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Preface

The Australian Journal of University-Community Engagement is a refereed journal published twice a year by the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance Inc. a not for profit organisation dedicated to enhancing the engagement capabilities of staff and universities by developing expertise, fostering collaboration and building their communities across Australia.

The AUCEA E-Journal strives to be inclusive in scope, addressing topics and issues of significance to scholars and practitioners concerned with diverse aspects of university-community engagement.

The AUCEA E-Journal aims to publish literature on both research and practice that employ a variety of methods and approaches, address theoretical and philosophical issues pertinent to university-community engagement and finally, provide case studies and reflections about university-community engagement.

The Journal aims to stimulate a critical approach to research and practice in the field and will, at times, devote issues to engaging with particular themes.

All manuscripts will be subject to double-blind peer review by three (3) professionals with expertise in the core area. The three (3) reviewers will include at least one (1) editorial board member.

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Growing Community Partnerships Through Shared Success

Dr Christian Martyn Jones, University of the Sunshine Coast

Abstract

The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) have seeded, secured and cemented a strong collaborative partnership through development and dissemination of successful community-focused projects. With a shared vision, USC and QPS have created educational resources aimed at reducing significant social issues. These resources use innovative technologies such as film making, computer games and online community networking.

The case study examines three partnership projects between USC, QPS and community groups to consider models for successful community projects. The paper uses lessons learned, together with evidence of the impact of the projects, to recommend

principles for successful project-led community engagement. Challenges include differing visions for accessibility, content and design; management of expectations of ownership; competing needs between industry and State Government Departments on marketing and promotional activities; value and protection of Intellectual Property whilst providing a free exchange of information between partners; and maintaining a collegial spirit during intense deadline-driving activities. The paper demonstrates how small community-focused projects undertaken by small teams can strengthen collaborations through success, building to larger partnerships between government, industry, commerce and community.

Keywords:

Community partnerships, Regional engagement, Recommendations for success, Social issues and change, Education and intervention, Serious games

Introduction

Regional engagement at the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) extends beyond the traditional concepts of knowledge creation through partnerships and the application of learning. At USC regional engagement involves using the full resources of the University to catalyse sustainable regional development. Regional engagement is integral to the USC mission. The University aims to be the major catalyst for the innovative and sustainable economic, cultural and educational advancement of the region, through the pursuit of international standards in teaching, research and engagement. The University has been successful in partnering with the community, industry, and government at local, state and national levels, and the region has become one of the newest and fastest growing in Australia. USC actively seeds and supports regional engagement partnerships. This paper presents the story behind the formation and strengthening of a USC and Queensland Police Service (QPS) collaborative partnership through the development and dissemination of successful community-focused projects. USC and

QPS have developed educational resources which use innovative technologies such as film making, computer games and online community networking to reduce significant social issues. The case study examines three partnership projects between USC, QPS and community groups to consider models for successful community projects. Focussing in-depth on one project, the paper uses lessons learned, together with evidence of the impact of the project, to recommend principles for successful project-led community engagement.

Growth has been significant in the number of collaborating partners, available budget, scope of message, complexity of technical developments, dissemination options, promotion and market channels, and region of impact from the initial Assault Reduction Campaign, the recently released Being Safety Smart resource, and the current project, the Feeling Safe game, as shown in Figure 1.



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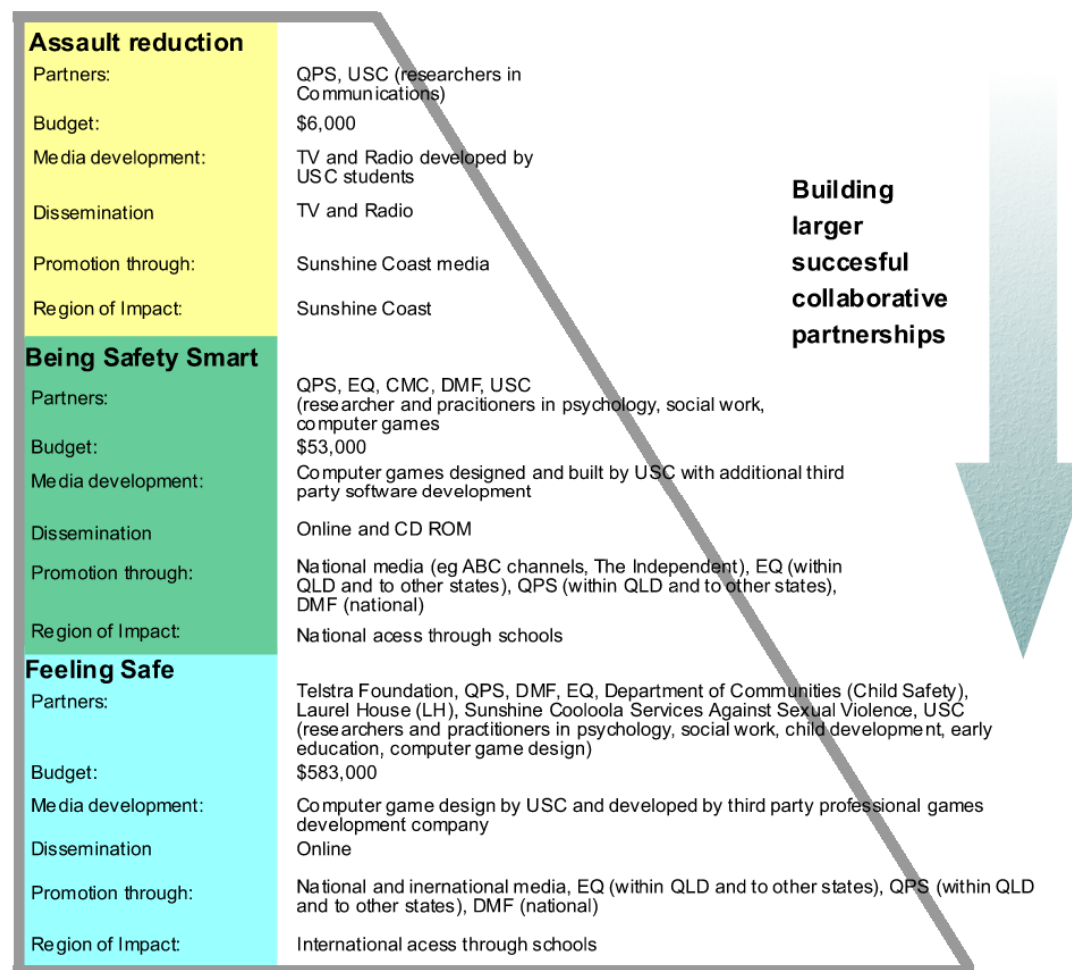


Figure 1: Growth of collaborative partnerships through successful projects.

Summary of projects

Assault Reduction Campaign

Just let it go

USC and QPS have a successful ongoing collaborative relationship and shared vision for developing Crime and Violence Prevention programs. In 2005-2006, QPS and USC developed the Assault Reduction Campaign, aimed at reducing the incidence of assault by changing the community view of unlawful assault as an acceptable option to resolve disagreement. The theme of the resulting multi-media campaign was “Just let it go, you could lose more than your temper”. The campaign was aired as community service announcements on television (see Figure 2) and radio, and newspaper advertisements and posters/stickers (see Figure 3), and was nominated for the Australia Crime and Violence Prevention Awards 2006.



Figure 2: Screenshot from the television campaign 'Just let it go'



Figure 3. Example poster and sticker from 'Just let it go' campaign

Joint recommendations by USC and QPS in relation to the completed *Assault Reduction Campaign*, included (Matheson et al., 2006):

1. the success of this initial campaign be capitalised on, with continuation of efforts to reduce assault crimes on the Sunshine Coast;
2. the success of the partnership of the Queensland Police Service with the University of the Sunshine Coast be continued for any future assault reduction campaigns and be broadened to include industry and other relevant sectors

Additionally USC research recommended that all future community campaigns:

1. be developed in consultation with several focus group meetings at the strategic planning stage;
2. be tailored to specific target groups across community announcements and print materials;
3. provide alternative non-violent scenario outcomes, other than the present violent ones, as a tool to present options for community behavioural choice and to educate the wider community in non-violent approaches to problems;
4. present diverse gender roles within any future community announcements;
5. formulate the campaign in such a way that it is effective across the broad spectrum of available media and other sources.

Being Safety Smart (Child Safety Awareness Project)



In 2007-2008 USC and QPS partnered on a Child Safety Awareness project, called *Being Safety Smart*. *Being Safety Smart* is a free-to-use educational game providing safety strategies to children between 6 and 8 years of age. The program is designed to increase the awareness of children to situations within the community which might impact upon their personal safety and to empower them with the ability to act appropriately and with confidence. Data has suggested that children in regional and remote areas may be at greater risk than children in other areas (Neame and Heenan, 2004). In response, *Being Safety Smart* is an internet delivered resource that can enable children in regional and remote areas to have access to the safety awareness messages.

The game married the University's academic evidenced-based research into best practice in child safety programs with

practitioner experience from the Police Service, Education, Psychology, Social Science, and Child Safety. The larger collaborative partnership included USC, QPS, Education Queensland (EQ), the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC), and the Daniel Morcombe Foundation (DMF). Collaboration on the *Assault Reduction Campaign* built a shared history of a successful working partnership, a shared vision of positive social and community change, and a shared trust between USC and QPS. This provided a basis for strong communication, governance, and a development environment where knowledge was freely shared and exchanged for the benefit of the project and all partners.

Being Safety Smart is a fun-to-play cartoon world with interactive stories and mini games as illustrated in Figure 4. Children learn key safety strategies through solving puzzles and completing activities online (See Figure 5). Children are protected whilst playing *Being Safety Smart* as there are no opportunities within the game for children to chat with, or share information with others (Jones, 2008).



Figure 4. Instruction section of game (left) and choice from multiple items activity (right)

Figure 5. Drag and drop Police Car game (left) and Photo fit game to recognise



faces (right)

Being Safety Smart has:

1. Eight levels of personal safety messages and strategies each with interactive games;

2. Safety messages spoken by children for children;
3. Cartoon animations of real life personal safety scenarios;
4. Rehearsal of personal safety skills using role-play in the safe and secure gaming environment;
5. Child award certificates and parent and carer information for each level as shown in Figure 6.

The game has been extensively evaluated in schools and was released across Australia in 2010 (Jones and Pozzebon, 2010). *Being Safety Smart* won the 2009 QPS Gold State award for excellence in crime prevention. An analysis by the USC marketing and communications division determined that *Being Safety Smart* was the second-biggest news story for USC in 2009 in terms of total number of news clips generated (USC's top news stories was the annual graduation ceremony).



Figure 6. Child award for level 1 (left) and Parent information sheet for level 1 (right)

***Feeling Safe* (Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Learning Environment)**

Feeling Safe is a free-to-use, online, fun and engaging, games-based educational resource for children to learn strategies to protect themselves from sexual abuse. Currently in development,

the *Feeling Safe* project was conceived by the Queensland Police Service (QPS) due to the increasing risk of child sexual abuse in Australia and which was brought to public attention with the disappearance of Daniel Morcombe in 2003.

Leveraging on the success and strength of *Being Safety Smart*, USC, QPS, EQ, CMC, and DMF partnered in 2008-2009 with the Department of Child Safety (Communities), and Laurel House (counselling practice for sexual assault support) to research, design, develop, deploy and maintain an online gaming environment to provide sexual abuse prevention skills and strategies training for children aged 8-10, and training around recognition of child sexual abuse and supporting a child disclosure for teachers and parents.

The *Feeling Safe* project will be developed around the key features associated with improved child learning and retention of prevention knowledge and skills (Sanderson, 2004). These include:

1. Active participation. Programs that encourage active participation of children (eg through role-play) are more effective than those that use either passive methods (eg traditional teaching, classroom discussions) or no participation (eg videos, written materials, self study) (Davis and Gidycz, 2000; Finkelhor and Strapko, 1992; Rispens et al., 1997);
 2. Explicit training. Allowing children to rehearse appropriate behaviours is associated with greater gains in skills and knowledge over non-behaviour techniques (eg lectures, videos, puppet shows) (Davis and Gidycz, 2000; Finkelhor and Strapko, 1992; McCurdy and Daro, 1994; Rispens et al., 1997; Wurtele, Marrs and Miller-Perrin, 1987);
 3. Standardised materials. Programs are more effective if they involve standardised materials and are taught by trained instructors (Finkelhor and Strapko, 1992; MacIntyre and Carr, 2000);
 4. Integrated into schools curriculum. Programs are more effective if they are integrated into the school curriculum with designated times for delivery and support (McCurdy and Daro, 1994);
 5. Longer programs. Longer programs involving repeated presentations and followed by summaries to reinforce training are more effective than shorter programs (Daro, 1991; Finkelhor et al., 1995; Finkelhor and Strapko, 1992; Hazzard et al., 1991; MacIntyre and Carr, 2000; Whetsell-Mitchell, 1995; Rispens et al., 1997; Wurtele, 1998);
 6. Parental involvement. Children benefit more from prevention training if their parents are also included in the program (Conte and Fogarty, 1989, Finkelhor and Dziuba-Leatherman, 1995; Finkelhor et al., 1995; Wurtele, 1993, 1998; Wurtele et al., 1991; Wurtele, Kast and Melzer, 1992);
 7. Teacher education. Programs that include teacher education are more effective in helping children to retain their prevention training (Finkelhor, 1984, 1994; MacIntyre and Carr, 2000).
- The project is funded through the Social Innovation Grant from the Telstra Foundation. The Telstra Foundation commented on

the strength of the team and previous successful collaborations as significant in their decision to fund the project.

Lessons learned

These projects have all benefited from highly motivated champions and visionaries from each partner, who are able to take leadership within each partner for the common good of the project. Additionally, success has been achieved through close and open relationships within (inter) and between (intra) partners that have grown stronger through each successful project and weathered changes in staffing roles and responsibilities. However these projects have also profited from honest and negotiated settlements when differences have occurred. Here we discuss practical recommendations drawn from the team's experiences of the challenges of differing visions for accessibility, content and design; management of expectations of ownership; competing needs between industry and State departments on marketing and promotional activities; value and protection of Intellectual Property whilst providing a free exchange of information; and

maintaining a collegial spirit during intense deadline-driving activities. For consistency, the challenges and recommendations are presented in relation to the *Being Safety Smart* project.

Differing visions for accessibility, content and design

All partners had a shared vision to empower children with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves. Additionally, all partners had a shared vision that the messages and skills training should be available to all for free. However the vision differed on how, and to whom, the educational resources would be made available.

In the case of *Being Safety Smart*, most would agreed with the need to protect children from those that may wish them harm, and that all children should have equal access to the protection education and training through the online computer game. Initially the funding partners for the project wished to have the game freely accessible to all, via internet delivery or on a CDROM. This would allow children to engage with the messages and skills

training in the games without any guarantee of adult support. The social work practitioners at USC, LH, and DCS preferred more controlled access where children would only play the game within a supported setting. If the child were to experience any confusion, distress or anxiety with the messages and skills training adult support would be available. The supported environments would be clubs (eg scouts), churches, community groups, but most often schools (eg classroom activities and before/after school care).

Abduction is a sensitive subject. A risk to presenting protective behaviour and skills training using animated stories and computer games is that children may learn inappropriate behaviours. Therefore, the *Being Safety Smart* resource is mostly used within the school environment (controlled access to the resource) so that teachers can monitor learning and behaviour changes (Jones and Pozzebon, 2010).

Before releasing the resource widely, *Being Safety Smart* was trialled in 6 schools. A range of proven psychological measures

were used to measure the child's pre- and post- understanding of abduction situations. These measures included adaptations of the Kraizer Children's Safety Knowledge and Skills Questionnaire (Kraizer 1986) and Battle's Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory (Battle 1981) to measure child self-esteem and confidence. In addition, questionnaires were developed for the project which specifically relate to the goals of *Being Safety Smart*. These included a Parents (and Teachers) Knowledge and Attitudes questionnaire, and a Parents (and Teachers) Project Evaluation questionnaire that was designed to evaluate the impact of the program on child self-protection skills and self-confidence. The formal trial and evaluation indicated that the game was successfully providing skills training and building self esteem, and the game was released to all schools (Jones, 2010). However, a successful evaluation of the game in the trial schools only suggests that the game is suitable for use in other schools and other controlled environments with adult supervision. The next step for the team will be to assess the risk of providing *Being Safety Smart* directly to all children over the internet where their learning may

not be easily supported or monitored by adults; where children may have experienced abusive events in their own lives (without receiving appropriate counselling); and where children may use the training game within a home where abuse continues to occur.

Recommendation:

When working with projects affecting social issues and promoting social change, care should be taken to balance the desire to develop potential solutions quickly and release widely, with recommendations of discipline experts on the type, range, and quality of the required messages and to whom these messages should be targeted. Too frequently resource are developed without consultation or collaboration with discipline and content experts and in most cases no evaluation is undertaken to assess the success, or not, of the resource in promoting social changes. Any education, training or intervention should be formally trialled and evaluated with each target audience before a wide scale release. Additionally, success within one population, environment

or messages does not guarantee similar social change within other settings.

Management of expectations of ownership***Issues around management of ongoing quality***

Within the *Being Safety Smart* and *Feeling Safe* projects, collaboration partners were concerned with any one partner having the ability to adapt and/or modify the Intellectual Property (resource) without permission and agreement from the other partners. On completion and launch of the resource it could be assumed (under the collaborative contract) that all parties would agree to the content presented (educational messages and skills training) and the delivery of the content (characters, animations, games, via online and CDROM, for use in schools only, with teacher support). However the ongoing use of the Intellectual Property (resource) beyond the term of the project also needed to be considered. If one party were to own the Intellectual Property (resource) it would be possible for that partner to

1. adapt and/or modify the content in a way that compromised the quality and effectiveness of the Intellectual Property (resource);
2. and/or use the Intellectual Property (resource) outside of the environment and audience for which it was developed and evaluated.

Founding partners of the project may consider any changes create risk that the Intellectual Property (resource)

1. will not effectively deliver its original objectives (in the case of Being Safety Smart - protection education and behaviour training for children);
2. may adversely effect the target audience (in the case of Being Safety Smart - teaching inappropriate protection messages, confuse children through inappropriate teaching, cause unwarranted anxiety and fear in children, and/or promote incorrect behaviours and strategies which could put children at great risk);

3. will be used in a way, environment and with an audience not originally intended, and without the support and evaluation framework to manage and respond to potential risks (in the case of Being Safety Smart - using the game with younger children, children with specific learning needs, or directly into homes where children do not have adult support).

Recommendation:

The primary concern for partners is the ongoing quality of the resource. This was addressed within the terms of the contract with 'USC grants to QPS and DMF respectively a non-exclusive perpetual worldwide irrevocable royalty free licence to use, reproduce and communicate that material with a right of sub licence, for non commercial purposes. Should either QPS or DMF require a licence to adapt and/or modify the material, the request shall be made in writing to USC detailing the adaptations or modifications required. The consent of USC shall not be unreasonably withheld'. There would also be the option for partners to withhold use of their name, logo and acknowledged

support on all media and materials if they were unable to agree to modifications to the Intellectual Property (resource).

Issues around ongoing and future use of content (for competitive advantage and revenue generating)

An extension to a partner modifying the content which may compromise quality and/or use of the resource beyond its original intention, is that the use, adaptation or modification of the resource is for competitive advantage and/or generation of revenues. In the case of *Being Safety Smart* all partners agreed that the resource should be free-to-use and freely available, with the potential that

1. charity partners could use the resource to promote their work and to seek donations, and that;
2. educational partners may develop chargeable training resources (eg paper-based, workshops, university short courses) for trainers (eg train the trainers), educators, schools, parents etc.

Recommendation:

The primary concern of partners is that the educational messages are freely and equally accessible. This can be addressed with an understanding in the contract that 'No party will commercialise the Project Intellectual Property without the written consent of all parties'. Additionally, if any partner attempted to profit from an unaltered version of the Intellectual Property (resource), they would be competing in the market against the original free version thus making the generation of revenues difficult. Any significant alterations made to the Intellectual Property (resource) with agreement between the partners, may create a version with new content and/or for a different environment and target audience, therefore not competing directly with the original free version. This new Intellectual Property (resource) may find a chargeable market.

Partners should agree rights to use, adapt and/or modify the Intellectual Property (resource) in the contract and should agree Intellectual Property ownership beyond the term of the project.

Additionally, agreement should be reached within contracts or terms of reference on the order (and wording) of acknowledgements, use of logos (size and order), and description of funding arrangements.

It is also necessary to grant to partner education providers licence to use, reproduce and communicate the resource, for example 'USC will grant to each applying Australian Independent Schools and State or Territory Education Departments (or their equivalent) a non-exclusive royalty free, fee-free licence to enable all Australian schools to reproduce and communicate the computer games and supporting documentation, through online internet delivery mechanisms, and/or CD-ROMs, mobile downloads, or other gaming platforms and to create local internet links to the online resource for non-commercial purposes'.

Competing needs between industry and State Government Departments on marketing and promotional activities

Where to market and promote activities

What is the best way to get a project, resource or message to be seen and used by the target population? Is a top down best (eg get buy-in at senior management level first), or bottom up (eg allow ground swell of support first)? How do organisations and institutes filter what they will support?

In developing educational resources for social change, there is no single solution which is suitable for all partners. The marketing and promotional activities that were ultimately more successful in getting the educational resource into schools are presented below.

Education Queensland

There is little room within the Education Queensland curriculum for teachers to assist in the design, development and trialling of new resources. Often teachers are time poor and are not available to take on voluntary supporting roles in partnership projects. Education regional managers responsible for behavioural support within schools can provide local access into multiple schools

through their teams of student support staff and student guidance officers (GOs). These student support staff and GOs can find teachers to champion projects within each school; can share any additional workload with the teachers; can provide quick feedback to the project team from within the school classroom as to student and teacher needs; and can organise and deliver the formal evaluation of the resource on completion. Additionally, it proved easier to get our emails read by principals and teachers when the sender had an Education Queensland email address.

Queensland Police Service

Interest in *Being Safety Smart* was reached using both top down and bottom up approaches within QPS. Initially working at a regional level, contacts from within QPS provided access to key units, colleagues and data (eg child safety coordination unit, inspectors, and perpetrator and victim reports). The team was also invited to present at community focused police events (eg neighbourhood watch conferences, Surf Life Savers, crime prevention conferences) which provided opportunities for other

partners to promote the projects into schools and clubs. The success of the project led to further interest and support at the senior executive level. At the Police Commissioner's request the team presented to the Commission, all Queensland Regional Assistance Commissioners, and the Minister for Police Neil Roberts. QPS project reports were circulated to other state Police Services which lead to national interest in our projects and delivery of the educational game in schools across Australia.

Daniel Morcombe Foundation

The Daniel Morcombe Foundation (DMF) is well known across Queensland and Australia for its work in educating children about personal safety and for raising awareness of the dangers of predatory criminals. DMF has considerable community support from within the Sunshine Coast region of Queensland. DMF held community events and the DMF newsletter have promoted *Being Safety Smart* and *Feeling Safe*. DMF also has close links with local and national media channels and are regularly asked to comment on child safety issues. Partnering with DMF has produced

favourable responses from the media for TV and radio time, and page space in print media for the promotion of the projects.

Recommendation

Understanding communication processes within partner organisations can contribute to the success of a project. Within Education Queensland, support from regional managers, student support staff and guidance officers has provided access into schools and built strong relationships with principals and teachers, and has removed much of the burden of time for teachers participating in the design and delivery of programs. Seeking support from other community groups has also been successful in promoting the resources. In particular community-policing events such as neighbourhood watch have greatly increased knowledge of the projects within the community. Existing relationships between QPS and EQ, such as the 'adopt a cop' program, have benefited from *Being Safety Smart* and *Feeling Safe*. However the most significant promotional activities within schools have been through teachers and parents. Word of mouth

between parents and teachers has been the largest contributing factor in the uptake of our projects across Australia.

When to market and promote activities

It is important to plan when to publicise news of social change projects. It can be counter-productive to release information about a resource 'in development' if the lead time to delivery of the resource is too long to maintain media interest, or the community demand immediate access to the resource. Differing opinions and different needs of partners impact on when each partner wants to promote the project activities. Partners may need to report on project progress to stakeholders. For charities and government funded organisation these reports may be available in the public domain and it is normal for the media to use these reports to generate news stories. Additionally, charities and government organisation may wish to use the success of past projects and the existence of ongoing projects as a means of securing continuing funding.

Recommendations

Media releases about our projects have led to considerable community interest in the form of requests to use the resources and offers to support and promote the project within organisations and groups. It can be both time consuming and frustrating to delay this support until resources are available for release. We recommend that partners agree on milestones for media releases and define within media releases how and when the community can become involved and use the products.

Competing needs of partners

There are additional agendas within partners that can lead to further successful promotion of the project and consortium. It is important to understand all reasons for which the partners are involved in the project and how the needs of all partner organisations can be met.

DMF are building a national and international presence and reputation for child protection education and support. Both *Being*

Safety Smart and *Feeling Safe* can help promote the Foundation's work. It is hoped that greater national and international presence will lead to greater donations to the charity, which in turn can continue and grow their child protection work. Symbiotically, the project and all other partners gain from the growing DMF brand and reputation.

Education Queensland works within Essential Learnings frameworks, and it is necessary for each school to evidence learning competencies. *Being Safety Smart* has been designed to link closely with the curriculum and using *Being Safety Smart* within a school allows the school to evidence Year Three Essential Learnings of Health and Physical Education, Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Schools benefit from having a ready to use resource which satisfies some of the educational reporting requirements and also requires minimal teacher training and changes to classroom activities and planning. As teachers become more familiar with *Being Safety Smart* they use it as a tool for

addressing more Essential Learnings. This embeds the resource further into the curriculum and the school develops additional evidence of learning competencies.

Value and protection of Intellectual Property whilst providing a free exchange and sharing of information

Value of Intellectual Property

The *Assault Reduction Campaign*, *Being Safety Smart* and *Feeling Safe* are free-to-use resources and therefore don't offer typical returns on investment for partners. However the business model used by games developers is often royalties per unit. Working with games developers on fixed priced developments can increase the overall build cost and does not encourage the developer to extend their involvement in the project beyond the agreed scope. However in the case of *Being Safety Smart*, any possible cost increases have been minimised by an altruistic desire on the part of the developers to be involved in projects around social issues and change.

Possible funding streams could exist from charging registration for schools and/or individuals and charging schools for teacher training to deliver the resources. However, these do not support the vision of freely accessible protective behaviours training and would hinder acceptance into the curriculum. In addition, it does not support the vision of having a resource that requires minimum training for teachers.

Recommendations

If the value of the Intellectual Property within the project is in the knowledge and assets rather than in generating income, it is important that the contracts allow for project Intellectual Property gained in developing the game, the digital assets, the school trials and partnerships be transferred to the research team (in our cases to USC) for each subsequent project.

Sharing information

Sharing information between large numbers of partners requires effective reporting, document versioning and file sharing

solutions and management. However issues of information sharing go beyond physical exchange of data and storage. To achieve outcomes based on best practise, sharing of best practise theory and know-how between partners is imperative. Parties can be fearful of freely exchanging background Intellectual Property for fear of misuse.

Findings from USC projects are that,

1. Academic partners are fearful of inappropriate publication of shared materials without suitable acknowledgement;
2. Government partners are fearful that sensitive information may become available beyond the partnership;
3. Charities are fearful of sharing information about programs from which they generate income and hold a competitive advantage;
4. Partners providing educational training are fearful that by providing their Intellectual Property for integration into a free resource will render themselves unable to charge for the educational training. However we could expect that

educational training providers continue to work with their existing clients to provide new levels of knowledge and the application of messages, and work with other target groups.

In the case of *Feeling Safe*, Laurel House provides chargeable train the trainer courses. Laurel House shared their train the trainer courses freely with all partners and the final *Feeling Safe* game will be based on its key messages and scenarios. However Laurel House can continue to charge for their trainer courses as these courses provide a more comprehensive educational experience for social workers and counsellors through face to face workshops. Additionally, Laurel House can use *Feeling Safe* to promote its courses and the *Feeling Safe* training materials as case study examples. Furthermore, new research and knowledge gains achieved during *Feeling Safe* are shared equally amongst partners and Laurel House can integrate these learnings into their training.

Recommendations

The sharing of information and use thereof should be agreed by all parties during the contracting stage. Example clauses could include:

The Participant will

1. Use the Confidential Information only for the purposes of carrying out his/her work in the Project and will not access, use, modify, disclose or retain any Confidential Information that he or she has acquired in participating in the Project, except for the purpose for which it was acquired;
2. In addition to any direction as to particular measures specified by USC, will take all reasonable measures to ensure that any Confidential Information held in connection with the Project is protected against loss, unauthorised access, use, modification or disclosure and against other misuse.

The Participant will not publish any material arising out of his/her participation in the Project without the prior written approval of USC.

This Deed will survive the termination or expiry of the Participant's engagement in the Project.

In the event that the Participant ceases to participate in the Project he/she will return immediately all Confidential Information in his/her possession, power or control to USC.

Maintaining a collegial spirit in the project during intense deadline-driving activities

With large scale projects it can be more challenging to maintain ownership in the future direction of the project. A team should consider that partners may plan and organise events (such as presentations, media publicity, institute-wide reports) without prior discussion with all other partners. Often opportunities arise which demand a quick response, limiting attempts to seek permissions from all other parties. It is difficult to scope terms of reference around such events to provide flexibility for partners to

react with ingenuity for the common good of the project whilst managing and monitoring the direction of the project within the agreed vision of all parties. In practice, trust and prior experience of working together allows for individuals within organisations to make decisions without the prior consent of all others.

Conversely, partners can take reasonable objection to not being consulted in all decision making, and feel 'out of the loop'.

However through maintaining open communications at all times, and full access to all progress reports and resources, our teams have built an understanding of the expectations of each other, can understand why quick reactive decisions may be required in their organisation, and a trust of each other that any decisions will be in the best interest of all parties involved.

Concluding remarks

The paper demonstrates how small community-focused projects undertaken by small teams can strengthen collaborations through success, building to larger partnerships between government, industry, commerce and community. The case study examines

three partnership projects between USC, QPS and community groups to consider models for successful community projects. Practical recommendations drawn from the team's experiences are presented around the challenges of differing visions for accessibility, content and design; management of expectations of ownership; competing needs between industry and State departments on marketing and promotional activities; value and protection of IP whilst providing a free exchange and sharing of information; and maintaining a collegial spirit in the project during intense deadline-driving activities.

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The efficacy of partnership evaluation and its impact on Alliance transformation: a case study - 12 months post evaluation

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Abstract

Partnerships involving higher education, governments, and industry have been recognised as important vehicles for engaging community, leveraging knowledge, and sharing potential resources. The critical need for these partnerships in rural and regional locations has been of particular note. Partnership evaluation can serve a critical function of informing continuous

improvement and may therefore assist the evaluated agencies to work towards responsive transformational change. The ability for a partnership to adapt and change may aid in their sustainability. Despite the potentially important role of partnership evaluation, the development of tools that measure partnership are at an early stage. Partnership evaluation is rarely reflected upon in the published literature. Moreover, benefits and reflections of the efficacy of evaluations 12 months post analysis is rare in the published literature. Therefore, a brief review of partnership approaches and measurement tools are presented. The purpose of this paper is to reflect upon the efficacy of an evaluation conducted 12 months previously of a partnership between Deakin University, the Department of Health and Department of Human Services (Barwon South West Region), known as the Deakin/DH/DHS Strategic Alliance. This case study reviews several tools/metrics utilised. The efficacy of the evaluation tools is discussed. Those metrics, underlying the tools which contributed to positive change in partnerships are discussed.

Keywords:

Partnership, Alliance, Evaluation, Transformational change, Reflection

Introduction

The ability of organisations to engage in inter-organisational alliances and partnerships is highly valued. Inter-organisational alliances may facilitate the capability and capacity of knowledge sharing stimulating and creating new ideas and processes. Such alliances have been afforded significant currency as strategies for improving the competitiveness of regions, nations, sectors, and organisations (Huggins, Jones, & Upton, 2008). Planning and evaluation are critical processes that support the continuous improvement of such partnerships. Despite the importance of these partnerships, the tools available for their evaluation are limited. It is possible that this limitation is the result of the context-specific nature of each partnership, or that the particular

stage of a partnership's evolution influences the selection of tools. This paper provides a broad but brief overview of partnership evaluation. A case study is presented in which various evaluative tools are utilised. The way in which the outcomes of the evaluation contributed to the continuous improvement of the Deakin/DH/DHS Strategic Alliance, 12 months later, is examined. The efficacy of evaluation tools is reflected upon, 12 months after the evaluation took place. Reflections on the efficacy of the outcomes from evaluations are rarely published.

Partnerships

Increasingly, partnerships are recognised as positively impacting on community health (Zakocs & Edwards, 2006). A partnership or alliance can be defined as a working arrangement between partners who are otherwise independent bodies, collaborating to achieve a common objective (Audit Commission, 1998). As such, partnerships enable various stakeholders to work together and share relevant resources, risks, and rewards. The aim is to implement strategies that may address issues of mutual concern

(Granner & Sharpe, 2004). Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001) have suggested that partnerships with a high level of "synergy" are better able to meet targets and are thus more effective. The level of synergy in a partnership is the "extent to which the perspectives, resources, and skills of its participating individuals and organisations contribute to and strengthen the work of the group" (p. 187).

VicHealth (2005a) noted that partnerships may be viewed along an engagement continuum that ranges from informal networking through to formal collaboration, with the latter representing the deepest level of engagement and synergy. This model for the various levels of partnership engagement is depicted below in Figure 1.

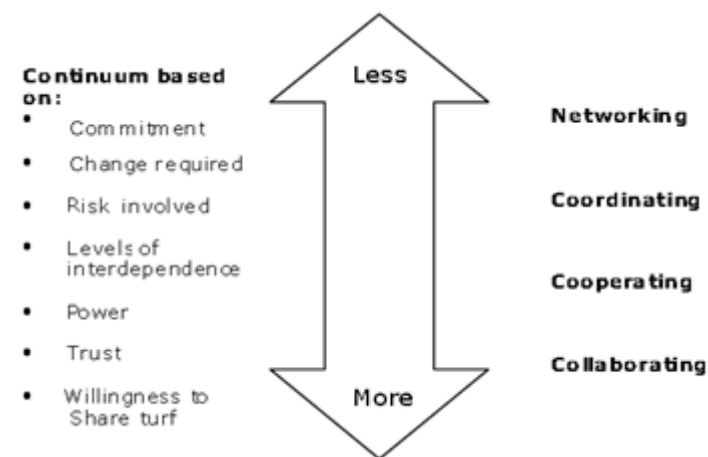


Figure 1 Partnership Continuum (VicHealth, 2005a)

Universities are often identified as having a key partnering role, particularly in developing regional communities. They are a source of knowledge and ideas that can address issues of importance (e.g., public health concerns). They can work closely with the community (Butterworth & Palermo, 2008; Huggins, Jones, & Upton, 2008; Ramaley, 2005). The engaged university is committed to interacting directly with communities through

jointly beneficial exchange, examination, and use of the expertise and resources of all those involved (Ramaley, 2005). University alliances are vital to the representation of a university as an active and engaged member of society, and they can also help develop the social and physical infrastructure required to promote healthy and thriving communities (Tsouros, 1998).

It is acknowledged, however, that such partnerships can be difficult to sustain (Zakocs & Edwards, 2006). This may be partly due to the need for greater knowledge concerning the managerial and organisational factors which are necessary for effectiveness (Einberger, Robertson, Garcia, Vuckovic, & Patti, 2000). An effective evaluation may provide accountability to stakeholders, improve strategies, highlight community awareness of the partnership, and inform policy decisions (Butterfoss & Francisco, 2004), although partnership evaluation is not necessarily easy (Milward & Provan, 1998). This is of concern, considering that evaluation should ideally contribute to partnership endurance.

Partnership evaluation

Research suggests that partnership evaluation should involve an assessment of whether key targets have been reached (Dowling, Powell, & Glendinning, 2004). This poses challenges, however, as some strategies implemented by partnerships are only realised in the long term and due to the nature of partnership engagement are difficult to attribute solely to the work of the partnership (Dowling et al., 2004). Consequently, much of the research on partnership evaluation has examined the internal functioning of the partnership (Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001; Zakos & Edwards, 2006). This methodology attributes effectiveness to the ability of the partnership to function as an entity (Pope and Lewis, 2008). Such evaluations have highlighted common factors which may be important for partnership functioning. An evaluation conducted by Pope and Lewis (2008) which assessed ten partnerships within Victoria found that having a good facilitator to assist in building relationships within the partnership, having the right decision-makers involved who were committed, having a clear purpose,

having good processes, and ensuring motivation were all important for partnership success. Zakocs & Edwards (2006) conducted a literature review of research which had evaluated partnerships. They discovered that the factors important for partnership effectiveness included strong governance procedures, active participation of members, strong leadership, member diversity, collaboration among member agencies, and group cohesion. Similarly, in their literature review, Dowling, Powell, and Glendinning (2004) noted that partnerships with a clear purpose, high levels of trust, reciprocity and respect, good accountability arrangements, and good leadership and management were believed to be more successful. Shortell et al. (2002) found that high performing partnerships had the ability to manage size and diversity, to attract and rely on multiple components of leadership, to maintain focus, to manage and channel conflict, to recognise where the partnership was sitting in terms of its life cycle, and to be able to modify its resources and assets when required to keep up with various changes. Furthermore, factors of partnership functioning which may

contribute to high levels of synergy include having sufficient resources (money, goods, and skills); seeking and retaining members with good resources; ensuring a good mix of members; building strong working relationships among partners through encouraging trust, respect, and having strategies for managing conflict and power differentials; having the right leadership, flexible and supportive administration and management, formal governance procedures, efficiency, and a community welcoming of partnership; and having minimal public and organisational policy barriers. The research findings also suggest that communication is important (Scott & Thurston, 1997), as is the equitable involvement of all partners (Casey, 2008). However, while there is research concerning the evaluation of partnerships and the factors important for partnership success, partnership evaluation tools based on such research are lacking (Pope & Lewis, 2008). This makes evaluation more difficult.

Measuring performance of collaborations

Performance improvement has resulted in increased university and industry partnerships. There is an identified need to develop an improved understanding of how to optimally manage collaborations. A brief review of the literature revealed different approaches to evaluation.

The supply chain management approach. Bhagwat & Sharma's (2007) analytic hierarchy multi-criteria decision-making tool provides a systematic approach to assessing performance at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels. Simatupang & Sridharan (2005) developed a collaboration index, which includes the interrelated dimensions of information sharing, decision synchronisation and incentive alignment. Giannakis (2007) measured the performance of supply chains relationships which are based on the number of perception gaps. Alfaro, Oritz, and Poler (2007) focused on the development of a process-based approach which seeks to relate supply chain performance at the activity level through to the enterprise level. They established

individual parameters at each level of data collection. Collectively these studies highlight the importance of social interactions as well as the need for rigorous process -based approaches and consequently the development of performance metrics for collaborations.

The information flow approach. It had also been noted (Philbin, 2008) that performance measures of collaborative activities should take into account information generation and dissemination. Critical to the successful performance of partnerships is the recognition of information flow. Sampson (2007) proposed efficiency and effectiveness of information flow as a key metric, taking into account such things as the number of activities and ideas generation (Cohen, Nelson, & Walsh, 2002), as well as the number of publications and informal social exchanges (Thursby & Thursby, 2001).

Cooperative process approach. Social psychology and structural role theory have informed measures of co-operation, through

considering collaboration and coordination as distinct (Philbin, 2008). Measurement of cooperative processes has been reported to be complicated by relational characteristics (Hurmelinna, Blomqvist, Puumalainen & Surenketo, 2005). Hurmelinna et al, (2005) suggested that role asymmetry as related to resources, capabilities, power and cultural parameters are important metrics in the measurement of collaboration.

The *balanced scorecard approach* (Kaplan and Norton, 2001, in Philbin, 2008) was introduced as a further approach to performance measurement, to reflect improved performance metrics as universities become more accountable to stakeholders. It was based on four complementary areas of measurement: financial perspective, customer stakeholder perspective, internal process perspective, and learning and growth perspective.

All of the above approaches to evaluation appeared to have something unique to offer the evaluation. Consequently, a multipronged approach to evaluation was conducted where

multiple tools were utilised. The partnership evaluation tools were selected on the basis that, together, they were inclusive of the approaches noted above.

Case study context/organisational context

Deakin University (DU) and the Department of Human Services (DHS), Barwon-South Western Region (BSWR) identified shared concerns about regional and rural health needs. It was recognised that both organisations could work towards building capacity to meet such needs given that they share the same geographic region, similar academic and professional interests, and worked in a shared environment of broader reform. During 2006 and 2007, a Business Plan was developed for the DU + DHS (BSWR) Partnership, with the aim of achieving greater university-community engagement. In December 2009, the name of the Deakin + DHS Partnership was changed to the Deakin / DH/ DHS strategic Alliance (BSWR)

The vision of the partnership is that it “...will be recognised as a leading innovator in brokering and conducting relevant research, fostering a skilled workforce, and improving the overall vitality, equity and quality of life of the Barwon-South Western Region by engaging the health and human services sector” (Deakin University and Department of Human Services, 2007, p.2). The mission was “...to protect and enhance the health and social well-being of all people living in the Barwon-South Western Region” (Deakin University and Department of Human Services, 2007, p.3). This Business Plan has provided greater strategic direction to the work of the alliance.

Advisory Groups were established to provide a targeted approach to research and intervention strategies. Each Advisory Group was chaired by two co-chairs-one appointed from Deakin University and one appointed from the Department of Human Services. The Advisory Groups were created to assist the Partnership included: Teaching and Workforce Development; Research and Evidence-Based Practice; Health and Well-being/Health and Community

Services; and Public Health Forums. The Advisory Groups had developed significantly, evolving since their inception as part of the initial business planning process. There was now 18 months of data from the Advisory Group activity to review and their membership had also evolved during this period. It was also identified that it would be timely to review the Core Membership of the alliance, which had grown significantly, to ensure that it reflected and matched the current direction of the Strategic Alliance.

Further incremental changes to the activity of the Strategic Alliance included the addition of a new work plan for three additional foci of work in 2009, the Beacon Projects. These were identified as:

- Farmer Health, working with the newly established National Centre for Farmer Health in Hamilton, South Western Victoria;

- Neighbourhood Renewal in the Corio/Norlane areas of North Geelong, building a research base to underpin key activity, and harnessing Deakin University expertise; and
- Workforce Development priorities for the Barwon-South Western Region.

Background to the evaluation

The need for an evaluation of the Strategic Alliance had first been initiated following the launch of the Business Plan in 2007 (Deakin University and Department of Human Services, 2007). A mid-term evaluation was identified as an important process to be conducted in 2009, to gather the most relevant data at the mid point of the implementation of the Business Plan. This was to ensure the collection of early evidence to inform the Strategic Alliance through 2010 and onwards and to inform any subsequent evaluation.

The evaluation was opportunistic as there was a small amount of additional funding available and the School of Psychology, Deakin

University, was available to conduct the evaluation, stepping aside from any involvement in Strategic Alliance activity.

In addition, the evaluation was implemented following considerable staffing change within the Strategic Alliance. Within a nine month period there had been staff changes to two of the three key dedicated Strategic Alliance positions and two of the four senior members of the executive of the Alliance had also changed. With the movement of new staff members into their roles working within the Strategic Alliance, there had been some opportunity for informal and ongoing critical reflection on the work program including an informal review and appraisal of active processes and projects.

The approach to the evaluation of the DU-DHS partnership

The mid-term evaluation consisted of two parts: a mapping exercise and a survey.

The mapping exercise was carried out with the Advisory Group co-chairs. This exercise was obtained from the VicHealth

Partnership Analysis Tool (VicHealth, 2005b). The purpose of this exercise was to identify the existing relationships among the agencies involved in the Alliance, and the strength of those relationships. These findings would provide an indication of where particular relationships could be strengthened to benefit the Alliance. All co-chairs provided input and were provided with the opportunity to review and comment on the linkages and relationships identified as part of the mapping exercise.

The second part of the evaluation requested all Alliance members to complete an electronic survey. This survey contained several sections:

Section A obtained **demographic information** from participants. *Section B* focused on the **importance of partnerships** and consisted of qualitative questions on members' perceptions of the importance of the Alliance. Several of these questions were adapted from the VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool (VicHealth, 2005b).

Section C consisted of statements referring to **characteristics of successful partnerships**. Members were asked to rate the Alliance against each statement to indicate whether such characteristics are evident within the current Alliance. This exercise was obtained from the VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool (VicHealth, 2005b).

Section D required members to rate the current **success of the Partnership** and to list both barriers and facilitators to Alliance functioning. The rating scale for current Alliance success was obtained from the Nuffield Institute for Health's Partnership Assessment Tool (Hardy, Hudson, & Waddington, 2003).

Section E required members to complete a **resource-use** template to highlight where and how time is spent on the Alliance. This template was obtained from Melbourne University's UCan2 Evaluation materials (The University of Melbourne, 2009).

Both qualitative and quantitative information was collected and analysed (see von Treuer, Mills, Johansen, Earl, & Loughnan,

2010). The results informed the findings and generated several recommendations, as set out below.

Findings and recommendations generated from the evaluation:

Some of the main findings were:

1. One-third of all core members had not yet attended an Advisory Group meeting.
2. The Health and Well-being Advisory Group and the Research and Evidence-Based Practice Advisory Group were largely functioning at the coordinating stage.
3. Nearly all participants reported that they were still interested in the Partnership.
4. Partnership likes included the collaborative effort and the people involved in the Partnership, whilst the most commonly reported Partnership dislike was insufficient resources, particularly referring to lack of time. To improve the Partnership, many respondents commented that more resources were needed.
5. Ninety-five percent of participants surveyed believed that there was a clear need for, and commitment to, the Partnership.
6. Forty-four percent of respondents seemed to be unsure whether the roles and responsibilities of the partners are clearly defined and understood by other partners.
7. Thirty-nine percent of participants responded *Disagree*, while 28% responded *Not Sure* to the statement: *There is an appropriate investment in terms of time, personal, materials or facilities*.
8. Forty-four percent of participants responded *Not Sure* to statements assessing whether (a) differences in organisational priorities have been addressed and (b) there are strategies to ensure that different views are expressed within the Partnership.

9. Half of all respondents were unsure whether or not there were processes in place to add or remove Partnership members, while 39% were unsure whether or not there were processes for recognising collective and individual achievements within the Partnership.
10. Eighty-nine percent of participants agreed with the statement: The Partnership is achieving its aims and objectives. The main barrier to Partnership performance was insufficient resources, while the key facilitators to performance were (a) clear objectives and mutual goals, (b) sufficient resources, (c) commitment and support from those involved and (d) the Partnership executive.
11. The majority of time devoted to the Partnership was spent on General Activities; however the amount of time spent on these activities varied considerably.

In light of these findings, recommendations were made.

Recommendation 1: Investment of time and personnel, resources

- 1a) Additional resources be added to the base funding in a sustainable way to ensure the current staffing fraction can be increased to better align with the current scope of key Partnership activity.
- 1b) The scope of Partnership activity be aligned to this revised resource base.

Recommendation 2: Core activities

- 2a) The Partnership clearly defines a maximum of three key priority areas for each Advisory Group.
- 2b): The number of Beacon Projects be limited, and milestones clearly marked, to ensure that the Partnership Team can appropriately meet the expectations that are raised through Partnership activity. This will also help ensure that the outcomes on each of these activities can be successfully delivered within the appropriate timeframes.

Recommendation 3: Membership

- 3a) The process of adding, removing or changing the status of Partnership members be formally reviewed. In particular, core membership should be reviewed to ensure that these members attend and are actively engaged in Partnership activity.
- 3b) Advisory Group membership should be continually reviewed and reinvigorated, identifying organisational gaps and targeting key stakeholders. The present Partnership focus on increasing regional TAFE representation is an example of the importance of ongoing membership review.
- 3c) The Partnership should seek better representation from the South-West of the region.

Recommendation 4: Time Allocation

- 4a) It is recommended that Partnership engagement activity/project work be listed among key performance activities of both Deakin and DHS staff. At present it is more often not a core activity of staff and there is no time

allocation or allowance for participation in Partnership projects. Partnership engagement and activity need to be officially recognised as an integral part of job specifications. Time should be allocated to this process, not found as an optional extra.

Recommendation 5: Acknowledgement

- 5a) It is recommended that the Partnership implement and/or review processes and strategies for recognising the individual and collective contributions of members.

Reflective practice workshop:

In addition to the formal mid- term evaluation, an opportunity for reflective practice arose which also served to inform the partnership. During 2009, Deakin University hosted Professor Judith Ramaley, President of Winona State University, Minnesota, USA. An internationally-renowned authority on designing regional alliances to promote educational cooperation, Professor Ramaley has published extensively in the areas of community engagement, building academic communities, higher education

reform, large-scale institutional change, and research engagement. Deakin University and the Strategic Alliance had benefited greatly from Professor Ramaley's reflective insights during her prior visits to Australia. In 2009, the Alliance Team conducted a workshop and a public forum in conjunction with Professor Ramaley, building on her previous engagement with the Alliance. This included the opportunity for an intensive workshop with the Alliance team to comprehensively review progress and address future objectives.

Furthermore, at the conclusion of 2009, each Advisory Group had been meeting for almost two years and Beacon Projects had been in place for one year. Core membership had also been increasing incrementally in response to Advisory Group needs without any formal review of the membership. Consequently it was timely to also review each of these aspects of the Alliance.

Together with the evaluation results, each of these factors was considered in refocusing and reshaping the model for 2010 and beyond.

How the evaluation informed the partnership progress

Building on this suite of activity, four key elements were proposed in moving the activity of the Alliance into 2010 and beyond.

These included:

1. The development of a revised and refreshed model of Alliance engagement that embedded the Alliance into the mainstream, whole of government approach to regional planning (see figure 2);
2. Strengthened governance to include appropriate representation from Departments of Health and Human Services and Deakin University (in the south west of the Barwon-South Western Region) and to build stronger linkages with Alliance Advisory Group Activity;
3. Refreshed and revitalised Advisory Groups focusing on the three key priority areas of Community Capacity Building, Research Evidence and Evaluation and Workforce Development, with newly developed terms of reference and refreshed membership; and

4. Revised Alliance Executive and Team meeting schedule to more effectively link to enhance appropriate and strategic reporting opportunities.

The Alliance between Deakin University and the Departments of Health and Human Services thrives to enhance and protect the health and social wellbeing of all people living in the Barwon-South Western Region. The Alliance members continue to work to support each other in conducting each organisation's core business (see, Deakin University and Department of Human Services, 2008). The underlying focus will continue to be a health equity approach focusing on disadvantaged populations in line with the Victorian Government's key social priority of reducing inequality and disadvantage.

The renewed themes of the Advisory Groups are underpinned by key national, state, and regional policy and planning frameworks (see Figure 2). Underpinned by the World Health Organization's Healthy Cities approach, this model is connected into the

mainstream, whole-of government approach to regional strategic planning recognising the key regional priorities as well as the broader determinants of health and wellbeing (see, Barwon-South Western Region, Victorian Government Department of Human Services, 2009).

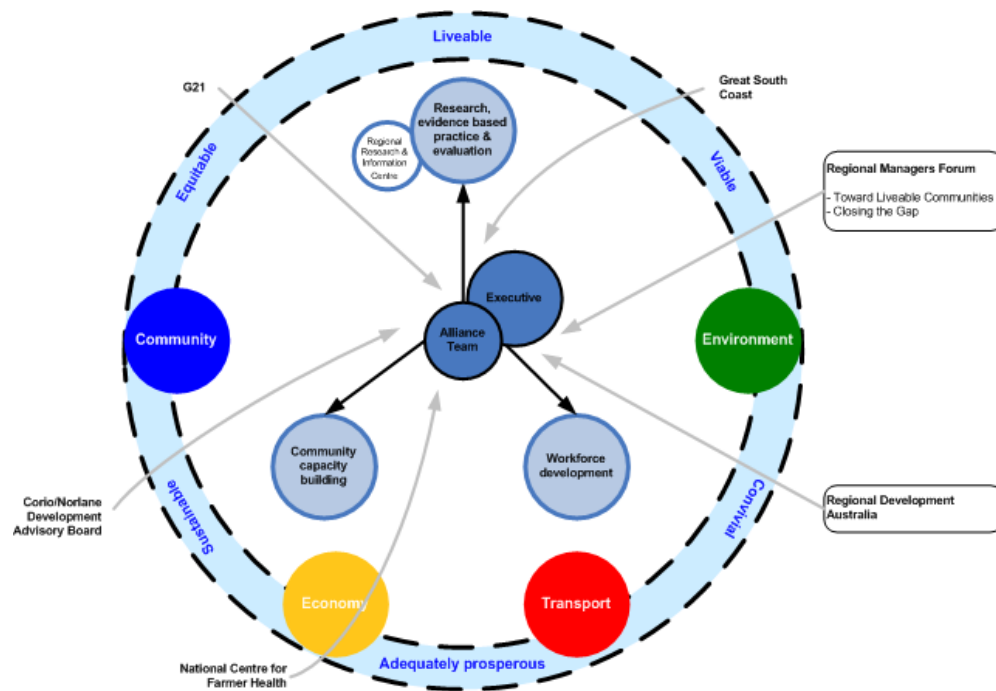


Figure 2 Deakin/DH/DHS Strategic Alliance Model for 2010.

Summary of evaluation tools and their impact on the partnership evaluation:

The following table (Table 1) displays the tools utilised and how they did and did not inform the evaluation and outcomes 12 months post evaluation.

Table 1 Evaluation tools and the impact on the Alliance 12 months on.

Tool used	Reflection on evaluation findings at the time of the evaluation completion.	Response: The impact of the evaluation on the partnership evolution, 12 months on.
The mapping exercise conducted with the Advisory Group co-chairs.	The mapping exercises provided validation that the Alliance is well connected to key regional organisations.	The importance of local connections and networks is pivotal to Advisory Group activity and has continued to be a primary consideration in establishing new Advisory Groups.
Section A of the survey obtained demographic information from participants.	The low response rate may have captured the core members who are actively involved and	A review of the core membership has been conducted in line with refreshing and renewing the



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	motivated participants, rather than the large number of members who are not active AG members.	approach of our Advisory Groups and the membership has been revised accordingly.
<i>Section B</i> focused on the importance of partnerships and consisted of qualitative questions on members' perceptions of the importance of the Alliance.	Findings are consistent with foundations of the Alliance and continue to be relevant to our work. Partnership dislikes relating to lack of time are consistent with the team's impression of work load at the time.	These findings continue to underpin the way we work with our partners. . The new Model aims to be more sustainable in its focus with fewer priorities and a better alignment of activity to the current staffing base.
<i>Section C</i> consisted of statements referring to characteristics of successful partnerships.	There was general consensus regarding many characteristics of successful partnerships which is consistent with the mandate of the Partnership. Areas of concern included the clarity of goals, commitment to these goals and roles and	The revitalised model has aimed to sharpen the goals of Alliance activity and streamline the workload of the Alliance team to ensure greater clarity of roles and responsibilities and a work plan that is more appropriately aligned to the resource base. It will continue to be

	responsibilities of members. Additional areas of concern included the staff time allocated to the Alliance and the funding base.	important, as the work program is implemented that the responsibilities of members in each of the Advisory Groups are clearly articulated in implementing the work plan. The need for additional resources has been identified across each Advisory Group and at the Executive level.
<i>Section D</i> required members to rate the current success of the Partnership and to list both barriers and facilitators to Alliance functioning.	Variation regarding celebration of collective and individual achievement. Respondents could be Alliance Team or those working in other organisations in which case differing responses would be required. The need for additional resources was also identified as a concern.	Opportunities to celebrate collective and individual achievement can be facilitated at all levels of Alliance activity.

Section E of the survey required members to complete a resource-use template to highlight where and how time is spent on the Alliance.	Responses to this item were skewed by the range of respondents including those for whom Alliance activity is their sole role, and those from external agencies whose Alliance involvement would be primarily attending Advisory Groups.	This information was of little relevance due to the range of respondents.
Professor Ramaley, an internationally-renowned authority on designing regional alliances to promote educational cooperation, provided an "alliance" reflective workshop for Alliance members.	Significant reflective insights were gained working with Professor Ramaley and were incorporated into our new Model.	The framework of the new Alliance Model including revitalised Advisory Groups has been influenced as a result of this Workshop.

Discussion

The continuous improvement of alliances can be seen as a transformational process. Tools and metrics that assist the evaluation process can be viewed as a vehicle to assist this transformation process. The evaluation approach was to incorporate several established metrics which cover a range of engagement- performance measurement tools.

The Alliance is at an early-to-almost-intermediate stage of development; the evaluation concluded that the Alliance was operating at a co-ordinating/collaborating stage (see Figure 1). The evaluation metrics were generally useful in forming the new strategic direction and structure of the Alliance in its early to intermediate stage.

Specifically, in this context, most of the evaluation metrics and the reflective workshop informed the new model of the Alliance. The resource-use template provided the least helpful information. Only a small subsection of the respondents completed this section

of the survey. Upon reflection, this would have been a difficult part of the survey to complete. The question asked Alliance members to complete a resource-use template to highlight where and how time is spent on the Alliance. The template completion required a retrospective estimate of time spent on the Alliance over a three month period. It is possible that this section of the survey was difficult to complete due to the huge variation in time that most members would have spent on the Partnership, and to the retrospective nature of the question which may have led to Alliance members not feeling confident in completing this section of the survey.

Therefore, the above reflections support the use of the engagement-performance metrics utilised for the evaluation of this Alliance. Most of the tools used were also seen to be useful 12 months after the evaluation.

Limitations:

The main limitation to the case study evaluation was the small sample size. This means that while the reflection revealed that the results were ecologically useful, the generalisability of these findings should only be done with caution.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Recommendations:

Several recommendations have emerged as a result of reflecting upon the evaluation approach and the tools utilised

Recommendations include:

1. The ongoing tracking and comparison of individual metrics over time would provide a clear analysis of collaboration performance, as well as contributing towards identifying areas for improvement.
2. Most of the evaluation tools were a positive addition to the suite of metrics utilised, and would provide useful

benchmark data should they be repeated in a further evaluation.

3. As the Alliance evolves further, the measurement of more tangible outcomes such as publications, and grants sought and obtained, may be useful.
4. Tracking of resource use would ideally be measured prospectively. This would provide more accurate account of time spent on the partnership.

Conclusions:

The holistic and comprehensive approach to partnership evaluation was useful to the continuous improvement of the partnership. The benefits were also evident 12 months after the evaluation. Understanding how to optimally manage alliances is a critical component of continuous improvement, and the evaluation of such collaborations may serve to inform good practice and will aid sustainability. As stated in a quote captured

in a qualitative study *"Longevity and collaboration renewal is the ultimate measure of success, where the best measure is the achievement of a sustainable collaboration"* (Philbin, 2008, p19).

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Social Inclusion through Transformative Education: The Catalyst Clemente Program

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Abstract

With social inclusion a priority for governments in many western nations the Catalyst-Clemente program shows the benefits of a social inclusion program offered through a partnership amongst communities, NGOs and universities. The program offers accredited university courses in humanities to disadvantaged people in a community setting. This community-embedded socially-supported university education program has its origins in Shorris' Clemente program in New York in the mid 1990s. Its

philosophy is that tertiary-level education in the humanities assists socially disenfranchised people break out of cycles of poverty and homelessness. This paper reports upon the nature of the Catalyst-Clemente program, and presents a profile of people studying the program together with their perceptions of the program and its benefits. Catalyst-Clemente provides a tangible model for community embedded socially supported education that enhances the presence and an evolutionary engagement role of universities within and with community.

Keywords:

Inclusion, Engagement, Partnership, Equity

Social Exclusion and the Importance of Education

Australian data from the Household, Income, Labour Dynamics in Australia survey demonstrates that around 13% of Australians who are facing disadvantage have the following profile: incomplete secondary education; typically experience unemployment for more than eighteen months; high reliance on welfare payments, and low income; poor physical and mental health; and experience the lowest levels of social support of any group (Headey & Warren, 2007). Vinson (2007) highlights that pockets of concentrated and severe social disadvantage have become entrenched across certain Australian communities. He notes that “it is difficult to deny the centrality of limited education and its impact on the acquisition of economic and life skills in the making and sustaining of disadvantage in Australia” (p. xiv).

The disadvantage of people who are socially excluded is multi-dimensional. Social exclusion occurs when individuals, families

and neighbourhoods: experience low incomes relative to community norms and needs; do not have secure and safe shelter; experience unemployment; live in fear in their environment; cannot access the health, child care and social services they need; do not receive adequate schooling; are not connected with friends, families and their neighbourhood; and experience self-esteem and quality of life outcomes well below those of the general Australian community. Such exclusion impacts on individuals, families and communities, leading to involvement in criminal activity and contributes to increased levels of public spending on welfare and related public services (Martijn & Sharpe, 2006; Henry, 2007). The social and economic costs of social exclusion are associated with a decline in social cohesion and an inability to harness society’s human capital resources (Abhayaratna & Lattimore, 2006; Productivity Commission, 2005).

The role of education

There is extensive evidence to suggest that there are positive correlations between education and the good health and wellbeing of individuals (Hammond, 2002; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). The specific impacts of education upon health and resilience throughout the lifespan have been thoroughly investigated (Grossman & Kaestner, 1997; Hammond, 2002; Hammond, 2004; Hartog & Oosterbeek, 1998; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). Many of these impacts are related to psychological qualities which “may promote attitudes, practices, and life circumstances that are conducive to positive health outcomes” (Hammond, 2004, p. 552). A number of studies have indicated that relevant education can lead to improvements in: self-confidence (Carlton & Soulsby, 1999; Dench & Regan, 1999); self-efficacy (Wertheimer, 1997); self-understanding (Cox & Pascall, 1994); competencies, communication skills, and civic engagement (Emler & Fraser, 1999; Parry, Moyser, & Day, 1992); a sense of belonging to a social group (Emler & Fraser, 1999; Jarvis & Walker, 1997); and substantive freedoms and capabilities (Sen,

1999). It is the combination of these ‘soft’ psychological outcomes and ‘hard’ social outcomes which indicate how purposeful and appropriate education can contribute to improvements within the social, economic, and personal domains of a person’s life (Hammond, 2004; Luby & Welch, 2006).

The Catalyst-Clemente Program

Providing educational pathways to social inclusion for people who are homeless, disadvantaged or marginalised requires their access to education which enables them to have the confidence and capabilities to take personal control and engage purposefully in a changing society (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007). It is the potential of education, to improve social mobility and promote social inclusion, delivered through a cross-sectorial collaboration that is the foundation of the *Catalyst-Clemente* Australian program (Shorris, 2000; Stevenson, Yashin-Shaw, & Howard, 2007). Founded in New York, the *Clemente* program’s philosophy is that tertiary-level humanities education can help lift socially excluded people out of poverty and homelessness (Shorris, 2000). Studying

the humanities requires people to think about and reflect upon the world in which they live, and it is this intellectual engagement which in turn can promote a broader re-engagement and “activity with other people at every level”, assisting them to escape from generations of poverty (Shorris, 2000, p. 127). The transformative potential of adult liberal education, which builds the capacity of students to view themselves in terms of their intellectual and personal capacities, and as agents, has been noted generally (Nussbaum, 2001). Scott (1998) notes that such education aligns “...various disparate parts of the self to gain coherence, peace, and a sense of wholeness...*promoting*...a sense of freedom and authenticity which can contribute to meaningful work and activity in the social sphere” (p. 183). Those people most in need of access to education and the critical pathway it provides to transformative learning and engaged citizenship, however, are often those least likely to access it (Butcher, Howard, & McFadden, 2003). Reasons include an inability to meet entrance requirements, very low incomes and a complex suite of health and social problems which inhibit their ability to maintain their

studies. To address these personal, social and learning needs the collaboration of community agencies, business and universities makes possible the offering of an integrated, learner-centred program (Howard et al., 2008).

Catalyst-Clemente in Australia

Clemente was first run in Australia in 2003 by the Australian Catholic University (ACU) in collaboration with St Vincent de Paul (St V de P) establishing an initial site in East Sydney. Since 2005, eight sites have been established across Australia, in Surry Hills, Sydney [July 2005, Mission Australia- MA]; Brisbane [July 2006, MA]; Canberra [February 2007 - St V de P]; Campbelltown, south-west Sydney [August 2007, St V de P]; Perth [February 2008, MA with Edith Cowan University]; Melbourne [April 2008, MA]; Ballarat [August 2008, ACU and University of Ballarat with The Smith Family] and Adelaide [March 2010, Finders University and MA].. The sites are under the umbrella name of *Catalyst-Clemente*.

The program offers university-approved units in subjects such as ethics, literature, drama, art, philosophy and history with students studying one unit each semester. On the successful completion of four units, participants graduate with a university non-award qualification which can provide a pathway into an accredited university undergraduate degree or other tertiary education program. Catalyst-Clemente is distinctive in that this university education pathway is embedded in the community and is socially supported. It is offered in a community site that provides services to cater for the complex health, emotional and social needs of students. As indicated in preliminary research (Howard et al., 2008), many students experience problems with substance misuse and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, with co-morbidity (both substance misuse and mental illness) increasingly reported among disadvantaged Australians (Stockwell, Gruenewald, Toumbourou, & Loxley, 2005). Levels of mental health are key indicators of disadvantage and poverty and a critical element for cognitive and communication skills, learning, personal development, resilience, and self-esteem (AIHW, 2003;

Johnstone, 2001). The community service setting facilitates participant access to the program and the agency support is crucial in addressing this complex array of student needs (Mission Australia, 2004, 2007).

The collaboration of community agency support staff, university lecturers, and learning partners are integral to the socially supported nature of the program as is the mutual support amongst the participants themselves. Learning partners are recruited as volunteers through the community agencies and networks, to establish one-on-one learning partnerships with the students. Students and learning partners meet weekly over the duration of the course to work through the educational and learning issues encountered.

Research Questions

This article addresses the following research questions:

- What are the characteristics of the people studying the Catalyst-Clemente program?
- What are their experiences of the program?
- What do they see as the benefits for themselves of Catalyst-Clemente?

Methodology

This paper has been developed from the data obtained in the first year of a 2.5 year ARC funded study [2009-2011]. Data collections included a survey of students across three sites at Sydney, Campbelltown and Perth; in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of students; focus groups of students from two sites and the program coordinators at each site; and a cost-benefit analysis of the program. Survey data were collected across five key domains: demographic; health and well being; social supports; program engagement and participation; and social inclusion. The study includes a profile of the economic, social and well-being position

of the Catalyst-Clemente student population on entry to the program.

Following the survey, semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of students and program co-ordinators is conducted across the data collection phase of the study. The interviews focus on 5-6 key topics related to the project's research questions with the use of open-ended, follow up and structured questions.

Student interviews gather data on the individual's life journeys across the study exploring and providing insights to the student's perspectives on their home, school and employment experiences, social interaction, health and wellbeing and the impact of these factors on their studies. As the students progress in their studies, the interviews explore how their education is influencing all aspects of their life. Interviews will be 'guided conversations' which, while having specific topics, will be fluid, allowing backtracking, reflexivity, and diversions (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1992; Yin, 2003).

Characteristics of the students

Students who are studying through the Catalyst-Clemente program have overcome significant hurdles throughout their lives. Some have experienced traumatic childhoods, interrupted and unhappy schooling, unemployment and financial hardship, and ongoing physical and mental health problems, including long periods of serious drug and alcohol use. These shared painful experiences help to bond them:

"We've all had hardships, we all kind of understand each other. They might not go through what I've been through, but we're all struggling from one point to another"
 (Matilda).

Over August-October 2009, a baseline survey was completed by 25 participants in the Catalyst Clemente program. In the year prior to the commencement of the program, 20% were looking for work. Of those surveyed, 40% have worked in a job of 35 hours or more a week less than 2 years ago; 12% were working or on paid leave. Others were studying prior to this program, with 8%

completing a course at TAFE, and 8% studying elsewhere.

Addressing health issues was another activity the respondents were engaged in, with 16% being treated for drug or alcohol problems, and 12% for a mental health condition.

With a male to female ratio of 13:12, the majority of the participants are above 41 years of age (72%). Participants are mostly single, separated or divorced (80%), and the others are married, or in a relationship; 60% have children; 56% were born in Australia; 20% speak other languages at home; 8% are of Aboriginal or Torres Islander descent; 8% of the participants are caring for one or two infants, and 52% have dependents under the age of 12.

A majority of the respondents had experienced homelessness and states of precarious living. At one time or another, 64% had lived in crisis or emergency accommodation, 60% with relatives, friends or acquaintances because they had nowhere to live, and 32% had lived on the streets, camped in parks, toilets, charity bins

or lived in squats or cars. As well, 28% have lived in boarding or rooming houses or hostels.

Education history

All of the respondents have attended primary or secondary school. Of these, 40% have completed Year 12 or equivalent; 52% have completed between Year 11 to Year 9 or equivalent; 4% have only completed Year 8 or below. Some of the reasons those who left school before Year 12 were: living circumstances prevented, did not like school, not doing very well at school, not given the opportunity to go to year 12. Since leaving school, 16% attained a post-graduate or graduate degree, 16% a Bachelor degree, and 40% a vocational qualification. Other attempts at study (19) have been disrupted due to health issues, having to care for children and the courses being too intensive.

The main activity in the last 12 months prior to the program, among 16% of the respondents, was suffering from, and attending to ill-health or disability. Further, 12% were receiving treatment

for a mental health condition, and 16% were receiving treatment for a drug/alcohol problem. A long-standing physical health condition, illness, disability or infirmity is experienced among 52% of the respondents. In response to the query on substance use at any time during their lives, 56% had tried Nicotine, 84% alcohol, 52% Marijuana, 28% Heroin, 28% Opioids, 36% Amphetamines, 28% Cocaine, 32% Tranquilizers, 36% Hallucinogens and 12% Inhalants.

The majority of the respondents have not been looking for jobs, with 72% saying they did not look for work in a full or part-time job last week and 68% have not worked at all in the last month. They mainly subsist on government pensions (76%). Others pay their way through working (24%), or from other sources. The survey queried the respondents with regards to their financial situation and their ability to make ends meet and 32% said they had just enough money to get by, and 28% said they had enough to get by, but not get back on track while 16% don't have sufficient funds to get by. Some participants raise funds to live by

pawning or selling something or borrowing money, and 40% had to ask a welfare agency for clothes, accommodation or money at one time or other over the last 12 months.

Over the last year, insufficient personal funds were found to be creating issues with wellbeing and quality of life. Of the 25 participants, 32% had to go without food when hungry. The inability to pay bills was another issue, with 40% not being able to keep up with utility payments, and 28% getting behind the rent or mortgage. At least 32% could not afford their own place, and stayed with friends or relatives. 16% moved house because the rent or mortgage was too high. 12% lived on the streets because they could not afford their own place.

Shortage of funds was also affecting connection with other people, where 44% could not go out with friends because they were unable to pay their way, 24% being unable to attend wedding or funeral, and 20% not being able to go to an event because of lack of transport. Self-esteem and confidence issues may have also

been experienced among the 24% who wore badly fitting or worn out clothes.

Sense of well-being

Access to food, clothing, bedding, and medical treatment was not an issue among the respondents. They also had reasonable purchasing power to own a telephone. However, they faced other issues that were affecting their wellbeing owing to not being able to afford it with 52% not having a decent or secure home, and 36% of them said this was because they could not afford it; 40% did not have access to dental care, and 32% said this was because it was expensive; and 48% did not have a saving of \$500 for an emergency, and 32% because of not being able to afford it.

Social isolation

The survey also found that 88% felt they were treated with respect by other people, 88% accepted by others for who they are, and 72% had regular contact with family. Several of the participants have not felt connected to the rest of society over the

last 12 months owing to various endogenous and exogenous reasons.

- *Expense:* 36% were not engaged in paid work, 36% lacked money.
- *Transport:* 40% did not have their own transport, and 28% faced difficulties traveling because of irregular or expensive public transport.
- *Poor health:* physical access due to disability isolated 20% of the respondents. 32% said physical health conditions, and 36% said mental health conditions prevented them from feeling a part of society.
- *Discrimination:* 12% said racism, 4% sexual prejudice, and 12% discrimination because of disability created a sense of isolation.
- *Unsupportive friends and family:* 40% said lack of friends to provide support when needed, 48% said lack of supportive family members, 48% said family related problems, and 12% lack of access to children created non-inclusion.

- *Caring responsibilities:* 12% had child care responsibilities which prevented them from getting out.

Service use

Amongst those surveyed there was a very high usage of health and justice services.

- *Health:* 72% had contact with doctors, hospitals, and health workers in the last year. They reported a total of 222 GP visits, 167 medical specialist visits, 129 Psychologist visits, 11 Nurse or allied health consultations, and 18 other allied health consultations. A total of 995 days have been spent in a drug or alcohol rehabilitation centre in the last year.
- *Justice:* 20% had contact with the police, justice system or courts in the last 12 months. They had a total of: 11 visits from justice or police officers, 15 incidents of being stopped on streets by police, 9 instances of being in court over an incident, 1 apprehension, and 4 incidents of being a victim of an assault, robbery which resulted in police investigation.

Students' experiences of Catalyst Clemente

There were several reasons why the participants undertook study in the program. These included motivation for betterment through: knowledge (68%), learning interest, personal satisfaction, to prove to themselves the ability to achieve (each 64%), to move on from where they were (60%); and additional skills were the primary reasons.

For most, personal circumstances meant that university study was usually not an option in the past, either because they did not have the necessary entry qualifications, or due to physical and emotional difficulties they lacked the confidence to tackle what they saw as a very intimidating place.

Reflections

Overall, the students had a very positive evaluation of the program, and felt that they had been able to make several changes in their life. 92% really liked life as a Catalyst-Clemente student,

88% feel that the program lived up to their expectations, 88% are satisfied with the overall quality of teaching, and 88% with the unit topics on offer. Students' satisfaction levels indicate:

- *Class atmosphere:* 20% really like the atmosphere in class. 88% found the supportive and informal nature of class helpful in their transition back to study, 88% liked the small class size, 80% felt formal structure of lectures would help transition to further study, and 76% with feedback on progress.
- *Access to services:* 80% were satisfied with access to university facilities such as the library and computers, 80% with access to support services, 84% with ability to access academic services, 76% with access to personal services, 88% with the personal support given, and 84% with the encouragement to explore new areas of knowledge
- *Access to information:* 92% felt that the administrative staff were available to respond to student queries, 64% were aware of access to information on procedures for course withdrawal and unit exemptions, 46% on information on

where to get financial aid, and 64% on information on health and personal services.

- *Pre-course information:* 94% were satisfied with information provided before enrolling in the course, 76% satisfied with information on what is expected as a student enrolled in the course, 80% found the admission requirements clearly identified

Engagement with others in the program

The survey assessed the experience of the participants with relation to their peers and lecturers.

- *Other students:* 72% were satisfied with the quality of discussion with other students: 76% with discussions with learning partners, 72% with support from learning partners, and 76% with the opportunity to see people with similar backgrounds complete the course to gain confidence to continue further study.

- *Lecturers:* 92% were satisfied with discussions with university lecturers.

Challenges

University study is a challenge still for most students. Besides having to deal with ongoing health and social difficulties, they have to cope with problems common to students everywhere. They talk about needing to be more computer literate, learning to meet deadlines, and needing support when the system seems overwhelming:

“when you get your outline and you look. It’s a bit daunting. You know what I mean?” (Jordan).

Their main difficulty was with managing study commitments (68%). Other challenges can be grouped around four areas.

- *Internal motivational and self-esteem related issues* such as having the self confidence to make initial inquiries (48%), the personal confidence to make a decision to commence

(44%), the sense of competency to begin study (44%), and managing personal behaviors (32%).

- *Literacy and academic issues* such as having appropriate computer skills (48%), appropriate academic literacy skills (24%), appreciating the role of being a university student (48%), and finding study harder than imagined (36%) were also limiting.
- *Exogenous issues* that hampered progress were: caring for children (24%), caring for family members (36%), and traveling and being on time for lectures (28%).
- *Interpersonal skills*, such as relating to other students (28%), making new friends (32%), relating to lecturers (28%), relating to learning partners (24%), and relating to agency staff (20%) were also challenges.

Benefits of Catalyst-Clemente

Catalyst-Clemente had benefitted the students personally and socially.

- *Self-development*: 88% felt that the courses were helpful with critical thinking skills, 84% with development of writing skills, 80% with development of time management and planning skills, 80% with better communication skills, 72% with skills helping future employment, 56% with skills helping in coping with crisis, 84% with broadened horizons, and 60% with confidence to engage in further university study.

"I'm not a gonna anymore, I'm a doer, I'm doing it. So if I do stuff up somewhere down the line, well, I've done it, I've had a go, you know?" (Jordan).

- Broadened outlook and confidence to deal with life: 80% report improvements in outlook on life and 62% in other areas of life. 76% find that they now look at challenges differently, and have found the confidence to make changes in their lives.

"... expands your thinking; it gets you to think about other things...like there is a life out there..." (Jordan).

Personal changes

"My outlook...is changing...has changed quite a bit...my perspectives are different...I'm a lot more optimistic"
(Millie).

Overall satisfaction was reported by 52% of the respondents. The significant self improvements are with regards to coping with serious problems (52%), health (48%), inclusion in the local community (44%) and opportunities of employment (40%). The respondents felt that there was the least difference with regards to housing (60% same), finances (72% same), and the neighborhood they lived in (60% same).

Students reported how Catalyst-Clemente had assisted them with respect to:

- *Future contacts:* 44% have established contacts to assist in future employment.
- *The community:* 76% feel greater connectivity to the community, with 28% reporting greater confidence to join

drama groups, and 48% more inclined to take part in various community groups.

Improvements in Health and Wellbeing

Participation has resulted in several positive mental health outcomes. 64% reported an improvement with overall health and wellbeing since they undertook the program. All participants whose main activity in the previous 12 months prior to the program, was spent receiving treatment for ill-health or disability reported much better or somewhat better health outcomes. In the group, 40% were about the same, 8% reported feeling somewhat worse or much worse since they started. Of those who reported worse health outcomes experienced the health conditions which had lasted or were likely to last for 6 months or more. These included: sight problems, hearing problems, limited use of arms and fingers, limited use of legs and feet, and mental illness for which help or supervision is required.

Prior to the program, 16% reported own ill-health or disability, 16% were receiving treatment for a drug/alcohol problem, and 12% were receiving treatment for a mental health condition as their main activity. All of these participants reported an improved outlook on life and an ability to look at challenges differently. The 12% receiving treatment for their own ill-health or disability who were unsure or felt their situation was worse than before may have felt this way because of the continued impact of physical pain on a daily basis, and requiring a great deal of medical attention to function.

The Future

"...it's enabled me to cope at this point in time...I feel like I do have a life and ...like I've got something to strive for, for me" (Earlybird).

A majority of the respondents were of the view that graduation from Catalyst-Clemente could get them a job, a promotion, a pay rise, or a more responsible job (60%). Of the 36% who responded didn't know if they could get a job at the end of the program, 16%

had dependent children whom they had to support, 16% had long-standing physical illness, 12% were taking medication and receiving support for a mental health condition, and 8% had contact with the justice system over the last 12 months. The students planned mainly to do further study after the completion of the Catalyst Clemente program (64%), find a part-time job (40%), a full-time job (28%), volunteer (28%), and obtain long-term housing (28%).

Conclusion

These early data indicate that for this group of higher education students, the circumstances of their lives have a strong capacity to influence their academic success. Conversely, their engagement in higher education is having a significant impact on their ability to establish control over their personal wellbeing and development, their capacity to gain and remain in employment, and their future opportunities including social, physical and economic success. Expansion of the data over the next 12 months will provide

deeper and more valid and trustworthy evidence with regard to the many issues identified so far in the research.

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Engaging for Health: Medicine in Context as a Case Study in Engaged Teaching and Learning for Students in Medicine

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Abstract

The University of Western Sydney's new School of Medicine (SoMed) had its first intake of students in 2007, with the aim of producing doctors for practice in Western Sydney. From the outset, the plan was to become a community engaged medical school, with a commitment that this be demonstrated by graduates, students and staff. So what do we mean by engaged, and how can we measure our success in achieving it? This paper provides a case study on the development of an engaged teaching and learning program. We begin with an examination of the philosophies the SoMed has drawn on. Then, by isolating those aspects which have influenced our directions, evaluate specific components to measure success and to identify areas needing further development.

Two paths converged in the creation of our engaged medical school. One path can be located specifically within the field of medicine. The second is that influencing the world of universities more broadly. The two paths share characteristics, but there are also unique features of medicine influencing the shape of community engagement in this profession. By drawing the two together we believe both are enriched.

Keywords:

medical education, community engaged medicine, social justice, community health, partnerships

Introduction

This paper analyses the UWS School of Medicine's (SoMed) model for involving the community in addressing health inequities, and developing a process to infuse social justice principles into SoMed planning. Our model draws on international experiences of community engagement in training medical professionals, with refinements reflecting our region's local realities. The SoMed has striven to involve local communities and their experiences in the medical curriculum. One outcome is the third-

year program, Medicine in Context (MiC). MiC is designed as an 'immersion' experience, which builds on less intense student-community interactions in years 1 and 2, and prepares students for later intensive specialised exposures in years 4-5. Inspired by an engagement model that places the community and its knowledge at the centre of social justice initiatives, the MiC program is one component of a broad ranging curriculum involving engaged teaching, learning and research.

MiC's objectives rely on developing mutually beneficial relationships that will deepen students' awareness and understanding of the diverse communities in our region and the lived reality of the 'social determinants of health'. By providing opportunities for our students to have a permanent presence in the community, and for an ongoing role for the community in the SoMed, we believe we can produce medical practitioners with greater community awareness and insight, and the capacity to influence towards a more equitable system of healthcare and health promotion.

The students' experiences of working in and with the community depend on the contributions made by the SoMed's community partners. Each third-year student spends one term working and studying with a range of organisations such as migrant and refugee resource centres, disability and aged care support services, and urban regeneration projects. But it also requires intensive, ongoing consultation with our partners, including formal evaluation. In 2009 this included a series of one-to-one interviews, focus groups and questionnaires. This paper examines the results of this process on the program's ongoing development.

Philosophical traditions in the teaching of medicine

Engagement is a means for finding ways to teach and practise medicine that is relevant for those for whom it is intended: the patient and their community."Knowing your patient" has long been recognised as a significant component in effective medical care, and engaged medical education provides a process for achieving a deeper knowledge. But these are not new ideas. From

the late nineteenth century there has been debate over whether the study of isolated diseases is a limited view; and further, whether this restricted vision results in less effective medical practice. Rudolph Virchow identified in the late nineteenth century the important interrelationship between living conditions and health, and in doing so laid the foundations for what is known as ‘social medicine’ (Porter, 1997, p.5). His argument, that a ‘well fed and politically emancipated population would produce a society in which both capital and labour had the same rights to health’ sounds curiously contemporary, and his insistence that health was a ‘right’ shared equally by all, resonates with current discussions. Its ‘truth’, while sometimes muted, shapes our understanding of the consequences of poverty and the benefits of socially inclusive policies.

Despite the persuasive power of Virchow’s insights, social medicine had little impact on the teaching of medicine in the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed it might be argued that the opposite occurred, with medicine rejecting a community-level

focus for an increasingly reductionist perspective, isolating smaller and smaller components of the human body as the locus of study. One exception was public health – and whether its historical low status in the medical hierarchy was a cause or consequence of this reductionism is moot.

In the second half of the twentieth century, and particularly from the 1970s, a cluster of significant events contributed to a shift in medical education. There are several interpretations of the cause of this shift, however the role of the United Nations (UN) and the growing internationalisation of medicine, were clearly influential. As the UN focused attention on the developing world’s health needs through the work of bodies such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF, it became clear that the “Western model” of medical education—with large, sophisticated, and expensive hospitals at the core—was unsustainable in the developing world. In the midst of Australia’s current discussions about a funding model for the nation’s hospitals, it might be argued that the model’s sustainability is difficult anywhere

because of the financial cost, but also, critically when its focus of care is on healthcare professionals rather than empowering the patient.

The developments suggesting a renaissance of Virchow's ideals included the Alma-Ata Declaration in 1978, which argued that 'people have the right and duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care' (WHO, 1978). This declaration was also a catalyst for the series of international meetings, the International Conferences on Health Promotion, which have collectively helped to redefine international thinking on health. The first of these meetings, held in 1986, produced the Ottawa Charter which was designed to effect the call for 'Health for All' embodied in Alma-Ata by articulating the role of health promotion (WHO, 1986). The fourth conference, held in Jakarta in 1997, took 'Leading health promotion into the 21st Century' as its theme (WHO, 1997). The Jakarta Declaration made clear that increasing health on a global scale required 'approaches to health promotion [that] evolve to

meet changes in the determinants of health' (WHO, 1997). Among the changes advocated of direct relevance here, were the calls to expand partnerships for health, increase community capacity and empower individuals. For the Declaration, partnerships needed to 'be based on agreed ethical principles, mutual understanding and respect.' People need to have opportunities for 'practical education, leadership training and access to resources.' Above all the Jakarta Declaration argued that communities and individuals needed 'reliable access to the decision making process and the skills and knowledge essential to effect change' (WHO, 1997).

Altogether, there have now been seven International Conferences on Health Promotion (WHO, n.d.). Their origins, according to Fran Baum a leading Australian theorist, can be located in the 1970s' push 'to persuade WHO of the need for a more grassroots approach to health care that stressed primary health care and the social roots of illness' (Baum, 2007). So while medicine's new internationalism was important, communities and local level planning are at the heart of the changes.

In March 1988 the World Congress on Medical Education met in Edinburgh to discuss the implications of Alma-Ata for academic medicine. The result was the Edinburgh Declaration involving an 'action programme for reform of medical education worldwide...' (Metcalf, 1989). The Edinburgh Declaration highlighted the eight main factors that should guide medical educators in the future; those particularly relevant to us here are:

1. Enlarge the range of settings in which educational programmes are conducted, to include all health resources of the community, not hospitals alone...
2. Build both curriculum and examination systems to ensure the achievement of professional competence and social values, not merely the retention and recall of information.
3. Ensure that curriculum content reflects national health priorities and the availability of affordable resources...
4. Complement instruction about the management of patients with increased emphasis about promotion of health and prevention of disease.

5. Integrate education in science and education in practice using problem solving in clinical and community settings as a base for learning... (WFMED, 1988).

In 1996 *Doctors for Health*, a global strategy for medical education change, was published by the WHO. In 2001 Charles Boelen led the team charged with analysing the strategy's outcomes. In his view, 'the world community is increasingly aware of the social, cultural and economic benefits of good health... [and] more socially responsive medical schools are essential in attaining better world health' (Boelen, 2001, p.6).

Despite the great potential of these developments, expanding the gaze from the individual to the community, from the curative to the preventive, has not progressed smoothly. So to draw on the momentum of Alma-Ata and the Ottawa Charter and bring out the potential of working in and with communities, the SoMed has incorporated the community engagement philosophy developed in the wider university context. For the core of this model is a

commitment to social justice and inclusion. The university as an isolated tower for the creation of knowledge is being abandoned in favour of a model which sees the generation of new knowledge and the teaching of the next generation as activities best undertaken in partnership with the community. Universities now embrace the ideal of playing active roles in the communities of which they are a part. More, that they need to be accountable to those communities and responsive to their aspirations.

As David Charles (2006, p.2) indicated, despite this unifying ideal there nevertheless exists a great diversity in the ways universities engage with communities. In particular, he calls attention to the need for a 'sense of place' to inform our engagement strategies. The Tulane University (Louisiana) Patient Centred Medical Home provides a good example of the idea of a place specific engagement program. Born of the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Katrina, the program involves 'not only providing care to disadvantaged populations, but also supporting medical students, other trainees and faculty'. The Tulane School's engaged

medical program is diverse, but focuses on meeting community-identified needs. The program helped to rebuild education and health care provision across the city, which in turn helped to make the School a magnet for high calibre academic appointments (Tulane, 2010).

Community engagement and development of the School of Medicine

On establishment, the SoMed adopted a "Community Participation Strategy" to define its intentions, using the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) model, the 'Public Participation Spectrum' (IAP2, 2007). While retaining the spirit of the strategy, we have since moved to align more closely with the wider UWS strategy, positioning engagement as a core activity (UWS, 2009).

The SoMed's philosophy encourages and enables community engagement in all aspects of our work. To do so, we have in train the development of engaged teaching and learning programs,

engaged research projects, and the Community Members program. This last provides for community membership on every SoMed committee; the members combined then constitute the SoMed's Community Committee. Their role is to provide the SoMed with a "community" perspective on decisions taken and directions chosen.

We now turn to examine an example of how the SoMed's engagement program operates in practice. We take the SoMed's 'flagship' teaching and learning program, Medicine in Context (MiC) for this case study for a number of reasons. As the first 'structural' engagement development for the SoMed, MiC provided us with a model for working with the community. Its development and implementation, the challenges it has posed and the responses these required, have given us a clearer insight into the demands as well as the delights of working with the community.

The UWS SoMed was announced in 2004, and enrolled its first students in 2007. It offers a five-year undergraduate medical program, with the first two years in a problem-based learning setting for skills development in the basic biomedical sciences. The final three clinical years are undertaken in the SoMed's local clinical schools at Campbelltown/Camden hospitals, Blacktown Mt Druitt hospitals and Liverpool Hospital, in the two rural clinical schools (Bathurst and Lismore) and in the community. So who is the community? Even confining ourselves just to the UWS 'region' provides few easy definitions however—as we rapidly discovered in developing the MiC program. Greater Western Sydney (GWS) contains both suburban and semi-rural areas, incorporating residential, rural, industrial, commercial, institutional and military uses. It covers nearly 9,000 square kilometres, with 14 local government areas and a population of almost two million. A third of its residents migrated to Australia, and half the world's nations are represented here. The largest urban communities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia live here. Burgeoning new housing estates

attract families to set up home, so the people of GWS are young: more than 30 percent are aged 24 or under (WSROC, 2010; MACROC, 2010).

GWS also contains areas of significant socioeconomic disadvantage with consequent high levels of social exclusion. Indicators include high unemployment and poverty levels; low educational attainment and reliance on unskilled work; large clusters of social and private-rental housing; scarce public transport with resulting car dependency or social isolation; and difficulties in accessing health and medical services. These issues have serious consequences: people living in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas have lower average life expectancies than those in more affluent regions (Woolf et al, 2010); 61% of Sydney's fatal car accidents occur in GWS; and the GWS doctor patient ratio is one of the least equitable in the country (Bartlett, 2005, p.60). Furthermore, the GWS population is expected to continue increasing (GWSEDB, 2010): without adequate infrastructure planning, this will place even greater pressure on

resources. This profile indicates the impossibility of defining the GWS 'community' in any way beyond the general. Hence our decision to simply call on the expertise and involvement of those who understand it best: 'the people who live and work here'.

Exploring the road less travelled: Medicine in Context

The initial idea for MiC was agreed upon a whole-school meeting in August 2007, and in December 2007 a community forum was held to workshop what it might look like. In the interim, a small core of staff and community members began the planning and implementation process, drawing on ideas from universities around Australia and overseas. The community forum was designed around some key issues identified using the WHO social determinants of health framework (Wilkinson et al, 2003) and informed by work of more recent epidemiologists such as Ichiro Kawachi (2000). Equally these reflected the interests of the forum participants, our first partners, illustrating the program's 'bottom-up' development approach. Our initial topics were Ageing, Children and Young People, Disability, Alcohol and Other Drugs,

Mental Health, Migrants, New Communities and Urban Health, Public Health, and Women's Health.

Invitations for the community forum drew on the knowledge of the SoMed's Interim Community Council members (an appointed group; interim by choice while a more transparent process for appointments could be developed). The invitation process was 'snow-ball', as invitees were asked to nominate others in their theme. The resulting forum involved around 50 people: from community organisations and individuals with specific interests, local general practitioners, and SoMed staff.

The workshop aimed to draw on community experts to advise the SoMed about their organisations' functions and identify suitable activities for student involvement; they also advised the SoMed on agency capacity regarding how many and how often students could be accommodated doing meaningful work. The outcome of the forum was a plan for community attachments that the participants felt was sustainable and educationally valuable.

A galvanising factor in MiC's development was the SoMed's agreement that it be developed as part of the third year's 'clinical' rotations – alongside introductory Medicine and Surgery. Each third year term is twelve weeks long, and divided into two six-week 'blocks'. In addition, the clinical rotations are designed as 'immersion' programs, so other learning activities are held at times outside the attachments. MiC adopted this model, with attachments involving three-days per week with a partner and one day per week with a general practitioner. One common day per week was set aside for seminars.

This was an exciting opportunity to develop the SoMed's engagement plans, and the consequence that MiC would be mandatory for all students underlines its significance. However, the first third year was to begin in 2009, so we had twelve months to create three term-length community-engaged rotations for an expected cohort of ninety students.

The pressing need to make MiC work therefore focused the SoMed's community engagement activities for the whole of 2008. We continued to call on snow-ball introductions but this was now supplemented by intensive research, trawling through community directories, having introductory phone conversations with many people and travelling extensively throughout GWS meeting potential partners and their agencies. Following the recommendations of the Boelen report, priority was given to developing relationships beyond the more usual 'community health' focus. As Boelen pointed out, looking outside this model can aid addressing critical issues 'such as poverty alleviation, social justice, human rights, ethics, tolerance, respect for individuals and confidentiality' (Boelen, 2001, p.73).

The agencies that have become the SoMed's partners are consequently diverse. Migrant resource centres, women's health centres, residential aged care, disability services, homeless youth support, drug and alcohol residential and non-residential services, released prisoner support groups, specific condition

patient/client advocacy groups (eg cancer/autism), and mental health community services are all represented among our partnerships. A variety of government departments are also actively involved in the program, such as social (public) housing, refugee health, children and family support services and local government community services.

The objective of the program is to introduce students to the functions of these organisations, as well as to meet and work with their clients, and a factor they share is a non-clinical perspective on health-related issues. But they also differ greatly in terms of size and range of activities undertaken. One of our partners has eight sites distributed through south-west Sydney with over 200 staff; while another has no paid staff at all and relies on the fact of shared need by the support group's members. Each attachment design therefore requires careful management to ensure some comparability of experience between students.

Establishment visits with potential partners play a critical role in this: and have been fundamental to the shape and content of MiC. These meetings with the agency's key staff, range between one and a half to two hours duration and begin with a discussion of the scope of the SoMed curriculum. This is usually in the context of the developments in medical education to highlight the intentions of our curriculum, but also to draw out the important historical forces which have led to their creation in Australia and beyond.

Each of our partners, indeed each community agency, is in its way unique. They have different clientele, different funding arrangements, and different philosophies and programs for addressing the issue that is their *raison d'être*. So we discuss the MiC program in that context—the work and philosophy of the partner. Locating the program within their work provides a good way for our partners to imagine the attachments; knowing how the learning objectives tie in with the agency's philosophy enables

the partner to see how the student's activities can assist the agency's own development.

Many of the 100 or so potential partners that we have met with during the first two years see their work having an immediate relevance to health. Those who do not nevertheless see the significance of—and are interested in contributing to—this new kind of medical education. This is not a spontaneous response to hearing about the idea, however. It is a response to the opportunity to talk through the implications and issues involved. It is also a response to the reassurance that their contributions will be respected and supported.

Consequently, in 2008 we began drafting the legal partnership agreements which, among other things, ensured that our community partners were protected. To do so, we consulted with other relevant academic units in the University, as well as the UWS legal office, and the Office of University Engagement, then led by Professor Barbara Holland. Our membership of the US-

based organisation Community-Campus Partnerships for Health provided access to a wealth of expertise. Risk management is a key issue for programs of this kind. These risks include: risks to students from unsuitable or dangerous sites; risks to partners from careless or thoughtless students, risks to the SoMed and the University from both of these and from poorly conceptualised and executed programs lacking clearly articulated learning outcomes. These steps were designed to minimise such risks.

Internal structures were also important in MiC's development. One crucial structure was the third year planning committee. Throughout 2008 this committee met monthly, and each month MiC's development and complexities were aired and debated. This committee also played (and continues to play) a role in providing links between the community rotation and the clinical rotations, thereby keeping MiC 'grounded' in the wider medical curriculum.

MiC also had its own planning committee: the MiCPC. This committee was convened and chaired by our then Dean, Professor Neville Yeomans who championed engagement throughout his tenure. His chairmanship provided high level oversight of the program and its governance structure. The value of this was evident as the scope of MiC increased and the committee planning these activities similarly grew. The committee's eventual memberships included community members, GP convenors, student representatives and SoMed staff, with a total membership of twenty-two. In order to facilitate 'equal time' for each group, and ensure that all concerns were given time for proper discussion, it was agreed to form separate working groups as unofficial sub-committees of the planning committee.

For, as is well known to those in the field, a significant contributor to the effective functioning of programs like this is partner engagement. This was articulated at the SoMed presentation which originally gave rise to this program in 2007, in the concern that we ensure that we continued to 'give back' to the community.

Relying on the community's generosity in taking on this teaching and learning load was a sure way to disaster.

Giving back was not just about public recognition and tangible benefits: although these were both important. Tangible benefits do go some way to repay our partners for their contribution in developing meaningful student experiences. We ensured, for this reason, that we were able to appoint community partners as adjunct academics, and developed official certificates of recognition and appreciation signed by the Dean for display.

However, giving back also entails providing ongoing support for partners as student supervisors, and in ensuring that their concerns and expertise continue to help shape the program. The MiCPC and working groups were designed to achieve this. However, these both faced difficulties, leading to diminishing attendances and limited community control. One clear barrier—reflecting the under-resourced nature of the sector—is our community partners' long working hours resulting in a limited capacity for additional meetings. As we have seen, GWS is a large

region and travel times can be daunting. As a consequence, the MiCPC fell into abeyance.

To compensate for this, we have recently instigated a process which we believe offers our partners a pathway to participation without calling on their own limited resources. This process will extend a measure for consultation and interaction that we developed early on: the MiC Supervisor workshops. These workshops seek to provide regular support for specific issues relevant to the supervisor role. Their second function has been to facilitate sharing information and expertise among the network.

The first workshop was held in December 2008: almost 12 months to the day from the original MiC workshop which launched the program in the community. Around thirty partners and members of the SoMed attended. Since then three further workshops have been held, and—taking advantage of UWS's multiple campuses—we have attempted to host subsequent workshops at different campuses.

While structural responses such as these are significant for the future of the program, we have also implemented an extensive evaluation process to provide detailed and critical assessments of MiC's implementation. This process involves ongoing student evaluations of their attachments, and partner evaluations of the program and students. We supplemented this in 2009 with an in-depth evaluation using interviews and focus groups with partners and students.

These have provided us with extremely valuable data about what was and wasn't working and underpinned changes introduced in 2010. From the partners' perspective, a number of themes emerged from the interviews which we present in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Main themes from Partner interviews, 2009

THEME	RESPONSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for partnering with UWS School of Medicine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide exposure to broader community services Help broaden students' views about community Benefits both the organisation and the student

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drawbacks/ challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time required to supervise students Time required to prepare/ tailor program Attending workshops due to distance and time constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships with other universities or higher education institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most partners are involved in partnerships with other higher education institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement with medical academics in the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few partners had worked with medical schools in the past
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Things believed important to include in training the next generation of doctors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compassion Communication skills Cultural awareness Exposure to social disadvantage Feminism Domestic violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best/ most memorable experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to trust SoMed students with confidential information Feedback received from students in their final reports Students who showed interest in the organisation and challenged their practices Having student return as volunteer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggestions for improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide student with information about placement beforehand Have a formal plan about what student should achieve (contract)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage students' expectations about attachments
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One element of interest was the tendency for partner organisations to have had involvement in placements for other tertiary students. While this has been helpful for us knowing that many of our supervisors have teaching experience, it does highlight the need to avoid overburdening some agencies, and to work around their other relationships. It was however very uncommon for our partners to have had previous experience with medical students, which underlines our responsibility to ensure that partners are fully aware of the students' knowledge level, and that students are not involved in anything beyond their level. For this reason, students are reminded that they are not in a clinical setting and know that they cannot make diagnoses, undertake any unsupervised treatments nor comment on existing patient management. Partners are also similarly informed.

Reasons given for becoming involved in the program is also of interest. Medicine has a kind of dual presence in the minds of

many. It is recognised as a high-level scientific and surgical field requiring many years of study and professional training; and that its practitioners work long hours and carry great responsibility. On the other hand, medicine is also seen as something that affects us personally and daily, and that we therefore deserve to have some say in its application to ourselves and our loved ones. This dualism is quite evident in the reasons given by partners for becoming involved. The opportunity to influence future medical practitioners, to alert them to issues they believe are currently ignored (such as the social model of disability; the significance of gender; the importance of a patient's perspective) were often raised.

There was also a subtly expressed expectation that "doctors" and the people of western Sydney may inhabit different worlds. This gently articulated expectation that doctors are drawn from a more advantaged stratum than our partners' clients provided, for a number of respondents, a crucial rationale: to give these future doctors an insider's perspective on disadvantage, and to head off

any threat of an attitude which blames the poor for their poverty and condemns them for ‘choosing’ a life style inimical to good-health. Whether this is a view of the profession borne of experience or expectation, it is nevertheless real and MiC, if it achieves what we hope, will contribute to a lessening of this “different worlds” view. Demystifying medicine and medical practitioners for the community, as much as enabling doctors to understand people living with disadvantage, are equally valuable components of this community engaged program.

As a general overview of the kinds of issues students raised, Table 2 captures the most significant:

Table 2: Student Responses to the MiC Community Program, 2009

Things students liked about attachments:	Things that could be better:
interacting with clients and getting hands-on experience	attachments too long and felt they could have learned the same amount in a shorter period of time.

having a variety of activities to do and being exposed to different services (i.e. early childhood services, allied health).	time was wasted and they didn't have much to do
the enthusiasm of their supervisors and the positive attitude of staff members at their organisation	would like more client contact and hands-on experience, more variety in the activities.
being involved in tasks that were medically related.	too administrative and would like it to be more medically relevant.
	more structure and guidance to their attachments, as well as the opportunity to develop their projects/report plans in advance.

Both groups identified components of the program which needed adjustment. One key need was addressing the uncertainty felt by some students about MiC's purpose. Medical students, as much as anyone else in our society, have a conception of medicine which is reinforced by popular and other cultural representations. For some, medicine has particular characteristics which bear no resemblance to, say, an agency teaching language skills to newly

arrived refugees. Medicine, in the popular imagery, is located in the hospital/clinic. Furthermore, medicine is a science, with all that term implies. MiC's community attachments therefore need intensive student orientation, to avoid the risk of placing confused and dissatisfied students in a setting with people who may not feel sufficiently empowered to respond. So, the program has been modified by shortening the length of each attachments by one week, and the introduction of a week of orientation—where students can discover the underlying purposes and philosophy of the program—and a week of reflection and extension to conclude the term.

A related issue was a consequence of the 'reciprocity' expected from engaged activities, which MiC incorporated within the students' assessment tasks. The 'immersion' concept involves students in the day-to-day activities of the agency, to learn about and contribute to the work. This led to some student resistance to the idea of 'unpaid labour', especially where the work seemed remote from medicine. So in conjunction with including the

philosophy of 'service learning' in the orientation week, we have introduced a new process for planning the attachment activities. Above all, we sought a way to give students some 'ownership' of their attachments and the work done there. So a template has been developed which the student and their community supervisor can use to jointly create the learning plan. The plan gives recognition to students' differing learning styles and creates opportunities for developing a project of benefit for both the partner and the student while meeting the objectives of both.

Where to from here?

MiC will continue to evolve, responding to both the changing health concerns of our communities, and to changing medical needs. We maintain our commitment to the value of students engaging in a systematic and ongoing way with community partners but we have also invited our partners to consider providing 'networking' opportunities for the students within their special fields, to help extend the experience. Whether we maintain the current model of three days per week for two five

weeks blocks will continue to be monitored and evaluated. However the current MiC model fits both our present intentions and our curriculum structure very well. Larger overarching changes will be the driver for systemic change, if it occurs.

On the other hand the role community partners play in the program needs to and is changing. The importance of greater community engagement with the full spectrum of activities is clear. However a major development from the MiC program is the model it has provided for incorporating community into more aspects of the curriculum. Currently the paediatrics, mental health, Indigenous health, and General Practice rotations all have or plan to have a community component. Using the experience we have gained from MiC will contribute to these developments; equally we are confident that MiC will in turn benefit from the ideas and experiences of these different programs. They will in their way influence future directions for MiC.

Conclusions

We have learned much during the past two years of planning and implementing the Medicine in Context program as a flagship community engaged program for our new School of Medicine. We have learned that the community has a huge, mostly unrequited, enthusiasm for contributing to medical education. There is also much good will, but there must be an investment of resources to enable the community to become part of the university's work. MiC has made clear to us that the lack of resources (perhaps especially time!) places the biggest hurdle in the way of successful programs. We believe it is important therefore to promote the value of these programs, and to help ensure that scarce university resources can be found. For, as the Ottawa Charter clearly spells out, one of the main aims of the 'new medical education' is in many respects not so very far from the ideals encapsulated in university engagement more widely: 'At the heart of this process is the empowerment of communities—their ownership and control of their own endeavours and destinies.' Medicine in Context is the first of the SoMed's community engaged programs

and from it we will continue to learn with and from the communities who so generously enabled its birth.

Notes

We list here only those who formed part of the early planning meeting and the MiC committee here—but each of our partners will be individually named on the SoMed web page. Thanks to: Ian Wilson, SoMed; Carmel Flavell, Wollondilly Community Links (Macarthur); Anett Wegerhoff (Macarthur Division GP); Deepa Mahananda (then 1st year student Rep ; Eman Sharobeem, Immigrant Women's Health (Fairfield); Matthew Grey (Macarthur Division); Kerenze Chippendale (then 1st year student Rep); Brad Frankum, SoMed; Diana Qian, Multicultural Disability (Parramatta); Carina Law (Macarthur Division GP); Paulina Min Ok Suo Suo (then 1st year student Rep); Carol Vleeskens, community member; Peter Zelas, SoMed; Bob Lester, Families in Partnership (Macarthur); Michael Fasher (Wentwest Division GP); Tasnim Hasan (then 2nd year student Rep); Bill Kefalas (Wentwest

Division GP); Scott Reid, (then 2nd year student Rep); Cris Carriage, SoMed; Louise Francis, SoMed.

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Student-identified Learning Outcomes in Community-engaged Learning in Economics and Finance

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Abstract

This paper reports on the key findings of an initial investigation into student-identified learning outcomes in the capstone unit *Economics and Finance Engagement Project* at the University of Western Sydney. A qualitative analysis has been undertaken of the reflective learning statements that the students prepared based on the reflective learning journal they had kept over the semester. This analysis was used to map the learning outcomes the students themselves had identified. Hence the focus was not on the overall learning that had taken place, but on the learning the students themselves recognised as their learning from community engagement. The preliminary map of student-identified learning outcomes is structured in relation to the

typology of service and learning presented in Eyler and Giles (1999) based on the work of Sigmon (1996). Key aspects of the map are discussed in relation to some of the characteristics of the particular service-learning setting.

Keywords:

Community-engaged learning, service learning, experiential learning, learning outcomes, teaching economics and finance

The context of this research project

Community-engaged learning at the University of Western Sydney

The University of Western Sydney (UWS) embarked on a community-engagement agenda almost a decade ago. By now, even disciplines as reluctant as economics and finance have introduced compulsory capstone units in the final year of their business degrees. These units aim to 'provide student exposure to the ill-defined nature of problems in business, the multi-dimensional nature of the issues, and to force them to consider

not only the nature of the problem but also how realistic their solutions are' (College of Business 2006).

The university sees community engagement following the definition advanced by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as:

the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity (no date).

When developing the unit outline for the *Economics and Finance Engagement Project*, the mutually beneficial exchange of resources was interpreted as having three components: students working for a community; community partners coaching students; and both benefiting from experiential learning.

The mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge was interpreted twofold:

- (a) community partners get a state-of-the-art consultancy report addressing an issue with the potential of enhancing their practice, which challenges their current *ortho-praxis*, while
- (b) students address an issue that challenges their own understanding and that of their discipline, which encourages them to develop theory further, challenging current *orthodoxy*.

Students undertake real work for a community partner and this experiential learning provides opportunities for critical reflection, which is an essential part of community-engaged or service learning. Yet community-engaged or service learning is different from other forms of experiential learning in so far as 'the value proposition of service-learning is not as one-sided as it is with volunteering, nor does service learning have the technical or

individual development focus of an internship or field study' (Seifer and Connors 2007: 6).

Therefore the unit was developed to enable students to identify, over the course of the semester, the benefits for both parties in terms of shared resources and knowledge. In particular, students themselves have to be able to identify these benefits in their own learning. In other words, students must be enabled to describe student-identified learning outcomes, which are seen as a key aspect of the self-reflectivity that characterises community-engaged learning. It was expected that the unit *Economics and Finance Engagement Project* would significantly contribute to students developing the UWS Graduate Attributes of adaptable lifelong learning and comprehensive, coherent and connected knowledge.

The Economics and Finance Engagement Project

Students in this unit undertake a consultancy project for a community or industry partner. This is either an economic

development unit of a local government authority or a community organisation with an economic or finance problem. The consultancy project involves the completion of a tender documentation based on a project scope provided by the partner, as well as a final written report and an oral presentation of key findings. Each community or industry partner provides a staff member who is responsible for a class of four groups of five or six students. Each of these groups receives a weekly coaching session of 30 minutes from the staff member on campus.

While the students do not leave campus to work in a community setting, writing a consultancy report to address a real-life problem provides a real-life service to an industry or community partner in a setting that is very close to the routine of any economics consultant. The students do experience this setting as very different from their normal university routine.

The weekly coaching sessions provide students with frequent, structured and reliable feedback which is similar to the format used by a project officer when managing consultants. The four 30

minutes coaching sessions for each class take place during a two hour block of class time, which allows for one and a half hours of intensive group work. This is followed by a one hour workshop for all four groups together. These workshops help students link their experiences in service with the content of what they have learned in their degree to date and with their own reflective learning.

Representatives of interested local government authorities and community groups develop the project scopes together with the unit coordinator over a period of four months prior to the start of semester. This preparation time allows for the identification of questions that are relevant for the community partner's practice and challenging for the discipline's current orthodoxy. In order for five to six economics and finance students to address issues in a relevant way, the project scopes need to be of adequate difficulty and depth. Such course-integrated service-learning projects support students in learning to transfer knowledge from coursework to real-life settings. Steinke and Buresh see such

knowledge transfer as one of three characteristics that distinguish experts from novices, characterising it as 'an active, ongoing process requiring both a certain level of knowledge and active learning to complete' (2002: 10).

Students are required to keep a reflective learning journal, which they use to write an assessable reflective learning statement of approximately 2,000 words at the end of semester. As a rule of thumb, students are expected to spend about ten hours a week on this unit. This includes three hours in class and about one hour reflecting and writing their journal. The last week of semester is fully dedicated to the writing of the reflective learning statement. Some workshop time is used to discuss the development of assessment matrices for the tender documentation and the reflective learning statement. Both the tender documentation and the final report are marked to industry standards by the community or industry partners, who discuss their proposed marks and feedback with the unit coordinator, who ensures

consistent standards between the partners. The reflective learning statement is assessed by the unit coordinator.

The motivation for this research project

When marking the Reflective Learning Statements written by students in the first two iterations of this unit, the first author found that the students described significant learning outcomes without recognising and identifying them as learning. In the first iteration a significant proportion of students wrote at length about their feelings without making a connection between their feelings and their learning. In the second iteration, a large group of students wrote about issues of cross-cultural communication, again without linking the issues with their learning. However, the second cohort did discuss the link between their emotions and their learning – after they were told to pay attention to how their feelings impacted on their learning at the beginning of semester, when the Reflective Learning Journal was introduced.

Against this background, the researchers decided to undertake a systematic mapping exercise of the learning outcomes identified by the students themselves. This was seen as a necessary first step in order to find out how students could be better supported in their efforts to recognise those aspects of their own learning that are over and beyond the general learning outcomes anticipated and described in the unit documentation. This paper discusses the findings of the mapping exercise.

Methodological Approach

Background to Methodology

Assessing learning in community-engaged or service learning

One of the seminal works on assessment in this field is Eyler and Giles' 1999 book entitled *Where is the learning in service-learning?* Eyler and Giles conducted focus groups, interviews and surveys with more than 1,500 students in several studies and present the insights they gained under the following headings: personal and interpersonal development; understanding and applying

knowledge; engagement, curiosity and reflective practice; critical thinking; perspective transformation; and citizenship.

Steinke and Buresh critically review the findings of Eyler and Giles in their 2002 article entitled 'Cognitive Outcomes of Service-Learning: Reviewing the Past and Glimpsing the Future'. They acknowledge the difficulties in documenting the complex relationship between student learning in general and service-learning in particular:

The difficulties lie in finding a valid way to define service-learning's cognitive outcomes and, once defined, in developing a convincing way to measure them (Eyler, 2000). In the past, researchers have used various measures including: self-report measures of learning, course evaluation measures, general measures of critical thinking, and general measures of creativity; more recently researchers have coded open-ended responses related to course content including problem solving protocols. (Steineke and Buresh 2002: 6)

They discuss these different measures of assessing learning in service-learning outcomes and provide an overview of the latest development and studies in the field. They are particularly critical

of studies based on self-report measures that do not consider the possible presence of what they call an overall "halo effect" due to the students' enjoyment of the service-learning experience. They suggest that a possible halo effect 'can be reduced by asking about specific cognitive outcomes in a question format that is different from attitudinal questions' (Steineke and Buresh 2002: 6).

According to Steinke and Buresh's review of the recent literature on best practice in assessing learning in service-learning courses, problem solving protocols are among the most promising outcome measures. This is because they lend themselves to being developed further, based on recent work on learning in the cognitive sciences:

Three cognitive constructs seem particularly relevant to the academic gains students report with service-learning: transformations in deep structures of their knowledge organization, ability to engage more easily in their knowledge's analogical transfer, and increased metacognition about how their new insights fail to fit with their previous expectations (2002: 9).

This research project focuses on the last cognitive construct, in so far as the students discuss in their reflective learning statements new insights that ‘fail to fit with their previous expectations’. The project asks, “Which of those new insights are recognised by the students themselves as learning outcomes they have achieved, how can these learning outcomes be mapped, and what research conclusions can be gleaned from this process?”

It is only once the learning identified by the students themselves has been mapped and understood more clearly that further research will be able to address the question, “To what extent and in which regard is this meta-cognition of learning due to good teaching practice in general or to practices related to service-learning or community-engaged learning?”

Rather than, as suggested by Steinke and Buresh assessing the learning in service learning through problem-solving protocols or other means, this research project revisits assessment material students had already written and interrogates this material to

establish what learning students think has happened. Such a revisiting will allow further research to investigate how well the general learning outcomes anticipated and described in the unit documentation reflect the learning that happens in this particular community engagement setting.

Student-identified versus teacher-identified learning outcomes

In a first step, this research project maps the learning outcomes identified by students in the first two iterations of the unit. This means that learning documented in the students’ reflective learning statements, which is not recognised as learning by the student, is not considered: the research project specifically aims at providing a map of those learning outcomes, which the students themselves recognise as their own learning.

The reason for this particular focus lies in the fact that service or community-engaged learning aims at developing the students’ self-reflectivity – their awareness of their own learning. Being conscious of the learning outcomes achieved will help students

develop the habits of lifelong learners. This includes an awareness of what helps and what hinders their own learning – two key questions that facilitate an active approach to improving their learning conditions.

Hence the success criteria for community-engaged learning and teaching include not only the traditional criterion of what or how much the students have learned, but also the criterion of what or how much of their own learning the students recognise as learning. This requires that the students develop the ability to engage in some sort of meta-reflection or meta-cognition of their own learning. While the development of an assessment matrix for the Reflective Learning Statement in class provided an opportunity to start some discussion in this field, it became clear very quickly that the students needed more support in learning to recognise their own learning.

Yet the sheer breadth and diversity of the learning outcomes the students did identify demonstrated that it was important not to

channel this process of meta-reflection too early, as this would lose or reduce the diversity of student learning. This was of particular importance as the projects the students undertook required the integration of skills and knowledge the students brought with them from outside their university courses and academia. Recognising and valuing students' diverse backgrounds required a careful inventory of the diversity of the learning outcomes the students identified.

Student-identified learning outcomes in service learning outcome assessment?

Correia and Bleicher's 2008 article 'Making Connections to Teach Reflection' refers to the literature on reading comprehension, which discusses reflection as a teachable skill. They see their study as

... a response to Eylers's specific call for more research that provides empirical evidence on how we can increase students' engagement in reflection and self-monitoring of their learning (2008: 41).

Correia and Bleicher (2008) analyse students' reflective journals with the theoretical framework of reading comprehension, with an emphasis on giving the students frequent feedback on opportunities for making connections with their service learning experiences (SLE) in three main regards:

- students' SLE-to-self connections, including 'connections to their personal ideas, beliefs, and attitudes about schools and elementary school children';
- SLE-to-similar setting connections, including 'connections to classroom experiences at a similar grade level either when they were in elementary school or in more recent classroom experiences'; and
- SLE-to-world connections, including connections to outside sources such as previous courses, news reports, and books (Correia and Bleicher 2008: 44).

Correia and Bleicher (2008) identify reflection markers, which they use to support students moving from description to reflection when the students connect to their life experiences. We

share Correia and Bleicher's interest in finding ways in which we can help students increase their own reflection. However, we are particularly interested in our students' meta-reflection regarding their learning achievements at the end of the course, when they look back over the semester and write a separate reflective learning statement based on their reflective learning journal. We are interested in taking on board some of Correia and Bleicher's suggestions to improve students' reflective capacity, yet, in addition, we are specifically looking for ways to support our students' capacity to identify for themselves the learning outcomes they have achieved. We are interested in this capacity of our students, because we see their recognition of their learning achievements as a crucial step towards becoming successful lifelong learners, which is a key graduate attribute for our students.

In doing so, we are aware of the danger that our own, necessarily limited views, can exclude learning outcomes our students have achieved, of which we are not aware. Our views are necessarily

limited because it is not possible to be fully familiar with our students' wide and varied backgrounds and the issues their backgrounds contribute to their learning. This issue has been summarised poignantly in a student quote in the title of a book chapter by Mitchell and Donahue (2009):

"I do more service in this class than I ever do at my site" – Paying Attention to the Reflections of Students of Color in Service-Learning.

Mitchell and Donahue (2009) focus on students of colour and their experiences with the lack of awareness of privilege, which white middle-class students can bring to a service-learning classroom. Students in our Economics and Finance Engagement Project come from a wide range of cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds and bring with them a wide range of pairs of privilege and disadvantage, which will all impact on their learning.

In addition, they study a degree course in an academic discipline that has been criticised for holding on to an ideological construct

of being a 'value neutral' discipline based on a narrow understanding of natural sciences. These debates were re-ignited by Sandra Harding's seminal 1995 article 'Can Feminist Thought Make Economics More Objective?' The ensuing debates among feminist economists explicitly included the experiences of women of colour. However, mainstream teaching in economics and finance has, to an alarmingly large degree, remained impermeable to such critical questioning.

Methodology: Mapping as a technique of content analysis in this specific context

In order to systematically analyse the learning outcomes identified by the students in their variety and diversity, a structured inventory of the learning outcomes identified by the students themselves needed to be developed from the students' writings, as opposed to the use of any outside structures imposed by the researchers themselves. Following Bateman, O'Neill and Kenworthy-U'Ren (2002), we used cognitive mapping, an inductive approach that allows the emergence of categories from

the students' Reflective Learning Statements themselves, rather than the categories being 'contaminated or constrained by prior work and a priori assumptions' (Bateman et al 2002: 1136).

In 2008, there were a total of 23 students divided into four groups, each working on a different project for one local government area (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Project Scopes in the one class of 2008

Understanding the Poverty Trap in Fairfield Local Government Area
Manufacturing Industry Decline and the Responses to Structural Unemployment
Understanding Affordable Housing and Shared Equity Housing as it Applies to Fairfield Local Government Area
Economic Development Strategies and their Application of Fairfield Local Government Area

In 2009, there were a total of 61 students in three classes of four groups of four to six students. Two classes worked with the same local government area as the previous year and one class worked with another. Each of the twelve groups undertook a consultancy project addressing a different issue as listed below in Table 2.

Table 2: Project Scopes in the three classes of 2009

Class 1:
Land Rent and Land Use Theory – Retail and Commercial
Land Rent and Land Use Theory – Industrial Lands
Population Thresholds and Market Trade Area
The Impact of Town Centres on a resident population
Class 2:
Supply Chain Analysis
Youth of Fairfield– Statistical Profile
Best Practice – Community Renewal
Indigenous Peoples of Fairfield– Statistical Profile
Class 3:
Visitor accommodation availability in the Parramatta Local Government Area
Economic Contribution of the cafe and restaurant sector to the Parramatta economy
Economic impact of the proposed Carbon Trading Scheme on Parramatta businesses
Industry Clusters located in the Parramatta Local Government Area

The first step of the cognitive mapping process involved both researchers independently reviewing the same three Reflective Learning Statements, noting the learning outcomes identified by each student and developing a first outline of how these learning outcomes could be mapped. Both researchers then met and discussed similarities and discrepancies between the student-identified learning outcomes they had mapped for each Reflective Learning Journal. This process was lengthy, detailed and much

debated. The agreed categories and sub-categories were documented and both researchers analysed a further three statements separately. They met again to discuss a refined and extended map that would encompass all categories and subcategories identified in the six statements analysed to date.

The second author then proceeded to map the student-identified learning outcomes of further batches of reflective learning statements, while the first author mapped one statement out of each batch. The coding was found to be generally consistent between the two authors, but there was no saturation point reached. Each new statement analysed would add further sub-categories to the map. This was consistent with the wide variety of cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds of the students undertaking the unit.

Once the student-identified learning outcomes of 80% of all Reflective Learning Statements were integrated, both authors met again to review the map in light of the literature on service

learning, which the first author had utilised while working with a new student cohort. It was at this point that it was agreed that a saturation point for the coding of categories had been achieved.

Research Results: Preliminary content map

Two types of student-identified learning outcomes emerged, which we linked to Sigmon's Service and Learning Typology, as presented by Eyler and Giles in their 1999 publication 'Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?' (see Table 3 below):

Table 3: A Service and Learning Typology

service-LEARNING	Learning goals primary; service outcome secondary
SEARVICE-learning	Service outcomes primary; learning outcomes secondary
service-learning	Service and learning goals separate
SWERVICE-LEARNING	Service and learning goals of equal weight; each enhances the other for all participants

Source: Sigmon (1996) as cited in Eyler and Giles 1999: 5

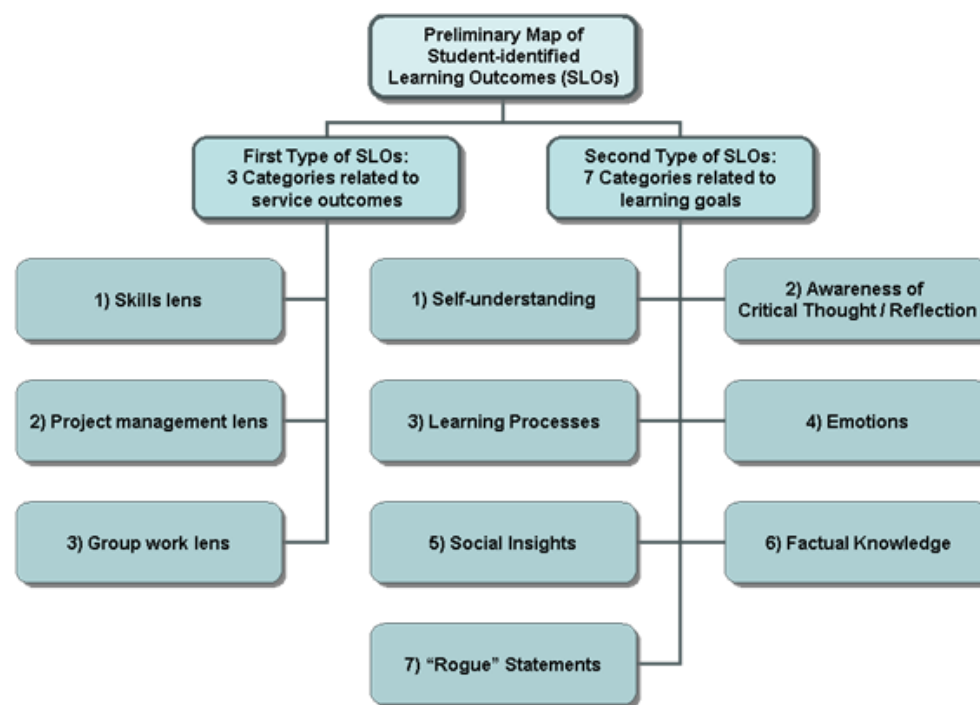
The first type of student-identified learning outcomes related to the key service outcome, namely the project report provided to the community partners as a result of the consultancy project

undertaken. The authors realised that whilst students all talked about similar issues, they chose to discuss these issues using different lenses or perspectives. In other words, students described similar issues, but saw them differently.

It is likely that the perspective or lens that the students selected to describe their learning outcomes is affecting their discussion of many other issues. However, the link between the lens selected and the other learning outcomes identified, and the significance of the selection of a particular lens, will be explored in further research. At this stage the map includes three main perspectives or lenses as categories of the first type. Here students presented the learning outcomes they related to their service and the consultancy project they completed, namely 'skills', 'project management' and 'group work' (see Map 1 below).

The second type of student-identified learning outcomes related primarily to the learning goals rather than the service outcomes

identified by Sigmon. The categories mapped were varied and far-reaching (see Map 1 below).



Map 1: Two types of student-identified learning outcomes

Sub-categories were kept as discrete entities, rather than being merged under one umbrella, as this was the manner in which some students represented their learning. The metaphor of the map allows the analysing authors to let the students' writings speak for themselves. It also allows the authors to characterise later attempts at categorising the students' writing for exactly what they are: humble attempts at structuring others' writing in categories and sub-categories.

Categories and sub-categories were then interrogated to elucidate the authors' own assumptions. The mapping process aims at presenting the raw data in a form that allows a critical confrontation between the voices of the students, including their ways of structuring their own insights into their learning, and the researchers' organisational task.

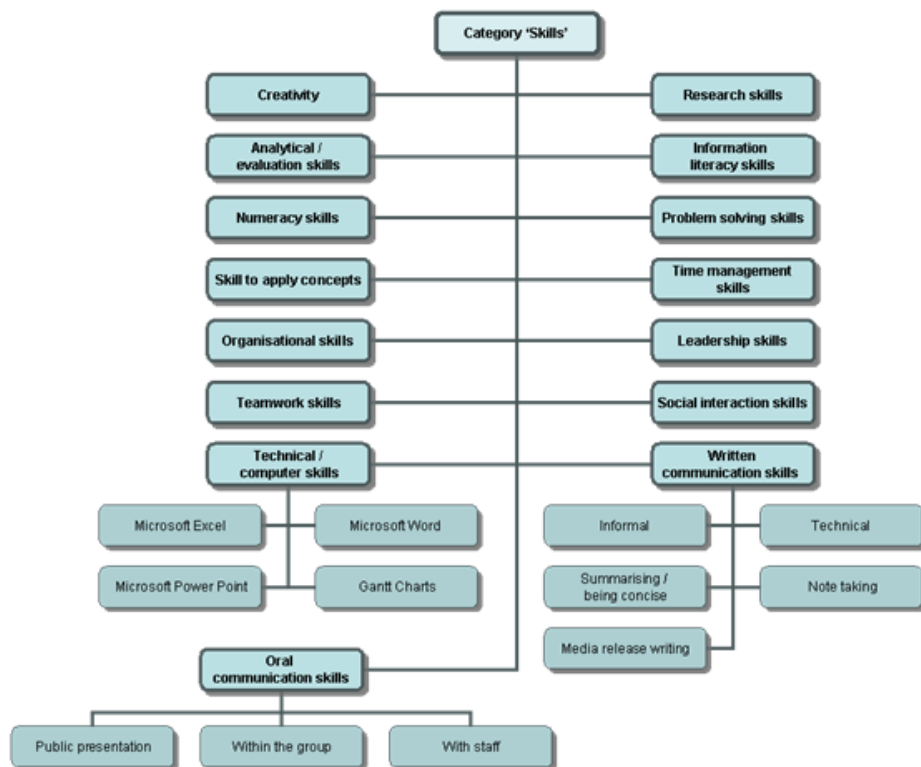
The first type: three categories related to service outcomes

These three categories reflect how students see their learning outcomes through a particular lens or from a particular

perspective. In many cases, the students tended to only use one lens through which to view their experiences. However, in some cases students would combine two lenses or perspectives, or even three.

First Category: 'Skills'

Map 2 below presents the sub-categories under the category 'Skills'. The term 'creativity' for example, is listed as a skill here, because this is how the students presented it.



Map 2: Category 'Skills'

Students who used this lens to interpret their learning outcomes prioritised skills rather than group work or project management. One student, despite difficulties with the English language, was able to convey the wide variety of skills s/he identified as learning outcomes:

The progress of my communication skills is resulting from doing the project as I should do a lot of research and readings..... my social interaction skills were also developed.....I should cooperate with my group mates which were different from which I had learnt in China. In China we were required doing most f school work independently.... my skill of information literate and numeracy were improved. I learnt how to select the available information for the final report.....

Another student focused on service learning as a key to developing skills:

There were certain skills which I required in order to complete this project but were not taught in any of my previous units. These include project management skills, presentation skills and time management skills..... It is my strong belief that a subject based around developing these skills would be very beneficial for students..... The fact that this unit is taught using the service learning technique has helped me to engage with the community and develop this diverse range of skills.....

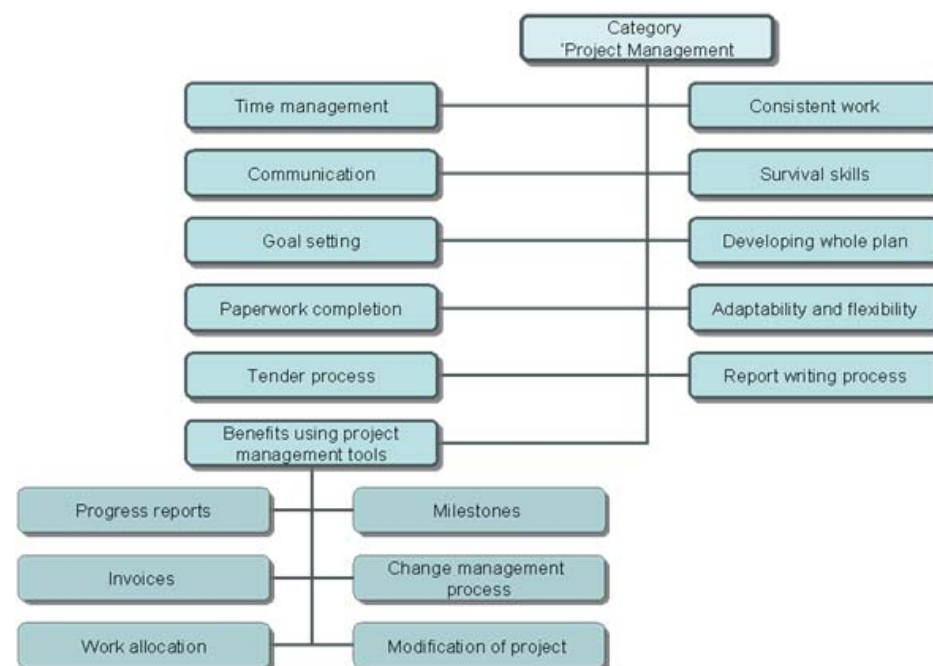
Yet another student focused on the difference between the skills learned in a co-operative learning environment and skills he or she had developed previously:

The skills I developed while collaborating with others were much different from the skills I developed while working independently before..... So I have never known that when doing such team work, there were so many skills that can be learned. The skills like a 'team player" (e.g. verbalising and justifying ideas, handling conflicts, collaborating, building consensus and disagreeing politely) are becoming more valuable and useful.....

Second Category: 'Project Management'

Here students prioritised the tasks they had mastered to manage their consultancy project and saw skills or group work primarily in this light. The sub-categories that emerged under this category are shown in Map 3 below.

Map 3: Category 'Project Management'



Students who chose a project management lens were particularly interested in the work experience aspect of their learning and how this related to the skills they would need for a successful career. The following statements are representative for this group:

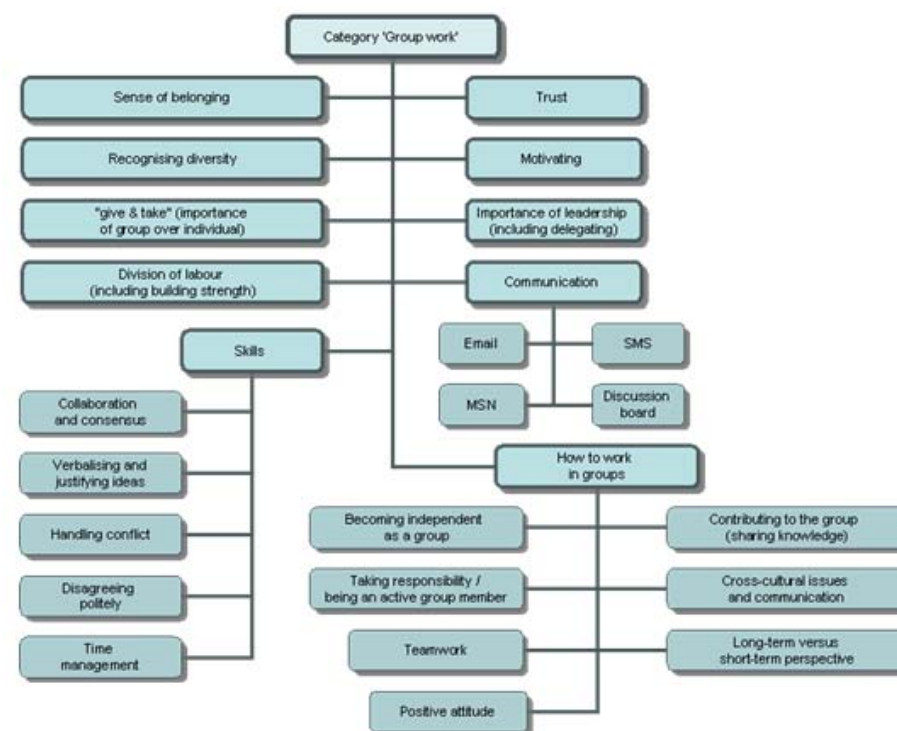
Another important lesson was learning about the consulting industry itself. Have for a long time known of consultants and heard they earn a good living. But I never really knew exactly what the job entailed..... I was able to learn about the consulting process and gain valuable industry experience.

But ultimately the engagement project provided experience, client contact, industry problem solving, real report writing, real deadlines, a real team to lead.....

Third Category: 'Group Work'

Some students were particularly keen about this aspect of their learning outcomes, and placed great emphasis on the group process, whilst other students paid little or no attention to this issue. A wide variety of sub-categories emerged in this category, which are listed in Map 4 below.

Map 4: Category 'Group Work'



As can be seen from Map 4, learning outcomes identified by students using this lens ranged across a wide variety of ‘group work’ issues, some of which are illustrated by the following quotes.

I also felt a sense of belonging as being part of the group provided a meaning to my work. Satisfaction and sense of belonging helped me to learn because it provided me with openness and ability to communicate.

I also gained a lot of competing perspectives of group work. Group work is not always the most effective way of making sure students learn everything....[it] means that most group members.... will not understand all parts of the assessment as they are not involved in it.... on the contrary, setting group tasks does prepare students for the kind of environment that they will be working in in the future – teams..... you get to share ideas, talk to one another....In talking and thinking about what you have read and learned about, you are further learning and developing Group work allows for a good flow of information..... you know that others are

dependent on the work that you are doing, thinking and learning.

I guess part of leadership though is about trusting other members of the team to come through with the goods and not be selfish and insist on doing everything, each individual brings with them their own unique talents and that makes them irreplaceable..... I know I did the right thing by my team, and helped the two presenting members achieve something that they may never have without that push..... I guess when push came to shove, no matter the learning styles we had in our group, and the way that some clashed with others, our team pulled together when we were expected to collapse. I am proud to have been a part of [this] group and will never forget the lessons I have learned about team work.

The second type: seven categories related to learning goals

These seven categories were shown in Map 1 above as ‘Self-understanding’; ‘Awareness of Critical Thought/Reflection’; ‘Learning Processes’; ‘Emotions’; ‘Social Insights’; ‘Factual Knowledge’; and “‘Rogue” Statements’. ‘Self-understanding’ is by far the widest category (see Map 5 below). It comprises a wide range of sub-categories and nodes. We will therefore discuss this category in more detail below. The fact that this category has many sub-categories with a variety of nodes reflects the width of issues on which the students reflected. A larger number of headings is not necessarily representative of a larger number of comments.

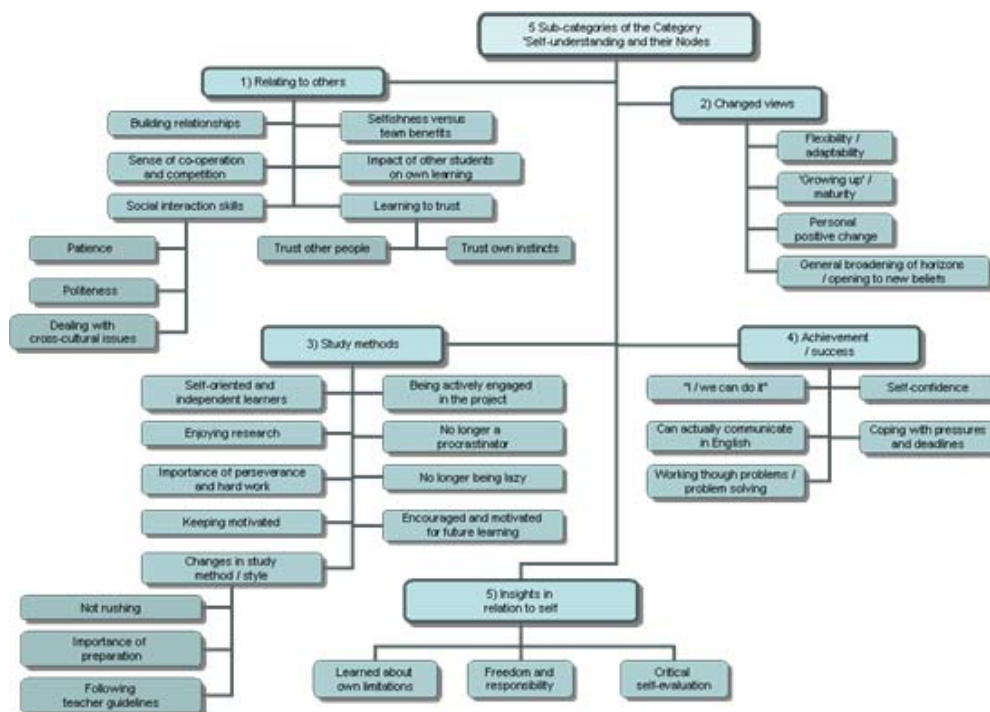
There is also the legitimate question whether it could simply be the case that the coders have a bias towards being more detailed regarding ‘self-understanding’ as opposed to, say, ‘factual knowledge’. The authors discussed this issue extensively between themselves and with peers, and while they are aware of the possibility, on balance they concluded that this was not the case.

The category ‘Self-understanding’ and its sub-categories

‘Self-understanding’ presented the widest variety of learning outcomes identified by the students, many of which were inter-related. This related to the wide variety in the students’ cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds. The students related their self-understanding often to a ‘changing’ process in their development, be it from an intellectual, social or emotional perspective. In many instances it related to reflection about responsibilities in terms of ‘the individual’ versus the wider group or team. It was found that there were strong links between this category and the category ‘Emotions’.

Five sub-categories were identified under the category of ‘self-understanding’. The sub-categories and their related nodes are shown below in Map 5. These sub-categories are discussed in further detail with accompanying relevant student comments.

Map 5: Five sub-categories of the Category 'Self-understanding' and their nodes



The first sub-category: 'Relating to others'

Some comments from students in this sub-category included references to different cultural backgrounds between students.

Yet it was interesting to note that students did not make direct connections between cross-cultural issues and their learning. Instead, students focused on relationship issues between people, who, in some instances, are from different cultural backgrounds.

I found working with international students a major challenge and put a lot of time into building a relationship with them so that they would begin to see that we needed them as much as they needed the Australian students.

I have learned how to communicate with local students, how to express my own ideas in a discussion meeting and how to work as a group.

The second sub-category: 'Changed views'

Students discussed that they had acquired new understandings and changed their views on a wide range of issues.

Due t the increased interaction, more understanding of each member's abilities and personal free time was developed. I

unexpectedly learnt that not all group members have the same amount of free time on their hands.

It is important to take students out of their comfort zones and what they are normally used to, to ensure that they are aware of the different circumstances they face.

This experience taught me.... that challenging other people's ideas and approaches is not necessarily a negative thing to do, and that it can help bring up knowledge and a new beneficial perspective to a problem.

The third sub-category: 'Study methods'

Some student comments under this sub-category can illustrate the kind of learning outcomes the students identified.

..... by throwing students into the deep and (and guiding them by providing support where needed), they will actually engage – find out exactly what is required and perform well by doing it on their own.... we had to get out there and 'do it ourselves'... which was ultimately very effective.

The activity of journal writing enabled me to challenge myself and figure out how to do things differently or better.

During this semester my learning style has changed from being a visual learner to learning through engaging in discussion.

The fourth sub-category: 'Achievement / success'

Comments under this sub-category included the notion that leadership contributed to confidence-building.

..... something that I was looking to improve upon is confidence. I believe this certainly was achieved.... I, for one, was not accustomed to taking upon leadership and tended to leave that to a person who put their hand up first..... The Engagement Unit changed this – I trusted my instincts and challenged myself to take hold of a leadership role....

Problem solving and success were also related to feelings such as courage

I realised I can resolve problems if I am brave enough to face them

The fifth sub-category: 'Insight in relation to self'

Some of the comments students made under this sub-category revealed interesting insights they had gained about themselves and included the following.

I have learned that I do have leadership and communication skills to get work done. My weakness is that I push people too hard until we have finished our work

I had a hard time letting go of the control.... my work did not fit with that of my groups. My style of research and writing was at a different expectation level to theirs. At times I felt rude and like a 'snob'...

We had considerable freedom in how we approached the construction of our project. Because of this, I felt that we were more involved in the project.... this lack of structure has given me the freedom to approach and solve problems.

Discussion of key aspects of the preliminary content map

Two major findings were identified from the preliminary content map. First, students chose one or several particular lenses to describe their learning outcomes that related to the service outcome, their consultancy report for the community or industry partner. Second, amongst the learning outcomes that related to the learning aspect of their service-learning experience, the students identified the largest number of learning outcomes in the field of self-understanding.

The relationship between these two findings, i.e. whether the selection of a particular lens in the first group is related to the learning outcomes identified in particular categories in the second group, needs further investigation.

The second finding, however, would indicate that over the semester something must have happened, which allowed students to understand more about themselves. The students were undertaking independent research to find answers, which had not

yet been discovered. They knew that their findings would have an impact on the course of action taken by real people in real life, and this exposed them to more stress than they had previously experienced at university. Yet why would this have such an impact on the students' self understanding as opposed to the six other substantive categories relating to learning goals?

The authors suspect that the reason lies in the specific setup of the service-learning projects in this course and in the opportunities that result from the rejection of an 'us' and 'them' structure characteristic of many service settings where students go out and serve 'others', outside the students' university world. Mitchell and Donahue (2009) discuss the impact such a setting has on students of colour, who may also be part of that 'other world', which students go 'out' to serve.

In the structure of this service learning project, students may research, but also inhabit, the outside world under examination. This outside world is no longer the 'other', but becomes a

legitimate part of university studies – and with this outside world the environments in which the students live become a legitimate aspect of university studies. While this may not be a major shift in many disciplines, in the field of economics and finance, with its notorious lack of self-reflectivity as a discipline, it is significant. It is a very significant shift for the students, and, once community engagement and service learning become a more accepted practice, for the discipline as a whole.

Yet this shift is not only in line with a model of service-learning where the community partner improves its *ortho-praxis* and the discipline expands its *ortho-doxis*, it is also in line with the model of course-integrated service-learning. In disciplines where the orthodoxy has limited traditions of self-reflectivity, the different aspects of this shift need to be reflected upon very carefully by practitioners of service-learning. Much can be learned from revisiting Mitchell and Donahue's chapter mentioned above in the context of a discipline's self-reflectivity. This paper contributes to this discussion by revisiting Mitchell and Donahue (2009) in light

of the learning outcomes our students identified in the field of self-understanding.

Once the outside world and the concomitant student environments have become a legitimate part of university studies, all students and their environments will be considered. Mitchell and Donahue (2009: 174) discuss the 'lack of awareness about race and racism' using the term 'dysconsciousness' (King 1991). This dysconsciousness is a description of privileged students' lack of awareness of certain aspects of their privilege – it is unseen and unacknowledged.

For a heterogeneous student body, which includes a wide range of pairs of disadvantage and privilege, it is crucial that any service-learning setting avoids the 'othering' of groups of students.

Dysconsciousness then refers not only to 'lack of awareness about race and racism'. What also needs to be overcome is the lack of awareness about other mechanisms of exclusion, of other forms of othering. In disciplines that lack such debates, this can be very

confronting for those academics and practitioners who set the agenda.

However, for the students, this can be a very fruitful experience. Students from backgrounds that have to date not been visible in the academic discipline they are studying, suddenly find themselves and their world a legitimate component of the discipline. This can be an empowering experience. Students on the other hand, who to date only saw their own backgrounds and circumstances reflected in the material they studied, and who were dysconscious of the privileges they enjoyed, can start thinking about such issues without putting an undue burden of 'double consciousness' (DuBois 1903/1982) on those students who do not share their privileges (Mitchell and Donahue 2009).

The fact that the category of 'Self-understanding' was the largest of the categories related to learning goals, would support this first interpretation of the preliminary content map of student-identified learning outcomes. In order to investigate this aspect

further, the content of the learning outcomes identified by students would now need to be reviewed and the following two questions addressed:

Question 1:

Do the three sub-categories 'Relating to others', 'Changed views' and 'Insights in relation to self' contain learning outcomes that are relevant for students who are disadvantaged and for students who are privileged? And are these learning outcomes relevant to disadvantage and privilege regarding students' cultural, educational or socio-economic backgrounds? And more generally, are the concepts of 'disadvantaged' and 'privileged' still meaningful in this context, and if so, in what sense?

The student who 'unexpectedly learnt that not all group members have the same amount of free time on their hands' would indicate a background that does not force him or her to work extensive hours to pay his or her way through university. However, the student who was not used to taking a leadership role does not

necessarily need to be from a disadvantaged background, which may indicate explanatory limitations of such a dichotomous framework.

Question 2:

Why did students not mention more learning outcomes that related to 'Factual knowledge', if the service projects challenged the academic discipline by explicitly addressing issues that traditionally were hidden by the discipline's dysconsciousness? Did the project not challenge the discipline enough, did the students not develop satisfactory answers, or would the students have needed more help specifically with identifying learning in this field?

In addressing this second question, there would again first need to be a detailed analysis of the actual learning outcomes discussed by students. A next step would need to investigate the links between particular projects and the learning outcomes identified by students in particular projects, as it could well be that different

types of projects make it easier or more difficult for students to identify learning outcomes in this field.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research project emerged out of a concern for respect for the voice of students. It therefore focused on the learning outcomes the students had identified themselves, rather than relying on a teacher-imposed agenda. This led to the emergence of a map of surprising data being identified from students' reflective learning statements and allowed the researchers to acknowledge learning outcomes that are as rich, complex and varied as the students' own cultural, socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Embedding this richness in the context of literature concerning the assessment of student learning in a service learning context, raised a number of challenging questions for community-engaged and service learning generally, but particularly in relation to disciplines with under-developed traditions of self-reflectivity.

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Classrooms without Borders: Using Academic Service Learning to Enhance Pre-Service Teachers' Understandings of Diversity and Difference

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Abstract

The development and first phase of implementation of a new pre-service teacher education initiative at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) called 'Classrooms without Borders' [CwB] commenced in 2010. As an academic service-learning subject in the Master of Teaching (Primary), CwB placed 300 students in various roles in a range of designated community agencies. The focus of these agencies is to support disadvantaged communities including those from Indigenous, refugee, culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD], and economically disadvantaged

backgrounds. UWS students are required to work with one agency for up to 30 hours for course credit and are simultaneously required to complete 6 formal academic learning components within the subject. These aim to develop understandings of Indigenous education, English as an additional language, diversity and difference, academic service learning, mentoring, and professionalism.

This paper explores the inception and implementation of CwB and the key procedures undertaken to establish the program. In particular, it examines the facets central to implementation, including the development of relationships with community agencies and the creation of online teaching and learning resources. It highlights how these resources aim to promote learning about learning. The paper concludes with qualitative comments based on participants' experiences.

Key words:

Classrooms without Borders, pre-service teacher education, service learning, diversity

Introduction

This paper focuses on an innovative, pre-service teacher-education subject delivered by the School of Education at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) called 'Classrooms without Borders' [CwB]. CwB is a mandatory core component of the pre-service primary teacher education degree.

Historically, the teaching population in Australia has been overwhelmingly white, middle class and English-speaking (Gallego, 2001), yet many teacher education graduates begin their teaching careers in Greater Western Sydney [GWS]. This is a very diverse, dynamic and complex region constituting approximately one-tenth of the nation's people. Its diversity is illustrated by the fact that about 30% of the population is born overseas and about half of the world's languages are spoken (NSW Government Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2009). Humanitarian

refugees are frequently settled in this region (Community Relations Commission, 2006). GWS has one of the largest urban populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in NSW. Socio-economically, the region ranges from areas of middle-class affluence to areas of extreme poverty and disadvantage. For pre-service teachers, the acquisition of knowledge and awareness about the diversity of this community is imperative to ensure that as future teachers, they understand the needs of the population in which they are most likely to begin their teaching career (Ferfolja, 2009; Ferfolja & Vickers, 2010).

Rather than relying on traditional tertiary methods of teaching, such as the information dissemination that occurs in the lecture/tutorial model (Abourezk & Patterson, 2003), in CwB students work in disadvantaged communities where they support adults and children as required and directed by a range of social service agencies including non-government, government, and not-for-profit organisations. This immersion coupled with formal academic study and reflective work simultaneously "prepare(s)

students for active citizenship” while involving them in “socially responsible action” (Howard, 1998, p. 21; King, 2004; Spencer, Cox-Peterson & Crawford, 2005, p. 2). It is envisaged that students’ commitment to social justice (Anderson & Erikson, 2003, p. 111) is enhanced through this work, particularly when coupled with reflective practices. Furthermore, pre-service teachers are required to undertake theoretical work that critically explores issues pertaining to diversity, disadvantage and community, prior to undertaking their community placement. Thus, students are learning about their learning - an important dimension of CwB. This approach enables students to begin to examine the discriminatory discourses that prevail in Australian society in relation to ‘difference’ and to see how these intersect with, and often arbitrarily inform, beliefs and practices. This is despite the fact that these discourses often reinforce stereotypes and mythologies about communities that exacerbate social injustice. Hence, not only are the ‘recipients’ in the exchange learning and receiving assistance, but those who ‘give’ are also

learning. This reciprocity is a crucial feature of academic service (Furco, 1996), and one actively sought in CwB.

Overview of Classrooms without Borders

CwB is a 10 credit point subject within the Bachelor of Arts (pathway to primary teaching) and the Master of Teaching (Primary). Students who are enrolled within the BA pathway to teaching may take CwB as one elective in their degree.

Alternatively, students can complete it as one of the 16 mandatory units of study in their Master of Teaching. CwB is located in the first semester of the degree, is offered to student intakes in both semesters, and is compulsory for all students undertaking primary pre-service teacher training at the UWS.

CwB contributes to the accreditation requirements of the New South Wales Institute of Teachers. It does not replace the traditional classroom practicum in the Master of Teaching (Primary), but rather, is an opportunity for students to experience different forms of teaching, learning and relating to others in the

community. The key philosophy of the subject is that teaching and learning is a 'complex interchange that is reciprocal, lifelong, and moreover without borders; experienced both in/outside of formal classrooms' (University of Western Sydney, 2010). To experience this, pre-service teachers are required to contribute up to 30 hours of service to a community agency during one semester. They concurrently undertake formal academic learning components that support their engagement with the communities, which are discussed in greater detail below.

Pre-service teachers are able to make a positive contribution to the lives of others by assisting those disadvantaged by life's circumstances – whether it is through the provision of academic assistance such as mentoring, tutoring, developing learning resources, conducting project work or offering other forms of support. Through this work, pre-service teachers can acquire deeper understandings and new ways of thinking about diversity and disadvantage (King, 2004). Such engagement can serve to

challenge and interrupt assumptions and prejudices learned throughout ones lifetime.

Three key facets were involved in the development of CwB. The first involved the development of relationships and the forming of partnerships with local communities and agencies. As with all collaborative enterprises, the development of positive partnerships with agencies is critical. The agencies generally provide services to the communities targeted by CwB as illustrated by Table 1. All agencies were initially contacted via email with an attached information package that included a letter describing the program and an agency information form. The latter enabled each agency to outline their needs and promoted a dialogue about how a partnership could be developed with the university. This was followed up by a phone call to discuss the subject's aims and requirements, the agency's needs and their possible potential involvement.

An information session was held mid December 2009 with eight interested agencies in attendance. Informal discussions centred

on the purpose of the unit, the involvement and commitment of the agencies and on the ideas as to how CwB could support the agencies while assisting in the development of important community, interpersonal and teaching skills for future UWS students. From this meeting, all bar one agency signed up to participate in the unit.

By the end of January 2010, after the summer break, student enrolments had almost doubled expectation and the recruitment of more agencies was needed. Information about CwB had begun to filter through the community agency network and agencies started approaching the university to participate. At the onset of the teaching semester in March, 17 agencies were on board and others were working with CwB staff to commence partnerships in second semester.

The agencies were invited to attend a whole day workshop. This was chiefly aimed at providing students with information about the subject, although it simultaneously offered the agency

representatives further insights into CwB. It provided the representatives with an opportunity to promote their agency by informing the students about the projects on which they could work, as well as any additional training required. For most agencies, at least one full day of targeted training for students was required prior to being permitted to commence agency placement activities. Some of the agencies also interviewed students before accepting them to fill placement vacancies.

Following the information day, students were expected to select and register their participation in an agency via an online database. Although most students received their first or second choice, enrolment was on a first come, first serve basis, and was dependent on students' interests, timetable, work and family commitments, and the location of the agency and each student's mode of, and access to, transport.

Table 1. Agencies involved with Classrooms without Borders in the first round of implementation

Agency	Community focus	Projects
One Laptop Per Child [OLPC]	Indigenous, remote communities and technology implementation	Deployment of XO laptops into schools and training for teachers and students
Anglicare Nepean Young Carers' Program	Young carers	Education support and after-school mentoring and tutoring
UX Fast Forward	High school students at risk of disengagement	Mentoring high school students, experiential learning activities and skill development
UX Indigenous Students support mentoring program [ISSMP]	Indigenous high school students	Building Indigenous students' academic and study skills, knowledge of future academic careers and confidence in setting and achieving education goals
Street University	Students for whom mainstream school is not suitable	After school mentoring and creative workshops
St Vincent de Paul Society Assisting Refugee Kids [SPARK]	Refugee primary school students	Literacy mentoring programs
Department of Human Services: Housing Claymore	Socio-economic disadvantage	Literacy programs
Together for Humanity	Primary and high school students	Religious tolerance and cultural diversity school workshops

Save the Children	Disadvantaged, Indigenous, migrant and refugee children and young people	Child's rights education and delivery of arts based workshops
Inspire Community Services	Socio-economic disadvantage	Assisting in writing and presenting workshop material for the XChange and Social Welfare programs
Cubby House Green Valley Resource Centre	0-5 years children with developmental issues	Assisting with early literacy and numeracy programs and fine motor skills
Youth Off the Streets – Chapel School	Students at risk of or already disconnected with mainstream education	Working with students, assisting with particular educational, social and developmental issues.
Campbelltown City Library	Local primary school children	After school literacy and tutoring program
Blue Mountains Multicultural Residents Associations	Multicultural communities within the Blue Mountains	Promotion and capacity building of the agency. The creation of artistic and creative workshops on cultural diversity run by MRA members
Bass High School	Junior high school students	Literacy and numeracy tutoring
Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation [ALNF] *	Indigenous remote communities	Working within the local school as well as on community literacy projects
Overseas Professional Experience *	Supporting work in schools	Students work in a school in either China or Penang

Another key facet involved in the development of CwB was the creation of resources aimed at increasing students' understandings of the communities with whom they were to work. To prepare the students for the many challenges they would face in the field and to enhance their understandings of diversity and difference, six online and face-to-face modules, known as 'components' were developed by academics and external consultants. These components focused on the key areas of: academic service learning; professionalism; diversity and difference; mentoring; English as an additional language [EAL]; and Indigenous education which was developed by academics from the Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education at the UWS. These last three components were predominantly online, requiring students to work at their own pace but within a required timeframe. These complex resources comprised a range of audio-visual media including staff video vignettes, slide-casts, readings, links to external readings and films, online discussion boards, short answer questions, written reflections and interactive student activities, such as quizzes and discussion

boards. The remaining focus topics were delivered via the traditional lecture approach.

The service learning component was presented to the students in lectures and face-to-face tutorials as it was a new area of endeavour for the students. The topic was divided into three distinct sections which included learning with, learning about and learning for service learning. Students learned: 'with' service learning by reading and listening to stories of others' work with communities; they learned 'about' service learning through understanding the organisational, academic and social skills required to undertake their service; and they learned 'for' service learning s by implementing the knowledge they had gained to competently and confidently undertake the placement.

In addition, students received guest lectures on ethics and counselling, as well as comprehensive, mandatory Child Protection training. These lectures were all crucial considering the potential vulnerability of the populations with whom the

agencies work. It was equally important that CwB students who may have felt vulnerable or stressed by the possible challenges of CwB to have support available to them and to know how to access this assistance in times of need.

As part of the conceptual design of CwB was for students to learn about their learning, the majority of the formal academic work was conducted at the beginning of semester. In this way, students gained critical, theoretical insights into some of the disadvantages experienced by the targeted communities. Opportunities were provided for students to discuss issues in tutorials early on in the semester and tutorials held later in the session offered time and space for students to 'debrief'. This approach was further reinforced through the structure and requirements of the two formal assessment tasks that needed to be completed to fulfil the subject. The first assessment was a 2000 word position paper submitted half way through the semester that required students to undertake research into community needs. The second was an electronic poster (e-poster) developed by small groups of

students who worked in the same agency. These e-posters reviewed the group's service learning experience and required students to prepare an electronic presentation no longer than eight minutes duration which was fully automated, narrated and included pictures, animations, sound and music. The e-posters were presented at a student conference at the end of semester that all students had to attend in order to share their experiences and give feedback to other groups. Agency representatives were also invited to participate.

Although on the whole successful, the first iteration of CwB was not without challenges for the academics and administrative staff involved. For example, it was anticipated that the initial cohort of students would be approximately 150. At the whole day workshop, there were 318 enrolled though 278 were enrolled following HECS census date. This flux in numbers meant that more agency placements needed to be found in a short time and then agencies had to be notified when students withdrew from the unit. This level of change meant that both the agencies and

academic staff were continually trying to ensure that the needs of the students and the clientele were met. The amount of follow up required to determine whether all students were placed with a suitable agency and that no agency was left without students was extremely time consuming. However, challenges are expected in the first implementation of any program, and it is envisaged that further iterations will result in an increasingly stream-lined process.

Evaluation and research

Ongoing research is being conducted on the perceived value and effect of CwB, including a longitudinal review. At this early stage, pre and post online surveys were available for students and agencies to complete, qualitative group interviews were conducted with students, and agency staff were interviewed at the end of the first iteration of the program. On the whole, despite its complexities and short development time, the first semester of CwB was extremely successful. All students were placed with an agency, and all agencies had students placed with them. The

importance of CwB was overwhelmingly acknowledged and understood by the students and the agencies. As one agency representative commented:

I think it's really great. ... We think that all universities should do it. ... Understanding the communities that they'll be working in is really important. (Agency representative, interview, June 2010).

Initial student feedback has largely been both constructive and positive, providing a solid foundation for further refinement and expansion. It is clear from the many student comments of the nature below that students typically learnt much about diversity and difference through their CwB experience. Although further in-depth analysis is required of the data, it is clear that some students have discursively re-positioned their understandings and the ways that they understand different identities. These kinds of developments are illustrated by comments such as the following:

Something I learnt is that not everyone is the same. ... Meeting the people you realise that they are different; their circumstances are so different. And you can't treat everyone the same because they are so not. I'm so passionate now... some children in the primary school, you [ask] where's your jumper and they don't have one because they can't afford a jumper. You have to think of those factors. (CwB student, group interview, June 2010)

The whole Indigenous issue, I felt so in the dark about it and after this subject it has opened me up heaps ... I think that's really important ... I really had to think about my position and the whole concept of discourse ... I was made aware of it for the first time to be honest. ... It has changed me definitely and the way I think. (CwB student, group interview, June 2010)

Conclusion

The development of a comprehensive service learning subject that meets the needs of the students at the university as well as the

many agencies in the local community has been challenging and will continue to develop in subsequent deliveries. The analysis of each semester evaluations, combined with the ongoing research will inform the future growth and enrichment of CwB to help it to meet the needs of all involved. Importantly, the research will also provide vital knowledge about the benefits that service learning approaches offer in the development of socially just teachers who are cognizant of the diversity in their classrooms and who are willing and able to effectively teach for all.

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Sceptics, Utilitarians and Missionaries: Senior managers' perceptions of engagement in a research intensive Australian university

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Abstract:

Senior managers at Australian universities are increasingly being asked to plan and manage for engagement. However there appears to be confusion as to what engagement entails, and how engagement relates to both everyday operational tasks and to the purpose of the university more broadly. This paper provides rich description of senior managers' perceptions of engagement at one research intensive Australian university. Currently, senior managers' perceptions of engagement vary significantly, to the

point of opposing perspectives. The spectrum of values and perceptions can be clustered around three personas: Sceptics, Utilitarians and Missionaries. Despite the differing perspectives and considerable confusion about engagement, there is broad support from all senior managers for the University to progress an institutional engagement agenda. Results presented in this paper highlight the misconceptions, opportunities and constraints confronting one university looking to adopt an engagement mission.

Keywords:

Engaged scholarship, community engagement, civic mission, engagement audit, engagement mission.

Setting the broad context

There has been much attention paid to the broad concept of engagement within the higher education sector over the past 10

or so years (*e.g.* Puntasen, Kleiman, Taylor, & Boothroyd, 2008; Talloires Network, 2005; Bruckardt, Holland, Percy, & Zimpher, 2004; Ansley & Gaventa, 1997). Despite this attention, it appears that understanding of engagement still remains a fuzzy concept for those within the academy, a concept which the Association of Commonwealth Universities (2001:2) suggests “... is more widely commended than properly understood”.

This paper presents findings on senior managers’ perceptions of engagement at one research intensive Australian university. As such, it moves away from the twin aspects of broad-scale theorising around engagement and the description of specific engagement initiatives that appear to dominate the published literature. It reports on analysis of one dataset drawn from an eighteen month meta-project at the University of Queensland (UQ). UQ is recognised as one of Australia’s leading universities. It is a member of the ‘Group of Eight’ Australian sandstone universities, consistently ranks among the leading 100 universities in the world and is acknowledged as one of the top

three research universities in Australia. In 2008, there were over 5,800 staff and approximately 39,000 students (University of Queensland, 2009:3).

The meta-project focused on an institutional audit of engagement and service activities at the University. It involved a comprehensive review of engagement literature, an audit of organisational units, in-depth case studies, an online staff survey and analysis of Academic Board Reviews (Cuthill, 2010; Cuthill & Dowd, 2008). The broad intent of the meta-project was to support development of a better understanding of and stronger approach to engagement at this University. This work was sponsored by the Vice-Chancellor indicating clear institutional support for developing a stronger engagement mission. Subsequently, recommendations from the audit report have been used to help frame relevant institutional policy and operational responses in this area (University of Queensland, 2009a).

This paper focuses on analysis of 32 interviews conducted with senior managers with a specific focus on their perceptions of engagement. Such information has relevance for a broad audience in that it makes explicit the misconceptions, opportunities and constraints confronting senior managers who are looking to implement an engagement mission.

The historical and contemporary context for university engagement

Historically, the idea that ‘western’ universities have a ‘civic mission’ dates back to ~1200AD with the advent of the earliest European institutions such as Bologna, Paris and Oxford (Brown & Muirhead, 2001). This historical foundation has fluctuated over the subsequent millennium with institutions constantly “... in conflict with their societies over missions and roles, and sometimes over ideologies and politics” (Altbach, 2008:5). Most recently, Boyer (1990 & 1996:19) reignited this discussion arguing the need to once again connect

“...the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic and ethical problems ...”. This statement provides a focal point for ongoing discussion on a contemporary civic mission for universities.

It is widely argued within academia that universities contribute to their ‘communities’ through diverse engagement initiatives, and much recent discussion and debate has taken place (*e.g.* Global University Network for Innovation, 2008; Puntasen, Kleiman, Taylor, & Boothroyd, 2008; Talloires Network, 2005; Bruckardt, Holland, Percy, & Zimpher, 2004; Ansley & Gaventa, 1997). A widely cited definition suggests it involves “... collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Carnegie Foundation, no date). This sets an expansive platform for understanding and defining engagement. For example, this might include diverse activities such as alumni, health clinics, community based

participatory research, research partnerships, art galleries and museums, outreach programs and service learning, under the engagement umbrella.

Such activities are consistent with the altruism of a 'civic mission'. However, contemporary concepts of engagement are argued to move beyond a singular focus on altruism. There is also recognition that engagement provides a valid methodological basis for scholarly work. This has been recently framed as 'engaged scholarship' (Cuthill, 2010a; Holland, 2005; Boyer, 1996; Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott & Trow, 1994) and as such is argued to provide a valid, practical and effective approach to scholarship,

Increasingly, academics will accept that they share their territory with other knowledge professionals. The search for formal understanding itself, long central to the academic life, is moving rapidly beyond the borders of disciplines and their locations inside universities. Knowledge is being keenly pursued in the context of its application and in a dialogue of practice with theory through a network of policy-advisers,

companies, consultants, think-tanks and brokers as well as academics and indeed the wider society (Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2001:i).

The concept of engaged scholarship explicitly focuses on relationships and collaboration as central to the production of knowledge, with an emphasis on trust, respect, tolerance and shared learning within the scholarship process. This approach suggests a move away from the academic as the expert producer of knowledge, to a focus on collaborative knowledge production processes which respect different types of knowledge (*e.g.* see Brown, 2006), such as:

1. collective cultural knowledge (e.g. Indigenous knowledge);
2. individual local knowledge;
3. political knowledge (a broad concept of 'political' which incorporates all those who hold power within decision making processes); and
4. scientific knowledge.

In contrast to traditional forms of scholarship, engaged scholarship can be characterised by four key criteria. First, it is transdisciplinary, moving beyond the constraints of individual academic disciplines (Gibbons, *et. al.* 1994; Max-Neef, 1991). Second, it is participatory, process orientated and relationship-based. It involves diverse stakeholders in genuine collaborative processes (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). With engaged scholarship the scholar becomes involved in the real world, in all of its messiness, time constraints, personalities, competing agendas, and the need for operational as well as research outcomes.

Third, it is reflective and iterative. Participants explicitly review their progress, their successes and failures, and adapt and refine their scholarly activity as required (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). Fourth, quality within engaged scholarship is both academically defined and socially accountable (Gibbons *et. al.* 1994). As such, it is action focused looking to address real world issues.

An array of inter/national associations, academic journals and community focused initiatives have now formed with the intention of progressing various agendas relating to engaged scholarship, engagement or similar concepts (*e.g.* Talloires Declaration, Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance, Carnegie Foundation, Global University Network for Innovation, and Campus Compact). Overall, there is increasing recognition that engaged scholarship provides an exciting opportunity for universities to strengthen and expand on their current scholarship. As a result, universities in many countries are looking to develop mission statements, and policy and operational responses relating to broad concepts of engagement.

However, as MacLabhrainn & McIlrath (2007:xxiii) argue “... it is essential within the institutionalisation process that each institution arrives at its own definition and understanding”. Engagement can be seen as context specific to each individual institution and directly relates to factors such as the

institution's history, culture and resources (Winter, Wiseman & Muirhead, 2005). Therefore, a necessary first step when moving towards an institutional engagement mission is to identify and acknowledge the current context, by developing understanding of existing policy, perceptions and practices relating to engagement.

This paper presents analysis of 32 in-depth semi-structured interviews, conducted with senior managers as part of a broader institutional engagement audit (see Cuthill 2010 for a detailed description of the broader audit research project). The purposive sample included senior academics (*e.g.* Deans, Deputy/Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Institute Directors) from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, and senior managers from areas such as finance, human resources, planning and infrastructure. The interview participants are typically a leader of their respective organisational unit within the University.

The intent of the interviews, as one component of the meta-project, was to collect information relating to four engagement sub-topics 1) Strategy, 2) Activities, 3) Management, and 4) Impact. However, the secondary analysis reported in this paper focuses primarily on responses which provide description of senior managers' perceptions of engagement. The rich description drawn from this analysis provides a platform for ongoing institutional dialogue, making explicit the misconceptions, opportunities and constraints confronting senior managers who are being asked to implement a University engagement mission.

Working from data analysis, senior managers' perceptions of engagement are seen to vary across a spectrum of perspectives suggesting three personas: Sceptics, Utilitarians and Missionaries. The three personas, which were derived from the research data, are used to indicate where senior managers' perceptions are positioned in relation to a new University priority on engagement.

Sceptics see engagement as largely outside of the core work and mission of the University and/or as unnecessary in their work unit,

- ... we mustn't ignore that fact that we are funded first and foremost as a university to serve the learning, teaching and research needs of the University ... [any focus on engagement] needs to be tempered with a recognition of what they're here first and foremost to do ...
- In terms of actually getting out there and having meetings with external people, we do very little of that. It's all work driven. We're not going down to businesses, i.e. architectural offices, councils, play groups, we're not into that. We're into doing our job ... We tend to focus more on what we consider work ... my involvement with outside the University is very limited ...

Clustered around the middle of the spectrum are the Utilitarians. Senior managers expressing this perspective consider engagement to be something that is relevant or useful in certain

contexts. For example, practising engagement might be necessary to achieve some desired outcome,

... [we] need the University to have a good public profile – that doesn't always involve engagement but it's helped by it.

A consistent view expressed by Utilitarians is that engagement within the University is practised by individuals, rather than being strategically led by the institution,

- ... community engagement as with most other University activities is absolutely driven, not by the organisation but by the individuals, and if they feel it's important they will do it, and if they don't feel it's important they won't.
- Certainly, there are individuals who are heavily engaged, or involved with people ... they're on committees, boards, professional bodies ... So, there are a number of people who get involved at that sort of level and then there are a number of people who don't. So, it's not as though it's a

uniform thing across the faculty, but there are those who are active and those who are less active, or even non-active

Missionaries present a third persona which strongly reflects the 'civic mission' of a university, a mission they argue is based on mutually beneficial relationships. These managers see engagement as an essential activity within a contemporary Australian university; activity which explicitly contributes to building a just and sustainable world,

- ... *[a university's mission] is first and foremost to do research for the betterment of society and to produce graduates and professionals for the betterment of society* ...
- ... *we can't do it without a partnership model and we know that we're terribly dependent on good relationships with our partners and we know that it's mutual, it's a privilege and a responsibility ...*
- ... *we are a public university and therefore effectively we have a civic mission ... at the end of day, this institution is*

established for one very simple reason and that is to enhance the wellbeing of the citizens ...

These three personas Sceptics, Utilitarians and Missionaries are used in this paper to illustrate and differentiate senior manager's perspectives with respect to an impending University engagement mission. While these personas might seem clean and definitive, there is a good degree of inherent 'messiness' that confuses explicit categorisation of any individual manager.

The following discussion, presented under three key themes identified during data coding, draws from these persona to illustrate the misconceptions, opportunities and constraints confronting senior managers. Themes include,

1. General perceptions of engagement,
2. Costs and benefits of engagement, and
3. Moving forward, embracing engagement.

General perceptions of engagement

As indicated by the three personas, senior managers' general perceptions of engagement vary greatly. This situation reflects the broader literature around this topic which suggests that the concept of 'engagement', including the many affiliated terms used to describe related activities, lacks clear definition (Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2001). For example, there is significant diversity across Australian higher education institutions regarding engagement, "... due largely to the different histories and campus locations, and the different ways in which universities define and relate to their multiple communities" (Winter, Wiseman & Muirhead, 2005:6).

It is useful to note that, at the time of the interviews, there was no clearly articulated mission for engagement at UQ, and each senior manager's understanding of engagement was based in their individual knowledge, experience or interests. A high degree of uncertainty was evident particularly among Sceptics and Utilitarians, with interviewees requesting clarification of

'engagement' in terms of their specific work roles. Various terms including 'university engagement', 'community engagement', and 'community service' were used interchangeably during interviews. To avoid confusion, 'engagement' is used as a generic term in the following reporting.

Sceptics perceive engagement as an additional activity beyond the central focus of the University and the individual's specific work unit. When engagement is acknowledged as taking place Sceptics understand it as an activity practiced by an individual, and should not overly interfere with 'work' activities. As such, these senior managers see no need to encourage engagement in their work units,

- ... not specifically. We've never been told that it's part of our thing to do ...

Utilitarians tend to take a very pragmatic approach to engagement, seeing it as an appropriate way for doing some University business,

- ... different bits of the University have different jobs to do and would be more or less engaged with the community ... So, you just have to recognise the gathering of knowledge is the primary purpose of the University and the gathering of knowledge that you are doing impacts, and is impacted by community opinion, then yes, you have to engage the community. But if the gathering of knowledge is in areas which the community would find difficult to understand, say nuclear physics, then I really don't think there is an impact and it's a little harder to engage with them and maybe not worth the bother.
- ... we just don't go out there and engage; we only enter into partnerships and collaboration or other relationships because by so doing that is the necessary mechanism by which we achieve our goals ... essentially we engage because that's the strategy by which we achieve our outcomes.

Missionaries however place strong emphasis on the building of long-term relationships, tending to emphasise the importance

of genuine collaboration, respect, and mutual benefits. This approach supports a broad view of ongoing benefits to diverse participants, the University and the common good,

- ... part of the strength ... is the synergy between current projects and future projects ... So, we can start looking at this University as not a discreet compendium of 2000 individuals, but as a reservoir of infrastructure and expertise that can be aligned to critical needs of the community.

The emergence of engagement as a focus of University policy and strategy is fairly recent, and managers feel they have been left behind, or that the terminology or language is unfamiliar, even though they might support the general concept,

... it wasn't until recently when we've started using this term community engagement as a particular process that I have realised it's very much aligned to my philosophic approach, to the way in which a university should operate within its community. So, I suppose I've been pushing stuff around

community engagement before the term became more readily known ...

However, the general confusion reported in interviews is problematic. For example, how can engagement be planned, resourced, rewarded and evaluated if senior managers have no shared understanding of what is involved?

Interviewee understandings of engagement diverge from very specific to very encompassing, the latter including virtually everything that happens at a university. In particular, an all-encompassing conceptualisation of engagement has considerable capacity to create a sense of the absurd reducing engagement to a meaningless concept,

- *Okay, yes, so it's anything. It's extremely broad. It makes it quite difficult ... so, a definition of community engagement would be a good start ...*

- *In terms of research collaborations and contracts, there's a multitude of people responsible for those things. They*

wouldn't call it community engagement though and that's why I'm struggling. No one would ever use the term community engagement in that context; it would be ridiculous ...

Despite the apparent confusion, both Utilitarians and Missionaries consider engagement to be of fundamental importance to the University. Sceptics see it as a relevant framing for some activities 'in addition' to core University work, more in line with a traditional community service perspective.

Currently, a lack of clear institutional direction is seen to underpin the confusion among senior managers, and even the most passionate advocates are struggling to move the engagement agenda forward at the institutional level. As a result, it seems that if the University does not explicitly identify and value engagement it is not likely to be given a high priority on a senior manager's agenda. Interviewees suggest that a clear understanding of the

costs and benefits of engagement would provide a solid foundation from which this agenda can be progressed.

Costs and benefits of engagement

Many assumptions relating to the costs and benefits of engagement were put forward during interviews. One of the most comprehensive recent studies in this area suggests this is a common situation, stating that “... there is very little detailed data currently available on the actual costs and benefits of participation in practice ... with costs to participants rarely covered ... [while] benefits tend to be recorded qualitatively, if at all ...” (Involve, 2005:15).

Undoubtedly, interviewees see engagement as a high cost activity and attribute this situation to engagement being seen as ‘extra’ work,

- ... a personal time gift to the University or to the community
... (interview comment).

Resource implications are seen to constrain engagement efforts,

- ... staff are not encouraged in any way to do community engagement or to go out into the community ...
- ... the University doesn’t value this as much as it should.
That’s the reason people don’t do it, they’re moving away from it ... the bottom line is the funding model that we have does not encourage this activity, in fact it effectively discourages it.

Subsequently, engagement is not seen as a career enhancing activity,

- I know that when staff go up for their promotion, engagement won’t be taken into account. It would be dishonest for me to say this will be taken into account under the University’s current policies, that’s just not the case.

However there are some exceptions to engagement being perceived as ‘extra’ non-core activities. For example, one

participant refers to (nationally competitive) 'linkage' research grants which are designed to encourage collaboration between the University and 'industry' partners (incorporating stakeholders from public, private and community sectors). Development of these grant proposals is viewed as legitimate and necessary work, an important pre-requisite for career advancement. Still, interviewees suggest that there is little limited support for the considerable effort required to undertake such a task (in addition to allocated workloads),

- *... a huge amount of personal interaction with the key stakeholders, with industry partners, and because those industry partners vary so much in scale and activity, getting the right entry point, ensuring you're in touch with the right decision makers is pretty important.*

Again, while there is a high expectation that academics will engage with multiple stakeholders in developing these proposals, there is little recognition of the extra time required to undertake engaged activities such as these. However, in the case of 'linkage'

grants, a successful proposal will be recognised and rewarded. The time cost and 'extra' effort is balanced through a tangible benefit to both the University and the individual. However, this is not the case with many other engagement activities where there are less tangible benefits that may not be evident in the short term.

Generally, senior managers perceive engagement to be time consuming and lacking appropriate funding and institutional support. This perception is consistent across all three personas regardless of the importance they attribute engagement, or whether engagement is formally listed as part of their work role. They argue that genuine engagement requires dedicated time for relationship building. If this is not explicitly supported, it is likely to cause problems in busy and time poor work environments. Interviewees suggest universities need to acknowledge this time requirement if they move to formally identify engagement as part of the institutional mission.

It is difficult to justify the 'extra' resources required for engagement activities in a tight fiscal environment, without first having a clear understanding of costs and benefits. While interviewees generally agree that, across the institution, there is already some investment in various forms of engagement, little evaluation of this work has been undertaken.

Despite the uncertainty as to what engagement might mean within specific work contexts, and perceptions that it is a high cost activity, there was generally strong support across all three personas to move forward with an institutional engagement mission.

- *I see there are enormous opportunities for the University to engage with the community and I think this is one of the things we don't understand yet, a few people do, but not as a broad cultural understanding ...*

Moving forward, embracing engagement

While senior managers indicate support for moving forward with an institutional engagement mission, the reasons cited and motivations for wanting to move forward vary. This variation by and large mirrors the perspectives of the three personas. While not perhaps overly enthusiastic, Sceptics see a strategic engagement focus as a reasonable way to strengthen the core focus of the University,

- *... a much more sensible investment of the University's resources than just handing over the toys as [an act of] charity.*

Utilitarians argue that better engagement will help the University be more competitive in the 'university market place',

- *... this image push of being the sandstone, the elite. Who cares? ... They've just got to get smart about how they're linking with a broad range of stakeholders, we've been way too complacent for too long.*

Missionaries suggest that a stronger engagement focus is a moral imperative,

- ... we should be engaged in work that is not only intellectual in regard to science and learning, but is morally analytic, morally critical and developing a moral leadership role ...

Regardless of the rationale for endorsing engagement senior managers acknowledge the need for institutional level direction, moving away from a piecemeal approach where engagement ... *sort of just happens* ... to a situation where the institution recognises, supports and values engagement. Leadership is required in building a University mission and culture that facilitates a flourishing of genuine engagement initiatives. Staff need to know what the University wants to achieve regarding engagement and also that they will be supported in responding to these directions,

- ... you've got to find the people who are talented and encourage them and yes sure maybe give them a part of their employment where they go and explicitly do that ... with current models it isn't possible to do that.

Recognition of staff, including clear communication describing successful engagement initiatives, is important. Interviewees suggest that there are examples of world class engagement currently being implemented. However, there is little profiling of this work and there is frustration that this work is not more visible,

- ... we're so involved in doing it, that we don't have enough time, or we're not strategically smart enough, to let the rest of the University know what we're doing.

Overall, interview participants suggest a number of requirements that will help progress an engagement agenda at this University. First and foremost is a clear University mission that defines engagement for this institution, and provides direction to policy development and operations. Appropriate resources are required

to support achievement of the mission, as is recognition of and support to staff who implement appropriate engagement initiatives. Finally, a change of institutional culture towards engagement requires a long term outlook,

- *... certainly everything that's related to community engagement is long term. So, there has to be a very long term approach to developing those relationships because you don't meet someone and then ask them for money. The first part of that is knowing what relationships already currently exist. It's certainly something that we are quite interested in terms of helping to coordinate a centralised strategy ... an understanding of what is already happening out on the ground ...*

Discussion

This paper works from the premise that if a university is looking to establish an institutional engagement mission, it is first necessary to develop an understanding of the perceptions of senior managers who will ultimately have operational responsibility for achieving that mission. Clearly, an engaged

university will require cultural transformation at all levels of the institution (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). However, it seems evident that this cultural transformation will only succeed if senior managers collectively understand, lead and support the development and implementation of a clear institutional engagement mission.

There was broad confusion (at the time of interviews) as to the institutional engagement mission at this University, resulting in considerable variation in the level of and commitment to engagement. Where engagement activity is occurring, it is most likely to be instigated by individual staff or at the school level in response to specific teaching, research or service interests. Institutional level engagement initiatives were seldom mentioned during interviews.

As such, senior managers primarily interpret engagement through the lens of their everyday work environment, reflecting both their individual opportunities to engage, as well as the diverse operational plans and organisational structures of each unit.

There is little indication from this study that either the disciplinary or professional background of the individual has any impact on the engagement persona.

Sceptics exclude engagement from the 'real' work of the University and/or their personal work units. They tend to see a new focus on engagement in a similar vein as community service; tasks that can be undertaken in addition to the real work of teaching and research. Utilitarians value engagement in a practical sense, arguing that it can effectively facilitate University business in certain situations. They highlight the diversity in how staff and work units are positioned regarding the University Mission. Missionaries emphasise engagement as being central to the overall purpose and function of a university. They believe engagement represents an ethical, informed way of working collaboratively with diverse University stakeholders, and suggest it as a valid approach to knowledge production.

The different perceptions of engagement, highlighted through the three personas discussed in this paper, are problematic. Without clear direction and support, engagement activities will continue to be implemented sporadically and links to the University mission may be tenuous. Issues of 'quality' at this university are seen to be paramount, whether in research or teaching and learning, and it would seem necessary to build such considerations into an engagement agenda at an early stage. Without a focus on internal capacity building, it will be difficult to ensure quality outcomes across the diverse suite of engagement activities currently being undertaken (Cuthill & Fien, 2005).

Currently, there appears to be little institutional value placed on engagement and as a result there is limited commitment to, or reporting of engagement activity. Perceptions of engagement as being resource intensive appear to outweigh considerations of benefits and constrain efforts towards building an institutional engagement agenda. Beyond participant's personal experience, there is little evidence relating to the cost and benefits of

engagement at UQ. This finding is consistent with other reports (e.g. Involve, 2005). Further research in this area is required to increase understanding of potential returns from any ongoing investment in engagement.

Despite the differing perspectives and confusion about engagement there is a general consensus among senior managers for a stronger institutional approach to engagement, for increased support to staff undertaking such work, and for current engagement to be made more visible. Shared understandings of engagement within the University must be developed, along with clear analysis of the costs and benefits involved. The University must be prepared to demonstrate its recognition of and commitment to engagement through appropriate institutional resourcing of activities and acknowledgement of staff success through career pathways and promotion opportunities.

Information presented here, relating to senior managers' perceptions of engagement, forms one component of a meta-

project which audited engagement and service activity at this university. This information makes explicit the misconceptions, opportunities and constraints facing senior managers at one research intensive university. It is hoped this paper will provide useful insights for other universities looking to establish and implement an engagement mission. However, ultimately each university will need to undertake its own journey based on a clear understanding of the institution's historical and cultural context, and current perceptions and future aspirations regarding engagement.

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