versus ‘supplemental’ tasks of universities. It argues that the intrinsic nature of the university imposes a most fundamental requirement on all teaching and research *and community engagement*: to be scholarly and scholarship-based. If community service is integrated with and based on scholarship, it becomes part of that scholarship. Further, while universities need to cherish their continuity and traditions, they also need to embrace their role – appropriately conceptualised – in society. The concept of community engagement, it is suggested, can address any gap that may (be perceived to) exist between the institution and the surrounding community, and can assist an institution to transform itself. A distinction is made (in an appendix) between ‘engaged’ and ‘non-engaged’ scientific activities, as well as between different types of engagement, and it is argued that the engaged university can be a constructive way of contextualising South African (and African) universities. Thus, it is argued, the biggest service to society of a university is to be a place of excellent scholarship (in the enriched sense of ‘scholarship’ expounded here). Good community service-learning needs to take place in a collaborative partnership context that enhances mutual, reciprocal teaching and learning among all members of the partnership (lecturers, students and members of the communities). The often asymmetric power relations inherent in the relationship between university and community need careful thought.

### **KEYWORDS**

conceptual framework for community engagement  
core and supplemental functions  
engaged and non-engaged  
intrinsic nature of a university  
scholarship  
University of the Free State

### **INTRODUCTION**

The topic of a conceptual framework for community engagement by universities inescapably situates one in some complex debates regarding each of these terms: What is a university? What is engagement? What (or who) is ‘the community’? Each of these debates harbours pitfalls and, even, rather sterile contra-positionings of views and interpretations. It can be a never-ending debate.

Nevertheless, any university or university sector that embarks upon a serious discourse on community engagement must deal with these issues in some way and make some choices – not the least because any university policy document on community engagement will have to get through Senate and past the critical scrutiny of academics!

More importantly, though: inappropriate choices may lead to conceptualisations and implementation of community engagement programmes that continue to get stuck in old academic debates and polarities, experience resistance from academics or the community, involve only a peripheral group of staff and students, make only limited difference to the conditions of the university's surrounding society – and contribute little to the transformation of the university itself.

I try to provide some thoughts and conceptual distinctions that could steer the discourse away from unproductive dead-ends and provide a basis for the consideration and implementation of community engagement initiatives by universities in South Africa (and perhaps other developing countries in Africa and elsewhere).

What follows conveys the understanding, interpretations and choices of one institution, the University of the Free State (UFS). It does not pretend to be the first or the last word on the topic – even at the UFS these are provisional choices, subject to ongoing discourse, analysis and growth of insight (as befits a university). But it may be a useful case study of a conceptual road travelled with some implementation success: a 2005 CHESP survey found that the UFS, with 2 233 students participating in 42 service-learning courses supported by JET, comprised a sizeable chunk (32%) of the national total of 6 930 students in 182 service-learning courses. And the UFS Senate recently approved our second (and second-generation) Community Service Policy, with the first policy having been approved in 2002 (University of the Free State, 2006).

## **THE FOUNDATION OF ENGAGEMENT: THE INTRINSIC NATURE OF THE UNIVERSITY AMIDST CHANGING DEMANDS (I.E. *CONTINUITY AMIDST CHANGE*)**

A key issue in many a campus debate on community engagement and community service is whether it belongs at a university, or whether it distracts a university from its 'core business'. This begs the questions: What is a university? What is proper, or not, for a university?

The contemporary university has a very prominent position in society. Central to the complex process of scientific knowledge creation and distribution, universities are key providers of general higher education as well as professional education and training in an ever-growing number of specialisations. The university not only serves as home to most of the basic and applied sciences but also to the complex system of journals, books, and databases that communicate and scrutinise scientific knowledge worldwide. This is in addition to the broader intellectual role of universities in society, developing new generations of intellectual and societal leaders.

The largest centre of learning in the ancient world, the Alexandria Museum and Library – established in Egypt in the third century BC – had African roots. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Timbuktu in Mali was a centre of scholarship where thousands of students were taught and large private libraries kept, with 'Sankore University' an important institution of learning. Nevertheless, the world's universities today mostly follow institutional patterns that developed in Western countries. The first universities of Bologna, Paris, Oxford and Cambridge were established to transmit knowledge and provide training for a few key professions. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the lead of the Humboldtian model, universities became creators of new knowledge through basic research and scientific inquiry.

Today institutions of higher learning with a variety of institutional forms and purposes exist. Universities are shaped by their societies and historical context. Yet, their basic functioning, organisation, patterns of governance and ethos remain remarkably similar.

Moreover, the mere fact that we intuitively recognise them all *as universities* must be based on an intuitive identification of sufficient commonality to make such recognition possible.

The crux of the historical analysis centres around the question: amidst the changes and relative variability in appearance and organisational form (despite some fuzziness created by the evolution of higher education institutions like polytechnics, 'new universities', technikons, universities of technology and 'comprehensive universities'), what is the common thread (continuity) that makes them identifiable as universities? Is it possible to broadly identify a core of characteristics that capture the essence of universities all over the world and across the centuries, in different cultures, continents and countries?

Identifying this *continuity*, this underlying or intrinsic nature amidst considerable variation and *change* in form and organisational appearance, may be the key to explaining the robustness of these institutions – *and* providing a strong guide to identifying and upholding the main idea of a university.

Certain key words and phrases stand out in the literature, for example:

- Instruction of the young;
- Transmitting knowledge and providing training;
- Cultivation, training and exercise of the intellect;
- Intellect and intellectual culture;
- Scholars and scholarship;
- Enthusiastic study of subjects without ulterior motive;
- Conjectural (abstract) probing of a 'vast imaginative realm';
- The creation of new knowledge through basic research; and
- Critical inquiry.

Taken together these terms give sufficient indication of a core of elements that characterise universities as such. If these have to be framed in a single statement or phrase, the following is a possible and provisional formulation (adopted by the UFS in its definition of 'academic work' – University of the Free State, 2006): "The essence of the university is the generation, transfer and application of analytical-scientific knowledge, methods and competencies".

This formulation encompasses most of the elements of higher education and training, including generally formative education as well as career-oriented (or professionally-oriented) education, basic as well as applied research, and 'Mode 1' as well as 'Mode 2' knowledge (while, as we know, all of these concepts and distinctions potentially are embroiled in complex debates).

The university's most distinctive and essential crux lies in the term 'science' or scientific inquiry.

- This can be interpreted as a *leitmotiv* that decisively determines and shapes, or *should* determine and govern, typical university functions, tasks and work, be they research, education or community engagement.
- It can also be understood as a decisive indication of the *way* things must be done – to do it 'the university way', i.e. being founded in scholarship and scientific know-how.

The way we at the UFS have chosen to see this, is that the intrinsic nature of the university imposes a most fundamental requirement on all teaching and research *and community engagement*: to be scholarly and scholarship-based.

The concept of scholarship is quite robust amidst many refinements and sub-distinctions that have been made – such as those by the late Ernest Boyer, who in 1990 proposed one of the most influential reformulations of academic work. He argued that academic work should be structured around four types of scholarship.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The Boyer scholarships have been incorporated into the policies of several universities (for example, the University of Ballarat and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia) in an effort to reflect more effectively the nature of academic work.

- The *scholarship of discovery* encompassed the traditional view of research in uncovering new knowledge, although Boyer emphasised the process of discovery as much as the results.
- The *scholarship of teaching* was about transforming and extending knowledge through the interaction of the teacher's understanding and student learning.
- The *scholarship of application* (engagement) covered 'community service' but also included the broader application of knowledge between the academy and the 'real world'.
- The *scholarship of integration*, the linking and synthesis of knowledge across the different disciplines, was viewed by Boyer as equally important but the most neglected of the four.

As Ramsden has pointed out, this reformulation represented "...a change from dichotomous models of university work (teaching versus research, practice versus theory) to continuous ones. The model integrates the different things academics do" (1998: 357). However, even if one accepts the identification of the four Boyerian scholarships as *activities*, the role (and requirement) of scholarship as a 'way of doing' typical to universities and academic work remains vital.<sup>3</sup>

### NEW DEMANDS, NEW CHALLENGES, NEW CONCEPTS, NEW FORMATS?

Having identified this continuous core of what a university is, and recognising the importance of this core for academe, one must enquire as to the ways in which this core is being manifested in contemporary society. Universities today are surrounded by many tensions. This is what makes a university so complex, but also so exciting.

Tensions exist between the ancient traditions of the university and the search for 'relevance'. Kogan points out that:

...at any one time there will also be tension and accommodation between social norms as voiced, or at least interpreted most directly, by central government, and academic values, as represented by self-determining institutions, basic units, and individuals. (1992: 47)

Tension also exists between basic science/ knowledge/ research and applied knowledge/ research; between academic research and 'relevant', socially useful or utilitarian research; between those who see Mode 2 knowledge as *replacing* Mode 1 knowledge, as against those who see these modes as complementary – with Mode 1 as the basis for Mode 2 (Muller and Subotsky, 2001: 170); or between generally-formative education and professional education. Universities

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<sup>3</sup> There are also related key issues on which authentic universities have never compromised without a fight:

- The university needs to respect and preserve scholarship and learning for their own intrinsic value, and to provide scholars and researchers with an environment where free and critical inquiry may thrive, independent of outcome or application.
- The university needs to nurture and uphold on behalf of all its staff and students the intellectual freedom to be able without fear or favour to advance unconventional critiques of established social, political or scientific paradigms.
- The university needs sufficient autonomy to discharge its long-term educational and scholarly responsibilities effectively. In practice, however, autonomy is always relative, and what universities should seek is reasonable, not absolute autonomy. Albornoz (1991: 205) argues that autonomy requires "striking a delicate balance between the need to respond to the requirements of society, while at the same time satisfying the needs specific to the institution itself". For some academics, autonomy may appear to be sacrificed as social engagement increases. However, it is possible for responsiveness and institutional autonomy not to stand in a trade-off relationship to each other, particularly if the true nature of what makes a university a university is kept in mind, however contextualised by the society and public sphere within which it operates.

must not be torn apart by these tensions. They are creative tensions and give us the intellectual stimulation that is so typical of and so valuable to a university. We should actually cherish such tensions.

On the one hand, we (at the UFS) say that we must cherish our continuity as a good university with its centuries-old traditions. At the same time we must embrace our role in this society, this country, this continent. The Minister of Education has expressed a clear view that higher education has a central role to play in achieving our national development goals:

Universities are too valuable to be constantly battered by the demands of disruptive policy, but transformation also demands engaged, responsive institutions. It would be peculiar, indeed, for our universities to be unaffected by the changing and changed priorities of our country. (Pandor, 2004)

It seems then that the issue is all about universities serving the needs of South Africa and Africa and the aspirations of all the people of the continent. I would argue that a constructive way to think about this is to be found in the concept of an engaged university – or of university engagement, or engagement by a university. The concept of engagement can address any gap that may (be perceived to) exist between itself and the surrounding community (appropriately defined; see below). This could happen in several areas of the ‘scholarship of engagement’. As a first step towards ‘unpacking’ this concept, the following elements can be noted:<sup>4</sup>

- Engagement in teaching and learning: this means curricula that reflect local South African and African history, context, circumstances and problems; opportunities for lifelong learning and professional development; and civic development. It also means mutual and reciprocal learning opportunities where students interact with community members in analysing and addressing community problems.
- Engagement in research: this means development-oriented research, community service research, and social transformation research, which could and should involve social as well as natural sciences. It involves new methods and styles of research that involve community members in addressing the problems of communities.

This engaged university model has a further benefit, notably in our context. To quote Malegapuru Makgoba's vision, the engaged university can truly

...reconcile the idea of a university, which is perceived to be universal, with the specific demands of being African...and involves championing 'Africanness' to the wider world while continuing to educate and develop scholars who are critical (and) analytic. (Makgoba, 2004: 3)

This engaged university model produces a different kind of scholarly knowledge that does "reflect an African reality" and "the African condition" (Makgoba, 2004: 3), that promotes and establishes an African consciousness in our universities and scientific work, that flows from Africa as a primary source of inspiration and that displays a clear Africa-rootedness in our scientific and scholarly work. In short: such an engaged university model also helps us give content to the concept of the African university.

Thus, the engaged university can be a constructive way of contextualising South African universities (*inter alia* as African universities). Whereas a university can only provide its core functions because it has a base of scholarship, an intellectual base of independently asking hard questions to gain knowledge and insight, it must at the same time be an engaged university that uses its academic capacities and functions to make a significant difference to the condition of its region, country and continent, helping – in this case – to eradicate the legacies of underdevelopment, poverty, colonialism and apartheid. (See [Appendix A](#) for further distinctions.)

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<sup>4</sup> A proposed set of more comprehensive distinctions regarding engaged and non-engaged scientific activities is provided in [Appendix A](#) of this paper.

It should be clear that such community engagement is also an important part of the transformation of society – and of the true transformation of a university. This can be denoted by the term “transformative engagement”.

Generally, I believe that in a developing society – because there are so many needs and so few institutional and other resources – many institutions do indeed (need to) broaden their scope and focus in order to add to the development of society. These responsibilities should not necessarily be seen as something separate from the intrinsic core business, or as atypical of the university, but they do demand a particular *orientation* and *focus* and *commitment* of the core business, and typical tasks of the university (see [Appendix A](#)). This commitment is to make a direct contribution towards a solution for the most pressing problems of that society – but, I must add, always on the basis of the scientific knowledge and scholarship of the university. (In Appendix A a second category of ‘supplemental’ development-oriented activities, which indeed are separate from the core and not integrated into the core, is distinguished.)

Put differently: the extraordinary ‘usefulness’ of the university in helping to address development problems through engagement lies in its foundation of scholarship. Meaningful university engagement indeed *presupposes* scholarly knowledge, and the continued generation of new scholarly knowledge and insight to be applied to new societal and development problems of communities. There need be no tension between scholarship and properly-conceived university engagement.

## FROM ADD-ON TO INTEGRATION

Since 2002, when the UFS became one of the first tertiary institutions in South Africa to adopt a comprehensive community service policy, we have gained more insight into ways of focusing and committing our core business to addressing the problems and challenges of our society. One such insight has been that a false tension, or contra-positioning, existed between the concepts of community service and academic work. To overcome this we adopted the concept of ‘integrated community service’.

A key principle of integration is that whatever we do in terms of community service must be entrenched in the unique and intrinsic nature of a university as a place of scholarship, and be an integral part of learning and research activities of staff and students.

Such activities relating to community service should, therefore, not be seen as separate from or unrelated to the university’s core activities, but as *a particular orientation and focus regarding many of the university’s core activities, a commitment to make a contribution towards resolving the most pressing problems of that society*.

While integrated community service can clearly be contemplated in a first world, developed society, *it finds a deeper significance in a developing society*. In a developing society – where there are so many needs and so few institutional and other resources – institutions such as universities do have a responsibility to broaden their scope and their focus in order to support the development of society.

In this process of integration a breakthrough has been one of integrating community service directly into certain curricula – where students learn to address real societal problems by using scientific knowledge gained in their courses, as an integral and credit-bearing part of these courses or modules. For this the term ‘community service-learning’ truly applies. The same could be done in terms of ‘community service research’.

These concepts of integrated community service-learning and integrated community research are richer than any add-on bit of welfarism could ever be and, being rooted in scholarship and critical

inquiry, are not in any way in contradiction to the intrinsic nature of a university as a place of scholarship. They should, indeed, always be founded on the idea of independent critical inquiry and independent scientific knowledge: as a university we must do these things.

The old concept of community service as a form of welfare, or something separate from the university, has been replaced by a concept of integrated community service that is clearly based on what a university is and should be (without necessarily excluding the possibility of 'separate' and non-integrated forms of service to society; see [Appendix A](#)). This was the great breakthrough for us (which also helped in overcoming the resistance of academics to this initiative).

This concept has enabled me to clarify many of the issues in my own mind and to overcome my earlier cynicism about community service at universities. With community service being integrated with and based on scholarship it becomes part of that scholarship. Hence, it remains true – as I have stated in public – that the biggest service to society of a university is to be a place of excellent scholarship (*but* with such scholarship conceptualised, contextualised and implemented in the enriched sense expounded above; again see [Appendix A](#)).

This new concept enables community service activities to take place in each and every discipline at a university, even in fields like physics and chemistry. For example, it is about issues like clean water. At the UFS, we have strong expertise in water, notably groundwater and surface water, and in techniques to make clean water available to people. This is an important part of our community service, coming from very 'hard' sciences, but also with many social, economic and political dimensions and problems. For many years we did not see research into that kind of issue as a form of community service – our thinking simply had not evolved to that point, and was stuck in simplistic 'polar' or 'either-or' models. Today, the UFS is couching this expertise in an academic 'strategic cluster' devoted to water as a resource in arid areas.

The challenge is to 'liberate' all disciplines and sciences into a world of integrated community service, in other words a situation where one need *not* choose between doing science or doing community service.

- It is about orientation.
- It is about which problems you choose to address.
- It is about how you involve people from the community in identifying the problems and in implementing appropriate solutions (through and in a process of mutual learning).
- Ultimately, you do things differently; but it is not a choice between science and community service.
- And there is no reason for such learning and/or research not to be world class.

Of course, the distinctions made here (and in [Appendix A](#)), do not imply that every discipline, or each and every academic staff member, will be involved in engagement in the same way – nor that any discipline or staff member will be confined to certain categories of academic work.

## **INTERROGATING THE CONCEPTS AND THE TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT**

This conference provides a platform for robust debate on the concept of community engagement and its implications for higher education. This debate requires some clarity on definitions. I shall propose some definitions that we have adopted at the UFS, fully realising that they may be controversial.

When we talk of 'community service' or 'community engagement', who is our community? In the South African political context, 'the' community has become a rather amorphous concept – often understood to be equivalent to 'the local township' or 'the black community', however defined (which is rarely done). But of course this is too narrow and also too vague, and of limited analytical use in designing community service programmes.

In principle, many communities can be identified, such as: the various business, industrial or agricultural communities; the public sector and policy-making community; the education, health and social welfare communities; language and cultural communities; sports communities; the community of higher education institutions; the student community, the parent community and alumni community; professional communities; scientific and scholarly communities; and so forth.

But, going this broadly, while analytically proper, is to render the term community almost useless or even undefined for the purposes of considering community engagement of universities in South Africa.

A more specific and context-specific definition is required for community engagement and community service by a university. In this context we (the UFS) have *chosen* to define 'communities' to refer to:

- a. *specific interest groups* informally constituted, delineated or defined by their sharing of, and search for solutions to one or more related *development problems/ challenges*; that furthermore
- b. participate or could potentially participate as partners in the community service activities of the UFS,
- c. contributing to the mutual search for sustainable solutions to the jointly identified problems and needs, through the utilisation of the full range of knowledge, know-how, skills, resources and assets at the disposal of both the members of that community and the involved university participants.

It is clear that this definition of 'community' is shaped by the historical context of our society, by the development context of South Africa and Africa. In a developing society such as ours, 'development' and the needs and challenges of the impoverished and marginalised people should play a pivotal role in the engagement between universities and communities. (In Silicon Valley, 'the community' may be the high-tech IT industrial community, and community engagement of a Silicon Valley university is likely to be defined accordingly.)

Interacting or engaging with these communities takes place within a broad, overarching partnership framework for the pursuit of relevance and responsiveness. The term 'community engagement' could therefore refer to collaborations and partnerships between the university and the appropriately constituted communities that it serves, aimed at building and exchanging – in a two-way engagement – the knowledge, skills, expertise and resources required to develop and sustain a developing society.

While development as a concept also is shrouded in debate, we can acknowledge an important aspect of development-oriented university work: that it requires a dynamically interactive, *reciprocal* learning process between its partners (communities, service sector etc.) and its staff and students. The process represents a concerted effort to achieve positive human development outcomes within communities and to improve the quality of life of those involved. This takes place in an enabling environment of mutuality and reciprocity, ensuring that collective growth and development of all partners take place and that contributions by communities are valued and duly recognised. (For the UFS, the emphasis on reciprocal teaching and learning is very important.)

Thus, 'community service', for the UFS, refers to the academic integration of the core functions of a university in an applied, developmental context, i.e. teaching, learning and research aimed at rendering mutually beneficial services to appropriately defined communities within a collaborative partnership context.

- It means connecting the rich resources of the university to our pressing social, moral and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers, and to our cities.
- It means empowering communities and community structures, transferring knowledge, insight and skills – but also being empowered and enlightened by the knowledge and wisdom of communities.

Universities should be viewed by both students and professors not as ivory towers for ‘pure science’ (which the university must do, of course), but rather as staging grounds for responsive actions and science-based engagement with a multiplicity of communities. This also means creating a special climate in which the academic and civic cultures can communicate more continuously and more creatively with one another.

There is an important *caveat*, though. Community expectations regarding the role and contributions of universities often are not based on the core competencies of universities. Communities may tend to see universities as huge, limitless resource pools that can do almost anything, and solve almost any problem – and, moreover, communities may assume that almost any stakeholder has a right to command these resources. This is a delicate issue that has to be handled with great sensitivity and care – perhaps as part of the mutual learning process. It is also necessary to be aware of the asymmetry of (knowledge-)power and influence in these relationships. However, if an understanding is not reached between a university and the various surrounding communities regarding the appropriate (and thus ultimately constrained) role of a university, even of an engaged university, excessive expectations will continue to cause community frustration and/or stretch universities beyond their competencies. This distortion will be to the detriment of the university’s core activities, and to the detriment of society as a whole: a huge *disservice to the community*.

More formally: at the UFS we define community service-learning as curriculum-based, credit-bearing educational experiences, in which students (a) participate in contextualised, well-structured and organised service-learning activities aimed at meeting identified development and service needs in a community, and (b) reflect on the service activities in order to gain a deeper understanding of curriculum content and community life, as well as achieve personal growth and a sense of social responsibility. Community service-learning takes place in a collaborative partnership context that enhances mutual, reciprocal teaching and learning among all members of the partnership (lecturers, students and members of the communities).

All of this, of course, raises significant conceptual and operational questions. Some of these questions focus on what community service is, what the characteristics of community service oriented institutions are, how higher education deepens community convictions and collaboration in educationally meaningful ways, and what the roles of students and staff are in an engaged institution. The often asymmetric power relations inherent in the relationship between university and community also need careful thought.

It is evident that partnerships are a fundamental requirement for effective service-learning and community engagement to take place. In the context of community service-learning, a partnership entails knowledge-based collaborations between a university and an identified community, where all partners contribute to the mutual search for sustainable solutions to challenges and service needs, implementing a mutually agreed upon *modus operandi* while maintaining their respective identities and core agendas. Successful partnerships are often identified by the following indicators:

- Shared philosophy, vision and values;
- A high priority on trust, mutual accountability and responsibility;
- Communication, evaluation and feedback;
- Reciprocity;
- Equality and equity; and
- Sustainability.

Community service-learning is still a relatively new and evolving practice. If service-learning is to survive and thrive in the long run, service-learning must be central rather than marginal, institutionalised rather than fragmented, and strong rather than vulnerable. The challenge remains.

## **IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS**

The above definitions highlight the complexities of community engagement, community service and service-learning, and we should never underestimate the difficulty of implementation and of making this a reality. Many academics still have to discover the possibilities contained in their own disciplines, because their thinking would have been influenced by traditional 'oppositional thinking' where science and community service are seen as opposites. As long as they are seen in this way, science and community service compete for the limited amount of time in a day. Therefore, we must work hard to develop methods to unlock the potential initial resistance we are likely to find.

Change management in this context will take time and be quite a challenge, but it must be dealt with in order to unlock the potential to serve communities that resides in all university disciplines. And it *is* a typical change management process, with all the normal reactions of denial ("we already do it"), resistance and anger ("I just want to get on with my job"), reluctant acceptance, and so forth. The challenge will be to find ways to facilitate the acceptance and implementation of integrated community service.

One way to help the process is to start incorporating these activities into our formal assessment of staff and to create incentives for doing them at the university. At the UFS this has been adopted in principle. To do it, to make it work, however, is still quite a challenge.

We also need feedback from role-players outside the university to help us evaluate the road we have taken in various disciplines and faculties (within the context of a proper community understanding of the appropriate role of a university in a developing society). We need to know and monitor how successful we are with this process of integration, and whether we really empower communities, really impact positively. We need to monitor the quality of this impact. Having community service as a concept is one thing, but having it really work is something completely different.

I am convinced that more and more academics will realise the satisfaction of opening up their discipline to a development context and a community orientation, having started this practice on campus and having the full support from senior management. I hope that they will also experience the satisfaction of making a direct, observable difference and of having their efforts recognised (and enriched) by the community.

I still firmly believe in the principle of universities being places of scholarship and the pursuit of science. We must be a good university within the community of the Free State – or wherever you are situated. It is all about an unwavering but broader, understanding of scholarship, the pursuit of science, the meaning of transferring knowledge and of what constitutes good science and research. But it is also about pushing the frontiers of science in a different way. Innovative, brave approaches to pursuing the positive nexus of teaching–learning, research and community engagement/ service are required.

It is very important, though, to clarify the conceptual framework of the discourse on a campus. Improper choices of terms and distinctions may lead to conceptualisations and implementation of community engagement programmes that continue to get stuck in old ruts, involve only a peripheral group of staff, and/or make little difference to the conditions of the surrounding society.

## **Digression: The Compelling Role of Flagship Sites**

A particularly noteworthy strategy that the UFS has adopted is the establishment of 'flagship' or key delivery sites for community engagement. The main purpose is to create empowering, collaborative 'spaces' where staff, students and external participants can meet in order to engage in productive, multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral interaction, within an environment where at least some of the 'terms of engagement' have already been negotiated and a high level of mutual trust has been achieved.

One such key delivery site or 'flagship' is the MUCPP, or Mangaung University–Community Partnership Programme. It was launched in 1991, during the difficult last years of apartheid, years filled with mistrust, anger and pain. Established through the diligent work and commitment of several pioneering individuals, the MUCPP involved several partners: the UFS, the Free State provincial government (notably the Department of Health), the Bloemfontein/ Mangaung Municipality, and representatives of the Mangaung community. It received substantial funding from the Kellogg Foundation for several years. Despite suffering from many of the governance, implementation and funding challenges so typical of community service partnerships, the MUCPP continues to this day, and is regarded by the Kellogg Foundation as one of its most successful projects internationally. It has changed the lives of large numbers of members of the Mangaung community and of the UFS.

Another 'flagship' is the Free State Rural Development Partnership Programme (FSRDPP), which during 2006 spawned the Khula Xhariep Partnership, as an independent entity, participating with the UFS in developing the communities of the three towns of Trompsburg, Philippolis and Springfontein and surroundings as a partner on the basis of equality and equity. This constitutes the most recent example of the ever increasing focus on the formation of collaborative partnerships as an enabling environment for meaningful engagement, specifically with regard to forming alliances with local and district municipalities, provincial government, the business sector and community structures.

There is a considerable number of well-established community service partnerships within each of the faculties of the UFS, *inter alia*:

- Lengau Agri Centre (Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, in collaboration with district municipalities, the South African Farmers' Union and the business sector);
- Boyden Observatory and Science Centre (a partnership between the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and the Free State Department of Education);
- A longstanding partnership between the Centre for Accounting, Free State Development Corporation and Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality in the Qwaqwa district;
- The Law Clinic (Faculty of Law in collaboration with the Attorneys' Fidelity Fund);
- The Faculty of Theology, working closely with KANSA, Hospice (Free State) and other organisations;
- Various forms of collaboration between the Free State Department of Health, local municipalities and the three schools of the Faculty of Health Sciences (Medicine, Nursing and Allied Health Sciences); and
- The National KhoiSan Consultative Conference (whose secretariat is situated within the Faculty of the Humanities).

## **CONCLUSION: THE UFS'S ROAD OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSFORMATION**

We have already made great strides in the implementation of community service as an integral part of the academic core of the UFS. Since 2002 (if not actually since 1991 with the launch of the MUCPP), the UFS has committed itself to making tangible progress in community service objectives. We face many challenges, such as mobilising all the UFS campuses and facilitating even greater participation by other role-players, including the support services, the various

communities, the private sector and other service providers. But we have thousands of students participating in community service-learning. And we have many academics involved in community service research.

We have a long, but exciting road ahead of us. One thing is certain; the UFS has embarked on an adventure, where community service-learning is based on scholarship and critical inquiry, without fear or expectation of favour. It is not for gain or foreseeable, tangible reward, nor because of research contracts from well-endowed companies, but because it is our task as a university in South Africa and in Africa.

It is part of our transformation – a very important part.

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## APPENDIX A: A POSSIBLE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SITUATING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITHIN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

Two broad categories of university tasks can be distinguished (see diagram below).

**I. CORE (or typical) tasks of the university:** The core functions of teaching/ learning and research, embodying, and based on, scholarship and analytical-scientific inquiry.

Within the typical tasks of the university, it is standard practice to distinguish between:

1. Basic research and knowledge creation (Mode 1):
2. Applied research and career-oriented education and research (Mode 2).

A slightly different formulation is suggested, i.e. that the latter category be described, in the context of the engagement debate, as *engaged science* or *engaged scientific activities*.

On the other hand, basic research or Mode 1 knowledge would, by definition, be non-engaged (not *unengaged*) scientific activity – but of course it provides the continuity of disciplinary knowledge and the ongoing scientific foundation for engaged scientific activities. It is relevant for any place on earth where a particular phenomenon or object of study occurs, but it has not yet been specifically focused on, or applied to, that phenomenon or a related problem in a specific situation or context (which would then transform it into Mode 2 knowledge or engaged scientific knowledge).

In the category of engaged science one can distinguish sub-categories of engagement:

- 2a. Engagement *with context*: Curricula and research that reflect the history, conditions and context of a particular society in a particular period, are informed and shaped by interactions with various institutions and sectors in society (which convey non-scientific, non-abstract, everyday, and/or indigenous knowledge and perspectives), and that include contemporary career-related and professional content.

Within this category, one can identify a sub-category:

- 2b. Engagement *with community* (**yellow box** in diagram below): Learning activities and research that are focused on particular needs and problems of particular groups or 'communities' (appropriately defined) and attempt to address those problems in processes of mutual, reciprocal learning and research, combining everyday knowledge and scientific knowledge. Integrated community service-learning and research would be situated in this element of engagement:

These probably comprise a continuum of forms of engagement, not rigid subdivisions. Community engagement/ service activities can also have varying degrees and intensities of involvement, and different degrees of integration.

### Notes:

1. Community engagement/ service is, in this categorisation, not listed as a third distinct core function of a university, since it is assumed to be subsumed in some teaching–learning and research activities as *integrated* community engagement or service (against the backdrop of a broader meaning of engagement implied by the category of “engaged science”, as well as the intrinsic relevance of basic research for the occurrence of phenomena or objects of study at any place on earth).

2. Other forms of community interaction, e.g. entrepreneurial or contract research interaction with business and industry, will also be situated within the upper blue box. However, for the purposes of this discourse and in a developing country context, such other forms are not depicted as community engagement – except perhaps in areas where business and industry are still very embryonic and directly part of the development and poverty challenge. (Of course, this is a contextual choice, not a fundamental distinction.)
3. The distinctions imply neither that every discipline, or each and every academic staff member, will be involved in engagement in the same way, nor that any discipline or staff member will be confined to certain categories of scientific work.
4. Most generally-formative learning programmes would span the engaged/ non-engaged distinction.

**II. SUPPLEMENTAL (or a-typical) tasks of the university (green box).** This is a second major category, alongside and outside the core tasks of the university. In extra-ordinary times (of which wars and major societal transformations are examples), universities (along with the state and other institutions) may be called upon to participate in or initiate a-typical activities that are not directly derivative of their scholarly foundations and core competencies, but do utilise their general organisational and resource capacities. An example is a state that would, alongside its typical role of establishing a public order of justice, establish an iron and steel industry in the early years of an economy, only later to allow it to go into private hands when the economy has matured sufficiently. For a university, an example would be to establish and run a school, literacy centre or social welfare centre in a city where insufficient public or non-governmental capacity exists. (Of course, sites such as these could then double as *community engagement or community service sites*, which activity would then fall within the engaged category of typical university tasks). Projects characterised by staff and student volunteerism, philanthropy and outreach typically would be examples in this category of supplemental tasks of the university.

Obviously, this category of activities can also be seen as a (second) form of community engagement. However, it clearly is of a different character and on a different foundation (i.e. not the scientific knowledge or scholarship of the university but, for example, its general organisational capacity and the general skills of its staff), and is not integrated into the academic core. It should, for the purposes of the discourse on community engagement, be distinguished and separated expressly from community engagement that is situated within the core (or typical) tasks of the university. Failure to make this distinction (even separation), can lead to severe distortion of the debate on community engagement – and significant resistance from academic staff.

Of course a university can choose to undertake both kinds of community engagement. However, in almost all respects – conceptualisation, planning, strategy, logistics, implementation, staffing, funding, partnerships – non-integrated community engagement will be different from the first type of community engagement, which is embedded in the core tasks of the university.

A key choice will be the mix and balance between the various ‘boxes’ in the diagram: between the lower blue box and the upper blue box, between the yellow box and the rest of the upper blue box – and between the entire blue box and the green box. Most academics will be active in more than one box or sub-box.

**Note:** The diagram below is a conceptual framework and categorisation, not an organisational chart.

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**CORE UNIVERSITY TASKS**

**ENGAGED SCIENCE**  
(contextualised, applied, career-oriented, MODE 2)

**ENGAGEMENT WITH CONTEXT**

**ENGAGEMENT WITH  
COMMUNITY**  
(Development-) problem-solving  
science  
(Integrated)

**BASIC SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH**  
(MODE 1)

(the Foundation of Engagement)

**SUPPLEMENTAL  
(non-core)  
UNIVERSITY  
TASKS**  
and forms of  
societal  
engagement  
(Non-integrated)

## Response

### **Mario Fernández de la Garza**

Director of Outreach, University of Veracruz and General Coordinator, Vasconcelos Project,  
Ministry of Education, Veracruz, Mexico

*Mario Fernández de la Garza provided a response to the paper by Frederick Fourie. The following are the notes taken by the Scribe for this Plenary Session.*

Mario Fernández de la Garza expressed gratitude for the opportunity to learn more about community engagement and the response – of the modern university in a globalised world – to the challenges of injustice. He agreed with Frederick Fourie that universities are significant instruments for social equity and he argued that it is vital to focus at the local level and within our own countries on what public universities in poor countries can achieve with regard to the generation and social distribution of knowledge. He argued not simply for scholarship but also for universities to establish strong co-operation with the poor and marginalised in society. He reminded participants that lofty ideals need to be *implemented* to be of value. He also argued that higher education is only one level of education and that all levels of the education system would need to be involved somehow in community engagement. He pointed out that education is increasingly becoming the social intervention instrument and that one challenge is to identify precisely *how* educational systems can have a positive impact on society.

Fernández de la Garza endorsed Fourie's argument for community engagement that impacts on teaching and learning, and for research and curricula that acknowledge local problems. In searching for the transaction spaces and the *agora* of which Gibbons had spoken, he emphasised the value of partnerships, as had been highlighted too by Fourie. Fernández de la Garza explained that in Mexico there is obligatory social service for students, which provides students with a valuable opportunity to learn about social realities. Picking up on Fourie's point about the value of partnerships, he emphasised the need for humility when working with community partners. He argued that community engagement initiatives that involve socially based partnerships and participation cannot be planned from academic desks, but involve academics working with community members and their interests and opinions. Thus, community members are actively involved in the management of such initiatives – never simply as 'passive recipients' of welfare but rather as permanent stakeholders, who influence the very methodology and goals, and have the power to cancel the project if necessary. He argued that paternalism is always misguided, and leads inevitably to failure. Rather, he argued, real, integrated community service within communities entails a two-way partnership of give and take, where social differences between university and community are taken seriously.

## Response

### Rupa Shah

Former Vice Chancellor, SNDT Women's University, India

*Rupa Shah provided a response to the paper by Frederick Fourie. The following are the notes taken by the Scribe for this Plenary Session.*

Rupa Shah expressed admiration for the work of the UFS in community engagement. She commended Frederick Fourie for championing the understanding of community engagement in its local or regional context. She suggested that each university undertaking community engagement would need to develop its understanding of itself and its role. She argued that in transforming themselves, universities need to locate their points of distinctiveness, and that in implementing community engagement there would necessarily be diversity arising from what is unique to individual institutions.

Commenting on what she saw as Fourie's suggestion of the need for commonality, and his idea that scholarship could be the anchor, Shah argued that it is very important that scholarship be applied in understanding community engagement, but that universities cannot take scholarship to communities and expect them to interact in turn in a scholarly fashion. She also pointed out that communities – like universities – are characterised by diversity, and in this regard it is important to identify the common bonds that tie that community, often in the face of tremendous ethnic differences.

Shah expressed her opinion that the diagram presented by Fourie was very valuable, serving as a launching pad for conceptualising a wide possible range of community engagement initiatives.

She also fully supported the point that had been made about the need for community engagement to be integrated into curricula. She highlighted the challenges posed by the need to integrate community engagement into research focusing on developmental issues, arguing that the mutuality introduced between university and community can challenge the core competencies of the university.

## Plenary Discussion

*Following responses to Frederick Fourie's paper by Mario Fernández de la Garza and Rupa Shah, the Chair Person opened discussion to the floor. The following are the notes taken by the Scribe for this Plenary Discussion.*

Nqabomzi Gawe (Durban University of Technology) thanked Frederick Fourie for sharing his institution's experiences and said it was actually encouraging to find that other higher education institutions faced the same problems and challenges. Commenting on the diagram Fourie had presented, she suggested the inclusion of a dotted line between the green ('a-typical') and the yellow ('engagement with communities') blocks, as it was problematic in her opinion for universities to go out to communities to find and solve problems; this would only deepen dependency and the idea that universities can solve the problems of communities. Rather, middle ground is needed, where universities and communities can together identify problems that need addressing.

John Boughey (University of Zululand) expressed support for the diagram Fourie had presented, seeing it as an excellent way of getting into the challenge of community engagement; but he took issue with Fourie's definition of the university, arguing that it seemed to perpetuate the idea of communities approaching universities 'cap in hand' rather than undertaking initiatives 'hand in hand'.

Susanna Coetzee-van Rooy (North West University) said that she found the conceptual framework diagram useful but that the emphasis on contextualising community engagement in the here and now of the needs of the community seemed problematic as it did not help to explain how to deal with the problems of the *future*. She posed the question of whether it was a luxury to think about the problems of the future or whether it could lead perhaps to more sustainable community engagement.

Michael Gibbons (University of Sussex) argued that Fourie's choice of the word 'foundation', in the Mode 1 section of the diagram gave the game away, and that the diagram missed the point. He asked whether there had been consideration of the fact that future scholarship could come *from* engaged science – rather than the other way around.

Ingrid Andersen (Rhodes University) thanked Fernández de la Garza for raising complex issues, including the dynamics of power, and highlighting the importance of two-way partnerships. She argued that in undertaking community engagement initiatives, higher education institutions need to be prepared to have humility and to learn from their community engagement partners.

John Kaburise (University for Development Studies, Ghana) commended Fourie on the clarity of his paper. He argued that stipulating basic research as the foundation for community engagement would seem problematic as it would seem to exclude the input of communities into what constitutes basic research in the first place. Commenting on Fourie's definition of 'communities' as being temporary groupings that come together around specific problems, Kaburise argued that this begged the question of whether universities see themselves as only doing community engagement to solve problems or whether they anticipate a situation where the partnerships actually help to *avoid* problems.

Regarding specifically the diagram that Fourie had presented, Thandwa Mthembu (University of the Witwatersrand) posed the question of what transaction space had been set up at the boundaries, and argued that universities and communities need engagement *at* – rather than *across* – the boundaries.

Fourie responded briefly. He thanked the participants for their opinions and emphasised the *conceptual* nature of the diagram; he acknowledged that, for purposes of application, further elements would obviously need to be added. He urged participants to accept that academics in higher education institutions need to be engaged – to enlarge their frames of reference when thinking about community engagement and liberate their thinking. Talking of future problems, he argued that the presence of the scholarship foundation in the diagram informs engaged science, and that basic science is not without context.

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# The Engaged University: Key Challenges, Enabling Mechanisms and Quality Management

**Rupa Shah**

Former Vice Chancellor, SNTD Women's University, India

## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on India's innovative experiments to integrate community development into education, thereby bridging differences in a society characterised by caste/ class/ gender and ethnic differences. The paper critiques some of the shortfalls of the Indian education system but also focuses on its participation in the struggle to establish a just society. One obvious strategy that has been adopted is an affirmative action programme, in terms of which students from deprived backgrounds are afforded advantages over other more privileged students. The other strategy adopted lies in the experiments conducted in the Indian education system to integrate community development into higher education. In looking specifically at the interventions that universities can make in community action, the paper discusses the rationale for the experiments, as indicated in the policy guidelines, and the political and philosophical orientations of the question of community engagement. India's education policies justify the introduction of extension activities in colleges, such as the National Service Scheme for undergraduate students, whereby students are expected to participate in nation-building activities. The paper considers the experiences of the SNTD Women's University in initiating social change; highlights some of the key challenges of community engagement; and suggests enabling mechanisms and strategies for ensuring the quality of higher education community engagement initiatives.

## KEYWORDS

affirmative action  
community development in higher education  
Gandhian ideals  
holistic education  
indigenous knowledge  
National Service Scheme  
SNTD Women's University, Mumbai, India  
social justice

## INTRODUCTION

We live in an uncertain world. This uncertainty arises from escalating violence, wars and civil strife, and the increased frequency of natural yet man-made disasters. Having lived through the 26 July floods in Mumbai of 2005 and the terror attacks in Mumbai in 2006, I am poignantly aware of the frailty of the present world. As an educationist I look inwards and ask myself the question: What can institutions of higher education do to stem this downward slide of human civilization, and work towards a world of peaceful co-existence – a world where the highest ideals of human society are upheld and each citizen enjoys the gifts of freedom, equality and peace? Given the complexity of this question, it will undoubtedly be answered differently by different people, from their ideological and disciplinary locations. My own location as an educationist makes me seek these answers from within the university system. I am painfully aware that somewhere along the line, our generation has failed. While we would like to pass this blame on to the political leaders, the bureaucrats and the business tycoons, we too must accept our failings.

India is one country that has not seen a war, but is living testament to the fact that it is possible to gain bloodless freedom!

Based on my intimate understanding of the Indian education system, I shall speak here of the innovative experiments carried out in India to integrate community development into education. This is not to imply that I am not conscious of failures within the Indian university system to ensure quality education for the masses, even now, nearly six decades after Independence. The *Tenth Plan Profile of Higher Education in India*, prepared by the University Grants Commission (UGC, 2001) indicates that while there is a growth of student enrolment in higher education, Indian's access parameters are approximately one-sixth of those of developed countries. An examination of the access parameters through the lens of the prevailing social disparities in society indicates that such access decreases along lines of caste, class and gender. For instance, although women's enrolment has increased from 20.92 lakhs to 33.24 lakhs in the last decade, it represents a marginal increase – from 33.6% of the total in 1992/1993 to 36.15% of the total in 2004. Some of this failure may be attributed to the mammoth size of the student population, and some to the lack of funds, the increased bureaucratic control and political interference.

However, the awakening to community engagement was ushered in during the Freedom Movement by Gandhiji, who walked through the villages and included the populace in the Movement.

In India, education is placed in the concurrent list of the Constitution. This makes education a responsibility of each state as well as of the central government. Some centrally conducted institutions offer quality education that can compete with the best in the world. Despite shortcomings, the Indian education system has boldly experimented with ways in which to bridge the differences in a society characterised by caste/ class/ gender and ethnic differences. Therefore, while I critique some of the blatant shortfalls of the Indian education system, I would also like to focus on its struggle to establish a just society. One obvious strategy that the Indian education system has adopted is its affirmative action programme, by means of which students from the deprived sections of society are given advantages over others from more privileged backgrounds. There is today a raging battle in India about this issue, with attempts being made by the government to extend the benefits to the premier institutes of the country. The other strategy adopted to establish a just society lies in the experiments conducted in the Indian education system to integrate community development into higher education. Since my aim here is specifically to look at the *interventions* that universities can make in community action, I will begin by discussing the *rationale* for the experiments, as indicated in the policy guidelines, and the political and philosophical orientations of the question of community engagement, as well as some important experiments. In this regard I will be drawing upon my knowledge as the former vice chancellor of the SNTD Women's University.

## **POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

In the post-Independence era, India adopted a socialist pattern of development. The impact of these policies can be discerned in its educational policies. Seen as an agent of social change, education was defined as going beyond the development of the individual to initiate the transformation of society and as a means of establishing equity. This socialist/ democratic concern for equity is reflected in the education policies formulated from the time of the Radhakrishnan Commission Report of 1949 to the present. The *National Policy on Education* (1968), *Draft, National Policy on Education* (1979) and *National Policy on Education* (1986)<sup>5</sup> emphasise that education is a means of equalising opportunities and enabling the backward and the underprivileged groups in society to improve their prospects. Education is thus seen as a means of ensuring social justice (Government of India, 1964-66 and 1992).

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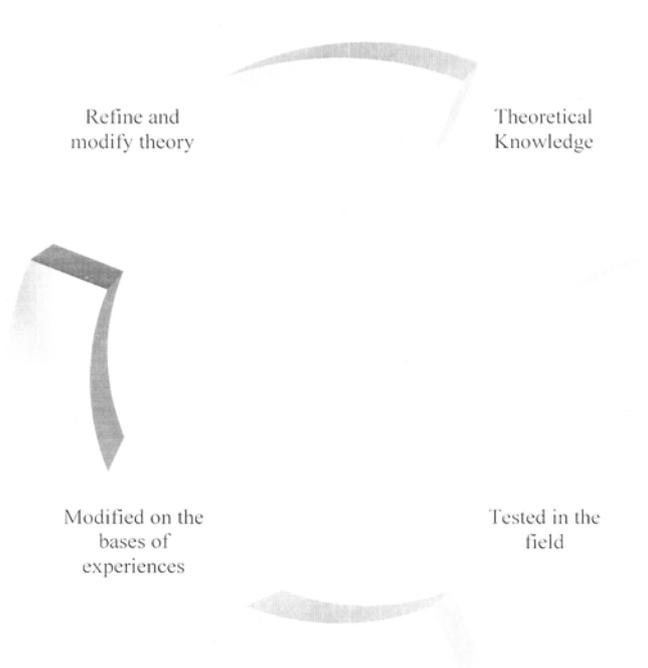
<sup>5</sup> All: Government of India.

Translated into concrete terms, the socialist underpinning of educational philosophy justifies the existing affirmative action programme within educational institutes, whereby students from the socially deprived sectors of society are admitted even though they have lesser marks than other students and are subsequently given concessions in fees etc. *The National Policy on Education 1986, as Modified in 1992* (Government of India, 1998) states that education is a means of removing disparities. Therefore, there is a need to “equalize educational opportunities by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far” (Government of India, 1998: paragraph 1,). But more importantly for our discussion here, India’s education policies justify the introduction of extension activities in colleges, such as the National Service Scheme (NSS) for undergraduate students, whereby students are expected to participate in some nation-building activities. In India, university education is seen as comprising three critical aspects: 1) research or the discovery of new knowledge; 2) teaching or the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another; and 3) extension (i.e. becoming agents of social/ political transformation). This fits the bill for community engagement of higher education.

## PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS

The idea that tertiary educational institutions should participate in community service springs from the fusion of Gandhian ideals of holistic education of the head, the heart and the hands with the socialist understanding that knowledge is best imbibed through action for social change. Knowledge of the social reality is not seen as received passively in the classroom or lecture hall, but through community participation. This understanding is an attempt to break away from the elitist model of education that India inherited from its colonial past. The ‘downward filtration theory’ of education adopted during the British period assumed that education would percolate down to the masses. It also saw education as a means to enable Indians to fill subordinate positions in society. By contrast, the model sought to be developed was to make education a vibrant instrument of social change. The model is best reflected in the following circle of knowledge.

**Diagram 1: Circle of knowledge**



There is another dimension to this circle of knowledge. This is the understanding that the universities must democratise education. The creation of knowledge is not the business of academics alone. There is a need to recover indigenous knowledge from the grassroots, to hear the voices from below, to learn from them and to represent their experiences in the process of knowledge construction. Essentially, the circle of knowledge is an attempt to point to the power equation in the creation and propagation of knowledge and to develop a more inclusive paradigm for the process of knowledge construction.

Therefore, community development is not to be approached with the idea of educating the people and providing them with training, but with the humility that seeks knowledge from those who may not have the academic credentials but have knowledge and experience on their side. Poverty, for instance, cannot be understood only in terms of distribution of wealth; it can most poignantly be understood from the everyday survival strategies and deprivations of a poor household.

## CHALLENGES

The following challenges can be identified with regard to community engagement in higher education:

- In the Indian context, to create the opportunity to carry out work of direct social utility within the context of the curriculum, debating the social relevance of British education, called for revolutionary, root-level thinking.
- It is necessary to identify what needs to be done and where, by higher education, for what purpose, and with what effect – so that the linkage can be established between community engagement and higher education. Know the practical problems involved and the processes to surmount them, and also judge the benefits, and thus can the road map of community engagement work be drawn.
- The remoteness of the university and the alienation of the educated must be cured by intelligent action and social involvement of the universities – they must be the *resource centres* for community engagement.
- It is educational innovation and an adventure for higher education institutions to participate in community engagement. Higher education must dedicate itself to identifiable social goals, with academic consciousness and social conscience.
- The public credibility of universities depends upon their being seen to be doing something of recognisable benefit for society. Social relevance, which is required, is legitimate in professional institutions as a form of repayment to society. Social action on the part of higher education may result in higher education becoming the agency of greater understanding, peace and non-conflict. Genuine and pressing societal needs can be met by positively influencing public opinion.
- The danger of students being used as cheap labour or political pawns must be guarded against; a new type of humanitarianism must emerge. A re-identifying with the community must result in practical service. The ethos of community engagement must enter higher education institutions, to help students become caring citizens.
- Often lack of knowledge of the community, the educational process, and its attainment may actually lead to reinforcing prejudices. Thus, to achieve participation by the community and a holistic approach, it is necessary to provide students with full information regarding wider social context and the specific community placement.

- The mesh of community engagement must involve the trio: parent, child (student) and teacher, with a joint role for community representatives. Rethinking preconceptions and prejudices is necessary for all parties, and social conscience is also a central tenet. Thus realignment of thinking for those involved in community engagement is a process of practice – slow, cautious and gradual educational regeneration.

## **THE SNTD EXPERIENCE OF INITIATING SOCIAL CHANGE**

Before I begin to describe how the SNTD Women's University – the oldest women's university in India – developed its community development programmes, I wish to describe the roots of the university, for they offer lessons for the present.

Established in 1916, the university from the outset drew inspiration from the nationalist/ social reform ethos of the time and undertook bold educational experiments. The University's founder, Dr Dhondo Keshav Karve, sought to establish gender equity by educating women. But his vision went far beyond the elitist moorings of university education elsewhere to open its doors to those women who were condemned to live as widows, under the darkest shadow of socio-economic and cultural discrimination. Aiming to equip women with the idea of selfless service to the community, Karve recommended a broad-based liberal education with a strong vocational component.

In the course of its development the university has continued to develop innovations in higher education: 1) the medium of instruction was the mother tongue; 2) it followed a flexible curriculum and instated subjects like domestic sciences and child development as university subjects; and 3) it introduced the hitherto unheard of system of self-study to enable women confined to their homes to access education. It should also not be forgotten that the growth of the university was set against the backdrop of India's historical struggle for Independence. Inspired by the Gandhian vision, many of the university's students participated in the non-violent struggle for India's freedom, and the villagers joined equally strong in thought and numbers – thus beginning the community integration era.

Given this background it should come as no surprise that the SNTD Women's University has evolved its community development programmes and since the 1970s has launched various experiments in community work. In fact, the University Grants Commission (UGC), the apex body governing university education in India, adopted the model developed by SNTD as the model to be introduced in other universities all over India. At SNTD, the Research Centre for Women's Studies and Rural Development was established at a point when the relevance of separate institutions of higher education for women was questioned. Through the introduction of Women's Studies, it was hoped that women would find the necessary theoretical space to conceptualise and to build a database on women, and the Department of Rural Development interwove the community aspect into the study programme.

Needless to say, these first bold steps taken by the SNTD Women's University were made possible by the overall optimism that permeated the 1970s. In response to the demands of the women's liberation movement, the United Nations had declared 1975 as International Women's Year and held the historic World Conference of Women in Mexico. The United Nations Plan of Action drawn up that year called for worldwide research on women, to inquire into the adverse impact of development on rural women in the various parts of the World. In India, as it is well known, the findings of the *Towards Equality Report* (Government of India, 1975) resulted in research initiatives being taken up by the Indian Council for Social Sciences. But what must not be forgotten is that the national and international sanction for the establishment of these studies was in response to the pressures from the women's movement! This point is crucial in understanding Women's Studies' pedagogical compulsions and some of the current community concerns. It was at the first National Conference held in 1981 at the SNTD Women's University that women activists, teachers and professionals called for the establishment of Women's Studies centres/ cells in the university system.

## COMMUNITY STUDIES IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

The introduction of such Women's Studies centres/ cells in the university system by the UGC was to make university education relevant to the prevailing social realities. These Studies were to be the vehicle for promoting non-hierarchical modes of knowledge generation. Thus the mandate given to Women's Studies centres was to conduct research, teaching and extension activities. These three-fold activities would not, however, be disparate; rather, they would feed into one another and enrich the process of knowledge construction. Thus the research conducted by the centres into community experiences would feed into the classroom teaching. At the same time, the extension activities undertaken as participatory action research would enhance the exchange of knowledge and ideas between the university system and the community. It was hoped that the research conducted by the centres would revitalise the knowledge generation process of the universities and enrich the different disciplines, while the teaching and the extension processes would contribute to social change. This model can be represented as in the diagram below.

Diagram 2: Research, Teaching and Extension Education



One of the earliest educational experiments that the SNTD conducted was to take the university to the village. In the course of time, the initiative evolved into a *learning laboratory*, wherein the students of not just the SNTD Women's University, but also the other adjoining universities, gained theoretical insights by working in the field, on a collaborative and co-operative basis.

## THE PROGRAMME

It is inevitable that, as a research institute, the university began its rural initiatives with research. It conducted a need-based survey of the region as early as 1976. Based on the findings of the study, University management initiated education, health and income-generation activities in the nine villages. With the steady expansion of the scope of these activities over time, the university felt that the rural development programme could be developed as a distinct department. Therefore, the university converted the programme into a fully-fledged Centre for Rural Development (CRD) of the

university. The community in which the CRD works includes the tribal communities, intermediary caste groups and upper castes. The people are mainly horticulturists and the majority of the tribal groups are either landless labourers or marginal farmers. The ownership of land is largely in the hands of the landlords or the rich traders. In recent years there has been a steady immigration into the region as small-scale industries have developed in the nearby towns. Despite this economic development, there is unemployment/ under-employment in most of the rural areas.

In the last two and a half decades, the CRD has worked on many levels; primarily committed to raising awareness among communities about their rights, it conducts awareness generation, legal literacy and health awareness programmes for all. To make this training programme more effective, it has (with funds from the British Council) developed an audiovisual cell. Additionally, to help make women economically self-reliant, the CRD has provided training for women in simple but useful traditional as well as non-traditional skills. Since 1983, the CRD has conducted several skills development programmes, with funds provided by the District Rural Development Agency, under the Training Rural Youth for Self Employment scheme. Through this programme, over 1 000 women, children and youth have received training in book-binding, stationery manufacturing, carpentry, block printing, tailoring, weaving, embroidery, machine knitting and masonry work as well as radio, stove and sewing machine repair. To enable these people to market their skills the CRD has helped them to develop a co-operative, which is managed locally.

Recognising that the empowerment of women requires multiple inputs, the interventions made by the CRD are multi-varied: 1) it has conducted gender sensitisation programmes for a local bureaucracy; 2) it has provided pre-school education and crèches for children of working mothers in tribal villages; 3) it has provided legal/ family counselling services (wherein issues of marital violence, divorce, desertion, separation, alcoholism and maintenance are resolved); 4) it has organised health camps; 5) it has established a production centre; and 6) it has interfaced with the bureaucracy to enable men and especially women from the entire 'taluka' to access the various government schemes.

## **ENABLING MECHANISMS**

In this section, I list a range of enabling mechanisms for community engagement in higher education. While the enabling mechanisms are drawn from my experience at the SNDT Women's University with engagement with rural communities, they are applicable to urban communities too.

All developing countries present the (unique) challenge of taking education to the villages – through nurturance and dedication. This challenge can only be taken on if the universities engage themselves and demonstrate the will to pave the inroads, literally and figuratively, and provide access to those marginalised in society.

Embedded in the concept of community engagement is the understanding that education should blend theoretical knowledge with practical experience – perhaps democratise education through engagement with the communities.

It must be the initiative of the university to make higher education responsive to the needs of the community – to the grassroots of the university's existence. The engaged university must work towards evolving a 'learning laboratory' in the field. Such experiments will articulate the commitment to the process of socio-economic and political transformation (for example, as already mentioned, the nationalist movement of India by Gandhi).

Need-based surveys are crucial, despite the fact that some of the problems to be identified may be staring us in the face! Good, intensive community engaged work will be contingent on community need fulfilment.

Universities should develop mobile audiovisual programmes, and provide training in traditional skills to keep them alive. A major enabling mechanism would be to develop several skills development programmes, creating employment through 'cottage industries'.

Here, training the university students for such involvement is essential. As any products created through such cottage industries must be marketed, marketing skills too must be exercised; perhaps for economic reliance, co-operatives should be formed, micro-lending schemes drawn up, and self-help groups be formed, to locate new occupations.

A focus group must work on sex education, considering the significant threat of AIDS, spread by prostitution and other factors. Health camps should be a regular feature of community engagement.

The sensitisation of local bureaucracy, and a neutral interface with the bureaucracy for government schemes, must be facilitated by the university.

Financial support from world organisations, local governmental resources, trusts, industry and the like should be used to facilitate universities' community engagement efforts.

The colleges/ universities may adopt entire communities, and the students should be involved in all the phases of empowerment. This presupposes pre-training of students, for action, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Each university department may locate its areas of specialisation for community engagement, wherever possible in its subject curriculum. Multi-departmental, multi-college collaborative work is a strong possibility, and must not be overlooked.

Community engagement must be a continuous process; thus continuing adult education programmes must be a constant factor, along with other 'four to fourteen', and adolescent and youth community programmes.

Students should be encouraged to be involved in community engagement initiatives during their vacations.

Community engagement must be part of universities' undergraduate and postgraduate curricula. Designing and conducting orientation courses and refresher courses, seminars, workshops and conferences on community engagement are all important. Publications need to result from community engagement initiatives, in order to make public the various achievements of such initiatives. An engaged university must constantly conduct training needs assessment, identify trainers, provide training of trainers, and assess trainers through certification or merit rating for reinforcement.

Policies may be evolved for planning for bureaucracy/ governmental vision, in order to ensure that projects are up-scaled where appropriate.

As mentioned above, training of workers is as important as identifying locals to be a part of the implementation programme. Most relevant to this is environment building for the motivation of students and the community; in particular, the trust of the community needs to be won prior to the teaching-learning process. The university staff members leading community engagement initiatives need to have sustained interest, unflagging enthusiasm and courage to face the hazards of rural living and local folklore. Confidence and willing co-operation must be won from the locals; the faith and acceptance of the programmes by the community will prove to be the seeds that will ensure that universities might reap the harvest of community engagement efforts. Involvement in community engagement is not a single faceted responsibility – it is not even multifaceted but *kaleidoscopic* in nature; because higher education's commitment to provide help is not only for material welfare, but

also for improving quality of life and perhaps for ushering in a new belief structure for the rural participants, within a framework of social action and change.

Our students must be like the Peace Corps youth, or the Gandhian social worker, in order that community engagement might be the channel for higher education to achieve integration, inclusivity and self-sustaining growth on the part of society, while contributing to strengthening social justice.

A critical assessment of the activities of the SNTD CRD since 1981 indicates that it has worked closely with the state government, central government and various funding agencies to initiate social change in the region. Acting as a catalyst, it has interfaced with the government to ensure that the various government schemes reach the poorer sections of society.

Our core objectives remain as follows:

- To sensitise the community on gender issues;
- To enable the community to have a knowledge of their rights;
- To develop employment/ income generation opportunities for women and men;
- To enhance people's earning capacities through vocational/ skills training courses;
- To build entrepreneurship (this would include knowledge of banking and management of small enterprises);
- To provide legal aid and family counselling services;
- To encourage all – especially women – to actively participate in the local self-government; and
- To inform and inspire communities by means of AIDS awareness programmes.

Another strategy that SNTD has adopted is to organise women into self-help groups (SHGs). It is proposed that the villagers of these SHGs will (through a series of systematic training programmes) be introduced to the concept of saving and internal lending to meet their consumption and economic needs. In the course of time, these groups will be able to avail themselves of bank loans to start micro-enterprises. Some of the additional inputs that these groups will require are skills training in banking and management of small enterprises, and vocational training. Over time, we propose to develop partnerships with industries to up-scale the locals' earning capacities. Finally, in keeping with SNTD's core commitment to changing the prevailing gender relationships in society, we would like to empower women with knowledge of their rights and deal with some of the more serious issues of violence against women through the Family Counselling Cell, which we have set up with funds from the Social Welfare Board. So far, under this programme we have trained people in making compost, and provided a beautician course. A few villages have already started internal lending and availed themselves of loans from the banks. Some of the enterprises that they have started include a general store, a snack bar, a cold drink stall, and contracts for decorating sandals.

## **QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

In this section, I provide pointers to ensure management of the quality of community engagement initiatives.

Each community engagement project must be able to pass the scrutiny of audit – academic and otherwise. Project operational records must be meticulously maintained at the university level.

Prior to the establishment of the project there must be a need-assessment survey of both the community and wider context within which the project would be established. Such a survey should include among other things: the culture of the region; the social structures; issues of land ownership (versus landlessness), rates of social mobility and migration; and levels and areas of employment.

Thereafter, the community engagement must be treated as a (rural) research initiative and offered full support in terms of the required infrastructure and human capacity.

In fact the university could develop the community engagement initiative into a fully fledged department, an area study department, an extra-mural department, or a Department of Rural Development in itself – a major step towards quality management of community engagement through a Centre for Community Education (Rural Development).

The university team needs to provide synergy – serving as the catalyst for the community engagement initiative to be well managed and successful. Local leadership must be encouraged, and community SHGs should be formed.

In terms of quality, academics need to bear in mind that the processes of community engagement serve to enrich both teaching and research, and application back in the field, resulting in an interactive, participatory, quality-enriched approach to managing the community engagement initiative.

For quality management of community engagement, it is important to have all partners in the initiative involved at all stages of the planning and implementation.

In India, we have the NSS at collegiate levels to promote social integration; the scheme has now been in existence for 40 years. Besides the social benefits to communities, the scheme has also effectively reduced crime and delinquency among the collegiate youth. Students began to work on neighbourhoods and communities to improve quality of life. When such awakening of social awareness happens naturally among students – as has been the case with those in the NSS – this serves to strengthen and sustain quality.

The NSS is a developmental scheme, today involving almost two million youth. It is connected with input of hours of work, and earns students ten marks credit in the annual examinations. However, the students participate voluntarily, showing enormous enthusiasm, passion and commitment, with little regard for the academic credit they will receive. The objective of the NSS is to develop students' characters through participation in community services and educate them to attain social consciousness through community engagement opportunities. The scheme promotes unity and integration of urban and rural. Most importantly, it familiarises the urban student youth with the realities of rural life.

Of course, when the scheme was introduced, no immediate outstanding advantages were seen – but over time the social benefits became apparent. Often in the case of community engagement, successes may be non-tangible at the start but over time the byproducts of such initiatives will talk for themselves. Thus positivity cannot be extracted, it will emerge! Community engagement is about social commitment and educational innovation, and is a fundamental requirement of higher education institutions, which must identify themselves with social goals and applied knowledge dispersal.

As mentioned above, monitoring can be an inbuilt mechanism – as in the SNTD experience – or can lie in other approaches.

It is important for universities to avoid attempting a sudden *coup* of community engagement programmes in the institution; it would be unhealthy and possibly dangerous for all parties concerned. Rather, a balance of boldness and care – matched by thoroughness of purpose and a steady and stable pace of implementation – is a safer, yet soldierly approach. The resulting initiative will have several objectives: maximisation of production by optimum utilisation of natural resources through appropriate skills management; maximum employment; minimal inequality; improvement of quality of life; development participation; social welfare; and humanistic evolution of mores and beliefs – in other words, a change in psyche and intellect on the part of participants!

Community engagement is one of the major salvation modes for developing countries – a strategy that will assist us in our progress towards developed country status!

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## Response

### **Mario Fernández de la Garza**

Director of Outreach, University of Veracruz and General Coordinator, Vasconcelos Project,  
Ministry of Education, Veracruz, Mexico

*Mario Fernández de la Garza provided a response to the paper by Rupa Shah. The following are the notes taken by the Scribe for this Plenary Session.*

Mario Fernández de la Garza praised Rupa Shah for her interesting and valuable ideas. He wished to endorse the idea of the circle of knowledge that she had presented. In expressing his support for Shah's idea, he quoted from her paper:

There is a need to recover indigenous knowledge from the grassroots, to hear the voices from below, to learn from them and to represent their experiences in the process of knowledge construction. Essentially, the circle of knowledge is an attempt to point to the power equation in the creation and propagation of knowledge and to develop a more inclusive paradigm for the process of knowledge construction.

Fernández de la Garza underscored that this is the real call for university education in developing countries. He explained that in Mexico, at the University of Veracruz, they understand community engagement in precisely this framework – of the university system and the community being mutually enhancing. He argued that universities have a role to play in elevating the quality of life of citizens, in the context of globalisation, without losing traditional knowledge. He explained that in Mexico community engagement involves going out of the classrooms and entering realities of communities, which in turn influences the epistemologies of education and research; thus community engagement, in entailing partnerships with communities, changes how people think and impacts on the curriculum. From community engagement, with the real exchange from community–university dialogue and with secular knowledge found in communities, comes feedback on social and economic needs, which in turn feed back into the content of the curriculum. Programmes need to be evaluated, indicators for community engagement created and cost benefits of community engagement considered.

Fernández de la Garza argued that it is vital to position the university in the collective mind for social relevance, which is the only way to deal with (for example, in the case of Mexico), migration or brain drain, and to become competitive in the job market. He endorsed Shah's closing words, and modified them slightly to include community engagement on the part of all aspects of the education system, rather than simply universities.

## Response

**John Kaburise**

Vice Chancellor, University for Development Studies, Ghana

*John Kaburise provided a response to the paper by Rupa Shah. The following are the notes taken by the Scribe for this Plenary Session.*

John Kaburise complimented Rupa Shah on a comprehensive paper, which provided a sense of the breadth of the idea of community engagement. He emphasised that in such a comprehension of community engagement, the institution is *out* in the community, doing things. He stated that he shared with Shah's experience that his own institution had also been established with the specific mandate of engaging in community engagement. As the only institution in Ghana dedicated to development, learning and research, the UDS is isolated and constantly fighting to justify its existence. It is seen as an aberration; it sees Ghana's other universities as dinosaurs!

Kaburise added a number of challenges to the list that Shah had developed, including that the whole conceptualisation of knowledge has had to be re-examined and reformulated. For example, at the UDS they recognise indigenous science as knowledge; and therefore one of the challenges has been to identify candidates for Honour's and Doctoral degrees who had not been in a classroom. Another challenge for the UDS has been that of vindicating the institution's right to exist as a tertiary institution. He emphasised the importance of the university engaging with local communities; in this regard, prior consultation has proved an important enabling mechanism, central to success at the UDS.

Kaburise explained that in his institution, the academic year is three trimesters, with two being theory-based and the third comprising eight weeks of living in the community, supervised. Students write a paper and lead a seminar in the community, and are graded on this work. It is compulsory for each student and every member of staff to be involved. He added that the university has adopted an integrated model, in that various disciplines are integrated. The university awards a degree in integrated development studies. Students are given credit for participation in the programme. The university has a dedicated centre for community relations.

Included in the challenges has been that of capacity to administer the programme; as it is spread out across the country, it is difficult to rely on assistance. Further, this means that there is variable quality of assessment/ grading of students in the field, with accompanying challenges relating to quality in this regard.

## Introductory Remarks

**Ebrahim Rasool**

Premier of the Western Cape, SA

Let me start off by appreciating the presence of our Minister of Education, Minister Naledi Pandor, the vice chancellors who are here, the deputy vice chancellors, leaders of higher education, and leaders of JET and of the Council on Higher Education.

I want to say that Jo Lazarus wrote me a letter, in which he said I could speak on the importance of collaboration between provincial government and higher education institutions to address the most important economic concerns in the region. Now that's a bit too much for me. So what I shall do is I shall continue where the Kuyasa Kids entertainers left off, and continue entertaining you. But I can't do it with song and dance, so I'll tell a story, and maybe you can unravel the relevance of that story to what you are doing in higher education.

It's really the story of one very dark night, when a man walks down the road, and under a streetlamp sees another man crouching and obviously searching for something. So he goes up to him and he says: "Listen. Can I help you? It's dark, it's stormy. Let me help you".

The other man says: "Well I've lost my car keys".

So they scour that area. And for ten minutes, they don't find anything. After 15 minutes, they don't find anything. And then eventually the one man says to the other: "Listen, man, we've scoured this area. We've looked everywhere here. Are you sure you lost the keys here?"

And the other man replies: "I don't think I lost them here, but this is the only place that the light is shining".

That is maybe the challenge of the world; to look for our keys where we really lost them, and to admit that they won't be found in the areas traditionally lit up – they won't be found where the answers have been before; that it's going to take a lot of courage to take each other's hands and to look in the unlit areas; and that it's going to take brave people, leadership, in order to look where the keys were *really* lost.

I say that, because we have to operate, in the world that we live in today, as it *is*, not as we want it to be, and not as we conceptualised it before, and not as we would like to see it; and understand how the world has changed, and understand our role within it. Particularly those of us in Africa – those of us in the developing world, those of us who are designated 'black' in the world today – must understand that, if we are going to help to find the keys, if we are going to help to find answers, if we are going to help to find a way to deal with the challenges of the world, as it is today; then we have to understand firstly, that there has been a massive marginalisation of intellectuals, and many of us form part of that marginalisation. We do not speak from a position of strength. We speak from a position where we have been marginalised, often dominated, and often not heard. And so we want to enter the debate, from the *premise* of marginalisation. If we do not recognise that, then we will fool ourselves that we have a voice, that we are being listened to, and that we are making an impact. And so it sets, as a starting point, our own need to overcome our own marginalisation, in the great debate about how we deal with the world.

The second point that I think we need to move from, that constitutes this contemporary reality, is that nothing exists in isolation. Everything is either interconnected, or interdependent. You cannot, for example, introduce banking reforms, without understanding the need for social justice, and the

need for greater equality in the world. And so some of us may be technically comfortable, in our universities, dealing with banking reforms, without understanding how we must impact on the presuppositions that we need in a changed world, if the world is going to be gentler, if the world is going to be kinder to the poorest of the poor and those who have started to be marginalised. So we don't only have to overcome our *own* marginalisation; we also have to be actors in overcoming the marginalisation of more than half of the world. And therefore we perpetuate our own marginalisation and the marginalisation of those on whose behalf we purport to speak, by continuing the silence, by continuing the lack of integration in our disciplines, in our sub-disciplines, in our faculties and in our higher education institutions.

I think that the third reality we've got to work from is that diversity has, to a large extent, become the essence of survival. Monocultures are there, but monocultures dominate, they isolate, they alienate, as the stock way in which they survive. They necessarily survive by dominating the other. We have to understand that, and also that it is pluralistic societies – their embracing of diversity and difference – that ensure general cultural survival. And so, in trying to overcome our marginalisation as intellectuals, in trying to overcome the marginalisation of those on whose behalf we ought to be developing ideas, there is probably one important lesson; the zeal of righteousness and the fanaticism of revolutionaries may not help us. In fact, they may end up in tyranny.

So how do we deal with this righteous cause that we have, this dedication that we must show, not fall into tyranny, and yet be able to overcome all of these marginalisations? We have to analyse and deal with the world differently. In dealing with it as it is, we must understand that the world is not simply divided into North and South, into this country and that country, into this religion and that religion, into this culture and that culture, into this political party and that political party (tempting as the ease of it may appear to us); that, probably, a more correct description of how the world is divided, is that it is divided into mindsets, approaches, perspectives, paradigms. And so, for example, the one that we all base whatever we do on, would be the great orthodoxies and the great traditions, as one mindset paradigm approach to life. However, if we are going to base all our work on orthodoxy or tradition, then we are going to be subjected to the same limitations that orthodoxy and tradition are subjected to. Raymond Williams says, for example, that orthodoxies can't push back boundaries, they can't extend boundaries, they can't cross boundaries; they can only confirm boundaries. And so that is one mindset with which we are dealing. And often, because orthodoxy or tradition can't do that, they are anti-intellectual. I am not saying that that becomes the enemy, but we have to understand that as the limitation, and that it cannot simply be adopted as a mindset. But they go across religions, across cultures, across countries, across North and South. In the same way, fundamentalism is a mindset. Some Muslims may have perfected it, but they certainly don't have a monopoly on it. And so the point that I'm making is that fundamentalism is part of the expression of ideologies of certitude. As J.K. Galbraith says: "The more uncertain people are, the more dogmatic they become", because they tend to hold on to the few certainties they have, they exaggerate certainty, they use it as a weapon against others, they enter their certainties into combat with other people's certainties.

The point I have been making is that part of our task is to be able to understand both the limitations of orthodoxy and the dangers of the ideology of certitude. Thus, we have to understand how to do things differently. How do we avoid these dangers? We avoid them by producing the kind of intellectuals who can respond to the challenges of the world as it is, and anticipate where the world's trajectory is taking us, and add the necessary intellectual resources and courage to intervene, if we believe that it is not necessarily taking us where it should be. Thus, developing such intellectuals becomes a major responsibility. Such intellectuals engage and transform at the same time, at every twist and turn in the evolution of civilizations. Intellectual movements, or intellectuals, have been able not only to posit new ideas, but to mobilise society with the excitement of those ideas, of those critiques, of those analyses. To lack intellectuals is to lack leadership. And when we lack that leadership, the world is engulfed in parochialism and sectarianism, as it is today. The table is laid for domination and control, not persuasion. The emergence of gurus begins to happen – leaders who are always right. It's the death of criticism,

because any difference is seen as a personal attack. If we think that the institutions we lead are free of these mindsets of orthodoxy, of certitude, and so forth, call to mind the debates we have at leading institutions. Debates about access, and how to use what mechanism to limit, or to control, or to direct access; debates about language. Call to mind the emergence of priesthoods of experts to defend and to dominate debates – technical experts, scientific experts, and so on. They arrange themselves almost as priesthoods peddling truths, in a way that is no different from the orthodoxies or the certitude that we are dealing with. And so we also need to measure how much time we spend conserving the old, rather than exploring and anticipating the new and the future.

So, these are the mindsets that challenge any progressive government. Increasingly we cannot operate, any longer, on the simple binaries that dominate our debates. The obvious binary is state versus civil society, but there are others; public versus private, the market versus the family, and so forth. And maybe what we need is more fluid understandings of life, if we are to rise to the challenge of both globalisation and localisation. Again those two cannot be simple binaries. Globalisation deals with the flows of money, of communication, of products, of people, of ideas, of cultures. And almost in response to that, localisation wants to speak about what is on the ground – regional identities, lifestyle particularities etc. And how do we shape out of all of these debates, to end up an ethical politics, not simply a set of rules, not simply based on the binaries of state versus civil society? I raise this, because we are each other's keepers, to a large extent. We don't, any of us, have a monopoly on truth in an uncertain world. How then do we shape an ethical politics out of it all, that's a framework for living, a framework for doing, a framework for doing the right thing, and then a framework for mutually embracing the uncertainty that we all confront in the world as it is today?

In deciding on the focus of this speech, I could have spoken about film studios and call centres and how universities could produce people for all of those things; but you know all about that. I thought that maybe the one thing that the Western Cape – in all its diversity that tends towards division – needs more than anything else, is a cadre of people, a cadre of institutions able to rise above the division and deal with the mindsets that are at the heart of the disjunctures that present themselves in society. Thank you very much!

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## Keynote Address

**Naledi Pandor, MP**  
Minister of Education, SA

Good evening. It's really nice to be with you all. I wanted to start in protocol terms by recognising Jo Lazarus, because I think if it wasn't for him, we wouldn't all be here.

Then, of course, Premier Rasool: it is indeed a great honour and pleasure to be with you. It's really great to be with you, Premier, and thank you for being with the education family. To the vice chancellors, the deputy vice chancellors that are here today, Nick Taylor and colleagues, to all the distinguished guests, my special advisors, all the wonderful people who are here today: it's so nice to be with higher education colleagues, because I know so many of you.

I am really pleased that the CHE and JET are sponsoring this conference, to discuss community engagement in higher education. I think that it is a first for South Africa. I think that all of us, in this room, would agree that there is an urgent need for all institutions of higher learning in the country to really get down to a dialogue on the content and meaning of 'community engagement'. I know that there are hundreds of examples of various programmes, initiatives that universities run, and so on. But my reason for calling for a *deeper dialogue* is because I would really like to see us move to the kind of centre that Gibbons referred to in his paper, yesterday.<sup>6</sup> What we tend to have, and talk about, is a 'community service' notion, rather than a 'community engagement' one. In other words, it is a 'needy' definition of the community and a 'giving' or 'able' notion of the university, and I think we need to move to a different level and character of engagement. I am hopeful that this conference will assist us, as South Africans, in giving deeper shape to our own responses – and that it will infuse this dialogue – which will lead us to really giving practical effect to what is meant by 'community engagement'.

Even the *concepts* are different, because often, in our country, we speak of 'community service', and rarely do we speak about engagement. And I think that *that* discourse – of community engagement – indicates the kind of shift that this conference is beginning to talk about.

I have also noted, when I engaged with some of our practitioners in higher education, that there is somewhat of a reluctance to deliberate on this notion, and I think this requires some debate and agreement among ourselves. I think some of the problem that we often meet, when we talk to colleagues in our universities (some colleagues, not all) is that many of them are concerned about the meaning of the notion 'community'; because 'community' has, in South Africa, been appropriated as somewhat of a political concept and has become over-politicised. So, almost, the sense is: community means 'black', community means 'disadvantaged'; and there is a weariness about really looking at whether a university has a space in that regard. I think we should not allow this notion, or our interpretation or understanding of the appropriation, to deny us the opportunity to use the expertise and skill we have to effectively play a role with the communities throughout the country, in engaging with a range of issues that confront us.

I think, as Gibbons said in his paper, that we need to see community engagement as a core value of our universities. And I also support his notion that indeed there is somewhat of a paradox in following such a route: "an apparent paradox", he terms it. It is so, because universities often see themselves as institutions that must remain somewhat protected from access by those who don't 'belong'. Thus, if the university opens up too much, if the engagement is too wide, then there

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<sup>6</sup> For the full conference paper, see these Proceedings, SESSION 1: OPENING PLENARY, Speaker: Michael Gibbons – *Engagement as a Core Value in a Mode 2 Society*.

begins to be a notion of a 'challenge to our autonomy' and a response along the lines of "Let's close off access, so that only those we accept should be received. But for the other – we would want to keep them out". But of course we also know that the paradox arises not just because of this notion of keeping ourselves apart, but because there *has* been an engagement, so the issue is: "What are we actually talking about? What is this 'deeper community engagement'?"

I think for us, as South Africa, what we are really asking for is to see whether, as higher education, it is possible for our engagement to make a contribution to this increasing notion of a developmental state and to see what form of support we could give to its emergence, to its ability to address the challenges that our society faces. Thus, I begin by saying that the demand and call we make on higher education is not a political imposition; it is not a threat to autonomy – it is rather a partnership in addressing the challenges our country faces.

Now, it is fascinating that Gibbons, in his leadup to delivering his paper, referred to a politician. I am fascinated that he spoke of MPs and their, at times, wariness of universities. The notion that we cannot hold meetings – political meetings – on a university campus, because we disrupt academic freedom, we disrupt autonomy – this is a very peculiar notion! 'Apolitical academic freedom.' I do not quite understand what it is, but I see how these things can happen. Certainly, I think one would want to accept Gibbons's conclusion – that universities would not be able to maintain autonomy in a context where community is *kept out*. That is to say, it is, in fact, the community's support and knowledge of higher education that will protect the university's autonomy. My colleagues sometimes fight with me, when I say to them: "We have to teach deep levels of democracy in our society, if South Africa is to remain democratic". It is the *people* who will ensure that we do not abuse democracy. But if the people do not understand what democracy is, and what it seeks to achieve, then our country does not have much of a chance of a sustained democratic order. Similarly, this is what we mean about the link between community and autonomy. Engaging with community is not a threat! Engaging with communities is actually positive, and it would allow us, then, to support institutions in executing their mandate. Imagine a community that you have engaged with, to a high level of development initiatives, and I come along and wish to impose the councillor from the Western Cape as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town; if you as a university were deeply engaged with the community, the community, knowing the capabilities of that particular politician, would rise up and say: "No. That cannot be done". Similarly, if you as a university wished to appoint a member of the Governing Council in a university, and that member was well known for criminal conduct, the community would rise up and say "No" – depending on the university's level of engagement with the community. Therefore, we need to ensure that this new context of community engagement delivers for us institutional autonomy, but also ensures the social embeddedness to which Gibbons referred (not the Bush 'embeddedness', not the USA in Iraq embeddedness); the embeddedness of a deep communication, understanding and interaction in delivering positive development in our society.

However, I also think that for many of us in our community, this engagement means that, as a community, we would then have intellectual resources available to us; not just within the university, but outside it as well. My nightmare, as Minister of Education, is our 30 000 schools, and what we do about quality within them. Now imagine if, in every School Governing Body throughout the country, we had one person who had some level of education – because in the case of the majority of our schools, we have left them to be managed by communities that have no access to education. So imagine if the educated in the communities saw it as their purpose to assist these schools to come out of their problem of poor quality and ineffectiveness. We really, I believe, can develop a very exciting and dynamic set of relationships, between higher education and our communities. And I think that the intellectual leadership that higher education offers can guarantee South Africans full freedom. But if our intellectuals close themselves off from our people, we will not have that intellectual opportunity to develop at our highest levels.

We have been very fortunate in South Africa, I think, in the past 12 years, in that there has been remarkable transformation in higher education. Certainly, there has been a great deal of

transformation in the student profile, with some movement in the staff profile – not enough at the senior levels yet, particularly with reference to women, but nevertheless some movement forward. Certainly, too, there has been progress in the number of graduates, although if you look at the recent inaugural lecture by Ian Scott,<sup>7</sup> you would understand that we are not doing as well as we should with throughput. And, therefore, although we are seeing increased passes by young people – more and more black graduates, more and more female graduates – the failure rates in our higher education institutions are actually quite frightening. So, there is a challenge for us there as well. We also have seen some transformation in the democratic culture of our institutions. Nevertheless, I think one of the things – despite the excellent progress I referred to – that continues to dominate our discourse in higher education is that we have really *focused much more* on access, equity, issues of success, quality of programmes, and so on; we have not given sufficient attention, in my view, to my pet subject, curriculum transformation, or to community engagement. And I believe *much* more needs to be done by higher education to address *these* particular areas as integral parts of higher education progress.

We had a conference recently, hosted by the Department of Education, on strengthening the study of Africa, in South Africa and on the African continent. What we were trying to do was to address the *need* to recast our curricula, in order to make them far more responsive to our context and to the realities both of our country and our continent.

My colleagues in Cabinet often tell me of their conversations with students in some of our universities. One of the ministers, Tony, was very excited to meet a young woman who told him: “Minister, I’m interested in working in your area of work. I’m doing Public Administration. I’m very, very keen to move into the area of Administration”.

And so the minister asked her: “What do you think of the IDPs? And how would you propose changing them? You’re in third year now, so what are your views on that particular aspect of local government?”

And she said: “IDP’s? No, I don’t know what that is”.

And he said: “What about MIG? (which is the Municipal Infrastructure Grant). What are your views on how it actually contributes to development in the poorest communities?”

And she said: “No, I don’t know that”.

He said: “You’re in third year. You’re almost finishing your degree and you’d like to work in my sphere, but you don’t know all these policies, which drive development in South Africa today. What about the functions that are assigned in Schedule 5 of the Constitution? What is your view?”

And she said: “Schedule...What?”

What it illustrated to him was a real dissonance, between what is going on in our country and what we are teaching in our institutions – that the two are not meeting. And his bet was that, if you were to ask that third-year student about policies in the United Kingdom, or in the United States of America, the student might know much more than she actually knew about *our* country and *its* systems and structures. So it does suggest a need for us to really problematise the degree to which context plays a role in what we do. Not that it should be the *only* thing, but it has to be a part of what is done in higher education.

I think that all of us would be aware that many in our constituencies believe that insufficient attention is being given to this particular issue of responsiveness. It is important, I think, that our

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<sup>7</sup> 23 August 2006, University of Cape Town.

communities see our universities as important parts of the intellectual capital of South Africa. The recent protest, in Pretoria, around the Mamelodi campus has been quite instructive in that, finally, it was the adults in the community who called the vice chancellor and asked him to explain what it was he intended to do with that campus. Students were totally incoherent and angry in their responses, but when the vice chancellor explained to the adults in that community; it was amazing, the turn-around that you began to see. So I think that engagement, that notion of relating to people on the ground – engaging them – although it is not the subject of everything you want to do, is a strong part of the kind of support we need to find.

I also think that what community engagement achieves, among our young people, is that it assists in developing attitudes of social responsibility and awareness, both of the role of higher education in economic and social development, and of the role students can play through community engagement programmes. Why should it be left to government to run internship programmes, when we can involve students in practical community engagement before they leave university? Each year in the Department of Education we take 336 graduates who are unemployed; after six months of practical experience they are finding work. So all they need is some practical work experience, which they don't get – this is true for many young people in our country. It is absolutely vital that we make much more dynamic use of these opportunities. I am very excited to see some of the programmes that have begun to be developed: some of the legal services clinics at postgraduate level run by some institutions; some of the use of Health Sciences students in community healthcare programmes. There are indeed exciting programmes, which I think take us much further than we were seven years ago.

I think we need to proceed along the lines of: "Maybe I have a different interpretation of community engagement from the one that you have". In other words, it might be necessary for us to talk to each other and arrive at a common understanding – especially if you believe that I should fund any part of it!

Finally, I wish to say that, while our universities – particularly those that work with CHESP – have in the past few years introduced really very good programmes in this regard, it is vital that, in every institution, we begin to evaluate the levels of quality of some of the programmes that we have. Because, as I have said, some of them are steered in a deficit notion of community; some of the programmes are really quite awful; some are actually quite offensive. So I do think an assessment – of the quality of the programmes and the degree to which these programmes are integrated with the curriculum that the students follow – is vitally important for us to attend to.

Many students tend to wish not to be involved in community engagement programmes, because they see them as an add-on, not as an integral component of the degree programme that they have undertaken. So let us use the research we did in 1997; take up the broad principles we adopted then, and use them, because they are part of the best research we have done, in this country, on community engagement. So do make use of the work that has already been done.

Of course, there isn't only one path. There is a broad range of community engagement principles. The notions are diverse, *including* the use of internships, post-degree; what form of legal clinics you would set up; how you develop practical experience, through social work; which areas of focus you build; how much medical knowledge you would need to do social work, especially for HIV-positive people; and so on. That is to say, there is a whole range of links and interfaces that you can build into very exciting responses.

Finally, I support community engagement. I believe that it is a vital part of higher education activity, and if there is any way in which, in practical terms, we can assist you to make this a better reality higher education, from my side, I certainly am ready to assist. Thank you very much!

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## Higher Education, Community Service and Local Development

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### ABSTRACT

In today's global world, higher education institutions face new challenges associated with providing timely and appropriate responses to the urgent need for distributed learning opportunities for all. This paper argues that it is necessary to change the focus of university programmes, faculty, students and administrators – so that they can engage in the provision of knowledge services in poor communities. In Mexico, the University of Veracruz has dealt with these challenges by delineating an institutional strategy based on the notion that community engagement is the *essence* of the main academic functions of a university: teaching, research and extension. The University of Veracruz has, since 1997, implemented a social outreach programme through the University Social Service Brigades. As this paper explains, the Brigades comprise undergraduate students who have completed their academic studies and who must by law meet social service requirements; groups of five to seven students receive scholarships from the university and reside in the community for a year. These resident students come from all academic fields of the university and, to date, more than 25 academic fields have been represented in the project. The University Brigades experience has provided valuable guidelines for the strategy – adopted as an instrument of social policy by the Secretary of Education of Veracruz – to link the tasks of education and community work in the state of Veracruz: the Vasconcelos Project (the idea of the first author of this document). The paper concludes by introducing the Vasconcelos Project, which is based on a combination of community work and the use of state-of-the-art information and communication technologies. Equipped with full information services (15 laptop computers) and satellite connectivity, the mobile (or itinerant) Vasconcelos classrooms are installed on buses outfitted for all-terrain travel and can reach even the most isolated communities of Veracruz. The mobile classrooms are backed by professional Service Brigade workers.

### KEYWORDS

compulsory social service  
distributed learning  
information and communication technologies  
mobile knowledge services in poor communities to support learning and leadership for social organisation  
University of Veracruz, Mexico  
University Social Service Brigades  
Vasconcelos Project

## INTRODUCTION

In today's global world, where rapid socio-economic, technological and information-related changes are taking place in modern society, higher education institutions face new challenges – to provide timely and proper responses to an urgent need for distributed learning opportunities for all. Relevant knowledge, considered to be the most effective means for local empowerment and community self-sustained development, must be accessible to all sectors of the population in order to assure improved quality of life. To improve local capacities of less privileged communities means promoting individual and collective self-managed skills and self-esteem that facilitate the conditions necessary to ensure acceptable standards of health, nutrition, productivity, and family and community integration, and sound environmental indicators, as well as income distribution and assets procurement.

Another basic criterion for global world functioning is acknowledging *interdependence*. All nations and all sectors of a given society are interrelated. Economic growth depends on expanding differentiated markets. Larger and stronger markets depend on increased and better distributed consumption of goods and services. And increased national consumption depends on higher productivity and awareness, as well as availability of financial resources in a significantly wider array of the world population. Sustained development and quality of life for all nations in the long term depend on the way local communities, across the globe, deal effectively with environmental issues, water supplies, public infrastructure, productivity, nutrition, health, family integration and, as a consequence, decreased migration. To promote local, self-sustained development in less privileged communities is to work for the wellbeing of all nations in an interdependent world.

## THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

What then is the role of higher education in the context of the pressing need for social distribution of relevant knowledge? What can universities do to play a significant role in the promotion of local empowerment for self-sustained development? How can these institutions contribute to certifying differential levels of relevant knowledge among members of a given community and evaluating the social impact of their engagement with such communities?

Historically, around the globe universities have concentrated on the training of the elite workforce. Most higher education programmes have been oriented to prepare the human resources needed to innovate, lead and manage production processes and services offered by the public, civil and private sectors. In many ways, graduates are taught either to work in modern sectors of societies or to modernise the processes and services that are expected to expand and deliver benefits to an increased number of citizens or customers. Higher education promotes modernisation and urban values; in many countries it is seen as a main factor in migration of the best men and women from rural to urban areas. With the exception of a few academic and professional degrees, most university degree graduates find attractive and challenging jobs in large urban settings.

In such a context, how is it possible to change the focus of university programmes, faculty, students and administrators so that they can engage in the provision of knowledge services in poor communities? What can be done in order to establish a global network of university programmes to enhance the use of best practices and technological transfer to strengthen local capacities for self-sustained development? In other words: How can universities put into practice the principle of *global knowledge for local action*?

In Mexico, the University of Veracruz has dealt with these issues by delineating an institutional strategy based on the notion that community engagement is the *essence* of the three main academic functions of a university – teaching, research and extension – and *not* a fourth function in itself. This new approach was a response to the fact that even when Mexican higher education had in the past traditionally defined *social service* – a version of community service – as a compulsory

student activity and a prerequisite for applying for graduation, the implementation of such service was not truly systematic and in many cases fell into a sort of bureaucratic procedure for graduates.

There are several premises underlying this alternative paradigm:

- Teaching programmes should incorporate the latest developments in the academic world in the different scientific, disciplinary and professional fields, but in order to promote relevant knowledge for students and graduates, such programmes must deal with issues pertaining to concrete problems – of specific regions and communities – located in their own context.
- Research activities of the academic personnel should provide support to both initiatives – the scientific, disciplinary and professional updating of teaching programmes, and the micro-regional identification of socio-economic indicators to address relevant issues for development – as well as paying attention to macro-variables and trends needed for comprehensive and horizontal community action plans.
- Extension programmes at the community level should be designed, implemented and evaluated using a bottom-up strategy that allows for active participation on the part of the members of the community, of the university (students, faculty and extension personnel) and of the various organisations (non-governmental, private and public) interested in establishing strategic alliances to support self-sustained development. The committed participation of local authorities is essential to assure permanent support and the generalisation of these types of services to neighbouring localities. Special attention must be given to avoiding a traditional, paternalistic approach, which is alienating and serves to undermine individual and collective self-esteem. Local empowerment is precisely based on the opposite notion: that knowledge, organised community action and impact evaluation are the quintessence of prosperity. The open dialogue among students, faculty, practitioners and community members is not only a must, but a learning object in itself.
- Pre- and post-implementation evaluations of community services are essential to measure their actual social impact; and the results should be used for the recycling of teaching, research and extension programmes, as well as for promoting future alliances with potential partners.
- Secured funding is a *sine qua non* of successful community engaged initiatives. So, universities must ensure that the budgetary needs of their extension programmes are met. However, considering that many academic institutions are not in a position to entirely or partially finance these types of activities, strategic alliances with governmental, private and civil organisations are of paramount importance. Shutting down a previously committed service programme in a given community for financial reasons brings with it negative impacts, such as the loss of confidence on the part of the community members, and reflects badly on the academic institution. Furthermore, if subsequently the project is to be revived, this requires tremendous efforts to restore the community's confidence and trust and takes time. Every community service project is nothing but an open commitment and a responsibility, on the part of the university, towards the community; thus, everything necessary must be done to ensure that the university fulfils its obligations.
- Beyond the profit of the beneficiary communities themselves, of the socially responsive university, and of the entire society that receives the gain of investing in knowledgeable communities, the largest benefits go to the students who participate in this type of social endeavour. Through their valuable experience, they are in a position to develop the proper skills and values to become socially aware citizens with an enhanced perspective to successfully face the local and global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **THE SOCIAL OUTREACH PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VERACRUZ**

The University of Veracruz has, since 1997, implemented a social outreach programme through the University Social Service Brigades (*BUSS* in Spanish).

The purpose of the University Brigades is to carry out community work in the most impoverished and marginalised communities, primarily comprising indigenous people, in the state of Veracruz.

The work of the Brigades is founded on a participatory method, which is in turn based on action–reflection–action; the purpose is to elicit the participation of the members of the community so that they may work together with the university students in social service activities that will contribute to the sustainable development of the community and encourage processes for self-management in the population.

Community work encompasses diverse areas, including education, health, nutrition, suitable housing, technology transfer, support for local productive activities, social organisation and recreation. Worth noting is that the University Brigades have provided dental services and basic laboratory analyses in communities that had never before received this type of health support for their populations.

The Brigades comprise resident students (undergraduate students who have completed their academic studies and who by law must meet social service requirements). These resident students come from all academic fields of the university. To date, more than 25 academic fields have been represented in the project by resident students carrying out multidisciplinary community work.

Although most members of the Brigades are resident students, in some cases there are also participants who are still in the final stages of their undergraduate degrees. This helps them gain a broader and more comprehensive perspective and knowledge of their respective fields of study.

The Brigades model consists of five to seven resident students living in a particular community for a year and receiving a scholarship from the university. The very fact that the students reside in the communities ensures community acceptance, for the students share in the community members' way of life, their poverty and their material needs in terms of housing, infrastructure and food.

Even when a Brigade concludes its stay in a given community, the work continues, given that a new generation of Brigade workers arrives and carries on with the work of its predecessors.

Brigade workers receive ongoing support from a group of mentors throughout the community work process. These mentors include professors and researchers representing the academic fields in question. In addition, once a month the university's regional headquarters offers specific training on community work and problem-focused advice to deal with the needs of each community.

Prior to the start of their Brigade activities, resident students attend a briefing workshop where they learn the basics of social anthropology and community work, and are given an introduction to regional indigenous languages. During the three-month workshop, Brigade workers relate to the purpose and methodology of the programme. This is achieved through group integration techniques.

University Brigades are supported through federal, state and municipal authorities in the form of strategic partnerships. The relationship with local authorities is of particular importance to the operation of any given project, because the local authorities provide room and board and inter-municipal transportation for Brigade workers. It is also important to underscore that the Brigades do not attempt to substitute their work for that of government organisations with regard to education and health issues; the Brigades merely offer their services in communities where state services are not yet available.

Brigade headquarters comprise housing for Brigade workers, medical and dental facilities and a laboratory for basic laboratory tests. They must also have at least one area to be used as a multipurpose room. The facilities are provided by the community itself. For this reason, in most cases they are modest places lacking comfort.

In some cases, the community has joined efforts with the university to build headquarters for the Brigades. The facilities are known as University Houses, and are able to offer a broader array of community services by merging teaching, research and expanded community work to be carried out by Brigade workers.

The University Brigades experience has served as a guideline for the strategy for linking the tasks of education and community work of the government of the state of Veracruz, as attested to in the case of the Vasconcelos Project.

## **THE VASCONCELOS PROJECT**

In 1923, the Secretary of Education for Mexico, philosopher José Vasconcelos, instigated the missions that bore his name, and whose purpose was to meet one of the deepest needs that the people of the country experienced during the Revolution: the need for quality education for all Mexicans.

Books were taken to the poorest and most marginalised communities in the country by pack animals so that all citizens might reap the benefits of learning. Since that time, the Vasconcelos Missions have been a model of equity.

Inspired by this model, the *Vasconcelos Project: Autonomous Vehicles to Support Learning and Leadership for Social Organization* is an innovative undertaking in the field of education.

The Vasconcelos Project – the idea of the first author of this document – answers to the immense challenge of demographic dispersion in the state of Veracruz, which has more than 22 000 communities, 63.8% of which have fewer than 50 inhabitants; 48.5% of the total population lives in rural areas.

The Vasconcelos Project is an instrument of social policy, used by the government of the state of Veracruz in the field of education, and is based on community work and the use of state-of-the-art information and communication technologies. The use of travelling, or itinerant, mobile classrooms, backed by professional social service Brigade workers, provides the poor and marginalised communities of the state – particularly indigenous communities – with opportunities for sustainable development, resulting in a sense of belonging and social equity.

The operational methodology of the Vasconcelos Project is based on the principles of social distribution and certification of knowledge, as well as on the community work undertaken by the Vasconcelos Brigades.

The Vasconcelos Project operates in the areas of education, culture, social organisation and productivity, and seeks to support the curricular programmes of the school system, and the social distribution of knowledge and its certification, as well as to train the economically active population to be competitive in terms of regional and local labour needs. With regard to social organisation, the purpose is to empower communities so that they might become self-managing.

The itinerant Vasconcelos classrooms are equipped with full information and communication technology services and satellite connectivity, and are installed on buses that are outfitted for all-terrain travel and can reach even the most isolated communities of Veracruz. The buses are equipped with 15 laptop computers, an Encyclomedia screen, a data projector, access point, a

self-directing satellite antenna, surround sound, remote access camera, DVD and VHS players, educational software, air conditioning, an emergency power plant and a broad conventional and virtual set of reference books based on international standards.

Based on the principle that technology alone is not sufficient for the purpose of educating, and that the human and social touch must be included, each travelling classroom is staffed by a Vasconcelos Brigade, comprising one mission leader, three Brigade workers, one information facilitator, one education facilitator and one driver.

Members of the Vasconcelos Brigades come from diverse professional fields, and are either resident students or have recently graduated; Brigade workers receive a scholarship, and Brigade leaders and facilitators receive a basic wage. The work of the Vasconcelos Brigades to fulfil a two-week mission is two-fold: the preparatory stage and the educational and social programme for the community itself.

The preparatory stage of work, carried out by the Brigade leader and two Brigade workers, is to become familiar with the community in question, persuade inhabitants of the benefits of the programme, establish alliances with local authorities to guarantee that the logistics of the mission are met – especially with regard to room and board for the Brigade members – and outline with the teachers a formal work programme to be offered during two weeks in the itinerant classroom.

The workday encompasses both mornings and afternoons, and starts at 08h00, when primary and secondary schoolchildren meet; in the afternoons, women, workers and handicraft artists meet. The last group of the day is that of the teachers of the community. Once the bus has finished its stay in the community, follow-up to the work accomplished is provided at a digital community centre or in a classroom where software for information services has been installed. The bus returns two months later.

The communities visited are of high or very high levels of marginalisation, with sufficient highway access to accommodate the bus, and with at least a 20% indigenous population. A digital community centre or media classroom is an added bonus.

The Vasconcelos Brigades, after strict selection of members, receive training similar to that of the University Brigades. The fundamental purpose of this training (offered through group integration techniques) is to encourage the Brigade workers to adopt a high spirit of service, solidarity and teamwork, and to prepare them technologically and academically to help the users in their learning processes. The community work of the Brigades is supervised by a supervisor at the headquarters of the programme; this person is also responsible for recording the impact assessments.

Impact assessment of community work is done through the application of the Logic Model proposed by the Kellogg Foundation in its community work.

The Vasconcelos Project is an effort entailing gradual implementation, and uses nine newly equipped buses in operation every year.

The Project is the result of the creative and innovative efforts of the government of the state of Veracruz and the Ministry of Education to offer new opportunities for quality education for all citizens of the state.

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## Community Engagement at the University for Development Studies

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### ABSTRACT

This paper shares the experience of the University for Development Studies, Ghana, in rolling out its strategies for an engaged university. The University for Development Studies was established in 1992 with an explicit statutory directive – to blend the academic world with that of the community in order to provide constructive interaction between the two for the total development of the largely rural Northern Ghana in particular and the country as a whole. The university is unique in Ghana, being the only one which, by its founding statute, is required to have embedded institutional arrangements in relation to community engagement. In giving effect to this mandate, the university's flagship programme is the Third Trimester Field Practical Programme, and the paper discusses that programme. The management, quality assurance, and sustainability challenges, among others, are examined; and recommended strategies for dealing with them are indicated.

### KEYWORDS

change management  
compulsory community engagement  
community relations centre  
faculty role  
funding  
institutionalisation  
institution–community relationships  
quality assurance  
rural education  
scholarship of engagement  
University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana

### INTRODUCTION

The University for Development Studies (UDS), a multi-campus university located in the northern savannas of Ghana, West Africa, was established in 1992 by the Government of Ghana (in terms of the Provisional National Defence Council or *PNDC Law 279*) to “blend the academic world with the community in order to provide constructive interaction between the two for the total development of northern Ghana, in particular, and the country as a whole” (Government of Ghana, 1992). Thus, the university, by law, had to develop curricula that focused on community engagement and development and on poverty alleviation strategies, since its major area of operation was to be the poorest part of Ghana.

The government had to be very emphatic about the direction of the new university because of general disappointments about higher education in Ghana and “new thinking in higher education which emphasized the need for universities to play a more active role in addressing problems of the society, particularly in the rural areas” (Effah, 1998: 2; and 2002).

This notion of university–community engagement differs from other forms of engagement in its direct and very specific focus on community engagement as a pedagogical paradigm. The strategic vision of UDS is to become “the home of world class pro-poor scholarship”. The main goal of the UDS is to identify itself with the realities of the predominantly rural communities in northern Ghana.

Since its inception, UDS has sought to achieve a paradigm shift in higher education provision, in order to tackle entrenched socio-economic problems in the country.

One of the guiding principles is that “the most feasible and sustainable way of tackling underdevelopment and poverty is to start from what people know and understand and then ‘rub in’ scientific knowledge”.

The commitment of UDS to poverty alleviation and the empowerment of poor and marginalised communities has resulted in a successful blend of academic programmes with intensive, practical and demand-driven training. Community engagement is compulsory for all students involved in all the degree programmes of the university.

The curricula of the Faculties of UDS emphasise community entry, community dialogue, extension and practical tools of inquiry. Students are required to continually discuss the importance of indigenous (local) knowledge and how that knowledge can be effectively combined with ‘scientific knowledge’. Participatory rural appraisal, participatory technology development and behaviour change communication methodologies are incorporated in appropriate places in the various curricula to ensure that students appreciate that the poor need to be partners in attempts to reduce or eradicate poverty.

### **THIRD TRIMESTER FIELD PRACTICAL PROGRAMME**

The Third Trimester Field Practical Programme (TTFPP) was initiated in 1993 as the university’s flagship programme. It seeks to combine indigenous and scientific knowledge in all areas of study. The aim is to create reciprocal learning in an environment that benefits all parties involved. The community engagement programme is characterised by an approach that is oriented towards practice, is community-based, focuses on problem solving, is gender sensitive, and is interactive (between community and university).

The TTFPP takes the form of fieldwork, during which all students are required to live and work for eight weeks each year in one of the 200 selected rural communities throughout their four-year degree programme. The fieldwork involves close interaction with the community, which is assisted to prepare its profile, identify and prioritise its needs (challenges), and formulate interventions to deal with these challenges. The fieldwork reinforces the spirit of solidarity between students and the communities, and exposes students to the complexities of development beyond the classroom.

The University’s academic calendar is divided into three trimesters, and the third trimester of eight weeks (which can be increased if found necessary) is devoted exclusively to fieldwork. All students in all the faculties are required to live and work within rural community settings. The students, with guidance from their faculty, identify development challenges, goals and opportunities with the people and design ways of working towards those goals and aspirations with the people. With the TTFPP, students accumulate nearly a year of field practice, fitted into their four-year degree programme.

Thus, during the third trimester, all Year 1 students are, for example, expected to be distributed to selected districts after a one-week orientation regarding what they are to do in the field. At the district level, the students are again distributed to selected communities. The programme for each year level is so structured that the same group of students work in the same district and possibly in the same community for all of the four third trimesters. The students are expected to work in groups at all times and to come up with courses of action for the communities and districts, and to assist them in implementing those actions.

The programme involves almost all stakeholders in the development arena of the various communities. The University liaises with governmental and non-governmental agencies and

organisations in the various communities and works together with them and with the people in the communities so that there is synergy and shared learning by all involved in the development efforts in the localities.

At UDS we believe that the impact of the TTFPP on rural people, including rural women and their girl-children, as well as on students and staff of the university and the nation as a whole will be phenomenal.

The mandate, vision and mission of the UDS enjoins it to work closely with communities and grassroots institutions to ensure that poverty alleviation measures are implemented in a participatory problem-solving manner. This means that both staff and students must be able to interact intimately with community members, in order to identify with them their problems, and again with them to proffer solutions. It is the TTFPP that ensures that this is achieved.

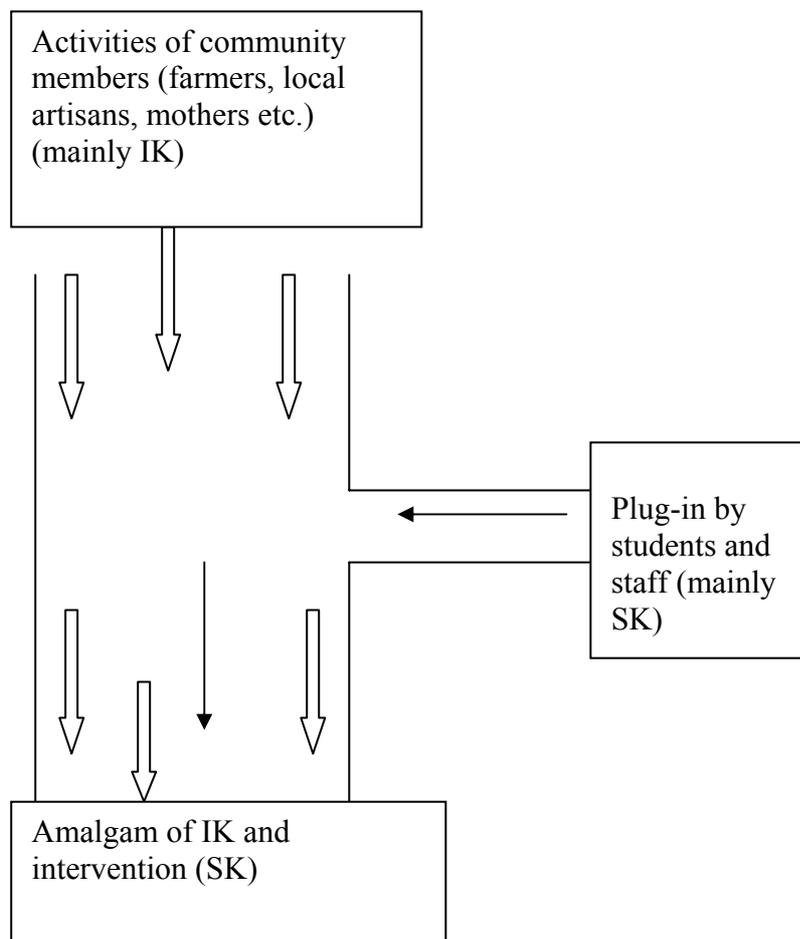
Many governmental and non-governmental organisations undertake development work in various parts of northern Ghana. The fieldwork of the students reinforces the work of most of these people. The field exposure helps students to build up ideas about development and also to see practically what is taught in the classroom or read in books.

The TTFPP is also a practical way in which the UDS is addressing issues related to gender mainstreaming. When development workers, researchers or students pay brief one- or two-day visits to communities, they hardly get the opportunity to interact with anybody except household heads, who are usually males. Even if one succeeds in meeting with those who are not heads of households, such people will usually be males. When students go and stay in the communities for several weeks, however, the level of interaction with all of the people in the village is heightened. There are gender and generational interactions and all male and female community members as well as male and female students benefit.

In effect, the flagship achievement of the university is the fact that it has successfully blended its academic programmes with intensive, practical, community-based training. A whole trimester, the third trimester, is devoted solely to practical fieldwork in the local communities. Students of a given year group identify a specific district, and in smaller groups live in the communities and interact with the people during each third trimester for a period of three years. This three-year intensive engagement is an iterative process that introduces the students to community studies in the first year. In the second year, the students, together with the communities, identify the development problems and challenges in their respective communities; and on that basis work together with the community members to formulate specific interventions in the third year. By working in small groups in a specific community on an ongoing basis (i.e. over the course of three years), students not only gain a better understanding of the complex nature of community development problems but also develop favourable attitudes towards working with rural communities. The fact that the majority of the UDS graduates are currently working in rural communities is testimony to the impact of this innovative training approach.

The programme is still evolving but it is based on a simple principle, which we term the 'plug-in' principle (for community engagement and development). It may be illustrated as follows:

**Figure 1: Illustration of the ‘plug-in’ principle for community engagement and development**



The salient points about the principle are as follows:

1. So-called ‘scientific knowledge’ (SK) cannot replace the existing knowledge or situation, it only ‘better’ it. Thus, we (staff and students) are ‘bettering’ agents not change agents.
2. The plug-in (intervention) is narrower than existing knowledge (in any society or community).
3. To successfully plug in, there is a need to thoroughly understand the existing situation. This requires some level of acceptance of the interventionists (staff and students) by the people. Thus staff and students need to spend time in the communities and with community members.
4. The amalgam of indigenous knowledge (IK) and SK is very much dependent on the degree to which interventionists understand and appreciate the existing situation. The understanding and appreciation of the existing situations help to modify intervention strategies to suit particular situations.

The experience gained over the years is continually used to enrich the content of the programme, to enhance its relevance and quality. Thus, beginning in the 2002/2003 academic year, the university embarked on an integrated approach to the field practical training. This climacteric development entails the combination of students from three faculties and one school: Agriculture, Integrated Development Studies, Applied Sciences and the School of Medicine and Health Sciences. This integrated approach is informed by the growing need for a holistic approach to the

solution of the congeries of development problems that plague the deprived communities, which UDS has positioned itself to serve.

### **Grading of TTFPP**

During the TTFPP, students are assessed at all the levels or phases of the programme: orientation, field site, seminars/ workshops and written reports. Staff members closely supervise the activities and students are scored in the field. They make oral presentations, attended by community members, at the local government levels. As a group, students also submit written reports for grading. This ensures the effective participation of all students in the programme.

### **Orientation**

This aims at introducing students to what they are expected to accomplish in the field and includes workshops/ lectures on the application of appropriate research techniques for data collection and use.

Students are taken through community entry techniques and protocols and are lectured on how to interact with communities, keeping in mind the different ethnic characteristics as they work in communities. This builds confidence in both the students and the communities. The orientation also includes lectures on safety precautions. The fact that students' participation in the orientation is assessed compels students to be punctual and responsive to the training. At present the orientation phase lasts one week and is assigned ten percentage points. First-year students are given orientation on the campus nearest to the region in which they would go for field placement. Second and third-year students are taken through the necessary orientation during the second trimester on their respective campuses.

### **Field Site**

In this phase, students are sent to communities in groups to undertake their field practical training programme. Each student is expected to keep a field notebook to record his/her daily activities, which is countersigned by a field coordinator (supervisor) or a community-based immediate supervisor at the end of each day. These field notebooks are collected at the end of students' stay in the communities and assessed by the supervisors. The field notebooks are assigned 15 percentage points. As part of the assessment, the immediate supervisors of the students, who are largely community-based, complete and submit pre-designed Field Evaluation Forms on each student. This is assigned 15 percentage points.

The physical presence of students in the field (community entry) throughout the fieldwork, which includes effective participation in field activities, also attracts ten percentage points.

### **Seminars/ workshops**

This phase comprises the presentation of seminars/ workshops by the students. In this phase students have the opportunity to report their findings from the communities. The seminars/ workshops are held in the capitals of the students' respective districts. This gives the stakeholders the opportunity to participate in such seminars/ workshops. For the purpose of this phase, the student groups are reconstituted into batches and scheduled to report to the district capitals to present their seminars. This helps overcome the problem of accommodating hundreds of students in the district capital for the purpose of presenting their seminars.

## **BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

This innovative, practically oriented approach to student training has yielded immense benefits. Discussion of a few of these benefits is included below:

- The community–technical interface has promoted active and constructive interaction of both students and staff with the local communities within the UDS operational area.
- The deep insights gained from the growing experience with these communities, through this rare innovation, have proved useful in shaping a new way of teaching and learning, i.e. practically oriented and problem-solving.
- The exposure of both students and lecturers, practically, to the nexus of development problems of deprived communities in Ghana and particularly in northern Ghana is fostering favourable attitudes in students towards working in deprived communities.
- The strong links established with deprived communities has placed the university in a better position to provide useful services through the exchange of knowledge and its application to address the intractable development needs and aspirations of these communities.
- The ongoing research, teaching and learning activities of the university are designed to meet the development needs of local communities.

The TTFPP has, indeed, gained popularity because of its direct relevance to the government's decentralisation programmes, which enjoin local government departments, agencies and local communities to initiate, plan and implement their own development programmes. The evidence is that UDS trained graduates are in high demand in the job market.

## **OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Despite the outstanding successes of the TTFPP, there are emerging challenges. The core problem is the increasing disjuncture between the rapidly growing student numbers and the resources available to run the programme. The programme began in 1993 with only 35 students. In the current (2005/2006) academic year we have a total of 5 400 students spread out in about 200 rural communities.

In 2003, we had envisaged that within the five-year strategic plan period (2003-2008) the student intake would increase significantly to about 5 000 by the year 2008. The growth in student numbers has, however, been exponential. By the 2005/2006 academic year, student numbers already stood at 5 400 – thus exceeding our estimates two years in advance!

This obviously brings pressure to bear on the already precarious resource situation. Some effects of this predicament are as follows:

- Low student/ lecturer contact hours in the field;
- Logistical constraints, especially the issue of transporting students to the field and back;
- Clearly inadequate incentive system for supervising staff;
- Inadequate documentation and dissemination of the rich experience brought from the field;
- Problems of the assessment and grading of students, especially where external evaluators are involved (for example, external evaluators sometimes grade unjustifiably too high or too low); and
- Poor orientation of partners on the TTFPP.

These challenges notwithstanding, the TTFPP is still the core of our curricula and UDS is determined to continue with it. We are encouraged by the enthusiastic support of our students, the

employers and the other numerous stakeholders and interest groups, who are the direct beneficiaries of this programme.

## **Sustainability**

The sustainability of the programme is a central concern of all the stakeholders, namely students, lecturers, district assemblies, NGOs, communities, and employers, among others. The University administration has put in place a number of measures to sustain the programme. These include:

- The establishment of a UDS Community Relations Centre headed by a Director at the level of a Dean of Faculty;
- The call for a more proactive stakeholder involvement in the financing of the programme since it benefits them directly;
- Intensifying the fund mobilisation drive – it is heartening to note here that our students and the alumni are willing to pay a special fee towards the running of the programme; and
- The active sourcing by the university of external funding through collaborative research and other donor funded projects – the university also sets aside 30% of the academic user fees paid by students and 10% of funds generated from application fees solely for the TTFPP.

## **Managing Community Engagement**

The first piece of practical advice is that at the design and curriculum development stage, consultation should be as wide as possible. This ensures ‘buy-in’ by the various constituencies. In our case, important partners have been the communities in which we operate, together with their chiefs, District Assemblies and other local-level structures.

Secondly, non-traditional approaches require committed, bold and consistent leadership, which is able and willing to set the tone in robust language. The leadership must learn to think in visionary and strategic ways. It should expect a sceptical audience from most of its constituencies, and a hostile reception from the establishment (the latter encompasses government structures, the educational establishment, the professional bodies etc.). The leadership must remain unwavering while allowing for the dialectical and therefore tentative nature of human endeavour.

Thirdly, there is also need for reorientation of academic staff, most of whom would have been trained in traditional environments and might not have been exposed to innovation. Here, the drivers of the process need to exhibit great patience in dealing with people who need time to absorb the impact of innovation. The risk here is of the leadership becoming disengaged from its primary base.

Another piece of practical advice relates to planning and resource accumulation. Our experience is that innovation should be carefully planned. Planning in this context includes a careful scrutiny of institutional statutes, procedures and processes to ensure their consistency with the innovations contemplated; otherwise, praxis may develop that is inconsistent with governing legislation.

Furthermore, in the current climate of resource and funding constraints, it is important that the roll-out of innovation should match available resources. This is because the tendency for morale to fall can be accentuated by a sense of helplessness and doom.

Finally, innovation calls for *consistent hard work*. It is amazing how accurate the saying is that “transforming a university is like trying to transform a graveyard: you get no assistance from the inhabitants”.

## Resources

The University implements community engagement programmes using internally generated funds. Rapid growth in student enrolment has brought with it the need to recruit more academic staff members and upgrade their mobility in the field so as to provide students with sufficient monitoring and assessment. Unless the serious funding constraints are tackled prudently, however, the resource limitations could dent the enthusiasm of all the partners and impair the gains made over the last decade.

## Challenges

The survival and success of the innovations pursued by the university face opposition from some universities and professional bodies that find it difficult to adopt the new thinking. Internal pressure also comes from academic staff members who subscribe to traditional thinking that does not expect universities to be engaged in this way with communities. Financial constraints mean that programme implementation may be affected by a variety of logistical and administrative difficulties including transport, limited student–lecturer interaction in the field, and inadequate incentives for supervising academic staff members.

## CONCLUSION

The UDS is uniquely placed as the only university in Ghana to be legally mandated to break with tradition and identify itself with the ‘realities of the predominantly rural societies’. Ironically the programme’s huge success, which manifested itself in its demand (marketability), has generated a medley of challenges, which centre mainly on inadequate resources. Unfortunately, these limitations could potentially derail the programme. Against this backdrop there is a need to create a stronger and more financially viable environment for community engagement in the country’s higher education sector.

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## The Talloires Declaration and Talloires Network

**Susan Stroud**

Executive Director, Innovations in Civic Participation, USA

I would like to talk, very briefly, about the current international context for community engagement in higher education. We have heard several wonderful examples in the past few days from Prof. Shah from India, Prof. Kaburise from Ghana and Dr Fernández de la Garza from Mexico. There is actually a great deal going on in various parts of the world, on the topic of community engagement in higher education. I think it is very exciting, and it says something about a *particular moment in time* that we have the opportunity to try to capture. In addition to talking about that international context, very briefly I'd like to talk about a specific initiative to create an international network of universities that are deeply committed to the idea of community engagement, as a first principle for higher education.

But if I may, I would like to divert for a moment. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge a person who perhaps more than anyone else, early on – ten years ago – assisted with the development of this 'Community Engagement in Higher Education' movement. Of course, I am speaking of Dick Fehnel, who unfortunately died in May of this year. Dick was the higher education program officer at the Ford Foundation in South Africa for more than ten years, and I think that all of you who knew him and worked with him knew him to be a great friend of higher education, specifically, and of South Africa, more generally. Last night Nick Taylor spoke a little about the beginnings of CHESP, and I would like to add to that. It was actually Dick Fehnel who had the idea of creating an initiative in higher education around the idea of community engagement, and he approached Nick Taylor about taking responsibility for such an initiative. Nick agreed and has provided consistent and constant leadership over ten years, which, I think, has a great deal to do with the success of the CHESP initiative.

The first phase of this was actually to undertake some mapping, to look at what was going on in terms of community engagement in South African universities and also to conduct research about what was going on in other countries. That effort was led by Rachmat Omar, Penny Vinjevold, Tebogo Moja and Helene Perold – and I was very fortunate to be part of that team at the time as well. This initial phase of research led to the publishing by JET of the small book that Minister Pandor mentioned last night, which is now very hard to obtain.

This first phase of research led on to the establishment of CHESP. The idea was to work intensively with a small network of universities, and feed back into the policy environment what was learned. And, in my opinion, the best thing that happened at that point was the very good decision to hire Jo Lazarus to run the initiative. Again, as with Nick's guidance, I think that Jo's almost ten years of dedicated service to CHESP has accounted a great deal for the success of the programme; I think we all acknowledge that. But again, it was Dick Fehnel who believed that community engagement, if it were moved from the margins to the mainstreams of the universities, had the potential for profound transformation – both in community development and in the nature of teaching, learning and research in the universities. I can't help but think how pleased and proud he would be about this conference. The initiative started with a very small group of people, in a conversation in the office in Braamfontein; and look where it's grown to! The 230 or so people here represent many more colleagues at your institutions.

Now I would like to talk briefly about a specific initiative that I have been involved in helping to form: the Talloires Network. The people involved in putting together this network include, primarily, the President of Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts, and a group of university presidents from around the world. The group gathered at the Tufts European Study Center in Talloires,

France, around this time last year, to talk about the international experience of civic engagement and social responsibility in higher education. We feel that now is an important opportunity for an international discussion regarding this agenda in the higher education community internationally for many reasons – but at least the following three.

Today, there are one hundred million university students worldwide, half of them in developing countries. By 2030, there will be two hundred million, with most of the growth occurring in the developing world. That is an enormous resource for social change if universities recognise their role to educate for lives of social responsibility – to develop the civic muscles of students as well as their intellectual capacities.

There are also increasing demands as national governments, NGOs and other groups attempt to respond to immense, unmet social needs with limited resources – they are demanding more and more from the higher education institutions as a resource for community development.

And finally there is also an expanding set of effective practices in universities around the world – approaches that work, and from which other higher education institutions can learn.

There are organisations similar to CHESP that have been established in other countries around the world in the last 10 to 20 years. In my opinion, among the most interesting is the one in Brazil that is championed by the former First Lady, Ruth Cardoso. She has created a network of over 250 universities in Brazil, and they work specifically on community development in the northern and north-eastern parts of Brazil. They have a particular initiative around illiteracy: they have trained and supported over 20 000 literacy teachers, who have taught more than four million young adults to read in the underdeveloped areas of Brazil. Similarly, there are networks of universities in other parts of the world: I've been involved in helping to form a new network of universities very recently in Israel; Dr Fernández de la Garza is part of a network of universities in Mexico; there is a similar consortium of universities in Australia; and, of course, there is one that some of you have been involved with – the Campus Compact in the US. In addition, at regional and international level, there are a number of associations that have made community engagement a priority topic: the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Inter-American Organisation for Higher Education, the Inter-American Development Bank (which has a consortium with universities on social capital) and others.

Recognising that this might be a critical moment for trying to connect some of these efforts through a network, the President of Tufts University in the US invited a group of 28 presidents from around the world – including Prof. Shah and Prof. Kaburise – to attend a meeting held last year. The aim was to test the interest in forming an international network that would make it possible to share experiences and information and perhaps to undertake collaborative work. We weren't certain, given the enormous diversity in terms of economic, social and cultural contexts of the universities represented at the meeting, that there would be enough in common to take this interest forward; it was not certain whether there were principles that could, in fact, be pursued despite those differences in context. That conference was attended by universities from the Sudan, Vietnam, Chile, the UK, India and Ghana; and a range of very different kinds of institutions as well – for example, Prof. Brenda Gourley was there from the Open University in the UK; a very large distance education university, and quite different, for instance, from Tufts University or the Woman's University in the Sudan or the American University in Cairo. The group that was gathered for the very rich conversation over three days decided that, in fact, there was value in forming a network that would focus on three things: action; exchange of information; and continued dialogue about these issues.

The outcomes from the conference were:

- A declaration (the Talloires Declaration, included in the binder for this conference) – this commits the signers of the declaration to several kinds of action, including expanding efforts on

their own campuses, ensuring standards of excellence, fostering partnerships and disseminating information, and raising awareness;

- The decision to create an international network (the Talloires Network); and
- The survey results – we surveyed fairly extensively the institutions that came to, or were represented at, the conference and that presented some very interesting information about how community engagement is interpreted in different kinds of universities in different parts of the world. We also gathered institutional profiles and have produced a conference report that is available.

Although Tufts University is providing some of the leadership for the Talloires Network and some of the initial financing, the President of Tufts does not want this to be seen as a Tufts initiative but rather as an international initiative. Thus, an international steering committee has been created, which will provide the governance for the Talloires Network. There will very shortly be a website available to provide a mechanism for exchanging information. The steering committee has decided to expand the network to include the leaders of other higher education institutions who share an interest in this topic. Members of the network have agreed to undertake activities on their own campuses – that is, to undertake a self-assessment of civic engagement activities and an institutional planning effort that will provide guidance for pushing their universities beyond where they are at the moment. Members also agree to collaborate on a global project around literacy and support for the 'Education for All' initiative.

Tufts University has agreed to host the Talloires Network, and the organisation that I direct, Innovations in Civic Participation, will serve as the secretariat for the Network. We think it would be very important to have a South African experience reflected in this international network, so we encourage you to join us. Please feel free to contact me with questions or for more information.

It has been a pleasure to be with you at this conference and to witness the deepening commitment by higher education institutions and government to the civic engagement agenda for higher education in South Africa. Thank you.

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## Response

### Frederick Fourie

Vice Chancellor, University of the Free State, SA

*Frederick Fourie provided a response to the papers by Victor A. Arredondo and Mario Fernández de la Garza, and John Kaburise. The following are the notes taken by the Scribe for this Plenary Session.*

Frederick Fourie referred conference participants once again to the conceptual framework diagram he had presented on the previous day in order to comment on the strategies presented by the various speakers.<sup>8</sup>

He said that the stories participants had heard about different community engagement efforts being undertaken in different parts of the world, including Mexico, Ghana and India, were very seductive and moving. He also argued, however, for the need to keep asking critical questions, such as:

- What kind of community engagement is this?
- Where does it fit in? and
- How should we do it?

Fourie highlighted the value of these cases as being that they help us think systematically about community engagement and different possible conceptual frameworks.

In terms of the framework diagram he had presented, and in terms of the criteria – of the degree to which an initiative was integrated into the curriculum, and of scholarship – he argued that the Brigades mentioned by Fernández de la Garza would fit into or even beyond the green block, because the Brigades programme involves graduated students.

In the case of the UDS, Fourie quoted the words, “world class pro-poor scholarship” and said that this was a very powerful slogan. He suggested that the efforts of this university would fit completely into the yellow block on the diagram. According to Fourie, that university has what might be termed the ‘luxury’ of a very focused, singular mission, as opposed to the multiple missions and constituencies of most higher education institutions.

Fourie also referred conference participants to the examples of the Universities of Limerick and Twente; in both cases, the university, in partnership with government, had had a huge positive impact on local communities in areas of low economic activity.

He commented on the simple but very radical solution adopted by Ghana of having students help identify the problem and then become part of that solution (bringing practical and academic work together). He commented that the plug-in notion is very fascinating in the way that it causes students to confront their scholarly knowledge with everyday, indigenous local knowledge.

He urged participants to be clear in their thinking and talking about different *kinds* of knowledge. He stated that he understood scientific knowledge to be about abstraction, analysis, taking things apart and putting them back together again, while indigenous/ everyday knowledge has a different kind of wholeness. While society needs both kinds of knowledge (scientific and indigenous) and

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<sup>8</sup> See these Proceedings, SESSION 2: PLENARY, Speaker: Frederick Fourie – *Towards a South African Scholarship of Engagement: Core and Supplemental Tasks of a University?* [Appendix A](#).

neither is better than the other, they are not the same; he argued that the complementarity of the different kinds of knowledge is built into the diagram he had presented previously.

Fourie argued that considering different cases of community engagement from different parts of the world alerts us to consider the balance or mix between (referring to the diagram):

- Basic knowledge and engaged knowledge;
- Contextualisation and active engagement; and
- 'Blue' versus 'green' approaches to engagement (in terms of the conceptual framework diagram he had presented).

He argued that whether we like it or not, we need to knowingly decide on these mixes, because this has important implications for what we do in community engagement and the mix of strategies adopted will vary, for example, with regard to:

- Structures of governance and management;
- Kinds of partnerships set up;
- The politics of engagement; and
- Funding strategies.

Fourie argued that, overall, the launch and sustainability of engagement initiatives in a university will be very much determined by how the university thinks about it. In other words, a conceptual framework for community engagement is not a luxury – but a necessity for implementation.

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## Response to Concurrent Workshop Reports

**Nasima Badsha**

Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Education, SA

I would like to start by thanking in particular Jo Lazarus and Mala Singh – for inviting me to be a participant in this very important conference – and to congratulate the two organisations for bringing us together for this historic occasion.

Before I begin to respond, as best I can, to the four inputs that have just been made, I would like to make a general suggestion to Jo and the colleagues who might be responsible for putting the conference report together; and that is to look at breaking down the recommendations that have emerged, in relation to the particular body or bodies that the recommendations should be directed towards. We have had a very rich set of proposals put in front of us, but I think it would be important for us to look at *whom* they're directed to; there are some recommendations that, rightfully, should go to the institutions for further engagement; some to the regional consortia, as was suggested by one of the groups; some to the national bodies – the CHE, HESA, the Department of Education (DoE); and so on.

I will start off by commenting on the proposals put forward by Prof. Badat's Concurrent Workshop Group on Community Engagement through HEI Governance and Management.<sup>9</sup> I think that particularly important is the emphasis on each institution's developing a conceptual framework; because how community engagement is conceptualised will frame the management and governance arrangements in each of the institutions. This was a point emphasised particularly in that group's earlier presentations, which certainly prompted me to ask: "What then would a conceptual framework or statement about community engagement look like at a national level?"

This conference's conversations among higher education leaders, around the rationale, values and goals of community engagement in a university, have begun, I think, to identify the elements that might go into a conceptual framework at a national level. CHESP would play an important role in driving such discussions and placing them on the agendas of, possibly, HESA, the CHE, and the DoE. It would be very important, in terms of the development of frameworks at both institutional and national levels, to resist orthodoxy and ensure space for multiple approaches.

I found the three conceptual models presented by the HEI Governance and Management group extremely useful: the three separate silos; the intersecting circles; and then what I am calling (from my academic development history) the 'infusion model'. The group asked the question about whether it is possible to jump into, for example, the infusion model without any prior serious involvement in community engagement. I think, in answering that question it is important that we take advantage of the particular historical moment we find ourselves in, right now in higher education, where, as part of the restructuring process, institutions are *reviewing* their fundamental activities, missions, and so on (I know Dr Singh is going to pick up on this, and I shall leave her to talk more about it). I also think that where an institution locates itself – in terms of its degree of involvement in community engagement – will very much depend on its broader location within the higher education landscape, hopefully within a differential higher education landscape, so that everybody need not locate themselves in the same place with respect to community engagement. Indeed, I think our universities do need to ask themselves the important prior question: Can you even contemplate quality community engagement, if there are serious shortcomings and shortfalls in existing teaching and research outputs?

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<sup>9</sup> See these Proceedings, CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS: *Community Engagement through HEI Governance and Management: Workshop Report*.

Moving on to the funding issues: I think that the Minister of Education clearly pointed to her desire to support this area and, as part of that, we would certainly be looking at the possibility of earmarked funding, which could be along the lines of the earmarked additional funding that we currently have for academic development; such funding has played a particularly important role in mobilising additional institutional resources. We need to understand that earmarked funding *is* mainstream funding; there would be no benefit to be had from putting community engagement into the formula, because then it would come out in the block funding. Further, I must emphasise that earmarked funding in this area would not necessarily come from new funding; it would probably have to come from the same pool. Should we go that route, the DoE will need to engage quite intensively with CHESP and others, in order to determine the criteria for funding, in particular the nature and scope of activities that would be eligible for support. I think that this is something we really need to explore. In the academic development area, we put together a reference group of experts, who helped us determine those criteria and then helped us in evaluating the programmes against those criteria.

Moving on to comment on the proposals put forward by Prof. Bawa's Concurrent Workshop Group on Research:<sup>10</sup> I think that that report really alerted me to the complexity of the issues – more especially the power relations within the university, between disciplines, between different modes of research, and, not least, with communities. Also, I became aware of the considerable challenge of adding, as they put it, “more chairs to the research table”. I think we need to give very careful consideration to the pre-conditions necessary for this to even begin. And I don't think that we should underestimate the complexity of bringing community involvement into research processes. I think that there is sometimes slippage there. I believe that – particularly in the area of teaching and learning and community engagement – we have some good case studies from which to draw. However, to the best of my knowledge, we do not have emerging case studies in the area of research and community engagement, and I would hope that this could be taken up as a matter of priority by CHESP.

To turn to the proposals put forward by Prof. Fourie's Concurrent Workshop Group on Teaching and Learning:<sup>11</sup> I think that the work emanating from that group provides an extremely useful launching pad towards developing an epistemological framework for community engaged teaching and learning. But I think that much more work needs to be done, to distinguish a framework that is – and here I am going to borrow from Prof. Badat – “alive to context”, and that responds to the particular challenges of community engaged teaching and learning. I think that the issue this group touched on, of staff development, is an area that we may be underestimating; it should be considered as part of the enabling framework for community engaged teaching and learning at institutional level.

To comment on the proposals put forward by Prof. Mthembu's Concurrent Workshop Group on Partnerships:<sup>12</sup> I think that the broad definition of partners was extremely important. Furthermore, especially in relation to the government, the very important role of *other* government departments (provincial and national) beyond the DoE is a point well taken; as is the role of partnerships to ensure sustainability. I think that the other issue that would be important to explore would be the development of Memoranda of Understanding with municipalities and cities, which could possibly be taken forward by the regional consortia of higher education institutions; I would hope that this might be another important peg for future work in this area, as an approach that would facilitate better coordination of initiatives.

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<sup>10</sup> See these Proceedings, CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS: *Community Engagement through Research: Workshop Report*.

<sup>11</sup> See these Proceedings, CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS: *Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning: Workshop Report*.

<sup>12</sup> See these Proceedings, CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS: *Community Engagement through Partnerships: Workshop Report*.

Finally, to comment generally on proposals made during the conference: support has been expressed for consideration of a Conference Declaration, which seems like a good idea especially as it could be an important vehicle for advocacy. Furthermore, the promotion of a national community engagement network (and associated databases) would be an important undertaking that should be supported. The work of CHESP would be the foundation of such developments.

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## Plenary Discussion

*Following Nasima Badsha's response to the Concurrent Workshop Chair Persons, the Chair Person opened discussion to the floor. The following are the notes taken by the Scribe for this Plenary Discussion.*

Lisbeth Lekotoko, a University of Pretoria student, commented that while she had attended several such conferences, at which participants planned, engaged and formed a new community, she had failed to see improved implementation as a result of such conferences. Her challenge to the conference was to be different in this regard and to chart a way forward.

Appollis Jacobs, a community organiser/ activist from UWC, wished to commend the conference organisers for their work. He raised two concerns: with regard to reporting back to his constituency, he was concerned that 1) not all the leadership – those with the decision-making powers – were at the conference, and thus his worry was about how leadership would be convinced to implement community engagement post-conference; and 2) while the conference looked like progress had been made, how would participants ensure it had made a difference, when they returned to their respective contexts?

Judith Favish from the University of Cape Town made the observation that there were fundamental differences (between the different Concurrent Workshop groups), which probably represent the different conceptual frameworks. She suggested that, in the conference report, it would be useful to attempt to surface the range of assumptions and different conceptual frameworks being drawn upon.

Saleem Badat from Rhodes University suggested that on the conceptual issue, it is important when we start to speak about community engagement to avoid simply adopting a new orthodoxy in the form of the notion of 'the developmental state', which he argued could be problematic – and for this reason he suggested rather talking about 'a project of development' or 'a developmental civil society' etc.

Saleem Badat also said that, at risk of sounding subversive, the university is a paradoxical institution – in that in as much as we wish it to be engaged and working with the concrete, we also need it to be detached and distant, as to some extent this allows for critique; for this reason, while being engaged, universities could not simply take their agenda from the community.

Thandwa Mthembu from the University of the Witwatersrand argued strongly that participants were taking a lot home in terms of the recommendations that had emerged. He emphasised that the recommendations do indeed require different categories of people to work on them, if implementation is to happen, and he endorsed Nasima Badsha's suggestion that it would be important to direct recommendations to the appropriate people or groups for action.

Responding to Judith Favish's point (above), Thanda Mthembu also suggested that diverse perceptions might mean that another recommendation to be made would be to set up a smaller group of people – maybe driven by the CHE – to attempt to consolidate a conceptual framework for community engagement. On the issue of avoiding orthodoxies, hegemony etc. he cautioned that while this was an important consideration, the participants should also beware of adopting a post-modern, structureless approach. He argued that it would be important to develop a conceptual framework that higher education institutions could agree on; and he argued that while Frederick Fourie's framework was a good start, as stated before it would need to be extended to include the partners, including the communities, with which higher education institutions work.

Responding to the student's challenge (above), Hugh Africa of the Higher Education Quality Committee argued that this conference had required participants to look afresh at the things their higher education institutions were involved in and to bring more rigour to bear, and thus the conference discussions had ensured reappraisal by higher education institutions of what they have been doing.

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## Conference Summary and Close

**Mala Singh**

Interim Chief Executive Officer, Council on Higher Education (CHE), SA

It is difficult to sum up two days of very intense discussions on community engagement, which ranged from attempts to address the conceptual issues to very rich practitioner experiences at universities in different parts of the world. In the interests of time, I am not going to go through a list of what I think the conference has achieved, except, perhaps, in one respect. I think that what the conference has done is that it has refocused attention on community engagement within the national policy agenda in higher education in South Africa. What will flow from such refocusing is that in all the steps taken to move forward from here, all the constituencies that are involved will certainly have to give consideration to addressing the challenges of improved implementation of community engagement within their institutions.

Based largely on the report-back from the four Concurrent Workshop groups,<sup>13</sup> I would like, from the point of view of JET and CHESP, and the CHE and the HEQC, to focus attention on what is to be done next, by whom, within what timeframe, and involving which role-players. In terms of what is to be done, I want to speak to the issues under four or five headings.

The work that has to be done includes:

- The work of conceptual framing and clarification;
- The strategic issues that have to be taken up;
- The planning and operational challenges that confront us;
- The strategic partnerships that have to be forged, in order to take the issue of community engagement further; and
- The theoretical work that has to be done in order to support the embedding of community engagement within higher education.

The first set of issues has to do with conceptualising a framework for community engagement. This has been brought to the table over and over again by almost every one of the groups and by a number of presenters, as well as from the floor. We have had many inputs at this conference by speakers who are grappling with the idea of community engagement. Gibbons, as we know, was proposing a much broader social frame of reference for engagement, through his idea of a Mode 2 society.<sup>14</sup> Frederick Fourie was arguing for engagement to be mediated through the key identity of the university as a place of scholarship.<sup>15</sup> Our colleague from Mexico, Mario Fernández de la Garza, sees community engagement as a mechanism to make the university into a knowledge-based instrument of social equity.<sup>16</sup> These views are only a preliminary set of steps towards developing an enabling conceptual framework for community engagement in South African higher education.

I want to suggest that conceptual work has to be undertaken at two levels – in a very broad way at a national level, and at a much more context-specific level within the framework of individual

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<sup>13</sup> See these Proceedings, [CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS](#).

<sup>14</sup> See these Proceedings, [SESSION 1: OPENING PLENARY](#), Speaker: [Michael Gibbons – Engagement as a Core Value in a Mode 2 Society](#).

<sup>15</sup> See these Proceedings, [SESSION 2: PLENARY](#), Speaker: [Frederick Fourie – Towards a South African Scholarship of Engagement: Core and Supplemental Tasks of a University?](#)

<sup>16</sup> See these Proceedings, [SESSION 7: PLENARY](#), Speaker: [Mario Fernández de la Garza – Higher Education, Community Service and Local Development](#).

institutions. But clearly, it must be done always as a conversation between the forging of some kind of a national enabling framework and how institutions are conceptualising a next level framework for themselves.

This is one important area of work that has to be done. However, the philosopher in me immediately raises the question: What constitutes a conceptual framework? What are the different elements and dimensions that should go into such a framework? I think that Saleem Badat and his Concurrent Workshop group have suggested some of the substantial issues that should go into this kind of a conceptual framework.<sup>17</sup> This conceptual work is not about setting narrow, tight, exclusionary definitions of what community engagement is, thus establishing an orthodoxy in relation to this issue. Rather, it is about setting some broad parameters for community engagement; it is about trying to establish a relationship between community engagement and the other two core functions; it is, very importantly, about signalling the place of community engagement in the social development agenda; and it is about indicating some of the possible models for community engagement. This is clearly a key area of work.

Secondly, we need to focus on the strategic considerations pertaining to community engagement. What are the strategic issues that have to be addressed at a national level, as well as within institutions, in order to take the community engagement debate further? At a national level, we know that community engagement has been flagged in the White Paper (1997)<sup>18</sup> as a strategy for transforming higher education, and as a strategy to enable higher education institutions to demonstrate their social commitment and their sense of social responsibility. At the HEQC, we have put community engagement into our audit and accreditation requirements, in this way creating the basis for a more systematic and institution-wide approach to community engagement. What still needs to be done at a national level? The Minister, as we heard yesterday and as reiterated by Nasima Badsha earlier today, has indicated her strong support for community engagement in higher education, and even opened, ever so slightly, a funding door – or should I say a ‘funding keyhole’!

In addition to what is in the White Paper and in the HEQC systems, what more could we be doing at a national level – particularly in relation to the roles of the Department of Education and the Ministry of Education? What additional policy, funding, monitoring and reporting levers are necessary in order to embed community engagement within higher education? And who is going to put together the cogent, well-argued, pragmatic representations on community engagement, for the advocacy work that needs to be done in relation to the ongoing conversation about community engagement with the relevant national authorities?

I mention the whole idea of additional policy levers for community engagement with some trepidation; thinking of the Minister’s view, reiterated more than once, that this should be a time of *consolidation* in higher education; thinking, also, of you within the institutions, faced with numerous restructuring challenges in the face of capacity constraints as well; thinking of the dysfunctionalities in many of the higher education institutions that constrain throughput rates, impede research productivity, and so on. So clearly, one of the most strategic issues that we will have to confront will be that of how to embed community engagement in the work that is already underway within universities – to rethink mission, to transform curricula, and to re-conceptualise research strategies. And for that, we are going to need very wise leadership, both at national and institutional levels.

Thus far, I have been addressing strategic issues at a national level. Clearly, there is a whole range of strategic issues at an institutional level that pertain to many of the issues that have been

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<sup>17</sup> See these Proceedings, CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS: *Community Engagement through HEI Governance and Management: Workshop Report*.

<sup>18</sup> Department of Education (DoE). (1997). Education White Paper 3: A Programme for Higher Education Transformation. *Government Gazette No. 18207, 15 August 1997*. Pretoria: DoE.

mentioned during the conference, and have come up in the work of the Concurrent Workshop on HEI Governance and Management – issues that have to do with making appropriate governance and resource allocation decisions, joint agenda setting, performance management etc. Unfortunately I do not have time to go into these strategic and associated operational issues. But perhaps, in this regard – even though each institution will set its own agenda of work for both the strategic and operational issues – it is time for CHESP to consider the development of another *Good Practice Guide*<sup>19</sup> on community engagement, to capture some of the more generic good practices that could be drawn on by different institutions, irrespective of their context.

The second to last question that I am going to address is: What are the strategic partnerships that have to be forged in order to take the community engagement discussion further?

I think that the partnership between JET-CHESP and the CHE-HEQC is a strong one and will continue in the future. But, for maximum effectiveness, a number of other partners will need to become involved in a more substantial way. Higher Education South Africa (HESA) has already been mentioned. HESA has to be brought in as a key partner. Further, I think that a really under-represented or non-represented constituency at this conference has been the organised student formations. We need to draw the newly-established South African Union of Students (SAUS) into our further discussions, because students are both the agents and beneficiaries of community engagement, in a whole range of the different models that we have been talking about. We should also consider, in light of Saleem Badat's comment about the need to start talking about a "developmental civil society", drawing in national organisations like SANGOCO (South African National NGO Coalition), although I am not quite clear about their focus and activities at the moment. In terms of partnership, the National Development Agency (NDA) may have money that it has not been able to spend, and perhaps universities could draw on some of that money to support development work in relation to community engagement. The idea of a South African community engagement network has been suggested. If that idea is taken further, then such a network will be an important partner in the next step. Then there is the international network, information on which was presented by Susan Stroud,<sup>20</sup> which would strengthen the connection between the South African discussions and what is happening internationally. These are some of the different kinds of strategic partnerships that we need to explore further.

The last point, in terms of what needs to be done, is identifying the theoretical *work* that could strengthen community engagement.

- What are the bodies of knowledge that could inform community engagement?
- What are the rules of engagement?
- What are community engagement ethics?
- What are the new epistemologies for establishing community engagement as a field of knowledge?
- What are the new pedagogies for teaching and learning in this area?
- What are the new research methodologies that we need in order to give substance to community engagement as a serious academic practice within higher education?

Passion and commitment in relation to community engagement – as a development tool and as a pro-poor strategy – are indispensable. But in order for community engagement to become a sustained academic practice, we have to get beyond the Nike logo to "just do it"! I think we will have to "just do it" in a much more *knowledge-based way*. I've outlined some of the tasks facing us in relation to taking the impetus and the insights from this conference forward, and I've also indicated who some of the likely agencies might be in order to do the work. What about the

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<sup>19</sup> Higher Education Quality Committee/ JET Education Services. (2006). *A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service-Learning*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

<sup>20</sup> See these Proceedings, SESSION 7: PLENARY, Speaker: Susan Stroud – The Talloires Declaration and Talloires Network.

timeframes? Well, I am sure that even before I get back to my office I will have an e-mail waiting for me from Jo Lazarus, making some suggestions about what has to be done next!

I want to end by expressing, from the side of the CHE-HEQC, our enormous thanks to JET and CHESP, as a partner and co-host. They have carried most of the responsibilities for arranging a conference that has great style and serious substance. For that we owe them many thanks. If the HEQC had organised this, you would have had the substance but perhaps not the style. A special thanks – and I want to reiterate the tribute that was paid yesterday by the Minister of Education and others – to our colleague Jo Lazarus. Without the passion that drives him for community engagement, we would not have had this kind of a national discussion on community engagement, notwithstanding the work that was done in the CHE and the HEQC. So on behalf of all of us, I wish to pay tribute to Jo's work and to say: Long may his passion and energies continue! Thanks also to the organising team for the conference and I want also to express my personal thanks to Gadija Petker, who has provided amazing support. We have been able to get on with the business of the conference due to immaculate efficiency in the preparations, and the warm and generous support provided. Thank you all!

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## CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS

### Community Engagement through HEI Governance and Management

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## Community Engagement through HEI Governance and Management: Workshop Report

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*This report reflects the discussions of the Concurrent Workshop Sessions on Community Engagement through HEI Governance and Management. The Concurrent Workshop Sessions focused respectively on:*

*Session 3: A Conceptual Framework for Community Engagement;*

*Session 5: Key Challenges, Enabling Mechanisms and Quality Management; and*

*Session 8: Key Strategies and Recommendations for Community Engagement.*

### INTRODUCTION

In reporting on the deliberations on the governance and management of community engagement, an overview of some of the considerations that framed the discussions on governance and management is necessary.

First, it is necessary to make a distinction between a university being responsive to its economic and social context, and community engagement. Being alive to its context does not mean that a university is necessarily engaged – that is to say, being alive to its context is a necessary but not sufficient condition for community engagement. In much the same way, a university can transform but not necessarily be involved in community engagement.

Second, community engagement can be approached at the level of the involvement of individual scholars and students or at the level of the institution as a whole. The concern of this Concurrent Workshop group was the institutional level.

Third, community engagement can be approached in two different ways:

1. The traditional 'silo' approach – in which teaching and learning, research and community engagement are conceived of and pursued as essentially separate, independent activities; that is to say, they do not connect; or
2. An approach that views teaching and learning, research and community engagement as connected, and conceptualises their connection in two possible ways:
  - One way is to see teaching and learning, research and community engagement as intersecting activities – the imagery of three circles is useful here. Within the community engagement circle are located outreach programmes and academic staff and student volunteerism. Where the individual circles of teaching and learning, research and community engagement intersect, they give rise to service-learning.
  - The other way of conceptualising community engagement is to see it as cutting across teaching and learning and research and as having implications for all the teaching and learning and research activities of a university.

Finally, in considering the governance and management of community engagement, there was consensus that it was not necessary for the purposes of this workshop to get bogged down by the concepts of governance and management. It was agreed that discussions would be guided by the following understandings of governance and management. 'Governance' would be understood as referring to the institutional arrangements in terms of structures, mechanisms and processes for creating a vision around community engagement, formulating policies and making decisions. 'Management' would be taken as referring to mechanisms and strategies for the effective and efficient pursuit of the goals that are identified for community engagement, including the use of people and resources for the achievement of goals.

### **SESSION 3: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

The principal conclusions of this session were the following.

- It is important to recognise that a conceptual framework for community engagement and an explicit conceptualisation of community engagement are necessary. The latter would shape how community engagement is manifested in the governance and management of a university.
- With respect to a conceptual framework for community engagement, a number of issues and concepts need to be extensively debated and an institutional consensus developed around them. These issues and concepts were identified as including:
  - The very idea of the *university* itself and its core purposes, responsibilities, and functions – were these only teaching and learning, and research, or did they include community engagement?
  - The *rationale* for undertaking community engagement, and the expectations of benefits that are seen as deriving from community engagement;
  - The *value basis* of community engagement – is community engagement about interacting with communities in order to maintain the *status quo* or to contribute to reforming or transforming the social order?
  - Notions of *knowledge* and how it is constructed;
  - Understandings of *engagement* – a one-way process or a two-way flow?
  - How '*community*' is to be defined – is there a single 'community' (the local township) or a multiplicity of communities that seek different kinds of interactions?
- Community engagement involves a change management process for the university and for the community, and challenges and problems in these regards should not be underestimated.
- In order to pursue community engagement, an institution needs the support of its leadership and senior management, and requires academic backing, mechanisms for integrating community engagement into university and faculty structures, and champions and drivers.
- Externally, it is necessary to build trust with communities – how ever these are defined – that shun a 'big brother' attitude and seek to forge mutually respectful and reciprocal relationships. Such relationships bring their own governance and management challenges in terms of agenda-setting, ensuring feedback loops and the participation of community representatives on the university Senate and Council.
- Recognising that there are three models of community engagement (traditional silo; intersecting; cutting across), rather than conferring on any one of these models the status of the ideal or orthodoxy, allowance should be made for a multiplicity of approaches as appropriate to the mission of a university. It is possible that a university could begin with a particular model and gravitate over time to another model.

- Once community engagement has been embraced, consideration should be given to its location within the university – complete infusion within departments and faculties, a separate central unit within the university, or both, with a clear specification of relationships. This was identified as an issue that had also confronted academic development programmes at universities.
- Consideration has to be given to whether every discipline can and should be involved in service-learning.
- It has to be posed whether a university can engage in high quality community engagement if there are shortcomings in the quality of its teaching and learning and research, or institutional weaknesses that compromise effectiveness and efficiency.
- It should not be assumed that universities are proceeding on a *tabula rasa*. Some have been involved in community engagement and have also restructured their community engagement activities on the basis of reviews.
- Universities currently primarily recognise and reward research, and to a lesser extent teaching. Consideration may have to be given to also recognising and rewarding community engagement involvement.
- While the HEQC of the CHE has given very clear signals regarding community engagement this has not happened to the same extent with the Department of Education (DoE). Although the funding formula does not prescribe how institutions must utilise funds allocated to them, neither does the funding formula specifically provide support.

## **SESSION 5: KEY CHALLENGES, ENABLING MECHANISMS AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

The key challenges and possible enabling mechanisms can be elaborated under a number of headings that will be familiar to leaders, managers and practitioners of higher education policy, planning, quality and financing.

### **Conceptual**

- A rigorous conceptual framework for community engagement is required, which articulates the key concepts and issues related to community engagement and serves as a useful guide to informing effective community engagement practices.

The CHE and JET-CHESP should take the lead in ensuring that such a conceptual framework is developed.

### **Policy**

- A clearer policy signal may be required from the DoE regarding the importance and place of community engagement in higher education.

The CHE could consider advising the Ministry of Education on this matter and the DoE may seek to give consideration to further emphasising community engagement, including through earmarked funding of community engagement initiatives.

## Planning

- An important issue is the *size and shape* of community engagement initiatives.

Decisions should be carefully and soberly taken on the depth and breadth of community engagement in the contexts of the diverse needs and assets of all partners and the sustainability of initiatives in relation to available resources.

- A key challenge is maintaining respectful, reciprocal relationships in the context of existing power relations.

This requires attention to be given to current institutional structures and strategies, and to making provision for the voices of community partners on university structures.

- A further challenge is integrating community engagement into the overall planning of the university.

This entails ensuring that community engagement is incorporated into the necessary planning structures and processes of the university and is also duly considered with respect to budget processes and resource allocation.

## Quality Assurance and Promotion

- Community engagement must be pursued alongside strengthening and/or without undermining the quality of teaching and learning (including pass and graduation rates), and research (including research outputs).

This means that there must be effective monitoring and evaluation of community engagement initiatives, alongside teaching and learning and research reviews.

To these ends, criteria should be developed for effective and efficient community engagement, as well as minimum standards and performance indicators.

- The safety and security of staff, students and communities must be important considerations in the undertaking of community engagement.

Community engagement should be an integral part of the quality management and risk management of a university.

- Effective community engagement requires developing the capabilities and capacities of both institutions (staff, students, management etc.) and communities.

Capacity building programmes have to be developed to these ends.

- Attention has to be given to the ethics with which community engagement is undertaken.

In this regard, a code of ethical conduct for community engagement has to be developed, in the same way that it exists for research.

## Financing

- The adequate and sustainable funding of community engagement is a major issue.

Universities have to be committed to engaging with the DoE in this regard, as well as with foundations and donors.

- An extensive body of knowledge has been developed, and expertise and experiences have been accumulated around community engagement.

There could be great benefits in CHESP supporting the establishment of a national network of community engagement theorists, managers and practitioners for extending theorising and research on community engagement, and sharing good practices on community engagement.

## **SESSION 8: KEY STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

In terms of recommendations for community engagement through higher education institution governance and management, this Concurrent Workshop group produced a comprehensive statement, as included below.

### **TOWARDS A NEXT PHASE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

#### **Preamble**

In the formulation of these recommendations and strategies, we acknowledge that there has been substantial engagement with the idea of community engagement (CE) in higher education in South Africa.

We also recognise that a substantial body of expertise, experience and practices has been developed within South Africa.

In the light of the above, and drawing on the deliberations of this first historic conference on CE in higher education in South Africa, we recommend that higher education institutions re-visit their CE to date.

#### **General**

1. We recommend that the leaders of higher education institutions give consideration to stimulating, conducting and leading a deep, inclusive and extensive intra-, extra- and inter-institutional conversation on the rationale, value and goals of CE in a university.

This conversation would include grappling with the notions of CE being part of a new social contract between the university and society, and of universities contributing further to economic and social development, and to a developmental state and civil society committed to reconstructing social relations and creating the conditions for all citizens to lead productive and rewarding lives and participate effectively in the governance of our society.

2. We also recommend that thought be given to the production of a declaration arising from this conference.
3. Finally, we advance below a number of recommendations and propositions related to a conceptual framework for CE, models of CE, and CE with respect to policy and decision making, planning, quality assurance and funding.

#### **Conceptual Framework**

4. We recommend that CHESP facilitate the development of a conceptual paper on CE in higher education.

In developing this paper, we must give considerable attention to a number of issues:

- Our conceptions of a university and of its core social purposes, roles, and responsibilities;
  - Our understandings of how different kinds of knowledge (scientific, everyday, indigenous etc.) are created and how learning occurs;
  - What we mean by 'engagement', 'community', and other related concepts.
5. If we are to have a productive and enabling conversation we have to give serious attention to certain issues:
- Our assumptions that what is a university, knowledge and learning are all self-evident;
  - Finding creative and strategic ways of dismantling those traditional and ossified ways of thinking and paradigms that sometimes hold us back, and helping each other towards new ways of thinking that can be liberating and open up new pathways of universities engaging with our society and contributing to our challenges, including the formal recognition of contributions to CE;
  - Thinking clearly and strategically about the language and words we use ('normal' activities, 'typical' activities etc.) to conduct the conversation, and the relations between the different roles of the university, especially if we want to win over larger numbers of people to embrace CE.

### **Models of Community Engagement**

6. With respect to the possible models of CE, our current thinking appears to conceive of at least three models:
- The university has three roles – teaching and learning, research and CE – and pursues each of these relatively independently of the others. Generally, CE in this model is confined to community outreach and student/ staff volunteerism.
  - The university has three roles – teaching and learning, research and CE – and acknowledges that there is some intersection between the three roles, and where there is an intersection it innovates service-learning while community outreach and volunteerism continue as separate activities.
  - The university has two fundamental roles – teaching and learning, and research – and defines CE as a fundamental idea and perspective, which must inform and animate and be integrated with most of its teaching and learning, and research activities.
7. It may be wise not to confer on any of these models the status of the 'ideal' or of orthodoxy.

Instead, it is perhaps advisable to provide for a multiplicity of approaches, in which each university for whatever good reasons it may have, adopts whatever model it thinks appropriate in relation to its values, mission, goals and context.

This will also be in keeping with the policy principle of a differentiated and diverse higher education sector.

### **Further Aspects of CE**

8. We can advance CE by considering it a part of and embedding it in the policy and decision making, planning, quality assurance and funding structures and processes of the university.

### **Policy and decision making**

We are of the view that leadership and management of higher education institutions must persuade themselves and persuade others of the values and benefits of CE through engaging with all constituencies, and providing leadership and strategic direction.

### **Planning**

We propose that universities:

- Integrate CE within the overall planning of the university with respect to strategic direction, the size and shape of the university, staffing decisions and budget allocations;
- Make choices and trade-offs regarding CE alongside other academic and financial choices, decisions and trade-offs.

### **Quality assurance**

We propose that universities:

- Ensure that CE initiatives are quality assured (mutually reciprocal, respectful and beneficial relationships, criteria and minimum standards, ethical conduct etc.) in the same way as other programmes are quality assured, and that there are clear policies, processes and activities designed to enhance the quality of initiatives and to build institutional and individual capabilities of relevant actors;
- Ensure that CE is monitored and reviewed in the same way as other initiatives in an integrated overall quality assurance system.

### **Funding**

We recommend that:

- Institutions should creatively mobilise funds for CE activities through a range of sources, including local and regional government, donors etc.;
- The Ministry of Education should consider creating a category of earmarked funding for CE.

### **National co-operation and structures on CE**

It is recognised that a considerable body of thinking, knowledge and research on CE has been developed in South Africa. In the light of this it is strongly urged:

- That a recognised (with the support of HESA, CHESP and the CHE *et al*) national network of CE should *now* be established to take forward CE in higher education;
- That strong consideration should be given to the creation of a national database on CE initiatives.

## **CONCLUSION**

Three factors appear to be critical to the greater and effective further development of community engagement in South African higher education.

One critical factor is a conceptual framework on community engagement in higher education. Through an interrogation and articulation of key concepts and critical issues internal and external to higher education, such a conceptual framework could usefully inform conceptualisations of community engagement in higher education institutions and also serve as a useful guide for informing effective community engagement practices. The CHE and JET-CHESP are well-placed to take the lead in ensuring that such a conceptual framework is developed.

Another critical factor is earmarked funding for community engagement through the DoE. Such funding would both facilitate community engagement initiatives and signal a shift on the part of the Department of Education from 'symbolic' policy towards substantive policy with regard to community engagement.

Finally, substantial knowledge, research and expertise and experience on community engagement have been developed in South Africa. Now may be an opportune time to establish a national network of community engagement theorists, managers and practitioners to take forward community engagement in higher education, including enhancing theorising and research on community engagement, and promoting and disseminating good practices on community engagement.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We wish to acknowledge the 50-odd colleagues who participated in the three Concurrent Workshops on the theme of HEI Governance and Management of Community Engagement: your ideas, effort and time contributed to the success of the workshops and facilitated the production of this synthesis report. In particular, we wish to thank the workshop Resource Persons, and the Chairs and Scribes of the working groups.

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## CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS

### Community Engagement through Partnerships

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## Community Engagement through Partnerships

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*This paper formed the basis of presentations made by Armand W. Carriere at Concurrent Workshop Sessions 3, 5 and 8 on Community Engagement through Partnerships.*

### ABSTRACT

Utilising a recently established collaboration among the 13 member colleges of Worcester Consortium, the City of Worcester, Massachusetts, and the local business community as a case study, the paper begins by examining a conceptual framework for campus–community partnerships. The paper describes a set of values and characteristics that will enable a partnership to respond to the needs of both the higher education institution and the community: informed leadership, a shared vision among the partners, an entrepreneurial approach to problem solving, recognising the mutual benefits to accrue to all partners, and resources available and accessible to both the higher education institution and the community. The paper also addresses structural modalities for sustainable partnerships as well as challenges to effective collaborations. Citing examples within the Worcester initiative, the paper looks at where in a higher education institution the focus for the partnership resides and how that focus translates into productive dialogue with the community. Challenges, including those specific to higher education institutions, are also described, with additional examples drawn from the Worcester experience. The second portion of the paper concludes with comments regarding the assurance of quality of partnership activities and the importance of assessment and feedback to all partnering organisations, most specifically the community partners. Finally, the paper describes strategies for advancing and embedding community engagement. Citing an article in a recent publication, the paper identifies keys to the continued development of community engagement; and concludes with recommendations to promote sustainable, ethical campus–community partnerships.

### KEYWORDS

challenges to effective partnerships  
framework for partnerships  
sustaining community engagement  
values and characteristics of partnerships  
Worcester UniverCity Partnership

### INTRODUCTION

It is indeed a privilege to join colleagues from around the world to examine our understanding of the roles of colleges and universities in relation to their communities. Through a series of concurrent workshops I will offer some comments on the general theme of ‘Community Engagement through Partnerships’. My perspective is that of both a former funder of community–campus partnerships and a current practitioner.

Over the course of the next two days I hope to elicit comments and generate discussion among participants in these workshops, particularly our friends from South African higher education institutions, who are vigorously incorporating concepts of community engagement into the very fabric of a renewed system of higher education. As we know from our work in community partnerships, these initiatives work best when there is the recognition that all parties bring value to the relationship. I am here to listen and learn from you.

## A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR PARTNERSHIPS

I would like to begin my discussion of a conceptual construct for a community partnership by examining the framework developed from the perspective of the Worcester, Massachusetts (MA) UniverCity Partnership. It might be helpful to provide some of the history and background that led to the creation of this unique partnership.

Worcester, MA is the second largest city in Massachusetts. It has a population of approximately 175 000 people. Worcester's history is like that of many northeastern US cities; it was a city settled predominantly by western European immigrants who came to the area to work in the steel and textile factories. Along with being a manufacturing centre, Worcester became a centre for banking, finance and insurance. The city was also home to nine colleges and universities. Through the 1960s, Worcester was a prosperous community, with a broad commercial and industrial tax base to support a full array of community services.

Like many cities in what is referred to as America's 'rust belt', Worcester fell on hard times, starting in the late 60s. Big industry left town, banks were bought out and consolidated, and a formerly prosperous downtown became blighted. This deterioration did not happen overnight. But the steady decline in business and industry left the community with an unhealthy economic dependency on the 'eds and the meds' – i.e. institutions of higher education and medical facilities.

During this period of decline, the population, somewhat surprisingly, remained stable. Worcester remained the second largest city in Massachusetts and jockeyed with Providence, Rhode Island as the second or third largest city in New England. This stability of population meant that the demand for municipal services remained high, while the tax burden to support city services fell disproportionately on the homeowner – in the form of ever increasing property taxes.

Amid all of this turmoil and decline, the colleges of Worcester remained economically viable institutions. They were indeed anchor institutions in the community. And as the city entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century it realised that the local colleges would have to play a leading role in any efforts to revitalise the city. While not the 'only game in town', they were certainly critical players.

As more and more people recognised the critical role the colleges could play in the city, an interesting sub-plot was developing. College and universities, for tax purposes, are considered non-profit organisations; that is, they pay no local, state or federal taxes on assets used for educational purposes. A small but vocal segment of the community, primarily local homeowners, looked at the colleges, with their substantial real estate holdings (classroom buildings, libraries, dormitories, athletic fields etc.) as well as the demands the institutions can make on municipal services (police, fire, public works) and demanded that colleges voluntarily pay 'taxes' to the city. The request put the city in an awkward position, given the major roles of employers and economic engines the colleges were playing. 'Biting the hand that feeds you' was a caution that occurred to many in the city administration.

It was at this point in late 2004 that a visionary mayor, Timothy P. Murray, convened a task force to look at creative ways that the city could better utilise the resources of the colleges and tie those resources more closely to city government and the business community. This task force, chaired by state representative James Leary, spent a year making a nation-wide study of models of campus–community partnerships and reviewing studies of the economic impact of colleges on their local communities. At the completion of their study, dubbed the 'Leary report' (Leary *et al*, 2004), a recommendation was made to Mayor Murray that a structure be established that would improve communication and coordination within the city, including the non-profit community, the local colleges, and the business community. That structure has become the Worcester UniverCity Partnership.

The Worcester UniverCity Partnership is a unique collaboration of the 13 member colleges of Worcester Consortium, the City of Worcester, and the local business community represented by the Chamber of Commerce and the Worcester Business Development Corporation. Each partnering organisation has contributed resources – both in cash and in kind – to form the collaborative.

In the course of its research the task force had chronicled individual success stories among the local colleges and their community partners, but felt these examples were exceptions rather than the rule. The new entity, the UniverCity Partnership, would have to forge sustainable linkages among the three constituent groups if real benefit was to be derived from this collaboration. To achieve these goals of communication and coordination, the task force recommended that each partner in the collaboration nominate an administrator, who would have authority to speak for the larger group and represent its interests as this initiative moved forward.

Building upon that essential principle identified by the task force, the Partnership created what is now a 12-person Advisory Board made up equally of representatives from each participating constituency. The Board endorsed the findings of the Leary report (Leary *et al*, 2004), citing economic development and the expansion of the local tax base as the overarching themes of the Partnership. In April 2005 the Board hired me as the founding executive director of the Worcester UniverCity Partnership.

## **VALUES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTNERSHIPS**

In order for a partnership like the Worcester UniverCity Partnership to succeed, some basic values must be adhered to, and *informed leadership* heads the list of these values. A confluence of positive leadership factors was occurring in Worcester at this time, facilitating the establishment of the Partnership. A youthful and visionary city government, led by the mayor – who is elected – and city manager – who is appointed – had recently been put in place. The president<sup>21</sup> of the Colleges of Worcester Consortium was on hand to lend the considerable weight of his organisation to the Partnership and make available the networking capabilities of the Consortium to initial organisational efforts. And the business community, somewhat moribund in recent years, was coming together under the dynamic leadership of the Chamber of Commerce and the Worcester Business Development Corporation.

Flowing from this executive-level involvement, more specific, hands-on leadership has emanated from members of the three partnering organisations. An assistant city manager, acting on behalf of the mayor, chairs the Advisory Board and serves as a liaison to the city administration. Individual college presidents within the Consortium have taken a more active role in supporting the work of the Partnership. I should point out that for partnerships to succeed they need ‘champions’. Within the group of college presidents in Worcester, John Bassett, President of Clark University, ably fits the description of ‘champion’. Starting in the mid-90s, much of the work that Clark University accomplished with a local community partner informed the planning and development of the Worcester UniverCity Partnership. And leaders of neighbourhood business associations have also stepped up and assumed an active role in Partnership activities, recognising the contribution they can make to these collaborative efforts.

Perhaps the key aspect of leadership that enables the Partnership to function effectively involves a committee of representatives from each of the colleges, who serve as my first point of contact with each institution. Known as campus liaisons, they provide me with an entrée to appropriate on-campus resources among the faculty and administrative staff. This system makes working with multiple institutions manageable.

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<sup>21</sup> In South African terms, vice chancellor.

Most successful campus–community partnerships typically make use of students in such activities as programme delivery or programme analysis. The Worcester UniverCity Partnership is attempting to go beyond those traditional roles and tap student leaders for policy making and advisory roles. In our earliest stages of planning, including meeting with campus officials, community leaders and business leaders, we realised that a key voice was missing: the voice of the over 30 000 students in Worcester. Led by two students from the College of the Holy Cross, a student advisory group was formed at the end of the 2005/2006 academic year. The Worcester Intercollegiate Government (WIG), made up of two representatives from each of the local colleges, will serve as an advisor to the UniverCity Partnership and will be engaged in issues like downtown development, transportation, and cultural and recreational programming.

Another key value that helps inform a successful partnership is the concept of a *shared vision*. I mentioned earlier that an overarching theme of the UniverCity Partnership is economic development. The fact that all of the partners can agree on this vision enables the Partnership to move forward. It is clearly in the interests of all three partnering entities that the city becomes a prospering, healthy community. While there is general agreement and commitment to the broad goal of economic development, I shall describe later some of the challenges to accomplishing specific aspects of this goal. The devil, as they say, is frequently in the detail.

A third value that promotes successful partnerships is an *entrepreneurial approach* to problem solving, a willingness to take some risks. As I described briefly at the beginning of my remarks, the city of Worcester was a traditional, old-line industrial city that happened to have several colleges within the city limits. The colleges educated the city's young people, and provided teachers for the schools, and employees for local business and industry – all very traditional and time honoured roles for colleges.

The architects of the Worcester UniverCity Partnership recognised that there was potential to go beyond these traditional roles and begin to engage more fully the resources of the colleges. In Worcester, we are witnessing partnerships among the colleges, the city and the business community that involve everything from a multi-million dollar real estate development that will bring small business and jobs to the city, to individual students working on behalf of the municipal government, producing an orientation video for the local housing authority.

I should point out that the formal construct of the Partnership – i.e. multiple colleges, the city (including the non-profit sector), and the business community – is in itself an entrepreneurial approach. Typically, community partnership models have linked single higher education institutions with one or more community partners. The Partnership model in Worcester is, in my view, unique.

Viewing partnership activities in the light of *mutual benefit* to be derived is another value all good partnerships will adhere to. Reduced to its simplest form, this could be thought of as enlightened self-interest. The work of Clark University and its community partner illustrate this point. Clark – like Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, or the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia – would not have become the model of community engagement nationwide and one of the motivating forces behind the Worcester UniverCity Partnership, if it had not been forced to react to the blighted conditions surrounding the campus. But it did react, and in ways that went beyond 'bricks and mortar'.

In spite of lingering town–gown tensions, Clark University's immediate neighbours recognised that Clark's motives for community improvements, however self-serving, would also serve the community's best interests. Results of this decade-long collaboration include an award-winning high school, a state-of-the-art Boys' and Girls' Club, and improved housing stock throughout the neighbourhood.

It was again this recognition of *potential mutual benefit* that convinced the designers of the Worcester UniverCity Partnership that a coordinated effort among the other colleges and

universities, the city, and the private sector could dramatically increase the positive results accruing to the greater community.

In order for the city and its neighbourhoods to benefit fully from the more engaged colleges and universities, the resources of the higher education institutions must be *available and accessible*. A role of the Worcester UniverCity Partnership is to be a broker and bring opportunities for collaboration to the attention of the appropriate parties.

Some natural collaborations have developed in Worcester over the years. I have spoken in some detail of the work of Clark University and its neighbourhood partners. One or two of the other colleges in Worcester are in the nascent stages of developing formal relationships with neighbourhoods abutting their campus boundaries. The challenge for the Worcester UniverCity Partnership is to link these and other colleges with other partnering organisations throughout the city. The UniverCity Partnership mandate is city-wide, so it becomes incumbent on the Partnership to serve as a facilitator, helping community groups make appropriate contacts within the colleges, while being cognisant of community issues that campus resources could address.

## **POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

Institutions interested in developing partnerships outside the boundaries of the campus will find a universe populated by organisations differentiated by such things as size, maturity, purpose, resources and leadership. What enables the higher education institution and the partnering organisation to negotiate these distinctions is a mutually held desire to problem-solve.

As mentioned above, a successful partnership can only be achieved if all parties perceive mutual gain or benefit. To illustrate this dynamic I would like to describe some examples from my experience with the Worcester UniverCity Partnership. Beginning with the earliest discussions regarding the establishment of the Partnership, the city and the business community knew what they wanted from the colleges: a concerted effort to expand and grow their economic impact. A list of economic impact indicators was established, borrowing liberally from the work of Harvard economist Michael Porter. This list described distinct roles colleges play in a community, including the college as employer, the college as purchaser, the college as real estate developer, and the college as provider of intellectual capital. It was in the city's and the business community's interests to have the colleges vigorously address these areas of economic impact. It was then a question of whether addressing these factors would be in the colleges' interests.

A revitalised local economy was certainly in the interests of the colleges of Worcester. Though only one college among the nine could be considered a downtown campus, the other eight institutions understood the benefits to be gained from a more thriving, economically healthy community. The UniverCity Partnership has therefore had little difficulty in convincing the local colleges of the wisdom and importance of supporting local merchants, trying whenever possible to direct their purchase of goods and services to local businesses.

Through a survey conducted by my office, benchmarks describing the dollar amount of local purchasing by the colleges have been established. The goal is to increase local spending by 5% per year for the next five years. The Partnership, by being an advocate for this emphasis on local buying, highlights this effort as a part of the overall mission of economic development.

More proactively, the Partnership has sponsored a Vendor Fair, where area businesses are invited to meet Procurement and Purchasing staff from each of the colleges and learn more about potential business opportunities. This year, the Chamber of Commerce, a key element of the Partnership, will incorporate this Vendor Fair into a larger, regional Business Exposition.

Another partnership has developed around the colleges' role as employer. A hiring initiative is underway targeting unemployed or underemployed Worcester residents for positions at the local colleges. The collective job openings at the local colleges will be identified and, working through the City's Workforce Development Office, Worcester residents will be screened and made job-ready for the entry-level job opportunities on the campuses. While the colleges are gaining qualified personnel, the community is benefiting from increased employment and the greater purchasing power that result from this employment. This kind of hiring also creates closer ties between residents and the colleges.

The colleges are also partnering with a public-private arts initiative, the Worcester Center for the Performing Arts, to restore an abandoned downtown theatre. Colleges have made a long-term financial commitment to this project in return for special access to the theatre, blocks of tickets to scheduled performances, and the opportunity to incorporate the theatre into their theatre arts curriculum. The theatre can also be highlighted to prospective students and their parents as part of a college admissions effort.

Lower-case examples of partnerships initiated or enhanced by the Worcester UniverCity Partnership include collaborations with the City Police Department on an analysis of motor vehicle usage, and with the City Housing Authority, in the production of an orientation video for new residents. In both examples, students, under a professor's direction, produced a valuable product for a city agency.

In each of the examples cited above the mutual benefit to all collaborating parties was evident. A successful and robust business community attracts new business; more jobs relate to greater spending and additional tax revenues; real estate development, as in the case of the theatre, provides an entertainment and educational venue while revitalising downtown; and service-learning initiatives provide students with practical experience while saving the city thousands of dollars in consultant fees or production costs. (Note: Saving tax dollars can be as good as generating new tax revenues.)

Where we see an occasional lack of perceived mutual benefit involves the application of the colleges' intellectual capital. While there is little or no reluctance on the part of the local colleges to engage their campus resources in service to the community, there can be a lack of understanding or appreciation on the part of the community as to what benefits will accrue to the colleges through these activities. The colleges must perceive an educational benefit if they are going to commit the time and talents of their faculty and students to community generated projects. Colleges go to some length to explain that they are not social service agencies; they are not commercial ventures; they are not suppliers of 'free labour'. In a community like Worcester, where colleges create such a large footprint, these distinctions become extremely important in the development and sustainability of potential partnerships.

The roles of the partners in the Worcester UniverCity Partnership continue to evolve. As the Partnership matures, the roles of the participating members become more clearly defined. Economic development remains the overarching goal of the Partnership and it remains in everyone's interest that the city thrives.

## **ENABLING MECHANISMS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

In the morning session I alluded to a conceptual framework for community engagement. A typical mechanism that enables effective implementation of a conceptual framework within US institutions of higher education involves multiple departments within a university partnering with one or more community partners. The model with which I am most familiar, the Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) model funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of University Partnerships, funded a college-based programme that required

the involvement of a minimum of three academic disciplines. This requirement was an attempt to provide a more comprehensive approach to community problem solving.

The approach was a good one (notwithstanding the federal government's recent decision to discontinue funding the COPC programme), although a higher level of engagement would involve inter-disciplinary approaches to community problem solving. In my own state, an institution like the University of Massachusetts-Lowell has established a Regional Economic and Social Development Department, which combines disciplines and enables them to approach community challenges in a much more comprehensive manner.

Many US colleges have established an Office of Community Affairs or Office of Community Engagement. Typically, the person in that position is someone not from the academic ranks but rather from the community. This office, preferably an adjunct to the office of the president,<sup>22</sup> serves as both the portal of entry to the university and the university's liaison with the community. The office is the primary link to the institutional partners and can serve as a broker among individual faculty members and community organisations. In my current role I've observed two particularly effective community relations officers – one a long-standing campus official, the other a recent appointment from the community.

The keys to success in this model are credibility and accessibility, both on and off the campus. In some later remarks I'll examine some possible obstacles to these models.

## **POLICY AND STRUCTURAL MODALITIES FOR EFFECTIVE, ETHICAL AND SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS**

Earlier I discussed the importance of top-level leadership in developing and sustaining a commitment to community engagement. It will be these leaders, these champions of community partnerships, who will establish the supportive environment necessary to sustain community engagement. While we can acknowledge the potentially obstructionist and reactionary influence of entrenched and tenured faculty and others in the academic hierarchy on campus-wide innovations, the importance of the university president cannot be understated. I am fortunate to have, among the nine presidents of the Colleges of Worcester, academic leaders who recognise the importance of their institutions in efforts to add value to the community.

And from this supportive leadership should flow the resources to support community engagement initiatives. Colleges too numerous to list here have used their own resources, tapped their endowment, and made faculty and staff time available to support a mission of engagement. Again, citing Worcester as an example, we see major inner-city investment on the part of the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Science; a multi-million dollar bio-tech park being developed by Worcester Polytechnic Institute; and a \$1.7 million loan guarantee by the College of the Holy Cross to support an affordable housing initiative in an adjoining neighbourhood.

*Where* an institution chooses to locate an office focusing on engagement activities is a key policy issue. Several years ago it seemed appropriate to locate these activities in a Student Life or Student Activities office. Much of what was happening off-campus was considered extra-curricular or volunteer/ service activity. As the civic engagement movement matured and the work and influence of organisations like Campus Compact became more prominent, more of these activities were seen as an integral part of the academic programme and placement within an academic department could be defended. If curriculum is a key to sustaining engagement activities then more thought should be given to locating the focal point of civic engagement within an academic department.

Another alternative, and one that I feel demonstrates true commitment on the part of the institution, is the placement of a community engagement coordinator in the president's office. The symbolism of a staff person charged with representing the institution to the community (and being the first point of contact at the university) being in the president's office is very strong. Within the Worcester UniverCity Partnership these points of contact have been the campus liaisons I described earlier. Their ties to the campus and to the community make coordination with other elements of the UniverCity Partnership much easier to negotiate.

Policies determining how and when the higher education institution communicates with the community are extremely important. Is campus leadership accessible to community leaders? Is the campus itself open and inviting to the community? Are campus leaders visible in the community? How are town-gown conflicts handled? Avoiding all potential sources of conflict is difficult if not impossible; open communication strategies and a general environment of respect will help ensure a continuing dialogue. A partnership like the Worcester UniverCity Partnership, with a conceptual framework that includes both academic and community constituencies, will be much better able to function openly and effectively within the broader community.

Conscious and vigilant attention to policies that could be perceived as counter to community engagement initiatives is also important. I have witnessed examples of an academic department working hard at establishing partnerships in a neighbourhood at the same time that the real estate arm of the campus was planning to buy up houses in the same neighbourhood to put in a campus parking facility. Such conflicting policies will cause irreparable damage to partnership activities.

## **CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS**

Establishing and maintaining effective community partnership is difficult in the best of circumstances. There are inherent factors that present challenges from the very beginning.

For example, the distinct culture of the academy must be acknowledged. Life beyond the campus does not exist on a semester or term basis. Leaders of partnering organisations are not apt to take year-long sabbatical leaves from their work. Community problems cannot be put on hold because of a lack of enrolment. All of these aspects of college life – taken for granted by those of us involved with colleges or universities – must be factored into our relationships with external partners and into our plans to implement partnership activities.

Earlier in my comments I described the importance of strong campus leadership, going as far as describing some presidents as 'champions' of this work. This asset, however, can quickly turn into a challenge or obstacle if that president leaves and is replaced by a president with a much different agenda. There is a risk when the commitment to community engagement on the part of a higher education institution is embodied in a president or other charismatic leader on campus. Embedding the concepts of community partnership throughout the campus, particularly through the curriculum, is one method of ensuring that civic engagement will survive the loss of any one individual, however charismatic. Acknowledging the work with communities through an official line in the annual operating budget is another method of ensuring sustainability. In Worcester we have been fortunate to witness what appears to be a seamless transition from one president to another at both Clark University and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. In both cases community partnership programmes initiated by an earlier president have been continued by the new presidents.

The effect of leadership change can also impact on partnering organisations. Higher education institutions must be prepared to engage new community leaders, leaders who may not share the vision or values of their predecessors. The US is currently experiencing the phenomenon of the baby boomer generation facing retirement. Many leaders of social service agencies, non-profit organisations and community-based organisations are retiring. A new generation of leadership is coming along, perhaps holding different values.

And this phenomenon does not begin to take into account grassroots partners, organisations frequently led by low-income people who may have personal or family situations that cause them to abandon completely or take time away from partnership activities. All of these leadership issues pose significant challenges to the implementation and management of effective partnerships. Even when stable leadership is in place other obstacles to successful partnering will crop up, many of these perceptual in nature. In my earlier remarks I described a small but vocal group of Worcester residents calling upon the city to extract from the colleges what are referred to as Payments In Lieu Of Taxes, or PILOTs. The establishment of the UniverCity Partnership was in part a response to this demand. It has been the colleges' position (and the city has passively agreed) that the contributions they make to the community through a great variety of outreach and partnering programmes far outweigh the value of a single, annual tax payment. With the main focus of the Worcester UniverCity Partnership being economic development, and anticipated increases in business revenues, employment and tax revenues on the horizon, the city has been willing to support the Partnership and table any formal discussion and vote on PILOTs.

Were the proponents of PILOTs to have their way, a not unlikely result would be a curtailment or reduction of the contributions the colleges currently make to the greater community, rendering the value of a PILOT payment purely symbolic.

Partnerships frequently have to overcome the challenge of a history of bad relations or no relations at all with their surrounding communities. Too often colleges in America were perceived as distant and removed from the communities and neighbourhoods immediately outside their gated walls. Entering into partnerships with communities that are suspicious at best and hostile at worst is a serious challenge. A case in point with the Worcester UniverCity Partnership is a member institution, the College of the Holy Cross. For many years, Holy Cross was, literally and figuratively, the 'College on the Hill'. In recent years a major interstate highway was constructed on the edge of the campus, effectively cutting it off from much of Worcester. Adding to this physical isolation was the sense that the college was populated almost exclusively by privileged young people from outside the area.

Within the past five years, the College has done much to change many of these negative perceptions. The College has established and supports an elementary school for low-income boys; its students spend thousands of hours volunteering at schools and social service agencies; the College made its athletic field available to a professional baseball team, bringing baseball back to the city after a lengthy absence; it has funded through its operating budget capacity-building initiatives by its community partner, improving the neighbourhood's ability to turn itself around; and possibly most important, the College has awarded scholarships to inner-city Worcester students, changing dramatically the profile of a Holy Cross student.

How an institution chooses to manage a partnership can present a challenge. Has the institution identified a staff person (or persons) dedicated to the administration of partnerships? Is there an office on campus, resourced appropriately, that is the focal point for community engagement activities? Are faculty members allowed released time to adequately pursue and manage partnership initiatives? A positive answer to each of these questions would indicate a serious intent to implement successful partnerships.

## **ASSURING QUALITY OF PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES**

Assuring the quality of partnership activities begins and ends with good communication. At the front end it involves the establishment of mutually agreed upon goals and objectives of the partnership. Both parties must perceive a benefit to be derived from the partnership. The roles of each partner must be clearly defined and agreed upon. Once these roles are defined, at least on the campus, the president or someone in the academic hierarchy must ensure that the person

responsible for partnership activities has both the authority and the resources necessary to manage the initiatives. Ignoring these initial planning steps will cause serious problems as the partnership attempts to implement its programme.

As a partnership moves beyond the planning stage and into the implementation phase communication continues to be a vital part of quality assurance. Ongoing assessment of partnership activities designed to measure progress is key to the ultimate success of the partnering initiative. It should be pointed out that evaluation is not the sole responsibility of the academic institution. The community partner must be an equal partner in any assessment effort. Successful partnerships have provided community partners with the tools and skills to survey and assess progress of partnership activities. This practice not only provides data needed by the project but also empowers local residents with new skills and reinforces the perception of partners as equals.

Building upon this example of data collection, another step that can ensure the quality and sustainability of partnerships is sharing results or outcomes with partnering organisations. Too often, the results of applied or community-based research activities are only shared among other academics. When studies or surveys are published, they are only seen in academic journals. It is important to ensure that data or results of this research are shared in media accessible to local residents: newsletters, websites, community meetings etc.

A rigorous assessment of the goals and objectives of a community partnership is extremely important to the continued quality of these outreach efforts. The designers of the Worcester UniverCity Partnership anticipated this need, recommending that “specific reporting requirements and measurement tools must be established and enforced”.

A quarterly report is now submitted to key members of the UniverCity Partnership, tracking the progress made in accomplishing the goals established at the beginning of the programme year. While the report is important to all Partnership participants, it is especially important to the City of Worcester since its financial contribution to the Partnership represents public money. The report serves to assure public officials that the city’s funds are being well spent. The report of Partnership activities can also serve to blunt the criticism of local colleges by those in the community seeking voluntary tax payments from the colleges.

I would like to point out a difficulty I have observed in measuring results of partnership activities. Institutions are unable or unwilling to distinguish between outputs and outcomes. To illustrate: a college–community partnership may describe as a goal placing residents in jobs. And to accomplish this goal the partnership will provide job training classes. At the end of a reporting period they will report that five classes were conducted with 15 students in each class. Everyone successfully completed the training. No mention is made, however, of how many people were placed in jobs. Distinguishing between *process outcomes* (five classes offered) and *goal oriented outcomes* (job placements) is important in the monitoring and evaluation of partnership activities and key to the ultimate success of the partnership.

## **STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING, ADVANCING AND EMBEDDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

In a recent publication,<sup>23</sup> contributors Brukardt *et al*, in an article entitled ‘The Path Ahead: What’s Next for University Engagement?’ address the issue of sustaining partnerships and furthering the overall movement. The contributors identify six keys to the continued development of community engagement:

- Integrate engagement into the mission of the institution;

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<sup>23</sup> Percy, Zimpher and Brukardt (2006), *Creating a New Kind of University: Institutionalizing Community–University Engagement*.

- Forge partnerships as the overarching framework for engagement;
- Renew and redefine discovery and scholarship;
- Integrate engagement into teaching and learning;
- Recruit and support new champions;
- Create radical institutional change.

I'd like to comment briefly on the six practices, based on my personal experience and observations. I will take the practices out of order, saving for last what I feel is the practice most germane to my comments today: forging new partnerships.

### **Integrate Engagement into the Mission of the Institution**

While most college and university mission statements acknowledge a commitment to the greater community (state; region) the reality falls considerably short of what we hold out as the definition of an engaged institution. Efforts ranging from research and development initiatives that have produced the Silicon Valleys of the world, to one-time student volunteer efforts that clean a vacant lot have traditionally defined a college or university's commitment to its immediate community. And clearly these are good things. But they stop short of what Brukardt *et al* describe in their discussion of how engaged universities can best serve society "(by) preparing students to be active, principled citizens and by linking knowledge to the public good through engaged scholarship" (2006: 245).

I recently attended a meeting of the Worcester City Council, at which two college-sponsored initiatives were being recognised. One involved a multi-million dollar bio-tech research centre being built by Worcester Polytechnic Institute on a reclaimed brown field. This was a private–public partnership that will be very important to the city's future by providing jobs and small business start-ups. The other initiative involved a local group of predominantly minority high school students, led by a local college faculty member, reporting on research they accomplished that identified targeted advertising of tobacco products in low-income neighbourhoods and in school zones. In looking objectively at these examples of campus–community partnerships, I think we all could agree that the bio-tech facility will be a wonderful addition to the city and a very good example of a college–community partnership. But if we apply the definition of engagement offered above by Brukardt and her colleagues, the work of that one college professor with the group of inner-city high school students may, in another sense, be a better example of real community engagement.

### **Renew and Redefine Discovery and Scholarship**

A need exists to elevate the perceived value of community-based or applied research. As opposition to this form of scholarship erodes, more and more faculty will be free to pursue research that informs their discipline based on real issues, makes a contribution to the community, and adds an element of greater citizenship to a student's education. Just as we need leading academic administrators to promote and champion the overall concept of community engagement, we also need leaders in the academic disciplines, deans, department heads, professional associations, and scholarly journals to recognise the value and inherent scholarship contained in community-based research.

### **Integrate Engagement into Teaching and Learning**

More and more faculty members, many from the ranks of what can be described as entrepreneurial faculty, have embraced service-learning. What is most encouraging is that these faculty members come from the full range of American higher education institutions. In my former position as Director of the Office of University Partnerships we worked closely with Campus Compact and its state affiliates. While we were not funding service-learning projects *per se*, we understood that a college's curriculum was an essential part of an institution's approach and ultimate commitment to the community. Service-learning was a way to involve the institution outside the classroom in a manner that could benefit the community while enhancing the student's education.

## **Recruit and Support New Champions**

In a chapter I contributed to the book, *Creating a New Kind of University: Institutionalizing Community–University Engagement*,<sup>24</sup> I identify some new leaders in the field of community engagement at a variety of American campuses: Ricardo Romo (President of the University of Texas-San Antonio); Sister Kathleen Ross (President of Heritage University in the State of Washington); and Beverly Daniel Tatum (President of Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia), to name just three (Carriere, 2006). I am delighted and privileged to be in the company of so many higher education institution leaders from South Africa and other countries, each one of you a champion or potential champion of the concept of community engagement. It is indeed a worldwide phenomenon.

Clearly this search for champions must not be limited to the academy. The eloquent and powerful voices of our community partners must be heard. A colleague at the University of Washington, Serena Seifer, recently convened a conference of community partners only, to solicit their views on campus–community partnerships. Listening to the voices of these champions should be part of a strategy to advance community partnerships.

## **Create Institutional Change**

Stepping away from traditional modes of instruction may seem radical enough for many colleges. Venturing into the immutable areas of rank, tenure and promotion and suggesting change in these areas would, on many campuses, go beyond radical, appearing to many a frontal assault on the most basic values of the academy. But it is precisely in these areas that change must occur.

A junior faculty member at the College of the Holy Cross, when considering taking on a community-based learning project with his class, had to consider the impact this work would have on the traditional demands of his department and his discipline. Would the research emanating from this effort be publishable in the ‘right’ journal? Would the time spent in the community take away from time spent in more acceptable campus or departmental responsibilities (e.g. committee work)? Would released time be an option for the time-intensive work in the community?

The happy ending to this scenario is that the faculty member chose to involve his class in this project. Would other young faculty make the same choice? Perhaps not; but these are not choices that should be forced upon faculty.

New institutions, like many here today, may be able to take the lead and prove that departures from the traditional requirements of promotion and reward will not signal the demise of higher education. Rather, it will make the higher education institutions more exciting places to teach and learn and enable them to more easily bring the resources of the campus to bear on contemporary issues of the community.

## **Forge Partnerships as the Overarching Framework for Engagement**

In the context of our overall discussion today, the forging of partnerships is where we should place the greatest emphasis. We can look at traditional ways a college or university links itself to the community: faculty consultancies; recreation, cultural or athletic programmes; student volunteer programmes in a variety of social service settings etc. In Worcester, for example, students contribute over 500 000 hours of volunteer service per year to a variety of institutions – an impressive total, indeed. But I would point out that only a portion of these hours represents real partnerships between the colleges and the community. We have two notable exceptions. The first is Clark University, with its long and rich history as a partner with a neighbourhood community development corporation. The University is intimately involved with education, housing, youth

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<sup>24</sup> Percy, Zimpher and Brukardt (2006).

activities, and economic development initiatives, with students, faculty and administration all taking part in engagement activities.

The second example is the College of the Holy Cross, the small Jesuit institution on the south side of the city. Holy Cross has more recently developed a strong partnership with a neighbourhood organisation, and has joined the organisation in housing, economic development, and capacity-building projects, again, involving all the resources of the college.

In both examples the colleges have worked to build the capacity of their partnering organisations, ensuring that they are an equal in dealing with both the college and with other potential collaborators. These partnerships will only enhance the higher education institutions' ability to engage in the community, providing greater opportunities that will serve the best interests of the campus and the community.

The Worcester UniverCity Partnership has now entered the picture, providing an umbrella organisation that can extend beyond individual campus boundaries and specific college–community partnerships and open up the entire community to beneficial partnerships. Through the Worcester UniverCity Partnership non-profit agencies, neighbourhood business associations and city agencies all have access to a greater variety of academic resources.

In Worcester we are just beginning to examine the potential of interdisciplinary and cross-institutional avenues of co-operation with the UniverCity Partnership. An exciting aspect of the Colleges of Worcester Consortium is the wide variety of institutions that make up the Consortium, including a medical school, a community (two-year) college, a pharmacy school, a school of engineering, a private, career-oriented college, two liberal arts colleges, and a local campus of the state college system. Each institution has unique assets. Faculty from several of the local colleges are planning to come together, some meeting for the first time, to examine how they may collaborate and increase their effectiveness and ability to serve the community. The challenge ahead of us is to maximise these assets, making the total greater than the sum of the parts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT, MANAGEMENT AND PRACTICE OF EFFECTIVE, ETHICAL AND SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

A number of factors come to mind when I think of sustainable and ethical partnerships. I would begin with a *mutually agreed upon definition of partnership*. My definition would clearly describe a collaboration among equals. Valuing the unique assets each partner brings to the relationship will serve the partnership well. The Worcester UniverCity Partnership has an Advisory Board that numerically allots equal representation to each participating entity, with no segment of the Partnership having more or less power or influence than the others.

I am familiar with other models that limit the higher education institution representation on governing bodies to ensure that the community partners have the greater influence. A stronger community voice may be optimum in some circumstances.

A higher education institution and the community partner must establish *common ground*. Earlier I described this as a shared vision. The goals of the partnership must be in the best interests of all parties to the partnership. Within the Worcester UniverCity Partnership all partners have agreed that an improved Worcester economy is the main goal. Identifying the means to accomplishing this goal will require an understanding and appreciation of what each partnering organisation will contribute to the process as well as what benefit/s they will derive from their participation.

As the partnership goes forward it is important that each partner *understand their own and others' limitations*. No one institution is all things to all people. This reality can be especially difficult to

appreciate in communities like Worcester that look to colleges to fill the economic and philanthropic void caused by the loss of business and industry. 'Responsible' community voices, with only a limited understanding of college finances and endowments, have asked local colleges to assume the costs of such non-mission related projects as the construction of public high schools.

We are fortunate in Worcester to have a variety of academic institutions as members of the UniverCity Partnership. There is potential to use the resources of these varied institutions to address an array of community problems. A single institution would be limited in its response to issues raised by the community and would have to convey these limitations to a community that may not fully appreciate what the college can or cannot do.

It its zeal to work in the community a higher education institution must take care to *understand the history or track record* of the institution in that community. A colleague in Worcester has recently proposed a type of community-based research clearinghouse that might prevent the 'research fatigue' afflicting some communities today. The 'community as laboratory' is not an approach that will foster good partnerships.

I would also recommend that before partnerships are entered into a commitment be in place to *adequately resource* these efforts. An inability to follow through on agreed upon goals and objectives could irreparably damage relations with community partners.

If I have a criticism of my own Worcester UniverCity Partnership it would be the relatively modest funding provided for the initiative. By contrast, an effort to attract business and industry to the Worcester area has a start up budget ten times that of the UniverCity Partnership. Fortunately, the lack of funding hasn't been a big problem to date, but the funding issue will have to be addressed in the near future.

In the months leading up to this conference I have enthusiastically shared with colleagues in the US my excitement about being here and having the opportunity to learn more about higher education in South Africa. And almost to a person, my colleagues have responded with their own stories of collaborations with individuals and institutions in other countries around the world. Turkey, Peru, Russia and Mexico are just a few of the countries where service-learning and community engagement activities are getting the attention of international scholars.

For the past ten years I have been privileged to play a small role in the furthering of this educational movement. It is gratifying to join with learned colleagues from South Africa and other nations to continue to pursue the goal of community engagement through partnerships.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this wonderful conference. I wish you great success in the months and years ahead.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to take the opportunity to offer a word of gratitude to my friend Josef Lazarus and his colleagues at JET for all their assistance in making my presence at this event possible.

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## Community Engagement through Partnerships: Workshop Report

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*This report reflects the discussions of the Concurrent Workshop Sessions on Community Engagement through Partnerships. The Concurrent Workshop Sessions focused respectively on: Session 3: A Conceptual Framework for Community Engagement; Session 5: Key Challenges, Enabling Mechanisms and Quality Management; and Session 8: Key Strategies and Recommendations for Community Engagement.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Universities have a major role to play in harnessing and unleashing the civic energy necessary to support and develop communities and organs of society. More potently, they do so by bringing intellectual and institutional resources to bear on the surrounding communities (Wiewel and Knaap, 2005). The aim of partnerships is to bring together individuals, organisations of all types, government at all levels and communities in an environment of support and respect, in order to solve emerging challenges too big for one group to deal with successfully on its own, by developing widespread public support, increasing the critical mass and minimising duplication of efforts and services (Butterfoss, Goodman and Wandersman 1993: 317). The critical role that universities have to play in this endeavour is to foster inter-penetration of themselves with broader society as we all seek to meet society's expectations and meet its challenges (Bjarnason and Coldstream, 2003).

During the Concurrent Workshops on Community Engagement through Partnerships, a quest for a common language and understanding among participants who reflected on and are role-players in their institutions in such partnerships, led to a common understanding of 'community' and 'community engagement', and to how partnerships should be conceptualised, nurtured, established, managed and enhanced.

#### **Understanding of the Concept of 'Community'**

Our common understanding of the concept of a community is that: a community is a group of people who plan, work and learn together. This definition means that higher education institutions are themselves a subset of the broader community, just as the most disadvantaged people in society are subsets of the broader community. This definition also means a multilateral inter-penetration that is mutually beneficial and empowering, and not one-directional.

The reason we wish to emphasise that universities are themselves communities is because they also have to learn from those with whom they engage. We have also identified 'the most disadvantaged people in society' because our efforts should not be self-interested but should create opportunities for those in the most unfortunate socio-economic situations to benefit from that engagement.

#### **Understanding of 'Community Engagement'**

Our common understanding of this concept is that: community engagement is a process of creating a shared vision among the community (especially disadvantaged) and partners (local, provincial, national government, NGOs, higher education institutions, business, donors) in society,

as equal partners, that results in a long-term collaborative programme of action with outcomes that benefit the whole community equitably.

In this understanding, the following words/ phrases are noteworthy: 'shared vision'; 'partners in society'; 'equal partners'; 'collaborative programme of action'; 'benefit the whole community equitably'.

Very little could be achieved without shared vision and mutual trust about what we collectively engage on. We make a distinction between communities and partners because we see the latter as the primary focus of our collaborative efforts as active facilitators and supporters. The principle of equality in a partnership is also important; it means that the value of a partner or a community should not be judged on the basis of its status, its wealth or other such societal measures. Then, once all these concepts are in place, there will be better chances of success of collaborative programmes. Implementing collaborative programmes does not mean that there will be equal benefits to subsets of society. Hence, our emphasis on equitable contributions and benefits, depending on the relative strengths, needs, programmes and products.

### **SESSION 3: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS**

The following key questions formed the basis for discussing a conceptual framework for community engagement through partnerships:

1. What are the basic tenets, values and characteristics of an engaged university and how should these inform or reflect on partnerships for community engagement? What are the key drivers for these?
2. How integral, peripheral or otherwise are partnerships in community engagement and why should they be so?
3. What conceptual framework and conceptual models may be appropriate for external partnerships aimed at community engagement?
4. Who are the potential partners, what interests and goals do they have, what drives or motivates these, how are they synthesised into common goals and what are the respective roles of the partners in all this?

#### **Key Question: What are the Basic Tenets, Values and Characteristics of an Engaged University?**

The following were identified as basic tenets, values and characteristics of an engaged university, together with key drivers for partnerships in community engagement:

##### **Shared vision**

- There must be shared ownership of community engagement initiatives among all partners and communities.
- There must be mutual agreement based on agreed focus areas (e.g. the area of economic development, health issues etc.).
- An entrepreneurial (self-sufficiency, non-entitlement) approach is necessary to ensure sustainability when funding from partners/ donors dries up.
- There must be commitment to go beyond the traditional roles of universities (detached, disinterested, disengaged), with equitable contributions from the various partners involved.

##### **Mutual respect and added value**

- Partners should value and respect one another.

- The partners should be equal, but with equitable contributions and benefits.
- Partnerships on their own help to form a new 'community' or 'family', which brings added value to the relationship.

### **Measurable mutual benefit among partners**

- Universities and the broader community should share *enlightened* self-interest. This means that we acknowledge that self-interest is a factor, but that interests and benefits should not be defined in a narrow-minded and one-sided way.
- There must be preparedness to take calculated risks. Before engaging and establishing partnerships, all risks must be assessed in order to limit potential damage and disappointment when benefits do not accrue as originally envisaged.
- Coordinating efforts among universities in a multilateral way would be better than working with single universities or in bilaterals. (It is necessary to rethink regional consortia so that collaboration could be less self-serving to universities – in this regard, one could consider the UniverCity Partnership example in Worcester, Massachusetts).<sup>25</sup>
- Costs and benefits should be determined upfront and agreed by all the parties before work starts. Community engagement may sometimes be double the cost, but actually deliver half the benefit.

### **Accessibility and availability of resources**

- Assets, infrastructure and facilities of the university should be accessible to communities and partners, as far as possible.
- Equally, community and partner assets, infrastructure and facilities should be made available to the university, as far as possible

### **Realistic expectations**

- Expectations differ slightly among universities, the government departments, the NGOs and business.
- There is a need to articulate expectations upfront and honestly so.
- Expectations must be negotiated and managed to the satisfaction of all parties.
- Universities may be seen as sources of wealth and human resources; while the community might also be seen by universities as a source of non-subsidy funding (third stream income) and/or a source of research data.

### **Key Question: How Integral, Peripheral or Otherwise are Partnerships in Community Engagement and Why Should They be So?**

The following were suggested regarding how integral, peripheral or otherwise partnerships are to community engagement:

- Partnership programmes should be integrated into the normal or conventional programmes and activities of the university.
- There should be systems, 'carrots and sticks' etc, in order to move participants (lecturers, students) into action.

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<sup>25</sup> See these Proceedings, CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS: Community Engagement through Partnerships, Speaker: Armand W. Carriere – Community Engagement through Partnerships.

- The university needs to develop a database of resources and key persons and activities taking place.
- When the institution engages in performance management and promotions or reviews staff for potential appointments, it needs to value staff members' previous experience of partnerships in community engagement activities as a key criterion. Partnership in community engagement should be identified as one of the key performance indicators for staff.
- Partnership development and sustainability should be part of the programme of monitoring and quality assurance.
- If the Department of Education cannot incorporate community engagement in the subsidy, then other relevant departments (local, provincial, national) like Social Development, should fund these programmes; other sources of funding could also be accessed i.e. SETA funds and donor funding.
- There should be leadership and buy-in from top management, and buy-in from staff and students.
- Champions should be identified to drive processes.
- Clear lines and structures of communication and engagement are necessary.
- Caution must be exercised in order to avoid mission drift for universities, so that they continue to play their intellectual role in society.
- There is a lot of knowledge that the community brings that should influence knowledge, learning and research at the university.
- Transaction spaces (structures of governance, management, implementation etc.) should involve all partners. In this regard, participants should consider how Senates might incorporate partnership programmes and role-players; at the least, some other forum could be created to ensure that decision making is informed by all partners.

**Key Question: What Conceptual Framework and Conceptual Models May be Appropriate for External Partnerships Aimed at Community Engagement?**

The following were suggested with regard to a conceptual framework and models appropriate for external partnerships aimed at community engagement:

- While the participants agreed that the framework presented by Frederick Fourie<sup>26</sup> was good, they pointed out that it was limited to academic buy-in or change management. It was also suggested that Fourie's definition of community as a changing, ephemeral entity, which is defined and engaged with when development problems are discovered (by whom?), might be fraught – in that one community may be ditched in favour of another, even while expectations for delivery persist. The participants agreed on a definition based on socio-economic status and relative power in society. But the question was asked: Will this definition be based on historical disadvantage (based on colour and race) or the new emerging disadvantaged communities that may be colour- and race-blind?

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<sup>26</sup> See these Proceedings, SESSION 2: PLENARY, Speaker: Frederick Fourie – *Towards a South African Scholarship of Engagement: Core and Supplemental Tasks of a University?* [Appendix A](#).

- It was suggested that such problems should be mutually identified and formulated by all the partners in a community engagement initiative.
- It was also suggested that problem-based or development-oriented community engagement must not only be reactive or responsive, but also future-oriented in order to pre-empt the emergence of such problems.
- Participants suggested the need to move even beyond the tri-partite model (CHESP) that involves the university, a service provider and the community itself, to a multilateral model that also involves business/ industry and government. In an entrepreneurial model, this would ensure sustainability.

**Key Question: Who are the Potential Partners, What Interests and Goals Do They Have, What Drives or Motivates These, How are They Synthesised into Common Goals and What are The Respective Roles of the Partners in All This?**

The following was suggested in answer to the question of potential partners, and their interests and goals, motivations, common goals and respective roles:

- Government (local, provincial, national), community-based organisations, NGOs, business, donors and universities – rather than the primary communities – should be partners in alleviating the plight of the people.
- Partnerships should be *multilateral* in sector, focus, scope (include the city, university, business, NGOs and communities) without putting unnecessary boundaries among them.
- During partnership development potential partners from various sectors that will play a role in the partnership should be involved from inception, as this ensures sustainability. For example, the different partners can include some or all of the following constituencies: government, NGOs, the community, business, higher education institutions and funders etc.
- The size of the partnership and the type of partners will be determined by the size of the city or area it has to service and the nature of the programmes. It is important to take cognisance of the critical mass of the universities (small, large, private, public) in a city or region to determine effective use of resources and effective collaboration.

**SESSION 5: KEY CHALLENGES, ENABLING MECHANISMS AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS**

**Note from the report authors:** *Some of the statements made in this section are repeated from the earlier sections of this report; this is inevitable, given that we collate into a summary the challenges already identified under the categories above.*

The group identified four challenges, categorised as follows:

- **Legislative and policy framework** for the higher education system: This highlights government, systemic and institutional policies that allow for institutionalisation of community engagement at universities. We need to consider whether mission statements and visions of institutions are aligned with evoking and entrenching a culture of community engagement.
- **Governance and management:** This refers to the manner in which the leadership of the institution is influential in fostering community engagement activities at the universities.

- **Availability of resources:** This is vital as it will ensure the sustainability of community engagement activities.
- **Creating an enabling system** at institutional and systemic levels: This is crucial for facilitating quality, monitoring and evaluation of community engagement activities.

The following were therefore identified as the key challenges to the development, management and practice of effective partnerships:

### **Institutionalisation**

- The vision and mission for partnerships for each of the partners may not be shared among them.
- Given heavy workloads on the part of students and staff, curriculum design and delivery do not allow for community inputs and actual participation by students and staff.
- Management of partnerships: agreements are sometimes not concluded before projects start, and thus when problems arise there is no agreed common reference to resolve them; loss of charismatic leaders and champions in the university and also within the community impacts negatively on partnership initiatives; political changes at local government level impact on community engagement projects; staff that administer community engagement are sometimes part-time or are secondments.
- Operational budgets are vital and must be firmly in place to ensure continuity and sustainability.
- Up to now, there have usually been no project cessation strategies put in place to cater for the possible need to terminate a project (for whatever reason).

### **Values and institutional cultures**

- The institutional culture of higher education is somewhat quaint and distinct from the rest of society; life outside campus does not exist on a semester or term basis; there are no sabbaticals in the community. Communities might not accept that a professor is on sabbatical for a year and therefore the project must be suspended until s/he returns. Hence, institutionalisation is important to ensure continuity.
- Partnerships need to be regulated to maintain a level of openness, transparency and trust among partners.
- Ethical issues in maintaining partnerships are important; communities, who are sometimes used as guinea pigs or as objects of questionable research, may not be abused or exploited.

### **Perceptions and expectations**

- The university is often seen as well resourced (infrastructure, facilities, finance, human resources, the latter including students).
- Higher education institutions often perceive community projects as a means of income generation and not as an opportunity for sharing and exchanging resources and skills. This perception is erroneous and has a negative effect on the partnership and on equity in the partnership.
- Partly because of their quaint façades, universities appear aloof and omnipotent and this creates bad relationships with communities.

The following were identified as the enabling mechanisms that would facilitate the development and management of effective partnerships:

- **Alignment:** Align vision, objectives and some programmes based on the needs of the community and enlightened self-interests of all the partners: declare university, community, business, government, NGOs and donors inputs and outputs upfront so that evaluation of progress will be less contested.
- **Governance and management:** Establish viable and long-term organisational structures for governance and management to govern, envision, plan and implement; set up clear lines of communication; ensure that top management drives community engagement; consider community engagement track records of staff in staff appointments, staff development programmes, performance appraisals, promotions and incentive schemes; ensure that campus leadership is visible and accessible; set up steering committees to steer community engagement initiatives.
- **Systemic approach:** Base interventions on properly researched information and on identified needs; analyse community skills and infrastructure bases and build a database of skills and other resources in the community; conduct a needs survey or assessment in the community; ensure that such assessments are regular and ongoing into the future.
- **Programmes/ projects:** Establish techno or science parks at the interface spaces between institutions and the community; set up volunteer programmes: involve students (and staff) in a variety of community initiatives.
- **Funding:** If the Department of Education cannot incorporate funding for community engagement in the subsidy, then other relevant government departments (local, provincial, national) like Social Development, should fund these programmes; other sources of funding could be accessed i.e. SETA funds and donor funding.
- **Developmental approach:** Universities should conduct community conversations to develop a vision and to build a database of skills and other resources in the community. When working in the communities, universities must involve the new 'family' as a whole unit. Need-based surveys must be conducted. Effective communication through correct channels and organisational structures should be assured. Programmes and objectives between community and university should be aligned. Programmes should undergo continuous assessment to ensure quality and relevance.

The following were suggested as strategies for assuring, monitoring and managing the quality of partnerships:

- The office or unit responsible for community engagement must develop policies, procedures and guidelines for ethical engagement; these should include conceptualisation, design and delivery approaches.
- Training of students and staff before they start projects should be mandatory.
- There should be regular monitoring and evaluation/ assessment of community engagement projects, in conjunction with the community.
- Results must be shared with the community in a vehicle/ language to which a community can relate.
- Benchmarking needs to be conducted to avoid replication of programmes and ensure continuity of programmes from one year to the next. Visible changes that are monitored give quality and value to partnerships with regard to equity and relevance. Benchmarking therefore

ensures that the partnership remains meaningful and value-adding. Events should be held in order to celebrate the successes of programmes.

- Establish communication platforms (showcasing and reports) and strategies. Remove barriers, to ensure open communication channels (e.g. use language that is accessible).
- Ensure that partnerships reinforce (and do not deviate from) the mission and vision of the higher education institution.
- Build institutional memory by documenting all community engagement activities and resources in terms of teaching and learning and research. Establish a community engagement resource 'centre' in the relevant office or unit or in the institutional library.
- Maintain high levels of trust among all partners in the community engagement initiative.
- Ensure that there is open, honest and transparent communication at all times.
- Establish principles and parameters of engagement. Compile rules and regulations for the conceptualisation, development and implementation of partnerships.
- Ensure that all partners have clearly articulated motivations and interests.
- Aim to avoid bureaucracy as far as possible.
- Ensure that the institutional culture changes to be more sympathetic to the aspirations of the community and to become an open system.
- Ensure that there is a clear distinction between long-term and short-term goals, as these goals impact on the kind of partnership that is established; making a clear distinction between such goals helps to prevent miscommunication of outcomes.
- Quality assurance is very important to ensure that community engagement retains its academic credibility with regard to facilitating learning and development of skills; the university needs to conduct its own programme of ongoing quality audits to monitor the learning and skills development processes.

## **SESSION 8: KEY STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS**

The following were identified as the key policy and structural modalities for effective, ethical and sustainable partnerships:

- **Legislative and policy framework for the system:** Higher education institutions should align their mission statements and aspirations with those of the community. This can be facilitated by developing an institutional memory and developing clear rules and regulations with regard to roles; such rules and regulations should govern the partnerships.
- **Transaction spaces:** Universities must go beyond bilateral agreements; there is a need to rethink the function of our regional consortia in this regard. Consortia could serve as transaction spaces for collaborative implementation of community engagement and for implementing local, provincial and national development frameworks.
- **Governance:** There should be a community engagement Advisory Board that includes representation from the community and the other partners; such a Board should have links to

the highest structures of governance (such as Senate and Council). Alternatively, the existing structures of university governance might have to be rethought and aligned appropriately for the purposes of community engagement.

- **Management:** There should be an office or unit for community engagement, which acts as an interface between the university and the community, to avoid sending community leaders from pillar to post when they need to engage. Such an office would act as a resource for community engagement for all students and staff; would encourage ethical engagement by students, academics and researchers; and would facilitate cross-transfer of knowledge and skills between the community and the university, among others. This office or unit should ideally be located within the vice chancellor's office or be managed by a deputy vice chancellor. The community should also be represented in this office or unit (or its governing structures) so that it could serve as an easy entry point for the community. Such community representation could help to broker relationships between the university and the community, and would be key both to accessibility for the community and the success of the partnership as a whole.
- **Key policy direction from top management and Senate and Council:** Policy should be driven, well managed and consistent, and offer continuity. Outcomes/ strategic objectives need to be incorporated in key university policies.
- **Resources:** The development of strategies that could counter barriers to building equitable partnerships is imperative for successful partnerships. Lack of funds for projects is a great challenge and during partnership negotiation issues of funding should be explored and a detailed plan should be developed. The sustainability of community engagement initiatives can be supported through an exchange of knowledge and skills and ensuring financial viability of projects to ensure continuity.
- **Creating an enabling system:** Joint leadership is essential in partnerships, based on clear definitions of roles and the kind of partnership being established to prevent miscommunication of outcomes; all the abovementioned strategies are essential in creating an enabling system for partnerships.

## CONCLUSION

The involvement of higher education institutions in community engagement activities and the development of partnerships enable higher education institutions to establish themselves through joining forces and sharing resources, to improve the quality of life for individuals in communities in universities' spheres of influence. The actual partnership is therefore the chief resource for ensuring that quality community engagement activities are developed and sustained. The challenge for higher education institutions is to foster and adopt the appropriate characteristics that will result in optimal partnerships that help to embed community engagement in institutions' regular programmes and activities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS

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## **Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning: Introductory Notes**

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*This paper served as a working document for Concurrent Workshops Sessions 3, 5 and 8 on Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning.*

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper provides an overview of experiential education – as a pedagogical foundation for community engaged teaching and learning. The ‘roots’ of experiential education as proposed by the philosophy of Dewey are introduced and the experiential learning cycle of David Kolb (1984) is discussed. The paper also provides a framework for different forms of community engaged teaching and learning, as well as criteria that can be considered for effective community engaged teaching and learning. The paper concludes with conceptual, structural and practical challenges for community engaged teaching and learning, as well as quality management procedures.

### **KEYWORDS**

challenges for community engaged teaching and learning – conceptual, structural and practical  
criteria for effective community engaged teaching and learning  
experiential education  
Dewey  
Furco’s typology  
Kolb  
quality management procedures

## **THE ENGAGED UNIVERSITY: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGED TEACHING AND LEARNING**

### **Introduction**

When community engagement for the purpose of teaching and learning is considered, academics and educators are probably facing questions such as:

- What theories underpin community engaged teaching and learning?
- How can community engaged teaching and learning be conceptualised?
- How does community engaged teaching and learning fit into my teaching and learning style?
- In which learning framework is community engaged teaching and learning situated?

In order to answer these questions and to ‘frame’ our work, this paper provides an overview of experiential education – as a pedagogical foundation for community engaged teaching and learning. The ‘roots’ of experiential education as proposed by the philosophy of Dewey are introduced and the experiential learning cycle of David Kolb (1984) is discussed. A framework for different forms of community engaged teaching and learning is also provided. The paper concludes with criteria that can be considered for effective community engaged teaching and learning.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Note that this section of the paper draws heavily on and makes use of excerpts from Chapter 2: A theoretical and conceptual framework for service-learning. In Bender, C.J.G., Daniels, P., Lazarus, J., Naudé, L. and Sattar, K. (2006). *Service-Learning in the Curriculum: A Resource for Higher*

## **A Conceptual Framework for Community Engaged Teaching and Learning**

“Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand” (Confucius, 450BC).

This famous dictum, focusing on the importance of involvement, experience and engagement, can be regarded as the ‘birth’ of experiential education. Since then, numerous theories have focused on the importance of experience as the source of learning and development.

### **Dewey and a new paradigm for learning**

John Dewey (1859-1952), who is recognised as a renowned 20<sup>th</sup> century American educator interested in philosophy, education and politics, emphasised the importance of hands-on education. His philosophical pragmatism, concerned with interaction, reflection and experience, made a significant contribution to the stimulation of educational thinking in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His formula: *Experience plus Reflection equals Learning*, served as the progressive foundation for the development of different perspectives on experiential learning (Dewey, 1963). Although Dewey never used the term ‘service-learning’, his perceptions and philosophy of education informed and contributed to the pedagogy of service-learning. In creating a new paradigm for pedagogy, Dewey considered the following five areas that can easily be related to service-learning (Saltmarsh, 1996):

- Linking education to experience;
- Democratic community;
- Social service;
- Reflective enquiry; and
- Education for social transformation.

#### **• Linking education to experience**

Holding the belief that “we learn in the process of living” (Saltmarsh, 1996: 16), Dewey proclaimed that intelligence is the reorganisation of experience through *reflection on action*. He emphasised the importance of connecting theory and practice: action and doing on the one hand and knowledge and understanding on the other. Saltmarsh summarises this eloquently: “Learning is active; the learner is an explorer, maker, creator” (1996: 15).

#### **• Democratic community**

For Dewey, education is a social process connecting the ‘I’ to the ‘we’. All communication is educative: face-to-face interaction, associated living, and conjoint communicated experience (democracy) are essential to education.

#### **• Social service**

Learning includes participation in a democratic community, contributing to social wellbeing. Dewey’s justice (not charity) perspective is oriented towards the wellbeing of society as a whole, interdependence of interest, positive opportunities for growth, and social rights and possibilities (Saltmarsh, 1996: 17).

#### **• Reflective enquiry**

Reflective enquiry critically connects and breaks down the distinction between “thought and action, theory and practice, knowledge and authority, ideas and responsibilities”: it provides opportunity for the creation of meaning from associated experience (Saltmarsh, 1996: 18). Through reflective enquiry actions are transformed into experiences, which are in turn transformed into learning.

#### **• Education for social transformation**

Dewey believed that education is linked to social reconstruction and is a primary means of social transformation: “Schools have a role in the production of social change” (Saltmarsh, 1996: 19). The aims of learning from experience – a connected view of learning, social problem solving and education for citizenship, which are the cornerstones of service-learning – are implicit in Dewey’s writings (Eyler and Giles, 1994a).

Dewey provided theoretical underpinning for good instruction,<sup>28</sup> which remains of value (Bringle, Phillips and Hudson, 2004). Learning should:

- Generate interest;
- Be intrinsically worthwhile;
- Present problems to awaken curiosity (create demand for information); and
- Cover a considerable time span to foster development over time.

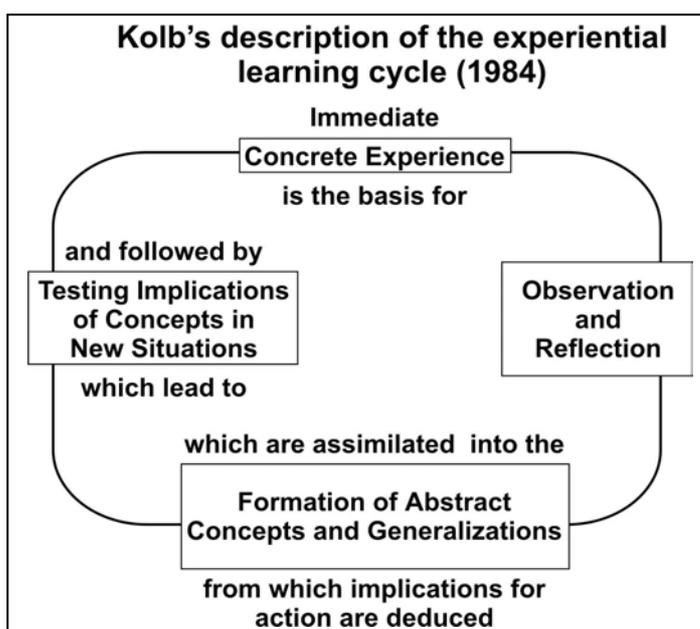
This corresponds well with what Eyler and Giles (1994a) summarise as effective learning:

- Learning begins with personal connection.
- Learning is useful to the learner.
- Learning is developmental.
- Learning is transformative.
- Citizenship rests on learning.

### Kolb’s experiential learning cycle

Despite myriad refinements and applications of experiential learning theory, the well-known model of David A. Kolb (1976; 1981; 1984) and his associate Roger Fry (Kolb and Fry, 1975) remains a central reference point for discussion. Building on the ideas of Piaget, Dewey and Lewin (1951), Kolb and Fry explored the processes associated with learning from experience. They regarded experiential learning as a strategy integrating education, personal development and work. Kolb’s concept of experiential learning explores the cyclical pattern of all learning from **Experience** through **Reflection** to **Conceptualising** and **Action**, returning to further experience. The four elements/ stages of this famous model can be explained as follows (Atherton, 2004; Kolb, 1984; Smith, 2001):

**Figure 1: A depiction of Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle**



<sup>28</sup> If you are interested in learning more about Dewey’s theories on education and learning or his famous declaration concerning education, *My Pedagogic Creed* at [www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/e-dew-pc.htm](http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/e-dew-pc.htm) offers an interesting starting point.

- **Concrete experience**

Concrete experience entails direct practical experience. In service-learning this might involve doing something for someone in a community or service agency. Concrete experience thus corresponds to the idea of 'knowledge by acquaintance'. The importance of such experiences is clear from Palmer's comment (1998; 2001) that people are more likely to live their way into a new way of thinking than to think their way into a new way of living. Zlotkowski (2001: 25) agrees with the above statement, claiming that higher-order thinking grows out of real-life experiences.

- **Reflective observation**

Reflective observation focuses on what the experience means to the individual, and requires observation, examination, analyses and interpretation of the impact of a specific concrete experience. Bringle and Hatcher (1999) regard reflection as a crucial element in transforming concrete experience into knowledge. Zuber-Skerritt (2001) maintains that all individuals, in reflecting on their everyday experiences, create a worldview or lens, which determines their future behaviour and strategies.

- **Abstract conceptualisation**

The next step in the experiential learning cycle gives meaning to discoveries by relating them to other discoveries, other forms of knowledge. Through abstract conceptualisation, theories or explanations for why events happened as they did are formed. This may then be followed by the derivation of general rules describing the experience; or the application of known theories in conceptualising the experience.

- **Active experimentation**

Taking further action and testing conceptualisations (and their implications) in different situations form the focus of this stage; the person learning makes a connection between learning experiences, theoretical grounding of these experiences and the real world. Active experimentation transforms conceptualisation: testing abstractions in practice; constructing and modifying the next concrete experience. The experiential learning cycle is flexible; learning can start at any stage; the completion of a cycle may happen in a flash, or over days, weeks or months – and there may be "learning wheels within wheels" at any point in time (Atherton, 2004: 1). The experiential learning cycle provides a conceptual framework for the unique blending of 'hands-on' experience and learning – with reflection as the vital link, e.g. real-life simulations (case studies), role-plays, fieldwork, internships, and many more. Kolb's cycle can also be used as a map to structure the environment for service-learning, giving students the opportunity to achieve appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes, and enhancing the development of a higher level of competence.

Due to the sharing of similar philosophical assumptions, action learning, which can be defined as "learning from concrete experience and critical reflection on that experience" (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 114) is sometimes used as a synonym for experiential learning. Indeed, it can be valuable for educators involved in experiential learning also to make use of the action learning and research cycle.

From this experiential cycle and its four stages, Kolb and Fry (1975) also developed four distinct learning styles, namely: convergent; divergent; accommodating; and assimilating. Each learner (and educator) has a preferred learning style, implying that every individual finds a learning experience interesting and challenging in a different way. The application of different styles of teaching enhances learning; similarly, the neglect of some of the teaching styles can prove a major obstacle to learning.<sup>29</sup>

## **Different Types/ Forms of Community Engaged Teaching and Learning**

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<sup>29</sup> For more information on the complementary, antagonistic or collusive interplay of these styles, refer to [www.learningfromexperience.com](http://www.learningfromexperience.com).

In the previous section experiential learning as pedagogical framework was discussed. We now continue to explore the possible applications of experiential learning within the framework of community engagement.

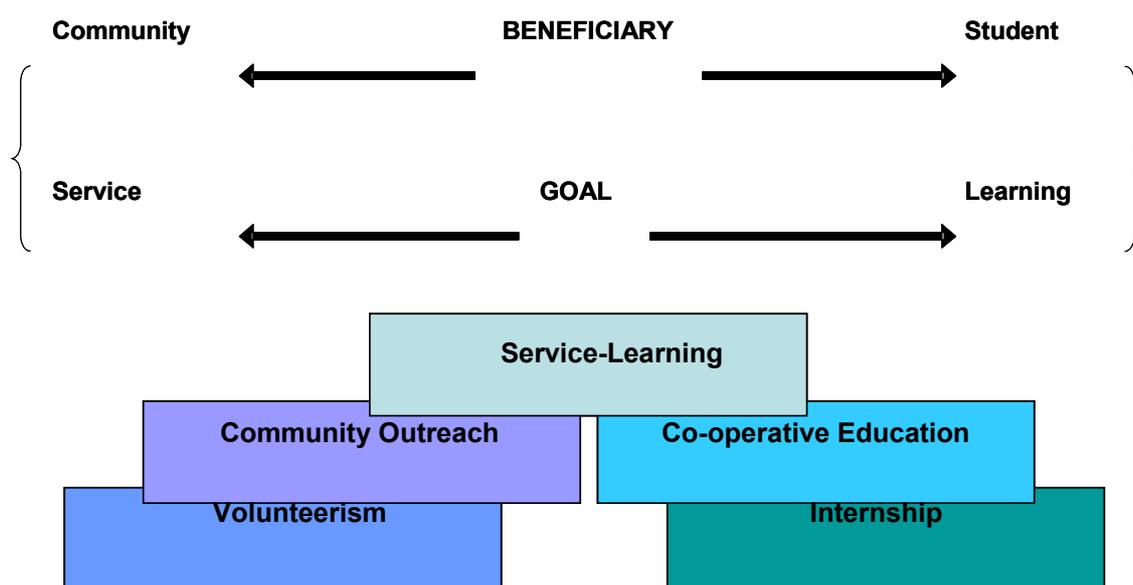
### Furco's typology of community engagement

Numerous terms and definitions are used to describe various forms of student community service (or engagement or engaged learning) in higher education. These forms may be placed on a continuum between two important distinctions, namely:

- The primary *beneficiaries* of the service (i.e. community or student); and
- The primary *goal* of the service (i.e. community service or student learning).

Figure 2 (below) identifies the various forms of students' community engagement and places them on a continuum as explained. It must be emphasised, however, that the above categories of community engagement are not necessarily discrete or mutually exclusive. For example, the boundaries between 'volunteerism' and 'community outreach'; 'internships' and 'co-operative education'; 'community outreach' and 'service-learning'; and finally 'co-operative education' and 'service-learning' are often blurred, and learning activities integrated in academic programmes may shift one way or the other on this continuum. A characteristic common to all of the above forms of community engagement is that they all embrace a measure of experiential learning.

**Figure 2: A continuum of different forms of community engagement**



#### • Volunteerism

<i>Primary intended beneficiary</i>	Service recipient (community)
<i>Primary emphasis</i>	Service provided

Volunteerism (also sometimes termed 'voluntarism') is an engagement of students in activities where the primary beneficiary is the recipient *community* and the primary goal is to provide a *service*. Volunteer programmes are essentially altruistic by nature. Although students may learn from these programmes, they are generally not related to, or integrated into, the student's field of study. Volunteer programmes are thus essentially extra-curricular activities, taking place during holidays and outside tuition time. Students generally do not receive academic credit for participation in such programmes and they are generally funded by external donors and through

student fundraising. Programmes are generally relatively small in scale and have a loose relationship with the higher education institution. In a context where the need is great, such programmes have a marginal role, in terms of both service and human resource development; for example, students wanting to give something back to the community decide to offer help at a clinic organising activities for National HIV/AIDS Day.

- **Community outreach**

<i>Primary intended beneficiary</i>	Service recipient (community) Students may receive benefits, e.g. credits.
<i>Primary emphasis</i>	Service provided

Community outreach is also an engagement of students in activities where the primary beneficiary is the recipient *community* and the primary goal is to provide a *service*. However, these programmes involve more structure and commitment from students and result to a larger extent than in the previous category in student learning. These programmes are generally initiated from within the higher education institution by a department or a faculty, or as an institution-wide initiative. In some cases recognition is given, in the form of either academic credit or research publications. As the service activities become more integrated with the academic module work of the students and as the students begin to engage in formal intellectual discourse about service issues, the programme moves closer to the centre of the continuum to become more like service-learning. One of the main features distinguishing academically-based community outreach programmes from service-learning is that the former tend to be a distinct activity and initiative of the institutions, whereas the latter are fully integrated into the curriculum. In other words, service-learning is not seen as an 'outreach' activity; it is seen as an integral and inseparable part of the higher education curriculum. An example of community outreach might be where students of a specific institution establish the Psychology Student Society, organising weekly outreach projects to various old-age homes.

- **Internships**

<i>Primary intended beneficiary</i>	Provider/ students Service recipient (community) benefits as a secondary/ unintended goal.
<i>Primary emphasis</i>	Learning

On the other extreme of the continuum (figure 2, above), internships engage students in activities where the primary beneficiary is the *student* and the primary goal is student *learning*.

Internships are intended to provide students with hands-on practical experience that will enhance their understanding of their area of study, help them achieve their learning outcomes and provide them with vocational experience. Generally, internships are fully integrated with the student's curriculum. Internships (also referred to as 'clinical practice' in some instances) are used extensively in many professional programmes such as Social Work, Medicine, Education and Psychology.

- **Co-operative education**

<i>Primary intended beneficiary</i>	Provider/ students Recipients/ community may also benefit.
<i>Primary emphasis</i>	Learning, but with a definite emphasis on the service

Likewise, the primary beneficiary of co-operative education programmes is the *student* and the primary goal is student *learning*. Co-operative education provides students with co-curricular opportunities that are related to, but not always fully integrated with, the curriculum.

The primary purpose of co-operative education is to enhance the students' understanding of their area of study. Co-operative education is used extensively in universities of technology throughout South Africa. It should be stressed that the primary differences between co-operative education and service-learning lie not necessarily in differing methodologies but in the nature of student placements and the desired outcomes. Co-operative learner placements are essentially within *industry* whereas service-learning placements are within *service agencies* or directly in the *community*. Whereas the desired outcome of co-operative education is essentially student learning, service-learning includes the additional goal of providing a service to the community.

Nevertheless, in terms of student learning outcomes, both co-operative education and service learning share the goal of enriching the students' understanding of the module content and discipline. An example of co-operative education would be where students studying marketing management visit the marketing division of a large firm to get first-hand experience of how marketing projects are planned and implemented.

• **Service-learning**

<i>Primary intended beneficiary</i>	Provider/ students and partner/ community
<i>Primary emphasis</i>	Service and Learning

Service-learning modules engage students in activities where *both the community and student* are primary beneficiaries and where the primary goals are to provide a *service* to the community and, equally, to enhance student *learning* through rendering this service. *Reciprocity* is therefore a central characteristic of service-learning. The primary focus of programmes in this category is on integrating community service with scholarly activity such as student learning, teaching, and research. This form of community engagement is underpinned by the assumption that service is enriched through scholarly activity and that scholarly activity, particularly student learning, is enriched through service to the community. Unlike the other categories of community engagement described above, service-learning is entrenched in a discourse that proposes the development and transformation of higher education in relation to community needs. Terms often used for this form of community engagement are 'service-learning', 'academic service learning', 'academic community service', and 'community-based learning'.

While the types of experiential learning discussed above include aspects of community engagement, some (i.e. volunteerism; community outreach) emphasise community service while others (i.e. internships; co-operative education) emphasise student learning. Service-learning represents a balanced approach to, and an integration of, community service and student learning (HEQC/ JET, 2006: 13-16).

**Criteria to Consider for Effective Community Engaged Teaching and Learning**

From the above discussion it is clear that different higher education institutions can have different means of implementing community engaged teaching and learning. Different models can cater to different needs with regard to:

- Responsiveness to the context in which the higher education institution functions;
- Realising the institution's vision and mission statements; and
- Achieving outcomes for student development (in terms of personal development, civic responsibility and workplace requirements).

When deciding which form of community engaged teaching and learning might be most valuable for a specific context, one might consider the following criteria (Howard, 2001; Stacey, Rice and Langer, 2001):

- Relevant and meaningful service with the community;
- Enhanced academic learning;
- Purposeful civic learning (social responsibility); and
- Structured opportunities for reflection.

- **Relevant and meaningful service with the community**

The service that is provided must be relevant and meaningful to the community, the students, and the learning institution. The service must be relevant in improving the quality of life for the community, as well as achieving module outcomes; it must be meaningful in the sense that the community deems it worthwhile and necessary, as well as in the sense that students' interests and skills are valued. This reiterates that service-learning endeavours must be negotiated *with* the community. The importance of reciprocity, as asserted by Bringle, Phillips and Hudson (2004) is clear from this criterion.

- **Enhanced academic learning**

Service-learning experiences must strengthen the accomplishment of learning outcomes and complement learning resources (student learning must take place during activities, experiences, learning strategies and assessment). A clear connection between module objectives and service activities must exist.

- **Purposeful civic learning (social responsibility)**

Civic learning can loosely be interpreted as anything that 'prepares students for citizenship'. In the stricter sense of the word civic learning can be defined as "any learning that contributes to student preparation for community-based public involvement in a diverse democratic society" (Howard, 2001: 28); that is, knowledge, skills and values making an explicit, direct and purposeful contribution to the preparation of students for active civic participation (active involvement in future communities) and therefore social responsibility.

- **Structured opportunities for reflection**

In order to relate community service experiences to the module, students need structured opportunities to reflect. As mentioned earlier, many theorists in the field of experiential learning and service-learning regard reflection as a crucial element in transforming, clarifying, reinforcing and expanding concrete experience into knowledge. Reflection assists in gaining a deeper understanding of module content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and/or an enhanced sense of personal values and social responsibility (Bringle and Hatcher, 1999; Eyler and Giles, 1994b; Kolb, 1984; Zuber-Skerritt, 2001).

## **Community Engaged Teaching and Learning as a New Paradigm**

It is clear that community engaged learning challenges every educator to make a paradigm shift. This paradigm shift is, however, compatible with other trends in higher education towards collaborative learning, problem-based learning, interdisciplinary work, and democratic and diversity foci – where the emphasis is on learning and not teaching (Bringle, Phillips and Hudson, 2004). The distinctions between more traditional ways of learning and the paradigm of community engaged/ service-learning are summarised in Table 1 (below).

**Table 1: Distinctions between traditional learning and community engaged learning/ service-learning**

<b>Traditional learning</b>	<b>Community engaged learning/ service-learning</b>
Theory	Theory and experience
Others' knowledge	Personal knowledge
Spectator	Participant
Individual learning	Corporate learning
Distinction between teacher and learner	Blurred distinction between teacher and learner
Answers	Questions and answers
Certainty of outcomes	Heterogeneous outcomes
Ignorance avoided	Ignorance a resource
Objectivist epistemology	Connected/ feminist epistemology

*Adapted from Howard, 1993, by Stacey, Rice and Langer, 2001.*

## **KEY CHALLENGES TO, ENABLING MECHANISMS FOR AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGED TEACHING AND LEARNING**

### **Introduction**

Although the value of community engaged teaching and learning is undeniably clear, it is equally true that certain issues need further exploration. If community engaged strategies are to be prioritised at higher education institutions, certain key challenges will have to be faced; mechanisms to enable these practices must be provided.

### **On a conceptual level**

- **A shift to a new knowledge society**

People find it hard to change; they cling to existing securities and preconceptions rather than venture into the unknown. Universities are said to have a monopoly on knowledge. Community engaged teaching and learning challenges this assumption, resulting in discomfort for academics. Too many lecturers still regard the academic as 'the expert' and believe that bringing communities into classrooms blurs the boundaries of the 'sanctity of the classroom'. Some lecturers remain of the opinion that community engaged teaching and learning waters down the curriculum and weakens educational quality. The question is still asked: If excellence in research breeds prestige, why invest in communities?

If the educational system wishes to do justice to the unique South African multicultural situation, a paradigm shift is imperative. In this regard, Heron and Reason (1997) argue that people need to change their positivist worldview – that higher education has all the knowledge and communities have all the problems – to a more participatory worldview, where all people are viewed in context. Bawa (2003) refers to a new social contract between higher education and communities and calls for the transformation of systems of higher education – to facilitate the production of knowledge. The fundamental feature of academic culture, namely discourse, must be embraced and extended to include the epistemology of all the partners involved.

- **Community engaged teaching and learning as scholarly activity**

Lazarus (2001) urges that a distinction should be made between philanthropic activity and scholarly activity in community engaged practices. There exists a need to promote the scholarly nature of engagement. Research endeavours, such as accredited publications, provide community engaged scholars with substantial arguments when participating in academic discourse.

Challenging existing notions is of crucial importance if community engagement is to be recognised as an integral part of the mission of higher education institutions.

- **A shared understanding**

When attempting to define concepts such as community, engagement and service-learning, various viewpoints, worldviews and agendas emerge – some of which may be contradictory in nature. Furthermore, various misconceptions and myths exist regarding community engaged teaching and learning. Although no clear and unified definition for any of these concepts exists, each institution needs to find a common understanding of community engagement and related terms – an understanding relevant to its unique context, vision and mission. This task proves to be even more complex when the different perspectives of academics from the social and natural sciences are considered.

### **On a structural level**

- **Mission statement and policy guidelines**

Lazarus (2001) argues that if community engagement is not acknowledged in the mission statements and policy guidelines of university structures, it will always remain in the margins where a few innovative (and altruistic) academics and students flourish. Community engagement must be among the institution's priorities in order to shift reward systems, providing incentives for greater academic participation; this will ensure long-term involvement.

- **Allocation of staff and resources**

Furco (1996) reports that faculty involvement and support is one of the strongest indicators for the successful institutionalisation of community engaged strategies, such as service-learning. A centre dedicated to supporting, enhancing and promoting engagement strategies, as well as the allocation of financial resources from the institution's central budget, are key indicators of an engaged university.

- **Staff support and capacity building**

Community engaged teaching and learning strategies, such as service-learning, have only recently been given attention. Such strategies challenge academics beyond the comfort zone of traditional practices – to incorporate in their teaching new strategies of teaching and assessment. For most academics this crosses a border beyond their prior experience. Once it is recognised that the design and implementation of service-learning modules is ultimately responsible for curricular reform, then the importance of training and development opportunities for faculty comes into sharp focus. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) confirm that academic staff involvement and development are crucial to the long-term success and institutionalisation of service-learning worldwide.

- **Performance management and appraisal**

Academics involved in community engaged teaching and learning dedicate considerable time and effort. If these activities do not form part of the performance management process for recognition and promotion, then community engaged teaching and learning will never become part of the culture and day-to-day functioning of the institution. There is a need for the inclusion of community engagement values in efficient, effective and quality driven performance management and appraisal systems. Only such measures will provide evidence of an institution's genuine commitment to community engagement.

### **On a practical level**

- **Time**

Community engaged teaching and learning modules are more time consuming than modules without community service elements. Given the work pressures experienced by both academics and students, time is a commodity that must be spent effectively. Preparation and supervision of students are time consuming activities and can become a burden. When academics feel that these inputs are not duly recognised in performance evaluations, frustration may result.

- **Financial and other resources**

A further practical issue complicating community engaged activities is the constant need for funding for a variety of expenses including, for example, transportation. Institutional systems addressing these needs must be in place to assist academics.

- **Logistical arrangements such as scheduling, transportation, risk management and liability insurance**

Logistical arrangements are a major concern when integrating community engagement strategies as core elements of an institution's activities. The formulation of comprehensive action plans, regarding transportation, scheduling, budgeting and liability, to assist academics can be of value. Inflexible systems, such as fixed and centralised class schedules that do not accommodate time involved in community activities, represent just one example of the numerous challenges academics face when attempting to integrate community engagement in their modules.

### **Quality Management and Community Engaged Teaching and Learning**

When considering the quality management of community engaged teaching and learning, the following excerpts can provide valuable guidelines.<sup>30</sup> Self-evaluation instruments for managing the quality of community engaged teaching and learning are presented in the Good Practice Guide.

#### **THE HEQC'S QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM**

The Higher Education Quality Committee's (HEQC's) service-learning priorities are evident in the following quotations from its *Criteria for Institutional Audits* (2004a) and *Criteria for Programme Accreditation* (2004b).

#### FROM: CRITERIA FOR INSTITUTIONAL AUDITS

##### *Criterion 7*

(iv) In the case of institutions with service learning as part of their mission:

- Service learning programmes which are integrated into institutional and academic planning, as part of the institution's mission and strategic goals;
- Adequate resources and enabling mechanisms (including incentives) to support the implementation of service learning, including staff and student capacity development; and
- Review and monitoring arrangements to gauge the impact and outcomes of service learning programmes on the institution, as well as on other participating constituencies. (HEQC, 2004a: 11)

##### *Criterion 18*

Quality-related arrangements for community engagement are formalised and integrated with those for teaching and learning, where appropriate, and are adequately resourced and monitored.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

- (i) Policies and procedures for the quality management of community engagement.
- (ii) Integration of policies and procedures for community engagement with those for teaching and learning and research, where appropriate.
- (iii) Adequate resources allocated to facilitate quality delivery in community engagement.
- (iv) Regular review of the effectiveness of quality-related arrangements for community engagement. (HEQC, 2004a: 19)

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<sup>30</sup> Excerpt from: Higher Education Quality Committee/ JET Education Services. (2006). *A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service-Learning*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 5-6.

## FROM: CRITERIA FOR PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

### 3.1.1 Programme design

*Criterion 1:* The programme is consonant with the institution's mission, forms part of institutional planning and resource allocation, meets national requirements, the needs of students and other stakeholders, and is intellectually credible. It is designed coherently and articulates well with other relevant programmes, where possible.

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum: [...]

(x) In the case of institutions with service learning as part of their mission:

- Service learning programmes are integrated into institutional and academic planning, as part of the institution's mission and strategic goals.
- Enabling mechanisms (which may include incentives) are in place to support the implementation of service learning, including staff and student capacity development. (HEQC, 2004b: 7-8)

## **EVALUATIVE STAGES AND INSTITUTIONAL LEVELS FOR MANAGING THE QUALITY OF SERVICE-LEARNING<sup>31</sup>**

Managing quality in the core functions of higher education institutions involves four evaluative stages, namely (1) input, (2) process, (3) output and impact, and (4) review. Therefore, these evaluative stages should form the basis of the framework for managing the quality of service-learning:

- INPUT with regard to the development of service-learning (i.e. mission statement and values; policies and regulations; structures; resources; and strategic and action plans);
- PROCESS-related arrangements for the implementation of service-learning (i.e. management strategies, implementation support, capacity building, and partnership development);
- Monitoring and evaluation to gauge the OUTPUT and IMPACT of service-learning; and
- REVIEW of service-learning modules/ courses.

In line with the HEQC expectations and procedures, self-evaluation should form the primary mechanism for managing the quality of service-learning in the different functional units. Such self-evaluation should be complemented and validated by external peer evaluation. If necessary, this process must be followed by an improvement and development plan with actions to address the gaps or weaknesses identified during the evaluation process.

In terms of managing quality, four levels on which service-learning functions within HEIs have been identified:

- The institutional level;
- The faculty/ school level;
- The programme/ qualification level; and
- The module/ course level.

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<sup>31</sup> Excerpt from: Higher Education Quality Committee/ JET Education Services. (2006). *A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service-Learning*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 9.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper you were introduced to the work of Dewey (1963) and Kolb (1984) as possible cornerstones of community engaged teaching and learning. Furthermore, a typology depicting different forms of community engaged teaching and learning was proposed. In the second section of the paper you were introduced to key challenges and enabling mechanisms for community engaged teaching and learning. Lastly, the issue of quality management of community engaged teaching and learning was raised.

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## Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning: Workshop Report

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*This report reflects the discussions of the Concurrent Workshop Sessions on Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning. The Concurrent Workshop Sessions focused respectively on:*

*Session 3: A Conceptual Framework for Community Engagement;*

*Session 5: Key Challenges, Enabling Mechanisms and Quality Management; and*

*Session 8: Key Strategies and Recommendations for Community Engagement.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The notion of community engagement in South African higher education is not new but is receiving much more intense focus currently as a national policy option and as a criterion for auditing and for scholarship development. This conference on Community Engagement in Higher Education is a milestone in the community engagement movement in South Africa. We hope that this conference will lead in future to the creation of new models and theoretical foundations for the multiple forms of community engaged teaching and learning and also to the development of infrastructure and enabling mechanisms for best practices.

This Concurrent Workshop – on Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning – was a historic event, in which delegates from 21 South African higher education institutions and one delegate from a US university participated. This implies that various conceptual and theoretical frameworks of multiple forms of community engagement could be discussed, as each higher education institution has its own background, culture, infrastructure, resources, mission, vision, policies and strategic plans for operating its core functions, namely teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

The workshop participants took note of the presentation by Frederick Fourie (2006),<sup>32</sup> who proposed a conceptual framework diagram based on the experiences of the University of the Free State in community engagement. They also took note of the presentations by the international speakers on the challenges, enabling mechanisms and quality management of community engagement. During the discussions participants stated that they accept as a premise that community engaged teaching and learning scholarship is embedded in Boyer's (1996) different forms of scholarship – namely the scholarship of discovery, teaching, application and integration. They assumed that the engaged university reflects the institutional alignment that Boyer (1996) identified as the "scholarship of engagement" – namely, scholarship that connects the rich resources of the university with our most pressing social and civic challenges.

The participants in the workshop support the idea of a new social contract between higher education and communities, and the transformation of higher education to facilitate the production of relevant knowledge (Bawa, 2003). They acknowledged the challenges to higher education in

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<sup>32</sup> See these Proceedings, SESSION 2: PLENARY, Speaker: Frederick Fourie – Towards a South African Scholarship of Engagement: Core and Supplemental Tasks of a University?

South Africa, which include both globalisation and local development, both international connectedness and local relevance. They acknowledged the need for a different kind of scholarly knowledge that reflects an African reality. Community engagement in teaching and learning embraces curricula that reflect local South African and African circumstances and challenges, and opportunities for lifelong learning, professional development and community development.

This Concurrent Workshop report is structured in three main sections to answer the following questions:

- What conceptual framework is relevant and appropriate for Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning in South Africa?
- What are the key challenges and enabling mechanisms that would facilitate community engaged teaching and learning and how can the quality be managed? and
- What are the key strategies and recommendations for advancing community engaged teaching and learning?

### **SESSION 3: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH TEACHING AND LEARNING**

This workshop was in an academically fortunate position as the speaker, Luzelle Naudé (University of the Free State), spoke from a South African perspective.<sup>33</sup> She is also one of the co-authors of the CHE/HEQC and JET publication, *Service-Learning in the Curriculum. A Resource for Higher Education Institutions* (Bender *et al*, 2006), which was a basic resource for the workshop. Chapter 2 of the book, 'A theoretical and conceptual framework for service-learning' provided the workshop with a basic conceptual framework for community engagement through teaching and learning. This means that research has been done in South Africa on the conceptual and theoretical aspects of service-learning. However, service-learning is only one form of community engaged teaching and learning. The speaker used excerpts from Chapter 2 in her presentation and the content was analysed and elaborated by participants during the small group discussions, and summarised as follows:

- **The 'roots' of community engaged teaching and learning as proposed by the pedagogy of Dewey (1963):** Dewey's experimentalism, with its emphasis on the principles of experience, inquiry and reflection, are recognised as the key elements of a theory of knowing in community engaged teaching and learning. Dewey's approach to education links the theory to practice. He sees both educational experiences and community engagement as playing an interacting role in social construction.
- **The experiential learning cycle of David Kolb (1984):** The experiential learning theory of Kolb is built on the foundation of Dewey's experiential education philosophy. Kolb regards experience as paramount to learning and recognises four important elements as the key elements in learning: (1) concrete experience, (2) reflective observation, (3) abstract conceptualisation, and (4) active experimentation.
- **Action learning** is linked to Dewey's pragmatism and Kolb's experiential learning theories, in terms of which learning can only be of value if it is applied to real-life situations. Action learning as described by Zuber-Skerritt (2002: 115) also links up with the theories of experiential education and community engaged teaching and learning, as it denotes learning from concrete experience and critical reflection on that experience. The main characteristics of action learning are: (1) learning by doing, through active participation; followed by (2) a reflection on that

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<sup>33</sup> See these Proceedings, CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS, Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning, Speaker: Luzelle Naudé – *Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning: Introductory Notes*.

practice or experience; (3) sharing the experience with others; and (4) solving problems and making positive changes as a result of the experience. Action learning is therefore an external, objective process that recognises the possibility that learners may generate knowledge from experience rather than merely absorbing information passively (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002).

The abovementioned points were accepted as the basic conceptual framework, but in the feedback of the small group discussions the following were stated as important aspects to consider in moving towards a conceptual framework for community engagement through teaching and learning:

- Employing Dewey's theory and Kolb's experiential learning theory is, of course, only a starting point. There are infinite complexities for universities to focus on in their own contexts and cultures.
- Other epistemologies, philosophies and theories should also be investigated, researched and published, e.g. indigenous knowledge systems; ubuntu; learning theories such as social constructivism and social cognition theory; situated learning and reflective learning; curriculum theories (academic, experiential, technological, praxis, transformation); and grounded theory.
- Disciplinary; multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary theories and approaches: institutions have to work outside of their disciplines and silos as communities are not divided in this way. Disciplinary alignment is needed and therefore it is necessary to acknowledge the different approaches to community engaged teaching and learning.
- The programme-based (module system) nature of the higher education teaching and learning system can be an advantage and/or disadvantage for implementing community engagement.
- It is necessary to acknowledge power relations and power dynamics in communities and service agencies, and also in the higher education institution, service agency and community partnership.
- Given the unique culture of each higher education institution (and with the recent merging of institutions) each institution has to formulate its own community engagement policy and conceptualise community engaged teaching and learning.

A framework for different forms of community engaged teaching and learning was also provided by the speaker for the workshop. Naudé (2006) presented Furco's (1996) typology of service-learning as a framework to identify the various forms of community engaged teaching and learning in South Africa, and placed them on a continuum between two important distinctions, namely, the primary beneficiaries of the service and the primary goal of the service. In South Africa the different forms of community engaged teaching and learning are not necessarily discrete or mutually exclusive. For example, the boundaries between 'volunteerism' and 'community outreach'; 'internships' and 'co-operative education'; 'community outreach' and 'service-learning'; and finally 'co-operative education' and 'service-learning' are often blurred, and learning activities integrated in academic programmes may shift one way or the other on this continuum. A characteristic common to all of these forms of community engaged teaching and learning is that they embrace a measure of experiential learning.

The workshop participants acknowledged the multiple forms of community engaged teaching and learning, and therefore the different lenses an engaged scholar might use in the conceptualising, planning, implementation and reviewing of community engaged teaching and learning. However, at the different higher education institutions the abovementioned forms of community engaged teaching and learning can be identified, and other forms could be added. It seems that two main categories of community engagement can be recognised: curricular and non-curricular community engagement. Curricular community engaged teaching and learning can be subdivided in various

forms such as: community service (national service); community-based education; internships (clinical practice or practicals); learnerships; work-based learning; co-operative education; community-based learning; service-learning; community-based projects; and community outreach.

When deciding which form of community engaged teaching and learning might be most valuable for a specific context and institution, the participants proposed the following criteria (cf. Howard, 2001; Stacey, Rice and Langer, 2001):

- Community engaged teaching and learning should encompass curriculum-based (credit-bearing) educational experiences.
- Community engaged teaching and learning should have a significant component of relevant and meaningful service with the service agency and community (needs and assets identified by the community).
- Community engaged teaching and learning should enhance student learning.
- Community engaged teaching and learning should include purposeful civic learning inculcating, for example, social responsibility.
- Community engaged teaching and learning should provide opportunities for structured reflection by students.
- Community engaged teaching and learning should promote a scholarship of engagement.

## **SESSION 5: KEY CHALLENGES, ENABLING MECHANISMS AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Conceptualising community engaged teaching and learning and meeting the abovementioned criteria for effective (quality) community engaged teaching and learning requires careful curriculum design and development (planning), resource allocation, implementation, monitoring and review at various levels and in different areas.

### **Quality Management<sup>34</sup>**

Managing quality in the core functions of higher education institutions involves four evaluative stages, namely (1) input, (2) process, (3) output and impact, and (4) review. Therefore, these evaluative stages should form the basis of the framework for managing the quality of all forms of community engaged teaching and learning:

- INPUT with regard to the development of community engaged teaching and learning (i.e. vision, mission and values; policies and regulations; structures; resources; and strategic and action plans);
- PROCESS-related arrangements for the implementation of community engaged teaching and learning (i.e. management strategies, implementation support, capacity building, and partnership development);
- Monitoring and evaluation to gauge the OUTPUT and IMPACT of community engaged teaching and learning; and
- REVIEW of community engaged teaching and learning (HEQC, 2006).

In line with the HEQC (2004) expectations and procedures, self-evaluation should form the primary mechanism for managing the quality of community engaged teaching and learning in the different functional units. Such self-evaluation should be complemented and validated by external peer

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<sup>34</sup> See: Higher Education Quality Committee/ JET Education Services. (2006). *A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service-Learning*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education; Higher Education Quality Committee. (2004a). *Criteria for Institutional Audits* (Criteria 7 and 18). Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 11 & 19; and Higher Education Quality Committee. (2004b). *Criteria for Programme Accreditation* (Criterion 1). Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 7-8.

evaluation. If necessary, this process must be followed by an improvement and development plan with actions to address the gaps or weaknesses identified during the evaluation process. In terms of managing quality, different levels on which community engaged teaching and learning can be promoted and supported can be identified:

- The international level;
- The national level;
- The regional level;
- The institutional level;
- The faculty/ school level;
- The programme/ qualification level; and
- The module/ course level.

The workshop on community engaged teaching and learning adopted this matrix to identify key strategies and enabling mechanisms for the establishment and promotion of community engaged teaching and learning in South African higher education.

### **Key Strategies and Enabling Mechanisms**

The following key strategies and enabling mechanisms (summarised in table format) were identified as critical to the success of community engagement through teaching and learning on the different levels – international (although the detail thereof was not discussed due to limited time); national; regional; institutional; faculty/ school and programme/ module level – and during the planning (input); implementation (process) and review (evaluation) phases.

**Table 1: Key strategies and enabling mechanisms on different levels and in different phases of community engaged teaching and learning**

<i>Levels</i>	PLANNING (INPUT) PHASE	IMPLEMENTATION (PROCESS) PHASE	REVIEW PHASE
<b><i>National</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve stakeholders (CHE/ HEQC, DoE)</li> <li>• Advocate with professional bodies</li> <li>• Secure funding from mainstream funding</li> <li>• Link up with national skills development strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise and participate in conferences</li> <li>• Link up with national associations (e.g. SAARDHE, HELTASA)</li> <li>• Form national networks (forums for community engagement)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure further development of HEQC institutional audit criteria for community engagement to include the multiple forms of community engagement</li> <li>• Develop measurable indicators for community engaged teaching and learning</li> <li>• Use the <i>Good Practice Guide</i> as framework for the multiple forms of community engagement</li> <li>• Set up multi-institutional research projects</li> <li>• Conduct/ participate in surveys (e.g. CHESP: national survey on current community engagement activities)</li> </ul>
<b><i>Regional</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link up with regional development plans and IDPs</li> <li>• Develop MoUs with other important role-players</li> <li>• Explore possibilities of using regional consortia as a vehicle for community engagement</li> <li>• Focus engagement on what is pertinent to the region in terms of socio-economic development strategies and plans</li> <li>• Set up advisory structures of people who bring different types of expertise/ knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement management information system/ set up database of regional initiatives</li> <li>• Get students to conduct needs assessment and asset mapping of communities</li> </ul>	

<i>Levels</i>	PLANNING (INPUT) PHASE	IMPLEMENTATION (PROCESS) PHASE	REVIEW PHASE
<b><i>Institutional</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define community and find institutional consensus on geographical area circumscribing the size and shape of 'community' (taking into account the effect on the community)</li> <li>• Debate concepts and a definition towards a consensus understanding on community engaged teaching and learning (e.g. use Furco's 1996 typology as an example)</li> <li>• Acknowledge that higher education institutions have different contexts, cultures and backgrounds and therefore different types and forms of community engagement; and that this entails different conceptual frameworks for community engaged teaching and learning</li> <li>• Given that each institution has its own vision, mission and policies, it is of paramount importance to ensure that there are linkages between the vision, mission and policy on community engagement</li> <li>• Draw up a risk management plan</li> <li>• Set up representative advisory committees</li> <li>• Make budget allocation decisions</li> <li>• Ensure sustainability of funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure management commitment and support</li> <li>• Ensure that community engagement initiatives have a cross-faculty structure</li> <li>• Appoint dedicated staff</li> <li>• Allocate resources</li> <li>• Focus on capacity building and support for academic staff</li> <li>• Ensure that performance management and appraisal of academic staff include community engagement (and not only research), to ensure staff involvement in community engagement initiatives</li> <li>• Consider establishing a resource centre for community engagement</li> <li>• Consider risk management and liability issues (institutions should have a policy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake self-evaluation of the institution according to audit criteria (CHE/ HEQC)</li> <li>• Undertake peer evaluation by academics from own or other institutions</li> <li>• Ensure benchmarking of community engagement development and implementation</li> <li>• Focus on integrated teaching and learning research projects</li> <li>• Write annual report on community engagement</li> </ul>

<i>Levels</i>	PLANNING (INPUT) PHASE	IMPLEMENTATION (PROCESS) PHASE	REVIEW PHASE
<b>Faculty/ School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get buy-in and support from deans</li> <li>• Formulate operational plans for community engagement</li> <li>• Organise and coordinate academic staff workload allocations</li> <li>• Plan and develop a survey of academic staff interest in community engagement and also their involvement in existing community engagement activities</li> <li>• Prototype courses/ modules as examples of good practice of multiple forms of community engagement</li> </ul> <p>Distribute community engagement information on modules and programmes to departments and schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate timetabling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appoint a faculty coordinator/ liaison officer for community engagement</li> <li>• Provide academic awards for excellence in community engagement</li> <li>• Provide one-on-one consultations for academic staff to assist them with curriculum-based community engagement, and developing and designing of partnerships for community engagement</li> <li>• Establish a mentoring programme and other capacity-building initiatives</li> <li>• Promote community engagement as interdisciplinary work</li> <li>• Coordinate community engagement activities and find synergies. Align the 'rhythms' of various partners (service agencies)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure measurement of performance indicators and key performance areas of managers</li> <li>• Collect data on academic staff involvement in various forms of community engagement</li> <li>• Facilitate and fund research of academic staff</li> <li>• Evaluate outcomes (thus impact of the community engagement initiatives and student service activities)</li> <li>• Publicise (e.g. annual reports)</li> </ul>

<i>Levels</i>	PLANNING (INPUT) PHASE	IMPLEMENTATION (PROCESS) PHASE	REVIEW PHASE
<b>Programme/ module</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a common understanding among academics of multiple forms of community engagement</li> <li>• Collaborate on curriculum design with stakeholders (be flexible in design and implementation)</li> <li>• Use criteria for community engaged teaching and learning as a set of parameters</li> <li>• Focus on ‘scaffolding’ (structuring learning activities in increasing levels of complexity with support)</li> <li>• Adopt an integrated curriculum model for the design of modules/ courses and/or programmes with community engagement activities</li> <li>• Conduct curriculum reform to include community interests and indigenous knowledge systems</li> <li>• Ensure that learning outcomes align with reflection activities and assessment criteria</li> <li>• Make informed decisions regarding pedagogy, teaching and assessment methods and criteria, and reflection strategies/ activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure different types of community engaged teaching and learning activities (e.g. volunteerism with 1<sup>st</sup> years doing service-learning; then in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year the focus could be on problem-based service-learning etc.)</li> <li>• Set up communities of practice</li> <li>• Implement an integrated curriculum model for community engagement in modules/ courses and/or programmes</li> <li>• Implement more capstone courses/ modules. Thus include community engagement activities (e.g. service-learning) in all 4<sup>th</sup> year programmes</li> <li>• Run student workshops on community engaged teaching and learning</li> <li>• Run community workshops on community engaged teaching and learning</li> <li>• Consider scheduling of community engaged teaching and learning (per semester)</li> <li>• Organise transportation of students to community placements (different agencies and communities)</li> <li>• Ensure that risk management is in place (i.e. a policy exists and is implemented; each student signs the relevant documents; and so on)</li> <li>• Address language barriers as experienced by students, academic staff, service agencies and communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake self-evaluation by each academic staff member (reflective practitioner)</li> <li>• Review the integrated curriculum model for community engagement</li> <li>• Undertake student assessment (formative and summative)</li> <li>• Obtain feedback from all partners (service agencies, community, students and academic staff) to inform future implementation</li> <li>• Engage students to do research on community engagement</li> <li>• Evaluate the relevance of all documents related to community engagement</li> </ul>

## **SESSION 8: KEY STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The following recommendations from the Concurrent Workshop on Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning are regarded as essential for the promotion and development of community engaged teaching and learning in South African higher education.

### **Conceptual Framework**

It is of prime importance to find institutional consensus on the meaning of multiple forms of community engaged teaching and learning and develop strategies accordingly.

When attempting to define concepts such as ‘community’ and ‘community engaged teaching and learning’, various viewpoints, worldviews and agendas emerge – some of which may be contradictory in nature. Furthermore, various misconceptions and myths exist regarding community engaged teaching and learning. Although no clear and unified definition for any of these concepts exists, each institution needs to find a common understanding of community engaged teaching and learning and related concepts. Choices also need to be made at the institutional level regarding which forms of community engaged teaching and learning will be the primary focus of the institution – choices relevant to the institution’s unique context, vision and mission.

### **Forms of community engaged teaching and learning**

Higher education institutions should move towards intra-institutional consensus on different forms of community engaged teaching and learning and the institution’s adoption of one or more forms. Curricular community engaged teaching and learning can take on various forms such as: community service (national service); community-based education; internships (clinical practice or practicals); learnerships; work-based learning; co-operative education; community-based learning; service-learning; community-based projects; and community outreach. Seeing that higher education institutions have different contexts, cultures and challenges, they may engage in different forms of community engaged teaching and learning. It would be necessary to debate the different forms at the institutional level to move towards a consensus understanding on community engaged teaching and learning for a particular higher education institution/ faculty/ department/ programme.

### **Pedagogy and scholarship**

Higher education institutions should stimulate academic discourse and debate on pedagogies underpinning community engaged teaching and learning. A characteristic common to all of the different forms of community engaged teaching and learning (e.g. ‘internships’, ‘co-operative education’, ‘service-learning’) is that they embrace a measure of experiential learning. Different learning theories incorporating aspects of experiential learning – such as Dewey’s pragmatism, Kolb’s experiential learning, action learning as described by Zuber-Skerritt, social constructivism, social cognition theory, situated learning, reflective learning, and curriculum theories – as well as other epistemologies, such as indigenous knowledge and ubuntu, should be investigated, considered and debated by academics involved in community engaged teaching and learning, and so contribute to the development of a scholarship of engagement.

### **Curricular community engaged teaching and learning**

Higher education institutions should promote and support an integrated curriculum model for community engaged teaching and learning, i.e. curriculum-based (credit-bearing) community engaged modules/ courses and/or programmes. This can be achieved when community engagement is infused into the teaching/ learning function of the institution. Integrating community engaged teaching and learning in the curriculum at a higher education institution cannot be done casually or as a simple add-on to existing responsibilities of academic staff. It requires a significant investment of planning, time and finances to reshape and restructure existing and new modules/ courses and, ultimately, to test and revise these new forms of teaching.

## **Institutional Policies**

If the importance of and a commitment to community engagement are not acknowledged in the mission statements and policy guidelines of institutions, community engaged teaching and learning will always remain on the periphery of institutional activities where a few innovative (and altruistic) academics and students flourish (Lazarus, 2001).

## **Institutional Management Commitment**

The legitimacy and status of community engaged teaching and learning depend upon institutional leadership and management commitment.

## **Resource Allocation and Funding**

Making available sufficient and sustainable resources (human, financial and infrastructure) for community engaged teaching and learning that is more resource-intensive than other forms of teaching and learning is essential for community engaged teaching and learning to flourish. This should happen not only at institutional level, but also at national level where the provision of earmarked funding for community engaged teaching and learning from the Department of Education will go a long way towards promoting the establishment and development of community engaged teaching and learning.

## **Establishment of Dedicated Institutional Structures**

A centre or office/ unit dedicated to supporting, enhancing and promoting engagement strategies, as well as the allocation of human and financial resources to such a structure, are key to the promotion of community engaged teaching and learning.

## **Training, Capacity Building and Staff Development Initiatives**

Academic staff involvement and support is one of the strongest indicators for the successful institutionalisation of community engaged strategies. Community engaged teaching and learning strategies, such as service-learning, have only recently been given attention in staff development activities. Such strategies challenge academics beyond the comfort zone of traditional practices – to incorporate in their teaching new approaches to teaching and assessment. For most academics this crosses a border beyond their prior experience. Recognising that the design and implementation of service-learning modules are ultimately responsible for curricular reform, the importance of training and development opportunities for staff cannot be denied.

## **Recognition for Community Engaged Teaching and Learning in Performance Management Systems, Rewards, and Criteria for Promotion**

Community engagement must be among the institution's priorities in order to re-align reward systems, providing incentives for greater academic participation. This will ensure long-term involvement by academics in community engagement initiatives.

Academics involved in community engaged teaching and learning dedicate considerable time and effort. If these activities do not form part of the performance management process for recognition and promotion, community engagement will never become part of the culture and day-to-day functioning of the institution. There is a need for the inclusion of community engagement values in efficient, effective and quality driven performance management and appraisal systems. These measures will provide evidence of an institution's genuine commitment to community engagement.

## **Curriculum Reform (Responsiveness)**

At both national and institutional levels, there is a need for flexible and streamlined processes of programme approval, avoiding unnecessary time delays or bureaucracy in the interests of responsiveness to community needs as they are identified; this relates both to approval of new programmes and programme amendments, in order for curricula to be responsive to communities. Through curricula, ideas of higher education are put into action. Through curricula, too, values, beliefs and principles in relation to learning, understanding, knowledge, disciplines, individual and society are realised.

## **Quality Management**

Managing quality in the core functions of higher education institutions – teaching and learning, research and community engagement – involves four evaluative stages, namely (1) input, (2) process, (3) output and impact, and (4) review. These evaluative stages should form the basis of the framework for managing the quality of community engaged teaching and learning; in other words, the same quality management strategies and criteria should be applied to all three core functions.

## **Enhanced Student Learning**

Community engaged teaching and learning should enhance student learning. Community engaged teaching and learning should include a significant component of relevant and meaningful service and purposeful civic learning, yet should be carefully planned and constructed to ensure deep learning by the students involved. In order to achieve this, different types of community engaged teaching and learning activities should be structured for different groups of students (e.g. volunteerism for first year students, problem-based service-learning for senior students etc.). Students should be able to conduct needs assessment and asset mapping of communities.

## **Student Orientation, Training and Placements**

Higher education institutions must ensure that their students are well prepared and oriented for community placements. Institutions should present orientation sessions and workshops for students, academic staff and communities. Adequate orientation and training imply that staff and students are adequately prepared for the tasks they will perform. Student orientation may occur in lecture venues and/or on site by the lecturer or service and/or community agency site supervisor. Students should receive a manual on the form of community engaged teaching and learning (for example service-learning) to introduce the concept, orientate students to general logistical considerations, introduce broader issues relating to the course/ module, and orientate students about expectations and responsibilities. The following topics should be covered during orientation sessions and included in a manual for students:

- Responsibilities: task assignments, expectations, role definition etc.;
- Protocol/ professionalism: policies, procedures, dress, manners, punctuality etc.;
- Client courtesy: behaviour and attitudes towards clients receiving the service;
- Problem solving around difficult situations that may arise; and
- Record keeping, time record keeping, supervision and accountability.

The following topics should be covered during the orientation sessions and if necessary included in a manual for students:

- History, mission, structure and location of the service sites;
- Background and description of the individuals to be served; and
- Social, political and economic issues related to the service site setting.

The students should receive a copy of any relevant manuals of the service agency.

Students who are ill-prepared may find community engagement a negative experience and may do more harm than good in their community service placements.

### **Structured Reflection**

Community engaged teaching and learning should provide opportunities for structured reflection by students. Structured reflection should include a thoughtfully constructed process that challenges and guides students in:

- Examining critical issues related to their community engaged teaching and learning projects;
- Connecting the service experience to module/ course content;
- Enhancing the development of social responsibility and ethical skills and values; and
- Finding personal relevance in the work.

Academic staff should play a key role in structuring the reflection process, and need to make design decisions about the following key aspects of the reflection process: learning outcomes; frequency and timing of reflection; form of reflection; and feedback/ assessment. Reflection activities can involve reading, writing, doing and telling.

### **Student Assessment Methods**

Assessment of community engaged teaching and learning should satisfy the criteria for effective formative and summative assessment. There should be a definite linkage between learning outcomes, structured reflection and assessment. Student assessment should also make specific provision for assessing the outcomes of the service component of the teaching/ learning activities. The course/ module design and its implementation should ensure that the module content (module descriptors), teaching and learning content, methods and materials, and student support provide students with a fair chance of attaining the learning and service outcomes specified for the module and of demonstrating this through assessment.

### **Evaluation of Impact**

Higher education institutions should put systems in place to evaluate the outcomes of community engaged teaching and learning, i.e. the impact on students' knowledge, skills and attitudes. The evaluation process should include assessing the impact on students, academic staff, departments and professional disciplines and community and service agencies. Students' cognitive understanding of module content, personal growth and civic behaviour are essential factors to consider in assessing the complete community engaged teaching and learning experience. Lecturers should revisit their motivation and determine if the module did, in fact, accomplish the intended outcomes that they expressed in their module curriculum. Similarly, lecturers should consider what professional skills they acquired or developed.

## **CONCLUSION**

The participants of the workshop hope that eventually there will be a new way to assess or audit a 'good or great' university – not by the number of articles and books its academic staff publish for other scholars, but by the improvements in community life that result from applying what we know to what we do. That is quality community engaged teaching and learning. The challenge of community engaged teaching and learning is really to bring life and work together; in the lives of our students and academic staff, in the collective work of our higher education institutions and in our partnerships with the broader community.

As the participants of the Concurrent Workshop on Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning look forward, to the future of the curricular community engagement movement in South Africa, they see both incredible opportunity and challenges. The growth in the movement in the

past three to five years has provided a foundation for sustained expansion. We need the creation of new models and theoretical foundations for the multiple forms of community engaged teaching and learning and with that the development of best practices. We hope that the next five to ten years will see more growth, discussion and commitment to community engaged teaching and learning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **Moving beyond the Last Century's Academic Traditions: Promoting Community Engaged Research**

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*This paper formed the basis of presentations made by Philip Nyden at Concurrent Workshop Sessions 3, 5 and 8 on Community Engagement through Research.*

### **ABSTRACT**

By combining 'community knowledge' and 'university knowledge' through collaborative university–community research, a stronger and more holistic research approach can be developed in university settings. The creative tension in university–community partnerships can also correct misinformation and weakness apparent on both sides of the knowledge production equation. Because it is influenced by community needs and scientific scholarship, community engaged research is well positioned to effectively address pressing social, cultural, political and economic problems facing contemporary societies. The Center for Urban Research and Learning at Loyola University Chicago, an established collaborative research centre, is described in this paper as a working model for institutionalising community engaged research in universities. With increased community engaged research taking place in many countries there is enormous potential to connect community-based projects in multiple regions and multiple countries, further strengthening local knowledge.

### **KEYWORDS**

Centre for Urban Research and Learning (CURL), Loyola University Chicago  
community-based participatory research  
community knowledge  
engaged research  
participatory methodology

### **INTRODUCTION**

Contemporary demands to more effectively use the combined resources, skills and capacity of higher education, and non-governmental and governmental organisations in addressing the pressing needs of society are directing our attention to more innovative strategies to promote community engaged research in higher education institutions. While there are certainly long-standing traditions of engaged scholarship, university research cultures and practices have often discouraged, and defined as inferior, community-based research approaches and their outcomes. This academic and discipline-based conservatism has become a roadblock to linkages between rich knowledge bases outside of academia and those inside academia.

This paper presents a conceptual framework for combining university-based knowledge and community-based knowledge – a framework to allow developed and developing societies alike to build capacity in addressing key local and global social, cultural, political and economic challenges facing us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Strategies and structures to promote high-quality community engaged research are discussed. Finally, mechanisms for creating lasting university–community partnerships are discussed. The article draws on the author's 20 years of experience in developing and sustaining both regional collaborative university–community networks and a university-based collaborative research centre.

## WHO PRODUCES KNOWLEDGE?

Knowledge is produced both inside and outside of the university. One can talk of 'community-based knowledge' and 'university-based knowledge'. These represent complementary perspectives on the society around us – perspectives that are incomplete when allowed to stand alone. Community-based knowledge consists of an understanding of society through familiarity with an everyday, lived experience. It is an understanding of day-to-day interactions in families, in communities, and in the workplace, among other social contexts. It also includes the collective knowledge produced by community-based organisations or NGOs familiar with the needs of local communities as well as effective ways of addressing those needs. It is an understanding of the history of these interactions and the changes that have taken place over time.

In some cases, community-based knowledge reflects a creativity in developing solutions to pressing problems. While there may be an uncertainty about *how* effective these interventions are, this knowledge often represents the kernels of innovative solutions to problems. In other cases there may be intimate knowledge of critical problems at the community level, but a lack of awareness of how to address those problems. In yet other instances local communities may not even be aware of a problem that is having a severe impact on their community. For example, while people may be aware of a range of health problems, they may not be aware that the problems are the result of a particular environmental pollutant found within their community.

University-based knowledge is essentially 'mined' from the social and natural world. Scholars trained in established methodologies, using theoretical frameworks developed over decades by their respective disciplines, gather and analyse information about the world around them. The rigour of the research approaches increases both the validity of the research (confidence that their research methods are, in fact accurately measuring the variable they are studying) and the reliability of the research (confidence that if the research project were to be replicated the same results would be produced).

University-based research is also produced by institutions with considerably more resources than most community-based organisations. Universities typically have the buildings, laboratories, faculty and students needed to develop and complete research projects. The ability to hire trained faculty – faculty who have often spent five to ten years of study in getting the top degrees in their discipline – represents a major asset. Even where some universities may have modest resources in comparison to more 'elite' universities, they typically have more research capacity than NGOs and local community networks.

Researchers based in higher education also enjoy a broad vantage point that many NGOs concerned with very local, day-to-day issues do not have. Knowledge already collected in their discipline (in the form of earlier research reports, journal articles and books) allows researchers to better understand the meaning of newly-collected information by placing it within a broader context of this existing knowledge. Universities also afford their faculty the ability to communicate with researchers in other communities, other cities, and even other countries, in comparing their research findings across settings. Such access to regional, national and global networks is an effective way to better understand common factors that may be creating social problems. At the same time, such global perspectives provide the potential for finding *solutions* to pressing problems that may already have been developed in other communities.

Higher education's central position in regional, national and global communications networks represents a major resource – particularly when this helps to provide links among *local* needs, knowledge and solutions and *global* needs, knowledge and solutions. In a world where fixed line and mobile, fax, internet and e-mail communications are becoming cheaper and more accessible to all, the potential for successfully linking local and global research and knowledge has grown exponentially. Without the need to go through international organisations, local researchers can now connect community engaged research projects in one locale with similar projects in another

locale. Local universities – particularly those with a community engaged orientation – have enormous potential in facilitating this link, given their resources and positioning in the new global communication system.

By segregating organisations and networks that create community knowledge from those that produce university knowledge, we are undermining society's capacity to understand and solve problems. Given the increasing speed of change in modern society, such underutilisation of our knowledge base is increasingly problematic. The potential for knowledge dysfunction – the dysfunction of not understanding emerging problems in some communities, and missed opportunities in expanding on developing solutions to sometimes those same problems in other communities – increases at the same pace as social change itself. Keeping community eyes, ears and voices out of the research process diminishes the quality and reach of that research in modern society. We need to correct the illusion that knowledge can be produced only in the academy and that the academy alone can train future researchers. Knowledge production should not be the exclusive domain of higher education.

### **NOT ALL KNOWLEDGE IS EQUAL**

At various times both university-based researchers, on the one hand, and community leaders, on the other, have implied that their knowledge is true knowledge and should not be the object of scrutiny. 'Scientifically-produced' knowledge acquired through the use of accepted research methodologies is sometimes seen as more objective and more accurate. On the other hand, community-based advocates claim that their knowledge is more accurate because it is based on everyday experience. However, if 'scientifically-produced' knowledge starts from incorrect assumptions or totally misses a key factor affecting a situation, it has little use in helping us to understand the society around us. Similarly, if community-based knowledge is precariously built on accepted social and cultural practices and not tested by new, more rigorous, scientific research, it can be equally invalid.

Some advocates of community engaged research bend over backwards in respecting local cultures and traditions. The fact is, however, that some local practices may be damaging to the community. In the course of the JET Education Services conference workshop on engaged research, there was concern expressed over always accepting community-based knowledge in an uncritical light. For example, in many of the South African black townships, a coming of age ritual involves having 16-year old males retreat to the bush for a circumcision ceremony. Holding with tribal tradition, a common ceremonial spear-like device or *assegai* is used to circumcise the boys – without benefits of sterilisation between circumcisions. Given the reality of extremely high HIV/AIDS rates in these communities, such practices are tantamount to increasing HIV/AIDS rates and other infection rates in these already-devastated communities. This community-based practice is clearly destructive of the collective health of the community.

At the same time, this example illustrates the potential for positive interaction between local practices and university-based or scientific knowledge. Combining knowledge bases can lead to solutions. On the one hand, community understanding of the high health risks that the community is producing with these circumcision practices can lead to a recognition of the need to change the practices. On the other hand, awareness by public health advocates of the existing practice, and collaborative work with local leaders in seeking new practices that respect cultural traditions but incorporate safer practices (such as incorporating new sterile scalpels as new ceremonial 'spears'), could lead to improvement in public health and life expectancy.

## **A UNIVERSITY–COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE MODEL: ADDING CHAIRS TO THE RESEARCH TABLE**

The Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) at Loyola University uses a collaborative research model that harnesses the creative university–community tensions and integrates community and university knowledge. CURL does not do research *on* the community, but rather *with* the community. CURL has expanded the reach of collegial relationships within the university that have been effective in promoting and enhancing the quality of research. University-based researchers typically talk with one another about developing research projects – informally ‘at the water cooler’ and at brown-bag lunches, or more formally at discipline-based roundtable sessions at professional meetings. At such informal and formal gatherings, research projects are conceptualised and fine tuned, with researchers receiving direction from colleagues who may have experience in the methodological or substantive aspects of the research.

The collaborative university–community research model takes this same successful model of formal and informal discussion at the research table and expands it to include community partners. It effectively ‘adds chairs’ to the research table. This establishes a venue for discussion of new research ideas, how these ideas may meet pressing community research needs, where there are overlaps in knowledge, and how community and university knowledge may fill in gaps. It is also a forum where constructive arguments can take place evaluating the merit of a particular research idea and the appropriateness of research design. Through this process community and university partners become more familiar with other facets of a particular issue – producing more holistic research.

The more inclusive research table can take the form of scheduled meetings of researchers, community service providers and/or other community leaders to discuss various ideas. It can take the form of more generic, regularly scheduled meetings where community leaders sometimes report on projects or programmes and university-based researchers present findings of ongoing research that might be of interest to community partners. Such relationships lead to an expanded university–community network of colleagues, who can communicate through regular e-mail exchanges, telephone calls and one-on-one meetings to discuss ideas and possible research with one another. It is an environment that effectively creates a social network combining university and community knowledge.

## **THE LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO CENTER FOR URBAN RESEARCH AND LEARNING: A COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE MODEL**

The Loyola University Chicago’s CURL is a notable model of success in institutionalising collaborative university–community research. As of 2006, CURL has a \$10 000 000 endowment, an annual budget of approximately \$1.5 million, and nine full-time staff. In the average year it engages more than ten graduate fellows, 15 undergraduate fellows, and 40 additional undergraduates in a collaborative research linked seminar, three community fellows, and three faculty fellows working on 10 to 15 different collaborative projects.

For anyone seeking ideas on how to build a university–community partnership from ‘scratch’, this might seem like a formidable model to set as a goal. However, CURL had its beginnings in the mid-1980s in the form of *unfunded* faculty–community activist partnerships involving faculty from multiple universities. This evolved into the Policy Research Action Group (PRAG), the multi-university, multi-community organisation network that started to organise around collaborative research in the Chicago metropolitan area; PRAG itself started with a relatively small \$20 000 grant in 1989. In its first seven years, PRAG was coordinated by me in my role as faculty member and chair of the Sociology and Anthropology Department at Loyola University, and the university provided a fiscal home for PRAG grants. It was the success of PRAG that convinced the university to seek additional, more substantial funding for its own collaborative research centre.

Success in getting funding for collaborative research projects is not necessarily the result of an initial focus on getting grant dollars. Rather, success is a product of the attentiveness by researchers and community leaders in meeting community needs and building lasting partnerships. Addressing these needs through collaborative research effectively taps into community interest and energy. The establishment of these vibrant working relationships and the importance of the research issues identified are what attract funding.

Working with the community in defining research issues also creates holistic research issues that typically are interdisciplinary. This means that faculty and students from multiple disciplines are attracted to such research projects. Community organisations receive valuable information that can help strengthen local social service programmes, grassroots organising campaigns or advocacy efforts. As one of our community partners put it, “CURL has become our research arm”.

Because the community has helped to define the research issue, it is not surprising that research outcomes receive significant interest from the media. This attention from the media provides positive reinforcement for faculty and students, who recognise that their research work is valued by a broad audience. It is also attractive to university public relations offices because it demonstrates a contribution that the institution is providing to local communities. Most importantly, it represents a political resource to community partners. For example, media attention to a report supporting a community organisation’s or a citywide civic organisation’s campaign for legislative reform, such as increasing city support for more affordable housing, is a major asset in their advocacy work.

At this point it may be helpful to describe CURL’s structure and organisational process a bit more.<sup>7</sup> I will later discuss factors that helped CURL develop over the years, along with obstacles that it had to overcome. CURL’s mission statement explains that:

The Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) of Loyola University Chicago seeks to promote equality and to improve people’s lives in communities throughout the Chicago metropolitan region. CURL pursues this goal by building and supporting collaborative research and education efforts. These partnerships connect Loyola faculty and students with community and nonprofit organisations, civic groups, and government agencies. Such collaborations link the skills and wisdom present within every community with the specialised knowledge and academic discipline of a vital urban university. Working together, community needs are addressed and the academic experience is enriched.

In addition to this, CURL has a set of governing standards that is used in shaping all of its collaborative projects. These include: 1) collaboration – the extent to which the project will strengthen university–community partnerships; 2) institutional change – the degree to which the project will further institutionalise university and community practices promoting knowledge exchange; 3) geographic focus – development of a mix of projects that include a portion from communities nearby Loyola’s three campuses, as well as projects in other communities throughout the city and region; and 4) communication – ensuring that project outcomes will be disseminated to local community members as well as to other communities and researchers who will find the data, analysis and outcomes of value.

## Research Teams

CURL research projects typically involve a research *team*. Faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, community partners and CURL staff work together. Funded graduate research assistants generally serve as the project coordinator, communicating with faculty and community partners on a regular basis; they supervise other graduate and undergraduate researchers on a particular project. Graduate research assistants work 20 hours per week during

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to details provided about CURL here, more information on the structure, fellowships and past or current projects is available on the website: [www.luc.edu/curl](http://www.luc.edu/curl).

the academic year and full-time in the three summer months.<sup>8</sup> More recently, CURL has created one-year, full-time, pre/post Doctoral fellow positions for advanced Doctoral students or recent Doctoral graduates.<sup>9</sup>

Undergraduate team members come from among either CURL's 15 to 20 funded undergraduate fellows or students in an Urban Studies seminar linked to CURL. CURL undergraduate fellowships are awarded on a competitive basis and are open to students in all departments and schools of the university; the undergraduate fellows receive a stipend (\$1 200 per semester during the 2005/2006 academic year) and work ten hours per week on CURL research teams.<sup>10</sup> In addition to these fellows, other undergraduates in an Urban Studies seminar complete six-credit hours of course work, which includes a weekly seminar and seven hours of involvement in one of CURL's ongoing research projects.

The team approach has been quite effective. It helps maintain quality collaborative research by promoting involvement and regular communication between university and community partners. By involving graduate students as coordinators, it extends the reach of faculty and community partners, who typically have other significant work obligations. Without the team assistance, it would be hard for faculty and community leaders to engage in such research projects.

For undergraduates, and even some graduate students, this represents the first time that they are involved in hands-on research projects. When they are first involved in a CURL project, undergraduates sometimes feel as though they are being thrown into the 'deep end' of the research pool without quite knowing how to swim. CURL staff and more seasoned members of other CURL research teams provide the needed support to learn 'to swim'. This not only builds self-confidence but also represents a valuable educational experience that cannot be taught in the classroom. Students, who often are listed as co-authors of research studies, also get to see their contributions fit into a larger project that has a visible impact on communities and/or local policy. In some cases, students get to see 'their' project covered in the *Chicago Tribune* or *Chicago Sun-Times*. This is something that is difficult for students, or even faculty, to do on their own! In essence, CURL is providing 'education outside of the box' – outside of the traditional classroom setting.

Learning takes place in multiple directions. Students realise that they can learn from community partners as well as from faculty. They also get to see faculty engaged in exploring research issues. After a visit to a local community organisation to discuss research issues, one undergraduate commented that outside a classroom she had "never seen a faculty member ask a question before". The misleading stereotype that faculty know everything disappears rather quickly in CURL's team research work. It is replaced by a more useful understanding that there are knowledgeable people in all areas of our workplaces and communities. CURL is teaching students how to ask questions or 'how to learn'. This is a most valuable skill to take away from college as one enters into the complex and rapidly changing world around us.

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<sup>8</sup> Graduate fellows generally receive a full tuition scholarship and (in the 2005/2006 academic year) a stipend of \$12 000-\$16 000 depending on whether they work for just the nine-month academic year or the academic year and full-time in the summer.

<sup>9</sup> These are treated as full-time university staff positions for the year. Pre/post Doctoral fellows receive full salary and benefits during the award year. In addition to helping CURL research, these fellowships provide excellent collaborative research experience that distinguishes fellows from other job candidates when they seek teaching or research positions.

<sup>10</sup> Funding for these positions either comes from CURL's endowment or is built into its research grants.

## **CURL Projects**

Over the past ten years CURL has completed more than 75 different research projects. At any one time, it is actively engaged in 10 to 15 different projects. Because community organisations help to define research issues, projects do not take on a single-discipline focus. Typically, faculty and students from different disciplines are involved in the same project. Over the years, the Center has worked on issues such as: affordable housing; racial and ethnic diversity in local communities; improvement of early childhood education; impact of welfare reform on economically diverse communities; community safety; lead poisoning prevention; housing low-income individuals with disabilities; use of new computer technologies in serving low-income communities; impact of gentrification and displacement on communities of colour; community economic development; health needs of Native Americans in Chicago; homelessness; and youth civic engagement.

Projects are developed in a number of different ways, such as holding community breakfasts involving grassroots organisations to discuss possible collaborative research projects. At other times faculty members come to CURL staff with ideas, but need to be introduced to potential community partners. On still other occasions, community organisations approach CURL to do research.

Particularly when the Center was starting up, but now occasionally, it held community-organisation discussions about possible new research projects around a particular issue. Because there are community stereotypes about what 'research' is, an initial conversation with prospective partners involves a description of collaborative research and the kinds of resources that CURL can bring to the table. CURL staff and faculty quickly disabuse community leaders of any notions that research is something esoteric, defined by academics looking through their disciplinary lens, and bound for the library shelf where it will gather dust. Staff and faculty discuss the connections between rigorous research and outcomes that can: improve the quality of services being provided by a social service agency; be used as credible policy research 'ammunition' in community organisation advocacy efforts with government agencies; or guide community organisation strategies in bringing about local changes.

Depending on the needs of the particular project, CURL can assign undergraduates, graduate students, staff and/or faculty to the project. Often one or two individuals work on developing a project and completing initial work. More extensive teams are used as the project grows. Since comprehensive community research cannot usually be restricted to semester-long time periods, CURL manages most projects beyond the limits of a 14-week semester. While there typically is CURL staff continuity in a given project, it may recruit different undergraduates and graduate students over the life of a project.

CURL regularly interacts with community-based organisations and citywide advocacy organisations with which it has had past research partnerships. Past partners may request quick information from CURL, knowing that the Center has resources and information that can easily be called upon in work with community partners. For example, posting data or research information on its web page or a community partner's web page can be done to allow community residents to access reports and local data quickly. Mapping data, using university computers and graduate student geographical information system skills, is another resource that can be easily accessed. In other cases, it is a matter of tracking down faculty expertise to answer a question. When there has been broad-based interest in particular policy issues or research skills, CURL has organised one- and two-day workshops for multiple groups. Using existing Loyola faculty or hiring outside experts, the workshops are also offered to both community members and Loyola students on a non-credit or for-credit basis.

In some respects, CURL is a knowledge 'match making' service. It has a resource of more than 500 faculty at the university, all of whom potentially could be involved in a collaborative university-community project. In some cases, it is a matter of CURL staff making a few calls and relaying

information from faculty member to community leader. In other cases, CURL not only introduces faculty members and community organisations to each other, but also facilitates the 'courtship' process. The CURL 'dowry' includes items such as faculty fellowships (typically course reductions), which can be used to provide time to develop a project or complete some phases of the research. For community partners the 'dowry' can include community fellowships (grants of up to \$12 000 to support community-based organisation resources or community staff time committed to a project). CURL can provide staff time to manage grant applications and oversee grant funding after it has been awarded; this helps to take the burden off faculty and community partners in project management. Since CURL has gained considerable experience in managing collaborative research, it also helps to smooth over any research issues, such as presenting Institutional Review Board applications involving participatory research methods, or working with Corporate and Foundation Relations in getting permission and support in approaching a potential foundation funder.

As CURL has matured, it has gained significant credibility among community organisations. Now it is often approached by community partners who either already have funding, or are working on grants to complete research. A few years after CURL was formed, it was approached by a large non-profit organisation serving a low-income, African American community on Chicago's Westside. One of the first CURL graduate fellows had worked with the organisation. The organisation wanted to work with CURL, offering the Center one-half of a \$100 000 participatory evaluation research project grant the organisation had just received. In a community vote of confidence, the organisation's executive director stated that "CURL is the only university research that I trust to do the research". This trust and credibility is a resource that has been increasingly valuable to CURL in locating new community partners and continuing work with past community-based partners.

A few examples of collaborative projects provide an overview of the different ways in which CURL's projects develop and function.<sup>11</sup> In the late 1990s, CURL worked with an Alinsky-style activist organisation and a traditional social service organisation, researching the impact of the new welfare reform legislation on the 180 000 residents of three stable racially, ethnically and economically diverse communities in Chicago. Each organisation had separately identified concerns regarding how welfare reform might destabilise its diverse neighbourhood. Ultimately, this collaborative project was partially funded by a Community Outreach Partnership Center grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. CURL produced three reports over three years. The first report was ultimately used by local and state organisations in successfully advocating for state legislation protecting the financial stability of legal, elderly immigrants living in the communities. Subsequently, reports addressed childcare and access to jobs. All of the reports received significant media attention in newspapers and on television.

Another project came to CURL after a former community partner had requested that an Illinois State Representative provide research money to better understand changes in the affordable housing base in a rapidly gentrifying community on Chicago's Northside. Affordable housing advocates were alarmed at what they saw as the loss of hundreds of housing units on a monthly basis, while developers and some members of the chamber of commerce felt there was too much affordable housing and more market-rate housing development was needed instead. Over an 18-month period CURL faculty and staff worked with an advisory committee representing all sectors of the local community. CURL collected data from an array of local, state and federal agencies, which themselves did not have accurate numbers on subsidised housing units in Chicago. The advisory committee pored over data and maps that the research team provided at regular meetings. The end result was a report that provided a more accurate picture of housing in the community of 60 000 residents. With the credibility established not only through the university–community collaborative research process but also through involvement of multiple interest groups in the

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<sup>11</sup>There is a more detailed list of past and current CURL projects on the website: [www.luc.edu/curl](http://www.luc.edu/curl).

community, this report has been used as a planning document in subsequent work in the community.

## **INSTITUTIONALISING UNIVERSITY–COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

There are a number of effective strategies in developing and sustaining university–community partnerships. A key orientation is to focus on the actual work to be done and issue/s to be addressed. While formal agreements and structures are ultimately useful in anchoring relationships, it is the research and the solutions-oriented work that motivates both researchers and community leaders. Structures and formal relations emerge out of the research process. Engaging in an initial, ‘trial’ university–community partnership to establish trust and credibility has been a first step in many successful partnerships.

Related to this is a strategy of building on existing, but often unconnected, partnerships between university-based researchers and community organisations. On many campuses there are already multiple relationships between faculty and community partners. Gathering more information on these partnerships and past positive outcomes can help identify areas of strength and also indicate where better connections among existing projects can stimulate further and even more effective community engaged work.

Increasing visibility of collaborative research – both inside and outside of the university – is also highly effective in raising awareness of past research outcomes and increasing campus and community interest in new projects. Newsletters, web pages summarising past work, published reports, books, and publications in academic and non-academic journals contribute to the visibility of the collaborative work. Such publications, and media coverage, also serve to disseminate important findings to broader audiences beyond the immediate project participants.

Although the creation of interdisciplinary collaborative university–community research centres, such as CURL, may not be a first step, such places can dramatically build engaged research capacity. Centres provide administrative and technical support for existing engaged scholars, allowing them to spend more of their time on project development, data collection, analysis and publication and less on the logistics of setting up and managing research projects. The development of a place where ideas can be shared, where community partners know they can ‘contact the university’, and where students and faculty from multiple disciplines can share ideas, will elevate the visibility, amount and quality of engaged scholarship on campus.

Collaborative research centres also become advocates for collaborative research and brokers of information and resources. For example, students and younger faculty may find it difficult to ‘break into’ the collaborative research process since they have no track record in such research. However, affiliation with a research centre gives them an instant connection to a collective track record of engaged research and the opportunity to interact with other researchers and community leaders. It provides an alternative socialisation venue that can moderate the limited perspectives of some departmental settings where students are funnelled into a narrow research focus rather than the interdisciplinary, university–community one represented by the research centre.

## **MAKING CONNECTIONS AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS**

Community-based research can increase the connections of researchers and community partners with colleagues at national and international levels. As countries such as South Africa seek ways of gaining more resources and knowledge to inform the many challenges of overcoming pressing problems, engaged research represents a major resource. A typical criticism of community engaged research by traditional academic-based researchers is that it is parochial research with a limited vantage point. This is not true. Although it is counterintuitive to think that collaborative

research focusing on local communities would lead to more national and international connections, the work of CURL and other networks has created national and international linkages among grassroots participatory research efforts. In the search for effective community-level models and solutions, it is logical that grassroots activists would seek more information from colleagues in other cities, other regions and other countries. Any past propensity of community engaged projects to not move beyond the local level had more to do with resources and communication capacity than with intellectual narrowness. Grassroots collaborations are increasingly recognising how to use the national and international linkages universities bring to the table to inform community-based research and contribute to building local solutions based on lessons learned in other communities. Such university–community partnerships are also increasingly taking advantage of newer, more accessible communications systems, particularly the internet, in completing comparative research or just using community-based research in other locales to inform their own research.

One major resource that universities have is a linkage to local, national and international networks. These linkages are a result of universities' decades-old visibility in regional, national and international circles, as well as the result of regular faculty involvement in national and international conferences where they discuss their research. While local community organisations typically are not part of such networks, collaborative university-based research organisations such as CURL can use these networks to create 'local-to-local' connections among grassroots projects in one city or country directly with projects in other cities or countries.

With new accessible and inexpensive computer-based communication systems, it is now possible to facilitate these local-to-local connections without the help of large international agencies. The ability of local projects to share lessons learned and questions with other local projects represents an underdeveloped source of new knowledge for local organisations. In an era of very tight local community resources, the possibility of gaining new knowledge, new programme ideas, and new successful community outreach strategies developed and proven by other communities, represents a major new global resource. Rather than viewing 'global' as something beyond local community research, such approaches can bring global home to the local community.

For example, in Europe, the science shop movement, dating back to the 1970s in the Netherlands, parallels the collaborative research movement in the US (European Commission, 2003; Leydesdorff and Ward, 2005; and Sclove *et al*, 1998). The focus of the movement has been on the integration of university and community knowledge in environmental, social and economic research. A number of European universities now have full-time, university-supported faculty positions for science shop activities. In 2003, a network of 13 science shops in ten, primarily European countries, created the International Science Shop Network (ISSNET). In addition to facilitating international co-operation among existing science shops, this network initiated a new effort in 2005 to mentor younger faculty and community leaders to build new science shops in countries and regions previously without such collaborative centres.

In parallel fashion at the level of a single US collaborative research centre, over the years CURL has expanded its co-operative research relationships to include community-based projects in other cities and countries. This has been largely driven by the need to seek additional information from others outside Chicago and the US in finding effective, proven, community-based solutions to pressing problems. CURL has facilitated university–community partnership connections with projects in Sydney and Brisbane, Australia; Birmingham and Liverpool, UK; and El Salvador. CURL has been the primary US centre participating in ISSNET. The Chicago-based Center completed a four-city equitable development curriculum project involving universities and community partners in Liverpool, Seville (Spain) and Washington DC. Funded by the US Department of Education and the European Commission, the project's aim was to create a change-oriented, participatory

research-oriented, educational package that can be used both in university and community settings.<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

South Africa's efforts to promote community engaged research and make it business as usual in universities and colleges around the country represent another building block in a global change – a change that is happening in many countries around the world. In an era of rapid change and continuing interest in better utilising the social and intellectual resources of our respective societies, more effective linkage between university and community knowledge is no longer a luxury but a necessity. In a world where the means of instant communication are at our fingertips and accessible to increasingly broad sectors of all societies, the means to connect these previously separated knowledge bases is available.

Without an active connection between community and university – the two halves of our knowledge base – we are relegated to wandering down two separate paths, neither of which may lead to solutions in addressing healthcare, employment, educational and other pressing needs that must be addressed if our respective societies are to make progress benefiting all citizens. The historical disconnect wastes creative talent and institutional resources. Efforts to engage these two sides of our society can open doors to a creative tension and holistic view of the world around us. This door is the entrance to improved quality of life for many in our worlds who have previously been locked out.

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<sup>12</sup> More information on this is available at: [www.luc.edu/curl/escd/](http://www.luc.edu/curl/escd/).

## Community Engagement through Research: Workshop Report

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*This report reflects the discussions of the Concurrent Workshop Sessions on Community Engagement through Research. The Concurrent Workshop Sessions focused respectively on: Session 3: A Conceptual Framework for Community Engagement; Session 5: Key Challenges, Enabling Mechanisms and Quality Management; and Session 8: Key Strategies and Recommendations for Community Engagement.*

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Concurrent Workshop Sessions on Community Engagement through Research was to engage in a process of intense discussion and debate with the goal of producing a *conceptual framework for community engagement through research*. In relation to the other Concurrent Workshops,<sup>35</sup> we would argue that this one was perhaps the most challenging. Any survey of community engagement activities in the South African context will indicate that such activities have always been centred on Learning and Teaching, that the issues of Governance and Management have been key to the experiments engaged in and that Partnerships have always been important. By this is meant that there have already been important intellectual engagements over these aspects during the vast number of experiments. Community engagement as contributing to improving the quality of learning and teaching has not been contentious. What has been contentious is the place of community engagement in the university in terms of governance and resource allocation, and assessment of the quality of community engagement through research. In particular, there has been much contention about the efficacy of various research methodologies that have been deployed or that have emerged.

Research in the context of community engagement has, on the other hand, been an area of contention in the university. The major source of contention is as deep as whether this form of research has a set of legitimate methodologies for the production of new 'scientific' knowledge. This kind of research is often referred to as 'participative research' or 'action research' or 'community-based research'. There is a considerable body of literature that describes these forms of research and that attempts to place them on a footing of legitimacy.

The challenge of integrating community engagement into the body of the university does, however, depend on the development of community-based research as a source of new 'scientific' knowledge, if community engagement is to find a consolidated home within modern universities. That is, community engagement has to be recognised as being a knowledge production activity, if it is to be treated as a core activity of the university – and thereby lead to an organic resolution of the challenges of mainstreaming with regard to governance, proper funding and full accreditation in terms of the usual academic metrics. This is not to say that the contestation between these forms of knowledge production and the dominant 'Newtonian' models ought to be eroded. In fact, the opposite holds. There ought to be the space at universities for contestations of this nature. And, in turn, a necessary condition for this contestation to occur in a fruitful way is for the 'practice' of research through community engagement to be fostered at these institutions.

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<sup>35</sup> Namely: Community Engagement through HEI Governance and Management; Community Engagement through Partnerships; and Community Engagement through Teaching and Learning.

Three Concurrent Workshop Sessions were held and they adopted a common methodology. The sessions were each initiated through an input by Philip Nyden. Each input was followed by a formal response. The first response was provided by Michael Gibbons, the second by Andrew Kaniki and the third by Thomas Auf der Heyde. This provided the basis for a more detailed discussion in three groups of about ten people each. Specific questions were decided upon for discussion in the groups and each group took up a different question. Each group was allocated a Scribe and the Scribe then presented the findings of the group to the workshop. This led to intense workshop plenary discussions. The findings of the Concurrent Workshop Sessions were presented to the Plenary Sessions of the conference.

### **SESSION 3: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH RESEARCH**

The key question for this session was: What conceptual framework and models may be appropriate for community engagement through research?

Following the input by Nyden<sup>36</sup> and the response by Gibbons, some very interesting initial points were made, which set the agenda for the remainder of the Concurrent Workshop Sessions. This opened the way for an understanding that this was a complex discussion and that there was not a common understanding of the meaning of community engagement.

#### **Competing Epistemologies and Power Relations**

A strong view was expressed that the emergence of a conceptual framework would need to confront the question of how knowledge is organised in the university and that community engagement in the South African context brings to the fore the challenge of understanding whether or not there are different epistemologies at play. For some academics there is a firm belief that engagement strengthens disciplinary knowledge, especially when the engagement projects are constructed in such a way that disciplines are themselves engaged in complex problem solving. It is clear that engagement provides different perspectives on issues and that understanding of issues is therefore enhanced by engagement. For other academics, communities are *sources* of information or *recipients* of knowledge generated in the university; that is to say, in such conceptions of engagement, communities have a passive role to play in the processes of knowledge production/ dissemination. The dominance of the traditions of scientism in South African universities may draw its sustenance from concerns about the self-preservation of the academy and from the role laid out for higher education in terms of improving the global competitiveness of South Africa's economy.

It is not possible to assume that there is homogeneity of epistemologies, and within the academy there is more likely to be a situation where epistemologies actively undermine one another or are in conflict with one another. A key source of the divide arises from a clash of epistemologies, with indigenous knowledge not being given the same status and recognition because it is not seen to be subject to the same controls as knowledge production in the academy. Recognising and valuing different knowledges should be seen as having a positive impact because new knowledge can build on the strengths of academic research and indigenous knowledge. Further, the recognition of differences can help strengthen the interface between them.

One of the major issues that was raised at this point, and which arose repeatedly throughout the course of the Concurrent Workshop Sessions, was the way in which community-based research projects are defined and designed. There are examples of community-based research where

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<sup>36</sup> See these Proceedings, CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS, Speaker: Philip Nyden – *Moving beyond the Last Century's Academic Traditions: Promoting Community Engaged Research.*

investigators do not engage with the community on the construction of the project, in the processes of research such as data collection or in the processes of analysis and dissemination. This issue became an important theme and, in Nyden's words, there is the important challenge of finding legitimate ways of "adding chairs at the research table". At the very least it is important to stress that the notion of engagement assumes two-way communication and interaction.

Another relevant and associated issue was to interrogate the meaning of the word *community* in community engagement. There were various contending definitions: the notion adopted by Gibbons *et al* of transient research communities, the 'fixed' communities with which universities work either in the immediate environment or outside it, as stakeholders who are brought together on the basis of an interest in particular issues, etc.

There was a substantial discussion about whether engagement should be seen to be applicable as a terrain for the production of new knowledge across the disciplines. Would it be possible to construct community engagement projects in the area of Nuclear Physics, for instance? The discussion that ensued pointed towards the possibility that research-based community engagement projects are possible across the disciplinary spectrum but that the manner in which the questions are answered may vary across disciplines, because some are perceived to be more conducive to engagement and because communities have tended not to approach basic scientists about research issues.

There was a strong view expressed that since most forms of community engagement depend on 'soft' funding these funding regimes impact on the debate, because they reflect values about what kind of research should be valued and recognised. There is a growing tendency in the US to earmark a certain portion of research funding for research that includes a community component, and this has helped change attitudes about community engagement.

The internal organisation of community engagement and its place within the governance and academic decision-making structures was seen as an important issue. It was felt that there is a need to recognise the impact of incentive systems that only reward conventional research or teaching and learning. It was learnt that several universities are already using promotion/ incentive schemes that are sensitive to community engagement.

In the construction of community-based research projects it is, in fact, not possible to ignore the power relations in the engagement. There are various forms of systemic imbalances. On the one hand in the South African context communities are impoverished and therefore open to exploitative relationships. On the other hand the hegemony of the universities in knowledge production provides universities with enormous power in their relationships with communities. Hence, there is always a significant challenge of constructing community engagement activities under conditions of strict mutuality – activities that are open to the abuse of power. The concept of establishing transaction spaces recognises power differentials. But community groups are still likely to experience difficulties in participating in the space because of inequalities and the lack of recognition of the importance of community participation for generating socially and academically robust knowledge.

### **Structural Issues**

The discussion that ensued pointed towards a strong view that the issues are mainly structural. However, it would appear that there are important moves towards loosening up these structural controls so that new approaches may emerge. For instance, peer review is an important form of control. However, there is a growing body of experience, as with the growth of Mode 2 type research, that peer review involves people from communities that are broader than the traditional ones. It is therefore not unreasonable to expect the peer review process of community-based research to include community representation.

Another form of structural constraint is that there are only limited alternative publishing routes (i.e. not organised on the basis of peer review articles), available for community engagement research activities. Many research centres that engage in community-based research do indeed produce outputs in alternative journals. This does not mean, however, that these alternative publishing routes provide for the kinds of academic legitimacy that traditional academic journals provide.

Perhaps the most important structural matter that militates against effective community-based research is the fact that universities still operate so tightly within disciplinary silos. But once again there are important developments at South African institutions that are gradually challenging this impediment. For instance, several universities have moved towards the development of interdisciplinary schools as the basic unit of academic organisation. Another example is the development of a significant number of multidisciplinary programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This kind of transformative change helps to deal with Peter Scott's concern (1984) that the world is not so kind as to divide its problems up into disciplines. Such transformative change is an important development from another perspective in that there is always the tendency for disciplines themselves to ossify knowledge so that knowledge cannot be changed because of control of the scientific base.

Another serious structural impediment identified lies in the reality that communities may experience participation in these community engagement activities as significantly alienating. The methodologies and techniques of research are usually honed in deeply academic activities that often take years to develop after much specialised learning. How then are these activities to be shaped so that they are not alienating?

### **New Extra-university Developments**

There are growing pressures brought to bear on universities by government at all levels to take on community engagement activities. These pressures flow from different sources. The first is that government would like to see the institutions that it subsidises proving themselves to be more socially responsible. The second is that there are high expectations of universities to be involved in service delivery activities, and community engagement is seen as one way of fulfilling such commitments. The third is that there are always concerns that universities generate elites, and the belief is that the exposure of students to community engagement activities helps to mediate this. And so on. This is important in the sense that there are expectations placed on universities to engage in community engagement.

As community engagement becomes increasingly embedded in universities, the HEQC institutional audits will begin to play an important role in helping institutions to improve the quality of their engagements. One way in which this may play itself out is through the introduction of suitable community-based individuals into these audits, to help with the assessment of the community engagement activities. State steering is also introduced through other means. The National Research Foundation (NRF) has explicit programmes of funding aimed at higher levels of engagement, in particular through research aimed at indigenous knowledge.

As we have seen with the work of Gibbons *et al*<sup>37</sup> there is a growing body of literature indicating that there are changes occurring in the way that research is organised and pursued within universities as they engage with external research partners. These changes in methodology are represented at all levels. For instance, they are reflected in the ways that research projects and programmes are defined. They are reflected in the kinds of outputs that are expected. And, perhaps most importantly, they are reflected in the organisation of the research.

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<sup>37</sup> For example, see these Proceedings, SESSION 1: OPENING PLENARY, Speaker: Michael Gibbons – *Engagement as a Core Value in a Mode 2 Society*.

In the 1980s and 1990s, at the height of the struggle against apartheid, there was a large set of community-based organisations and NGOs that provided the opportunity for engagement of various kinds. These were not necessarily connected to the challenges of fully accredited service-learning. Once again in the 12 years after political democracy became a reality in South Africa, there has been a growth in social movements. This is an interesting development since such social movements open up new vistas for interesting forms of engagement and, taken together with other national developments in terms of service-learning, may represent an opportunity to re-visit 'struggles' as a site for knowledge production.

Yet another 'external' imperative is the growing rigour with which research ethics approval decisions are made. This rigour is enhanced by the growing importance of external funding for research, since many funders make this an absolute requirement. The participation of non-university personnel on these research ethics committees has allowed research ethics to become more important in being able to 'talk back' to scientists.

And of course national debates about the notion of the developmental state and a stronger focus on human rights issues open the way for a more substantial place for volunteerism, service-learning and other forms of community engagement.

## **SESSION 5: KEY CHALLENGES, ENABLING MECHANISMS AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH RESEARCH**

In his presentation Nyden focused on three broad issues: the first was that it is necessary to involve communities at all levels of research; the second was that as much as possible teams should be used for this kind of research; and the third was that there is a need to focus on the principle of mutuality – that the mutual needs of each party are necessary to consider.

He indicated that the participation of communities in these research partnerships enables them to gain familiarity with the various elements of the research process, allowing them in turn to develop skills that will permit the growth of capacity to engage more fully. This might also help to improve practices in community organisations in terms not only of these engagements but also of the organisations' regular functioning. Finally, participation of communities in community engagement research partnerships will also help to move the partnerships from research to action.

What does community engagement do for universities? To answer this question, Nyden listed a few ways in which community engagement introduces new pressures for change in higher education. These engagements help to foster high levels of interdisciplinarity in research and provide the opportunity to create stimulating environments for faculty and students. They help to integrate university and community knowledge into the learning environment and build an environment where learning might take place in multiple directions. And perhaps the most important element of this is that it provides an understanding of connection between knowledge, power and social change. It gives a face to social change and helps thereby to demystify the policy development process. And it forces students to think across and beyond the disciplinary boundaries.

Nyden pointed out the barriers and challenges that community engagement faces in universities. Among these are the ways in which universities organise knowledge in disciplinary silos – although much progress has been made in this regard in South Africa. Another artificial knowledge-based dichotomy in universities, which impinges on community engagement, is the way that theoretical knowledge is favoured over the knowledge of practice. There is another formulation of this; there has long been the debate at universities as to whether action and/or participatory research are valid or whether they are indeed limited in scope. Yet another representation of this is that traditional academic culture often favours the global over the local in terms of its knowledge production processes.

Nyden also pointed out that it is possible that, for academics and universities, social change is not necessarily the primary goal and that the usual outputs of publications and contributions to the field may be favoured over impact on society. This has implications for the way in which community engagement is organised in universities.

On the side of communities involved in community engagement activities, Nyden pointed out that there are several conditions that point towards less than suitable participation by communities. The most obvious one is the lack of various kinds of resources. This leads to the systemic problem of uneven playing fields and therefore uneven power relations in these collaborations. This, in turn, results often in the breakdown of trust, meaning that such communities might well have very poor past experiences with university-based researchers – tending to lead to the development of preconceived notions of what ‘research’ can and cannot do for such communities.

Nyden concluded this very useful input with comments about the management of quality. He began by indicating that the one sure way of ensuring quality is to adhere to normal rigorous standards of research. But this is dependent on bringing engaged research into university oversight; and to ensure that it is considered important, community engagement must figure in the various peer review processes that take place within universities, such as the evaluation processes in tenure and promotion process. Another important advance would be for universities to determine how the outputs of community engagement would be assessed. How would measurements of impact be made? This requires the development of oversight mechanisms that involve both university and community participation and this does require the redefinition of what might be referred to as ‘peers’.

In response to Nyden’s talk, Kaniki amplified some of these points. His main areas of concern related to the need for the development of a set of systemic mechanisms for the measuring of quality. He addressed this particularly from the point of view that if national research funds were to be deployed in community engagement activities then such activities should be subjected to the same kinds of review as applies to any other academic research. His view was that these quality measures have also to include the use of quantitative tools. One of the major challenges in this regard was identified as getting the university community to the point of seeing this form of research as valid and measurable and agreeing that such research has to be mainstreamed. Kaniki made the point that contextualisation is important in arriving at mechanisms for measurement; that is, one size does not fit all.

These inputs led to the group discussions and again these were rich in detail and diversity. The discussions were managed under three headings, as follows:

- How to change the ‘Lone Ranger’ discipline-driven culture of academic research?
- Is this a research model that all researchers should use? Or is it just one of many possible research approaches?
- How do we change the academic reward system and community reward system to encourage more community engaged research?

- **How to change the ‘Lone Ranger’ discipline-driven culture of academic research?**

The groups came up with a large number of responses to this question. It was agreed that cognisance must be taken of the fact that there is much going on at universities, where this kind of question is being dealt with organically through the usual contestations in academia. It was also agreed that the one sure way of addressing this question is to do what Nyden coined as “adding chairs to a research table beyond the academy”. In the plenary discussion that followed, the concurrent issues of paternalism and intellectual property were raised.

It was felt that there are various policy initiatives that would help to facilitate the strengthening of the role of communities in the research enterprise. For instance, it ought to be determined upfront just how communities would access information to which they have contributed during community

engaged research. There was also an expression of concern over the need to shift the discourse over community engagement away from one driven by philanthropic motives, which would in fact be instrumental in keeping it marginalised. In an amplification of what was put forward by Nyden, the plenary called for a systemic embedding of community engagement into the core activities of the institution. The key issues identified as levers for this embedding are the following:

- Community engagement must be linked with the institution's reward system.
- Institutions should find interesting ways to recognise forms of output that widen notions of scholarly outputs, to include products that do not culminate in peer-review articles.
- The challenges of embedding community engagement must be worked through, rather than implemented via a top-down approach to the changing attitudes. That is, to convince the cynics, arguments must illustrate benefits to the knowledge production process itself.
- Institutions must celebrate and acknowledge the role of the strategic deployment of curiosity-driven research, which may help to improve the quality of people's lives in the longer term.
- There has not been a sufficient attempt to make links between universities and local government to identify needs around which universities could do research linking to immediate delivery challenges of local government.
- There are indeed good examples available of funding models that build in a requirement of community-based research as a core element of the research project.

The mechanisms that emerged in this discussion are very interesting and each might form the basis of a sustained discussion/ workshop.

- **Is this a research model that all researchers should use? Or is it just one of many possible research approaches?**

Whether research models that emerge from various forms of community engagement are ones that should be adopted by all researchers is an odd question. Rather, the question that is relevant is whether these kinds of research models lend themselves to being used across disciplinary and interdisciplinary research enterprises. This animated discussion focused on a variety of interesting ideas, some of which are captured below.

There is the potential for communities to be involved in all facets of the research process and in all disciplines. By this one does not mean that all research lends itself to community engagement. Rather, it points to the fact that in all disciplines there are possible research questions that might allow for community engagement. It was felt that researchers should allow themselves the imagination to explore new ways of doing things. The issue centres on how the communities are involved in the research process and in determining the research questions to be asked.

Needless to say this raises a set of interesting questions. For instance, there is the need to review issues of authorship and ownership of the product to support the idea of co-ownership. There was a view that these things should be set out in a contract, which can define the roles of different players in the partnership; at the beginning of a project such a contract would specify desired objectives for all parties.

- **How do we change the academic reward system and community reward system to encourage more community engaged research?**

If community-based research is seen by institutions to be legitimate as a research model/s, then these institutions must put in place processes that acknowledge this, and that provide the basis for this kind of research to be recognised in terms of the usual mechanisms of quality assurance and reward systems. For instance, there is a need to balance intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, such as

giving more prominence to the development of enabling mechanisms for communities in terms of their empowerment and building of skills, creating of job opportunities and so on. As was mentioned previously, community engagement provides us with an understanding of the connection between knowledge, power and social change and this may point towards a special place for community engagement.

In terms of academics there is a range of important considerations to keep in mind and some of these have been looked at previously. Among a host of other issues, there is the need to consider workload formulae to factor in community engagement.

It would be important for institutions to trace the impacts of projects and to integrate these into performance reviews, taking into account that traditional academic peer review does not necessarily lead to high quality research. There are journals (or journals should be created) where academics can co-publish with research participants and this form of publication could be utilised to transfer knowledge.

There was a strong view that researchers have entrenched ways of doing research; they are groomed in such methodologies and techniques. There might therefore be the need to train academics in new ways of doing research.

## **SESSION 8: KEY STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH RESEARCH**

This opportunity to brainstorm was to follow a similar path to the first two, and the area for engagement was around the building of strategic partnerships to facilitate community engagement. However, after some discussion in plenary it was agreed by the group not to follow the usual route but to use this as an opportunity to address the *critical issue*, which was identified as that of *how to embed community engagement at a conceptual level within the university*.

Philip Nyden, in his input, covered a range of interesting topics and these are listed below for the record:

- Organise work around projects.
- Do not dwell on structures and processes before getting engaged.
- Overcome past relationships, especially where there is a history of poor community–university relationships.
- Maintain high levels of visibility and information sharing so that the partners feel that they are taken seriously, and in order to strengthen ‘local-to-local’ connections.
- Ensure that publications are put out regularly and use different media such as presence on the web, books, periodicals, peer-reviewed journals etc.
- Use the media effectively.
- Explore models of working groups, whether they be citywide or regional.
- Do ‘political work’ inside the university, making things visible and translating research to make it accessible.
- Build a following of people experienced in partnerships.

- Take care with language; so for example, it is important to emphasise that community-based research is research with a constituency and that it is traditional research plus other aspects.
- Use a team approach, connecting faculty to practitioners with similar interests.
- Use as much common ground as possible between faculty and community-based organisations: questioning the *status quo* should be the norm.
- Make attempts to reduce discipline-bound control of faculty personnel policies.
- Campaign for increased university-wide incentives to promote engaged scholarship.
- Create a national and international network of peers to judge faculty doing collaborative research; this may require the redefinition of what is understood by ‘peers’.
- Make community impact a primary, not secondary, criterion for evaluating scholarly work.
- Build a network of institutional advocates for collaborative research.
- See these partnerships as brokers of information and resources.
- Find new and interesting alternative socialisation venues for faculty, students and community partners, where they might work together at this.
- Develop the skills of individuals who may act as convenors of collaborative researchers to discuss ongoing projects.

Once again, this was a very rich set of pointers to facilitate the development of community-based research enterprises.

Auf der Heyde responded to this input, making important points that in some senses brought the discussion back to a number of fundamental issues. He called for the need for much greater conceptual clarity about what constitutes community engagement and why universities should do it. He was of the view that it is extremely important to fold in both top-down and bottom-up processes in developing such conceptual frameworks. A part of this process could well be an audit of existing community engagement projects and to produce an analysis of these. In keeping with earlier discussions he also felt that there is the need for a clearer definition of what is meant by *community* and that community engagement cannot be measured in the same way for different kinds of communities. In terms of understanding what holds these projects together he expressed the view that care should be exercised not to confuse data and information with knowledge and concepts.

### **The Conceptual Embedding of Community-based Research in the University**

*So how are we to address the critical issue of understanding how to embed community engagement at a conceptual level within the university?* This was taken up in plenary and there was a wide-ranging discussion. The conceptual embedding of community-based research and community engagement more generally may be done in three ways:

- The first is the way that most universities do it now. They define community engagement as a core activity – one of the ‘three pillars’. Usually this kind of political statement is simply not enough, since there are strong and powerful hierarchies upon which universities are constructed. Community engagement is more often than not seen as an addition to or as an enhancement of teaching and research and hence community engagement is taken up in a patchy way.

- The second way is that a university may define community engagement (and therefore community-based research) as a crosscutting activity of its core activities. This is substantially different from the first model in the sense that community engagement is conceptualised as a legitimate part of learning/ teaching and research.
- The third way in which some universities conceptually embed community engagement is that it is seen as a direct mechanism of service to society.

It is not at all clear that one or other of the ways is superior or inferior, since ultimately the success of community engagement depends on a range of factors that we have addressed above.

The discussion that occurred in plenary indicated that the connection of community engagement with other core activities performed by universities is one way of addressing this conceptual embeddedness. And here we considered two broad areas: that of capacity building (discussed further below) and that of the organisation of knowledge and its impact on universities (discussed further in the Conclusion).

### **Capacity building**

It is quite easy to see that the embedding of community engagement at a conceptual level within the university would be enhanced if community engagement has as one of its key elements its role in capacity building. What form this capacity building takes really depends on the needs of communities on the one hand and the nature of the community engagement or community-based research on the other. There has been much written about the nature of capacity building that may take place. The point of community engagement in this regard is that it leads to the creation of a particular kind of space for capacity building, which may not be available through other forms of engagement.

There was also some discussion as to whether capacity building through community engagement should be seen in the light of current thoughts about South Africa as a developmental state. This then raises the issue of how the NRF and other research funding institutions could/ should make deliberate choices in terms of funding strategies for strategic research focus areas – some of which may be accessed through community-based research. And in terms of this the role of leadership is critical in focusing on priorities of a developmental state. There was a view that organisations like the NRF would need to look at whether there is a need to review their processes to ensure that appropriate capacity can be built to address developmental priorities. In terms of power relations it may also be important to understand that disjunctures between national and community priorities may appear – and it was suggested that in such instances universities should be willing to support community-based priorities.

There has also been some interesting writing that indicates that community engagement could be an important site for the building of the capacity of communities to be more effective, active participants in shaping notions of a 'knowledge society', beyond the national and international imperatives of the knowledge economy.

### **CONCLUSION**

There has already been much discussion in this document about the way in which the construction of the university impedes the development of community engagement. There are several interpretations or descriptions of this. The organisation of knowledge into disciplines is one form of this. The subsequent construction of institutional budgets in terms of this organisation is another manifestation. As a result there is not always structural support for interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary initiatives.

There may, however, be a more deep-seated structural issue. All universities are embedded in society and the question is: which sections of society? What is meant by this is that the organisation of the university may indeed be reflective of its societal location and that this is represented in the way in which community engagement finds its place in the institution. It may be the case that this is why it seems to be easier to accommodate service-learning initiatives (as an outreach activity) in universities, and more difficult to accommodate community-based research; engagement tends to be seen as going beyond what is required to generate new knowledge in traditional research methodologies. Actually this may also apply to the national system. For instance, even though the NRF has tried to drive a developmental agenda through funding, most researchers are doing disciplinary research. Thus, even if the NRF wants to drive alternative research models, such efforts may be stymied if there are not appropriate levels of capacity in institutions.

It has earlier been recorded that the reward and peer recognition systems within academic systems may militate against the embedding of community engagement into universities. This really flows from the ambiguity with which community engagement is considered within universities. To build understanding so that community engagement might be embedded in practices would need a lot of debate within a university about what is meant by community engagement. For this the university may need to develop a conceptual framework to guide discussions. Institutions would also need to define how they understand the boundaries of their communities. In developing a conceptual framework on community engagement and deciding how to embed community engagement within a university, it may be useful to revisit the purposes of a university within a framework of what is being spoken of as the 'developmental state'.

Perhaps one of the most potent ideas relating to the conceptual embedding of community engagement in universities – and this is most pertinent in this discussion on community-based research – is that there may well be knowledge or knowledges that are best surfaced and studied through engagement. This, as has been pointed out earlier, raises a range of rather complex issues relating to the different research methodologies and the matter of the hierarchy of epistemologies. In particular, it is increasingly clear that the social construction of knowledge is much more complex than what goes on in universities themselves. One way of unearthing the processes and philosophical underpinnings of the social construction of knowledge is through engagement in this interface between these knowledge-intensive institutions and communities.

Closely linked with this, however, are the power relations between the institutions and communities, within universities themselves, within communities and within society more generally. These are often very powerful forces, which attempt to shape the agendas of knowledge production; foremost among these is the state, with all its funding mechanisms and its ability to steer the system in directions that flow from its own imperatives such as its macro-economic plan. It is the case then that community-based research may well be a key transformation lever within institutions and within national higher education.

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<b>Surname</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>E-mail Address</b>	<b>Concurrent Workshop Selected</b>	<b>Telephone</b>
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Zaaiman	Jannie	Dr	Executive Dean, Faculty of Information Communication and Technology	Tshwane University of Technology	<a href="mailto:zaaimanj@tut.ac.za">zaaimanj@tut.ac.za</a>	Governance & Management	012 382 9689
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## CONFERENCE READING LIST

*On arrival, conference participants were provided with a file containing relevant readings, including the papers to be delivered at the conference (the latter are not included in the reading list below).*

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