Papers to the

National Conference of the
Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA)
Whyalla, South Australia, 2009

Contents

Preface

The Australian Journal of University-Community Engagement is a refereed journal published twice a year by the Australian University 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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Editorial Introduction

The cross section of development of engagement between the tertiary sector and our communities is growing with a wide range of engagement between academics and the community and students and their communities.

The strength of the engagement is demonstrated in the range of papers presented at the conference of AUCEA and are presented here for the calibre of their work.

The U3A/UniSA partnership reported by Ellis identified the need to break down the perceived barriers between 'town and gown'. Through the use of a survey of both groups it was identified that the facilities which were made available as well as knowledge and resources were factors that contributed to the ongoing relationship.

Francisco, Pratter and St Vincent Welch draw the focus towards the development of internal relationships to ensure the sustainability of community engagement. With numerous multi campus universities throughout Australia and the need to link with each other and the community the issues raised are prevalent to the tertiary sector as one way forward.

Garlick and Matthews focus on a different concept of engagement creating a new concept of 'ecoversity'. Drawing up on the experiences of two English universities they propose that the way forward to meet the global issues is through a model of engagement which develops our understandings of self and relationships with the wider community. They present challenge for each institution, as engagement with the community needs to be developed and maintained.

Whereas Holland, Lee and McGuiggan worked with final year students within the Bachelor of Business and Commerce degree to link community based learning with engagement and assessment of the students. From this work they have developed a community based learning framework. This is clearly a direction many faculties are looking toward and with guidance may be able to put it in place for their students.

In another approach to engagement between the studies and industry experts saw the academic content being presented by industry partners. The skills and knowledge brought to the teaching and learning at the university were examined through written feedback from before and after the sessions from the students. Lessons learnt from this form of partnership between the industry partner and the university give strategies for the continued development of such a program.

With a clear focus on the development of competent nurses Penman has evaluated the six health fairs that have been held in the Whyalla area of South Australia. The benefits of the fairs through linking the community with students yet most of all linking the University of South Australia's with health and assisting the local residents.

Also focusing on health issues, Dietsch and Shackleton, from Charles Sturt University, worked with maternity units across Australia to develop partnerships to enhance the number of midwives. Their case study demonstrates how successful partnerships have made a difference to one particular profession.

Sawyer and Evans also from University of South Australia and the Whyalla campus worked with the Local Economic Development Board to assist regional firms to enhance their socially and environmentally responsible actions. Through a range of interviews with local businesses it was highlighted what the needs of the local small businesses were. The knowledge would form the basis for future development with the local community.

Creating a meaningful online teaching course is challenging for academics but it was complemented with practical engagement through the linking of nursing students who were undertaking a blended learning course and practical work with local primary students. This saw the development of an innovative project through the connection of the two groups of students creating a valuable learning experience and positive outcomes for both groups of students.

Each paper gives educators some indication of how to maintain and develop their engagement with their community to the benefit of the students or the academics.

University and seniors working together:
engagement in a regional community

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Abstract

For over a decade at Whyalla the University of South Australia (UniSA) has sponsored the local branch of the University of the Third Age (U3A), where active retired people learn from each other. In the early days support tended to be one way: the university provided a venue and other facilities, and some university staff contributed as lecturers for various U3A courses. Over the years the numbers of U3A members taking a lead role in offering courses has increased. As well as encouraging and facilitating lifelong learning, U3A activities provide a valuable social outlet; both of these aspects have implications for health and well-being. Mutual benefits from the UniSA–U3A relationship have emerged: not only has the campus been a continuing source of support for the U3A branch, allowing it to keep its costs to a minimum, but U3A members have also contributed to various academic and other university activities. A research project conducted late in 2008 sought to identify the range of two-way contributions, as well as the potential for enhancing and extending these. It also tapped into knowledge of university engagement with other seniors' organisations. Data-gathering included a short, paper-based survey of U3A members, a similar online survey of Whyalla-based university staff, and an interview with representatives of another local organisation catering mainly to seniors. The study confirmed that there can be advantages for both universities and older members of the community from engaging with one another, and that such engagement can break down perceived barriers and facilitate the making of further links between 'town and gown'.

Background

The University of the Third Age (U3A) operates in many countries, having spread from beginnings in France in the 1970s to other parts of Europe and beyond, the first U3A in the United Kingdom being set up in 1982 (Lawton, 2003; U3A Melbourne, 2003). Its aim is to provide learning opportunities for active retired people, particularly in contexts where they learn from each other. In Australia, the first U3A was set up in Melbourne in the mid-eighties and now there are nationally about 200 groups (U3A Melbourne, 2003; U3A Online, 2009). There is also an online version, hosted by Queensland's Griffith University, but catering to people anywhere in the world (Swindell, 2003; U3A Online, 2009). In South Australia, the Adelaide branch was founded in 1986, and there are currently at least 18 groups in this state, half of these in non-metropolitan areas (U3A Online, 2009).

U3A began in Whyalla following a public meeting in 1996. Early meetings were held either in University of South Australia (UniSA) lecture rooms or in a room rented for nominal cost at a local high school. UniSA Whyalla soon took on sponsorship of the new U3A Branch, offering a venue and other assistance, and encouraging staff members to contribute from their expertise and interests as course lecturers, supplementing the services of others from the community and from within the U3A group. A varied selection of courses and one-off presentations and educational excursions allows the participants to meet some of their learning needs and also their social needs. Some courses are ongoing, particularly French, which has been offered for many years and now has beginners', basic and advanced levels. There are also quarterly social afternoons, and recreational activities (e.g. games & quizzes). Each week day has activities scheduled. Currently there are at least 75 members, not all of whom attend classes regularly. Members' reasons for being involved and their perceptions of the importance of learning were explored in an earlier project (Ellis, 2006).

While support tended to be one way in the early days – from UniSA Whyalla to the U3A group – in recent years mutual benefits have been identified, including contributions by U3A members to a range of university activities. However, the extent of these is not always obvious to all.

While Whyalla U3A members appear to enjoy the intellectual and social aspects of continuing to learn, some seniors and early retirees may choose to develop new employable skills and knowledge. For these, UniSA may offer options in its regular programs. The university has also interacted with other older Whyalla residents. Exploring these links can provide insights into such community partnerships and their potential for enhancement and extension.

After considering some relevant issues – the ageing society, workforce and further education implications, contributions made by older citizens, and lifelong learning and its impact on well-being, this paper examines university engagement with older Australians, particularly in this one regional area. It includes the findings of a small qualitative study involving U3A members and university staff, with additional input from representatives of another community organisation mainly involving seniors.

Lifelong learning in an ageing society

By 2056 25% of the Australian population is expected to be aged 65 or over, compared with only 13% in 2007 (ABS 2008), an age group whose needs, but also potential contribution, are significant – a source of often underused human capital (Borowski, Encel & Ozanne, 2007; Garlick, 2008; Jones n.d.;) that should not be overlooked in further and higher education planning. Current issues relating to the ageing workforce and the need to challenge ideas of early retirement are outlined in *Improving with age – our ageing plan for SA* (cited by Gale, 2006). In fact, whether retirement is even a relevant concept for the 21st century has been questioned (Rosenman, 2005). A report on *Lifelong Learning and Older Workers* considers only people up to age 64, but recognises that some people older than that wish to engage in employment (Karmel & Woods, 2004). Some seniors and early retirees who choose to re-enter employment may do so even in a new career (O'Keefe, 2007).

A number of myths are associated with ageing; the World Health Organization for World Health Day in 1999 set out to explode these, including the fifth one, 'Older people have nothing to contribute' (WHO, 1999), as did Jones's address on the 'chronologically gifted' (Jones, n.d.) A 2003 study by de Vaus, Gray and Stanton put a dollar value on the unpaid household, caring and voluntary work done by older Australians.

'Learning', which continues throughout our lives, has been defined as 'the process whereby human beings create and transform experiences into knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values, senses and emotions' (Jarvis, 2001, p. 10). Notions of lifelong learning as part of a learning society have become accepted over the last few decades. The Unesco report *Learning to Be* enunciates the principle: 'Every individual must be in a position to keep learning throughout his life. The idea of lifelong education is the keystone of the learning society' (Faure et al., 1972, p. 181). This includes making accessible higher education 'through many different paths and at any age, in many forms, especially with a view to continual self-improvement and development' (Faure et al., 1972, p. 182). A quarter-century later, another writer bemoaned the loss of these democratic ideals (Boshier, 1998). Numerous people in their sixties and older have been successful higher education students, making contributions to the creation of new knowledge as well as fulfilling their own needs for self-fulfilment (Jarvis, 2001; Lear, 2003; Lear, 2004); increasing longevity will enable an increase in this cohort. Lear's honours study (2004) explores the motivations and experiences of several people undertaking higher degrees later in life, including one who enrolled in a PhD at 85. Media items following graduation ceremonies tend to highlight such successes as the exception to the usual achievements of older people (e.g. Esau, 2000; Fewster, 2002; O'Keefe, 2007; Owen-Brown, 2002; UniSA, 2008). Perhaps elders' academic ability exhibited after decades spent gaining wisdom should be more expected!

While lifelong learning is a career necessity, it also has recreational and health implications. Retired people inevitably continue to learn, have a right to do so, and often feel a need to do so actively (Elmore, 1999; Withnall, 2002), seeing it as improving their quality of life. Vaillant (2002) lists continuing lifelong learning as the fourth basic activity needed for a rewarding retirement, the others being a social network, rediscovering play, and creativity. He states:

> *Gusto for education in late life is highly correlated with psychological health. The capacity to take a fresh look at things makes a young person out of an old person. (Vaillant, 2002, p. 246)*

Numerous researchers have identified the positive benefits for general well-being of pursuing learning activities (e.g. Ranzijn, 2002; Swindell, 1991;), which have in-built advantages for well-being and the economy, as well as intrinsic value (Andrews, Harford, Jones & Ranzijn, 2002). Moreover, when these activities take place in a group setting, they also have the effect of counteracting social isolation, something that many older people encounter if they lose former work and other contacts; such isolation has been shown to have 'a strong causal link with illness' (Gray, 2006, p. 142). Recent research has highlighted the plasticity of the brain (Doidge, 2008), the fact that learning activities can improve its abilities, and the concepts of brain reserve and cognitive reserve – the latter built up through using the brain – that can have a protective effect on its function (Melton, 2005; Valenzuela, 2005), and promote positive ageing (Rimmer, 2007).

The research project
The research conducted late in 2008 aimed to clarify ways in which U3A's location at the campus and the relationships developed have been beneficial both to the U3A and to the University, seeking to identify further possible ways of working together. A secondary goal was to gather information about other UniSA engagements with Whyalla seniors. Additionally, the research sought to gauge an indication of participants' interest in undertaking formal studies through UniSA, and their motivation for this.

An interpretive approach was adopted for this descriptive study, gathering information on the components of this engagement between a regional university campus and local seniors and on the perceptions of those involved. The study built on knowledge previously gained by the researcher as a participant observer, both as a UniSA academic and as a U3A member, and from earlier research.

Examples of UniSA–U3A engagement from print materials such as newsletters and newspaper articles were accessed. Having gained approval from UniSA's Human Research Ethics Committee and the U3A committee, a survey of U3A members was conducted towards the end of 2008, using a paper-based anonymous questionnaire. Apart from questions seeking socio-demographic data (indicated by the summary in Table 1), the questionnaire comprised mainly open-ended questions. Questions were:
1. What benefits do you see coming from UniSA's sponsorship of U3A Whyalla
    –   for you?
    –   for U3A?
2. What benefits has this relationship brought to the University, in your opinion?
3. Can you think of other ways in which the University could help U3A?
4. Can you think of other ways in which U3A could help the University?
5. Do you know of other seniors' organisations in Whyalla that have or could have links with UniSA? If you do, please give a few details.
6. Would you be interested in studying in one of the regular UniSA courses available at Whyalla? (Or a whole program?)
7. If so, would your main motivation be
    –   interest?
    –   intellectual stimulation?
    –   gaining a qualification?
    –   other?
    (Please tick any of the above that apply.)

An opportunity was given to the researcher to explain briefly the aims and nature of the study at a U3A meeting. The survey was distributed via the U3A classroom to those present at two classes, and the remainder were mailed or hand-delivered to all current members and some who had been involved, but were not financial members at the time. A reply-paid envelope was included with the questionnaire and information sheet. A locked posting box was also available in the U3A room for responses.

Key personnel of a Whyalla community organisation catering mainly to seniors' health needs and education, and which has had interaction with UniSA, were also consulted via an informal interview covering similar areas as the U3A questionnaires, including the nature of the relationship with UniSA.

In order to identify further examples of engagement with seniors and to gain insight into staff perceptions of related benefits and challenges and of the potential for further collaboration, Whyalla-based UniSA staff of the Centre for Regional Engagement and also of the Spencer Gulf Rural Health School (SGRHS, an initiative of UniSA and The University of Adelaide) were invited to respond to an online anonymous survey. The invitation to participate, e-mailed to approximately 60 staff members, included information about the study and the URL for accessing the survey.

The questions were:

1. Please give examples of any ways in which the U3A or individual members of it have contributed to UniSA.

2. Can you suggest other ways in which they could make a contribution?

3. Have you contributed in any way to U3A?

4. What contributions by other staff members do you know of?

5. If you know of other Whyalla examples of UniSA engagement with other seniors' organisations, please give brief details.

6. If individual U3A members or other retired people wished to study in a program with which you are involved (whether individual courses for audit or credit, or the whole program), what issues, challenges, and benefits can you envisage for yourself, your other students, and UniSA?

In addition they were asked to indicate whether they were professional or academic staff and, if the latter, which discipline area (business, engineering, nursing, social work, or other) they were connected with.

Data analysis involved tallying socio-demographic data (done automatically by the online questionnaire) and summarising qualitative data after content analysis.

Findings

The participants

The response from U3A members was considered good. Twenty-eight questionnaires were returned. While 105 questionnaires had been sent out, some recipients were not currently involved with U3A. Those actively participating in classes during the term when the survey began numbered in the thirties. See Table 1 for respondent profile details.

Table 1: Profile of U3A survey respondents

	n = 28
Sex	
Male	11*
Female	17
Age group	
<60	2
60-69	8
70-79	16
80 and over	2
Years of involvement with U3A Whyalla	
up to 2	3
3-5	8
6-10	10
>10	1

Source of income	
Centrelink pension	8
Centrelink pension and other	3
Superannuation	4
Part time employment	1
Centrelink/superannuation	5
Other	5
Nil response	2
Highest level of formal education so far	
High school	14 (various end-points)
Apprenticeship	1
Tertiary (TAFE, incomplete university)	6
University degree	3
Nil response	4

* One respondent underlined both Male and Female.
This may have represented one response from a couple.

A lower response (15) came from UniSA staff. This was to be expected, as many of them had not been directly involved with U3A or other seniors' organisations. Table 2 provides the profile of UniSA respondents.

Table 2: Profile of UniSA survey respondents

Category of employment (n = 15)	
Academic staff member	13
Professional staff member (formerly General staff)	2
Discipline area (n = 14)	
Business	2
Nursing	4
Social Work	3
Other	5

Staff involvement with U3A and other seniors

Six of the UniSA staff respondents had had no involvement with U3A (one of these 'not yet'); seven had been course lecturers or delivered a single session or sessions (e.g. 'a talk on my career experiences', 'lectures or educational sessions on health related matters', a 'talk on one of our research projects'); one had liaised with U3A 'to gain support for being involved in nursing program activities', as well as encouraging colleagues to provide sessions; and one professional staff member had assisted 'with the provision of facilities and equipment and as a point of contact for UniSA'. In an attempt to capture contributions by former staff or of staff who did not participate in the survey, participant staff were asked what they knew of other staff contributions. While five did not know, others referred to the courses and other activities and support mentioned above, specifically mentioning a staff member who had taught a variety of topics, and two former staff who had contributed, one over a number of years.

UniSA contributions to U3A

U3A participants identified many benefits from the UniSA sponsorship (Question 1). The question was in two parts: benefits of the relationship for them personally and benefits for U3A. Some of the responses to the first part related rather to personal benefits of U3A involvement (unrelated to the UniSA connection), but other responses relevant to the UniSA links included mention of a central location, use of facilities and equipment, a dedicated meeting room, input from some staff, and allowing fees to be kept low. With regard to the venue, it was equally accessible to people from both eastern and western Whyalla suburbs, it was a 'comfortable and safe room', in 'nice surroundings', with accessible equipment, with a lift facilitating access for any with mobility issues. They valued the 'interaction with uni staff and lecturers', and the fact that UniSA people 'take an interest in us'. One commented:

> *We are in the latter stages of life and it's important to m ix with people young and old to keep an interest in life.*

Advantages for the U3A group in general included the facilities and equipment (remarked upon by 8), and the convenience of having their 'own room – can leave equipment'. (The room is equipped with three computers, television, VCR and DVD, overhead projector, refrigerator, tea/coffee-making facilities, and furniture, including bookshelves. The members also have access to a computer pool for computing lessons, and to the campus library.) One participant felt that the quality of the venue (mentioned by 7) helped to retain numbers of class participants, and it also fostered the social aspects of the group along with the achievement of learning outcomes. The rent-free accommodation had a favourable impact on membership fees:

> *It gives us a very good home. Many clubs have to pay rental – it keeps our finances low. UniSA have supplied most things we need. We are grateful. Photocopying, airconditioning, repairs, furniture. What more could we want?*

They also felt that speakers were more 'comfortable with the venue' and this had an 'influence in attracting great speakers'. Being located within the university, members felt less 'daunted by approaching lecturers and the facilities offered'. Interaction with younger students was possible. Two felt that the association with UniSA raised the status of U3A in Whyalla: 'higher profile in the community', and 'gives the group some substance'. UniSA's support was appreciated, with one expressing the opinion, 'Without the sponsorship I could not see U3A existing.'

With regard to how UniSA could further help U3A (Question 3), eight did not reply, and several others commended the current state of affairs, for example:

> The university already contributes hugely by facilitating U3A, by making us welcome, encouraging us at a variety of hours, sharing facilities, lecturers and resources – Thank You!

> *and*

> Uni has already indicated its willingness to assist wherever possible. Hard to imagine what more it could do.

Suggestions given included publicity assistance, more involvement by UniSA lecturers in presenting U3A courses, lecturers passing on their teaching skills to U3A members, university students speaking to the group, 'a periodical visit from the [Director] to see how things are progressing with us', a broadband connection to the U3A room computers, and a downstairs computer pool (mainly because an out-of-order lift once meant the cancellation of a class as the lecturer used a wheelchair).

U3A contributions to UniSA

In response to the question concerning how the relationship had benefited UniSA (Question 2), U3A participants listed a number of ways in which they had helped with UniSA classes and activities. They felt that their presence on campus also contributed to UniSA's outreach into the community: it had 'removed the "only them" use' of the university, 'opened up the campus to people who may not have otherwise accessed the site, therefore raising awareness of the Uni', and helped UniSA Whyalla to be 'seen as part of the community', creating 'an interaction between the general public and the academic world'. U3A had provided good word-of-mouth advertising for UniSA:

> *I sing the praises of the University loud and clear to my large family in South Australia and elsewhere.*

Participants listed the many contributions they had made as volunteers in UniSA activities: at Open Day, 'to perform small duties as required', as 'patients' or 'clients' for students, as audience members for student presentations, and as research participants. They contributed to campus diversity – 'mixing young and mature aged' – and showed 'that education is not only for the young'. One felt that they could be a 'source of inspiration to undergrads', and another mentioned the positives of 'sharing ideals with different generations'. One said that they benefited UniSA by providing 'some tidily dressed students, most of whom do not smoke'!

Some made suggestions for further contributions (Question 4). (There were 10 nil responses, and 6 said that they could not think of other ways of contributing.) Suggestions included continuing things that were already happening, and also 'Mentoring. Real life experiences. Hindsight on education', being examination invigilators, helping out with enrolment, 'involvement in use of exercise room and healthy eating' (connected with SGRHS project), passing on experience of life and health conditions: 'Perhaps some U3A members might have expertise which could be used in an occasional address to uni classes'. One suggested newspaper and radio advertising features for U3A, which would also publicise UniSA's contribution to their activities.

UniSA staff participants recognised the contributions already made by U3A members and expressed the importance of these continuing: participating in classes as 'patients' for nursing students or 'clients' in social work scenarios, 'relating personal and professional experiences', or as an audience for presentations (and in the past for a Law mock trial), 'contributing to ethical debates', and sharing their wisdom in a philosophy class; helping out on the registration desk at the campus Open Day; being role models and advocates for lifelong learning; and providing a link to the community, making the place 'friendly for people'.

> *They bring a different perspective to the campus as well as highlighting for all students that one is never too old to learn and the importance of learning for knowledge sake not just for a piece of paper!*

Suggestions from staff survey participants for ways in which U3A members could further contribute included more of the above activities: further U3A involvement in UniSA classes as guest speakers, audiences for student presentations, 'clients' for practical sessions, and as ambassadors to the community: tapping into 'their potential for publicising UniSA activities through other organisations and family networks' and encouraging others in the community to study at UniSA. Other ideas were: 'to suggest topics for value adding components for nursing students to undertake', delivering talks/guest lectures to students, 'inspiring students with their thirst for new knowledge', being 'involved in facilitating discussion forums on ageing' and related issues in social work, participating in various research projects, and attending seminar programs. One suggestion was for a common monthly forum for elders, university staff and community. Being mentors for students was seen as a valuable possible role.

Possible formal university study by U3A members and other seniors

Some U3A respondents expressed interest in undertaking formal university study. Their responses (to Questions 6 and 7) are summarised in Table 3. Whether interest translated into actual enrolment would depend on courses available and further information on issues such as cost and expected time commitment. While they had not been asked reasons for a negative response, one said simply, 'too old'. Volunteering commitments left little time at the moment for one respondent to consider formal studies. This was also the situation for the community organisation interviewees, who also worried about costs.

Table 3: Interest in formal university study

	N = 28
Would you be interested in formal UniSA study in Whyalla?	
Yes (some depending on availability of certain courses)	9
No	9
Maybe (cost and time constraints)	6
Nil response	4
*If so, what would your main motivation be?**	
Interest	16
Intellectual stimulation	16
Gaining a qualification	4
Other	1

Many listed more than one.

UniSA staff saw potential U3A involvement as regular UniSA students as bringing enrichment, but perhaps the need for additional support. One did not think it was an issue: 'It does not make too much of difference when 55+ year aged students are already there and coping up well, at times better than the younger ones.'

Prerequisite knowledge was all that would be necessary, indicated one respondent. Another mentioned physical constraints in some areas of nursing (strength needed for lifting patients, etc.), but indicated that there were areas to which an older person could be quite suited, such as 'health promotion, working with families or with other seniors'. There were three who queried information technology prerequisites; one mentioned this as a possible area for 'significant support needs', another thought, 'Issues and challenges potentially around use of technology, though it is not always the case,' and the view of yet another was:

> Not really sure of their skills base. They seem to get on the computers a bit – which is one of the biggest issues as everything is available online and there are expectations that students will get lecture materials, download podcasts etc. from online.

While one thought that such students could be 'more time consuming', and another was aware that there could be a 'different learning style and preferences' to be considered, others (5) identified many positives stemming from the older students' 'life experience and knowledge' that 'could inform any classroom discussion', and three mentioned the enrichment arising from 'cross-generational learning which has potential to be richer and broader':

> I think all students bring something to the class and the learning context, regardless of their age. Age, any age, offers unique circumstances, but it is not what makes people valuable or unique. In my experience, a class which has a large age range of participants usually bond more and share information more freely – there is less competition between students.

Other current or potential links with seniors' groups

Regarding knowledge of other seniors' organisations in Whyalla that have or could have links with UniSA, the U3A participants mentioned the Association of Independent Retirees (AIR) (3), Probus (two clubs) (5), Senior Citizens (2), and there were single mentions of Mission Australia (for unemployed aged), Country Women's Association (CWA), aged care hostels, church fellowship groups, Whyalla Writers' Group and Neighbourhood Watch. While the membership of the last three mentioned is not confined to seniors, seniors make up a good proportion of their members. Nine did not reply to the question, ten said 'No' or equivalent, one of these being 'Can't think of any with an educational base', and one adding 'but believe that U3A provides the link for senior access'.

When asked whether they knew of Whyalla examples of UniSA engagement with seniors' organisations other than U3A, eight UniSA staff respondents gave negative or nil responses. One mentioned 'church organisations, CWA, Probus', without giving details of the involvement. UniSA had provided some facilities free of charge (when space was available) for the use of the Over 55's Exercise Group and a Tai Chi Group, commented another. Two referred to the In Our Hands Health Information and Resource Centre (not exclusively for seniors, but the coordinators and the majority of clients are seniors), which has received some support from SGRHS, with one having 'direct involvement by being on executive committee and involved in activities'. A pharmacist academic does Home Medicine Reviews at a local nursing home, and another respondent is on the Whyalla Aged Care Board. Another had given health talks on 'basic life support and healthy lifestyle' at the Bowling Club and for the Low Vision Group. A number of SGRHS projects (e.g. falls prevention, quality use of medicines) have involved older people.

The community organisation interviewees showed the impact that their involvement with UniSA had had in building individuals' skills, confidence and capacity, and in providing useful feedback for UniSA staff. (Their relationships, with UniSA and also with an international university, are the focus of another paper at this conference, and so are not considered in detail here.)

Discussion and conclusion

U3A provides one avenue for following the quest for learning, a part of the human condition that does not disappear with age:

> *It offers an opportunity for continued learning and adult interaction essential in the well-being of people – a time to give and receive – to and from others with a common interest.*

The responses that many participants gave to the first part of Question 1, such as the one above, related to the love of learning in congenial company that they would, one hopes, have gained in a U3A group not connected to a university campus, but a need which, nevertheless, UniSA has played an important role in fulfilling. The study has clarified the two-way flow of resources that has been a part of this relationship. These are not accidents: one U3A member mentioned that they wanted to be able to give something back to the university. UniSA is not alone in engaging with groups such as U3A. Other examples include Charles Darwin University (CDU, 2006a and b) and RMIT University (Claiborne, 2008). Such endeavours contribute to breaking down barriers between 'town' and 'gown' and building bridges towards the common goals of community engagement and lifelong learning.

Staff responses have indicated that higher education possibilities for interested seniors are feasible and could contribute to course enrichment. As Bunyan has pointed out, based on research conducted in an Irish context with older and younger foundation course mature students, 'both younger and older adults feel that the age diverse classroom is a positive experience that should be encouraged and nurtured' (Bunyan, 2003, p. 6). The wealth of experience of older undergraduate and postgraduate students can be a resource to be drawn upon (Jarvis, 2001). Lecturers should, of course, seek to develop an awareness of what all their students have to contribute to classes, and be flexible with regard to their particular needs or challenges (Jarvis, 2001). By learning how to respond to student diversity, lecturers are broadening and sharpening their own teaching skills. An awareness of some of the perceived barriers to seniors' higher education participation and human capital contributions (Garlick, 2008) can suggest ways of working to overcome them.

As the study illustrates, mutual benefits are possible from engagement by universities with older members of the community. The relationship between the University campus and the U3A branch has exhibited positive impacts on both. Possible directions for future continued or new engagement include the potential for tapping further into the enthusiasm and experience of seniors in areas of curriculum and marketing, following up some of the suggestions offered. The study highlights the need to recognise the formal education aspirations of some older citizens, including those who need to up-skill or requalify in order to continue to contribute to the workforce, as well as those seeking a purely intellectual challenge. Further engagement opportunities suggested by participants provide scope for both informal discussions and formal research. Included in these are possibilities of engagement with other groups of seniors to which study participants have pointed. This group of older Australians should not be overlooked in further and higher education planning.

To quote a reviewer of the original proposal for this paper:

> *In an ageing society the knowledge contribution of seniors becomes increasingly important. The U3A is a highly underutilised group of people and any initiative designed to enhance their knowledge contribution through university engagement is worthwhile.*

No doubt the same could be said for other groups of seniors, particularly those engaged and delighting in learning new things.

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Growing Quality Relationships with Business and Community through an Internal Engagement Process

Lisa Francisco, Sue Pratten and Justin St Vincent Welch

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Introduction

Southern Cross University is a regional institution that is distributed across its constituent region through three separate campuses. The University's region runs from the mid north coast of New South Wales with its southern most campus situated in the coastal city of Coffs Harbour, through the State's north coast and hinterlands of Lismore to its campus and on to Tweed/Coolangatta, the youngest of the campuses. Lismore is the oldest campus and is the administrative and academic centre of SCU, the Coffs Harbour campus shares its campus with the North Coast Institute of TAFE, and a Senior College. The Tweed-Gold Coast currently has three separate locations while the new campus is being constructed.

Southern Cross University (SCU) is committed to engagement as set out in their Strategic Plan (2005), through the creation of the Office of Regional Engagement (ORE) (2005) and the development of the Regional Engagement Functional Plan (2006). The role of the ORE is to act as a facilitator of engagement and clearing-house or gateway for information and exchange that helps to grow relationships within the university internally, as well as with external regional communities. The ORE develops and implements a number of engagement initiatives for the university, one of which is the Internal Reference Group (IRG) for regional engagement.

Engagement tools such as the IRG assist in implementing the university's strategic vision for engagement with its region. An IRG within a regional university has the capacity to identify, engage, connect, inform and facilitate engaged activity out in the region. It can result in a unified and more streamlined approach to external engagement by increasing the quality of what we offer to our business and community partners and fostering trans and multi-disciplinary projects (2002, p. 292). This is achieved by leveraging the university's human, economic, intellectual and financial capacity, building on internal intelligence and capitalising on existing and potential external connections.

The IRG was established in March 2007 and had its origins in the University's Regional Engagement Plan 2006-2008. The Plan was developed in part from the outcomes of a consultative process that was initiated by the ORE and designed to gather input from staff and the community on strategies the University might employ to manage its engagement with its constituent region. The consultative model used was based on a process known as a citizen's jury (Carson & Gelber 2001) and a series of overarching strategies emerged from the consultation as key recommendations, one of which called for the raising of the profile of regional engagement within SCU (Fisher 2006). The ORE has a whole-of-university perspective on regional engagement, and the Jury's support for this type of approach was a common theme emerging from the Juries based at each campus.

It was decided that an appropriate response should be the formation of one internal reference group with representation from work-units located across the university's distributed individual campuses.

This group's purpose was to increase internal awareness of engaged activities through discussion and communication, both at the IRG meetings and also within their own work-units and to provide feedback to ORE on issues relating to engagement within the University.

In order for a single and properly representational reference group to reflect and communicate engagement issues and opportunities across the whole university, it must recognise and respond to the distinctive and unique nature of each campus. Not only are there differences between campus cultures, but also the communities within which the campuses reside. Both the unique campus culture and the role played by the engagement facilitators combine and influence engagement practice and as a result, characteristics that are particular to each campus may develop. In light of this, it was decided in 2008 to take the IRG a step further and create a separate IRG for each campus. The campus specific IRGs are held quarterly, and an annual University-wide Engagement Showcase, linking all three campuses via videoconference, was also introduced.

An Action Learning framework, although not formally applied, has guided the development of the ORE's reflection and decision making regarding the formation and function of the IRGs. We are hopeful that the IRG has the potential to evolve into a truly dynamic communication broker that can respond to a range of opportunities, both internal and external, ultimately resulting in the improvement of SCU's relevance to its constituent region.

Some theoretical underpinnings

This paper explores the idea that, in order to grow quality external partnerships, internal relationships need to be robust. The strengthening of internal relationships is crucial to our usefulness to the communities of interest in our regional footprint. One reason for this may be that in a small regional university such as ours, both human and financial resources are stretched thinly across many small work units, and they are all trying to offer something. There is not the critical mass of personnel, or funds, as is often the case within larger universities. However, by creating an engagement process such as an IRG, where internal engagement is valued and a deliberate attempt is made to address an academic culture of insularity, we endeavour to strengthen both the quality, quantity and relevance of what we have to offer to our external business and community partners.

The search for literature to corroborate a link between strong internal engagement and better quality external partnerships has been challenging, however, we hope our findings contribute to the discussion of the issue. Some literature regarding the traditional academic culture of disciplinarity, and the characteristics of a good partnership was reviewed.

While acknowledging that specialisation in a particular discipline is necessary for in-depth understanding, it can also lead to the kind of insularity which inhibits connectivity and information sharing. Collen (2002, p. 292) notes five forms of disciplinarity:

- Mono-disciplinarity, which is the traditional model of specialisation or what Gibbons (cited in Hatherall 2007) refers to as the 'Mode 1' form of knowledge production;
- Multi-disciplinarity, where more than one specialist discipline provides feedback and information;
- Inter-disciplinarity, where genuine collaboration occurs amongst the participants, with the different discipline perspectives being valued;

- Trans-disciplinarity, where a common, and often new language develops from the collaboration and connection of different disciplines;
- Meta-disciplinarity, where disciplinary boundaries disappear completely and a 'superordinate and emergent mono-disciplinarity of greater complexity' evolves.

Through the work of the IRG, we hope to encourage either multi or inter-disciplinary projects which enhance what we can offer to our external partners. Through this process, we want to foster the development of knowledge which is not just accurate, but also in line with Gibbon's 'Mode 2' of knowledge production where - 'research problems (are defined) in the context of application, or practise rather than in terms of disciplinary protocols' (Hatherall, 2007 p. 36).

So what kind of internal relationships are we trying to foster in the IRG in order to strengthen our capacity to build solid partnerships with business and community?

Once again, sourcing engagement literature specifically addressing the idea of creating good *internal* relationships proved challenging, so we looked at literature focused on good *external* partnerships. We argue that many of the qualities identified in relation to external partnerships could be deemed as necessary in the development of a Trans-disciplinary or 'Mode 2' approach to problem solving and so are also of relevance in our quest to develop strong internal connections through the IRG process.

Ramaley (2002, p. 11) maintains that a good external partnership 'promotes a discipline of reflection….encourages new patterns of conversation….creates new information and new patterns of information flow'.

These transferable qualities also apply when building robust internal engagement processes and are relevant to what we are trying to engender through the IRG. An obvious way that good internal engagement can strengthen external partnerships is in the case where multiple work units have a relationship with the same organisation. At one of our IRG meetings it was revealed that different work units have separate relationships with the one external organisation – all unbeknownst to one another. Ramaley (2002, p. 11) makes the point that external partnerships are often 'fragmented by competing interests in the community itself' and it is apparent that this fragmentation also happens *within* the academy. As a result the ORE is engaged in the process of trying to better streamline the university's approach to community partnerships and engagement activity.

Gibbons (2005) notes that, in the past, the engagement agenda of universities tended to focus entirely on one way pathways, where knowledge was transferred *from* the university *to* the community of interest. In more recent years however, there is a growing awareness that, in the words of Strom (2009) 'University-Community Engagement (UCE) provides an important mechanism for allowing the community voice to be heard in "the corridors of academia", that in turn can provide a valuable contribution into the development of "academic knowledge".' This highlights how this *one* way model of knowledge transfer is limited, and can often be irrelevant to the felt needs of business and community partners. Therefore, the need for reciprocity in a good external partnership is paramount. This includes both mutual benefit (Muirhead & Woolcock 2008) and the 'two way negotiated flow of knowledge' (PhillipsKPA 2006).

These ideas are instructive if we are to develop 'multi' and 'interdisciplinary' partnerships within our university. One of the stated goals of the IRG has been to create 'a dynamic conduit..... to enable two-way communication between the ORE, other IRG members and their work units' (Derrett, Strom & St Vincent Welch 2007) How well the IRG is achieving this stated goal is discussed in this paper and is part of the ORE's ongoing action learning. However, the fact remains, that the need for reciprocal openness to learn from each other, and the two way transfer of knowledge and skills, is essential for the success of our internal collaborations, which then impacts on our external relationships and collaborations with external partners.

Case Studies – Reality / demonstrated experience

a.   Lismore Case Study

The rationale that underpins SCU's IRG for regional engagement is the need for effective lines of communication across the University to foster informed discussion, the dissemination of contemporary activity and the promulgation of best practice models of engagement. The ORE sought to satisfy several aims, the first of which was to raise the profile of regional engagement within the University by creating the IRG. ORE recognises that much activity already takes place across the University but, because of the ad hoc nature of planning for engagement, the insularity of work units and to some extent, individual attitudes, knowledge of engagement remains fragmented and uncertain. By facilitating a deliberative exchange of information on engaged activities between practitioners and some times, invited guest speakers, it was intended to lay foundation to improve networking and a greater appreciation of the issues and opportunities inherent in the regional engagement paradigm.

Secondly, it was intended that, by populating the IRG with representatives from all work units, schools and faculties, information would be carried back and disseminated throughout the University. By establishing a conduit with the University, an improved understanding of the nature of existing partner relationships could potentially extend the capacity to embed engagement as a way to enhance and support the University's strategic objective of taking ' ...a constructive role in the ...development of the region' (SCU-Strategic 2008). Currently, the IRG's methods of communicating intelligence across the University has involved dissemination of information by the membership, regular email based updates, newsletters and website bulletins from both ORE and SCU's Media unit. This will continue, but its capacity to store, review and discuss intelligence on engagement activity is limited. ORE is proposing to introduce an online Blackboard facility to lodge detailed summaries of engagement projects from the IRG membership. This may also serve as an engagement activity reporting mechanism for schools and work units.

The Lismore campus IRG is ORE's seminal reference formation. Although established as a university wide forum, after 18 months of operation it was decided that there was a need to accommodate the unique character of each regional area.

This decision resulted in the formation of two new IRG groups in 2008, one at Coffs Harbour and the other at the Tweed-Gold Coast Campus. This response was informed in part by the realisation that because of the fragmented distribution of both schools and faculties throughout the three campuses, the single work unit representative model, initially adopted as a communication conduit of the IRG, was not effective.

There are substantial differences between the three IRG's; Lismore's is more formal in its approach. The original membership was made up of appointed staff who were responsible for completing the 2006 Regional Engagement Audit on behalf of their work units. The majority are administrative staff

with a few academics attending infrequently and this limits the group's ability to develop inter-disciplinary projects.

The agenda is always developed on the basis of equal time being given to reporting on current and planned engagement projects followed by discussion and at times, presentations from visiting scholars such as Professor Ira Harkavy, Mr Wayne Delaforce and SCU academics whose work is relevant to the IRG.

The Lismore IRG is a work in progress; because it has access to the University's largest staff and the regional centre of Lismore, it has the potential to generate significant internal networks from which robust external relationships can develop. The University is a dynamic organization that gradually changes to respond to different environments. As this happens, so the role and work of the IRG must also reflect this state of strategic realignment.

b.   Tweed-Gold Coast Case Study

The uniqueness of the campus begins with its layout with the Tweed-Gold Coast being comprised of three sub campuses. There are now two sites based in Tweed Heads, including the original site known as *Riverside* and the *Lakeside* location which became operational in 2009 to accommodate two new academic courses. A third site, *Beachside*, will be operational for first semester 2010, and is located adjacent to the Gold Coast airport. The layout and function of the Tweed-Gold Coast (TGC) campus spans both the NSW and QLD border and the need to explore and experiment with internal engagement processes, in order to strengthen external relationships, is vital. The combination of the three sub campuses and the growth of onsite staff and students highlights the importance of building strong engagement processes both internally and externally as a high priority. This reflection on engagement initiatives for the university serves to assist the TGC campus by providing an opportunity to establish and influence perceptions and processes for engagement with the view to embed a culture of engagement during its early stages of growth and development.

So the importance of being informed and aware of staff and their experience, interest and the academic expertise they bring to the university, is a necessary function for the IRG at the TGC campus. Reflection on the link between how this internal intelligence can assist and impact on the quality of work and our external relationships has value. There is no doubt that the IRG's evolution will be directed largely by individual campus cultures. For the TGC campus, it is encouraging to see the overall agreement from staff that building such connections internally will serve the university well and provide a united and informed front for university and community interactions.

Learnings from the original IRG model lead to a revamp on how the campus specific IRG's should progress, all the while ensuring it was in keeping with the original intentions. The key themes for the TGC IRG are: capacity, sense of place, relationships, membership, visibility and flexibility and they have influenced the initial establishment of the group.

The first key theme addresses 'capacity'. Understanding the capacity available around human, financial and material resources will impact on engagement effectiveness. In this instance, 'capacity' directly refers to the role of an engagement facilitator to assist in the delivery of engagement support and facilitation. It is this role that works to create and grow individual relationships with campus stakeholders to enable external business and community to navigate and capitalise on university linkages and vice versa. Having engagement facilitators at each campus to foster connectivity, and map relationships between the university and the region creates visible and clear pathways for engagement to flourish. The fostering "of critical connections...and relationships...new knowledge, practices and courage and commitment will lead to ...change" (Frieze & Wheatley 2006). This role enables the implementation of tools such as the IRG and whilst the capacity of these roles varies at each campus, it has no doubt assisted with the collection of intelligence and the clearing of information in a more streamlined and efficient manner.

Recognising the value of a 'sense of place' and how this influences engagement is vital. A sense of place is reflected by the uniqueness of each campus/culture, and it will have impact on how engagement is received, levels of participation, relevancy and whether it has 'fit' for those it hopes to connect with. The TGC campus is working to create a consistent and regular format for the IRG, allowing it to change and be moulded by the culture of the campus on which it exists.

The IRG process relies on its 'relationships' and these are often strategic. It is important to be strategic in identifying the key stakeholders for each campus, based on their perceptions around engagement, and who among them is best placed to assist an engagement process. These relationships might be active or static at various times but they help to identify internal champions for the IRG in the first instance. Reflecting on how we perceive, value and develop relationships has to be considered when exploring how the IRG might grow quality relationships.

The IRG model requires 'membership' which might need to be creative and again reflective of campus culture. Membership for the TGC IRG aims to reflect the entire campus to give staff choice around their internal 'connectivity' and how this 'fits' with their own view of engagement. This not only aims to build in a sense of ownership and relevance around engagement processes, it ties in closely with keeping the IRG and engagement 'visible'. It means that the audience has the opportunity to be informed and to participate, but on their own terms. This concept is confirmed by Frieze and Wheatley (2006, p. 5) who state that, "Networks have fluid membership." Having equitable representation across the disciplines from academic and non-academic staff might not be as important in this instance as generating a presence for the IRG and ultimately increased active participation over time.

As already mentioned, the IRG needs to have 'visibility'. It is an aim of the IRG to become a familiar, visible and constant campus institution, regardless of levels of staff participation. Making the IRG meetings regular and visible aims to familiarise campus staff with the IRG, regardless of their levels of participation.

Finally, 'flexibility' is necessary in the development of any engagement process. It allows for experimentation and innovation, hopefully resulting in the best possible outcome. In relation to the IRG, flexibility refers to membership, its format and informal structure, to give the IRG the opportunity to evolve and change to 'fit' the landscape from which it operates.

It is becoming evident that without internal connectivity, external relationship building can be chaotic, ineffective and result in unnecessary duplication. Through the IRG, we seek to enable a more consistent and coordinated approach to the development and growth of regional relationships both new and

established. This will be achieved by looking at the internal frameworks and building on the relationships and assets that exist within the university community.

c.   Coffs Harbour Case Study

Southern Cross University shares its campus at Coffs Harbour with the North Coast Institute of TAFE and a Senior College, and it is a small part of a relatively small regional university. This presents both advantages *for* and challenges *to* the ORE's quest to embed a culture of engagement. [1]

One big advantage of working on a small campus is that we can get to know new staff members personally, which allows for regular, and often extremely valuable conversations around engagement. This gives the ORE a more nuanced understanding of the work being done by staff than might be possible on a larger campus, and can also result in the establishment of good quality relationships across all work units. This means that if staff *want* to participate in multi and inter disciplinary projects, the IRG forum is small enough for them to be individually heard and also enables them to easily *hear* much of what is happening in other disciplines.

The main disadvantage is that only a few Academic schools within the university have any staff members located here, and only one Academic School of the University has its management staff located in Coffs Harbour. This makes it more difficult to deliver a broad range of engagement options to the region and often, what the region requests from us, is difficult to deliver. For example, the Mid North Coast has a growing Creative Industries sector but we have very few Creative Arts staff on campus who can offer their scholarship to the community.

Another factor we have to consider on *this* campus is the extremely high number of casual academic staff. One academic school here has only six permanent staff with eighteen casual academics. This greatly affects connectivity as it is almost impossible to involve casual staff in the IRG process or in dialogue regarding engagement from either a work-unit or a wider university/regional perspective. The lack of on campus office space, and their already stretched workload which does not usually include time for anything beyond the absolute essentials in the delivery of their academic unit, impinges on their ability to engage even if they wanted to.

The original model of the Lismore IRG was to 'communicate with individual (work) units via a single contact person' (Derrett, Strom & St Vincent Welch 2007). It was observed that this model was not working particularly well and so with the initiation of the Coffs Harbour IRG, we decided to adopt an attitude of 'the-more-the-merrier'! This was also affected by the fact that even though the IRG had been running in Lismore for 18 months, people from the Coffs Harbour campus had not attended or understood its function. The introduction of the idea at Coffs Harbour required a lot of conversations and personal approaches to inform staff and help them see the benefit of being involved in an IRG.

The Coffs Harbour IRG had its first meeting in September 2008 and it was mainly targeted to attract academics. We were aware that there was not a strong academic representation at the Lismore IRG so we tried to *begin* our group with a strong focus on engaged scholarship. We have had two very well attended meetings so far and although non-academic staff have been well represented, academics have made up the majority of the group on both occasions. There has been positive feedback from attendees and a desire to share the work they are engaged in.

The first *university wide* Engagement IRG Showcase was held in October 2008 with a three campus video link up, and the Coffs Harbour academics gathered enthusiastically to share engaged aspects of

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[1] The sub regional footprint of the Coffs Harbour campus includes five Local Government Areas with reach into another two, covering a geographical area of around three hundred kilometres.

their work with the rest of the university. This was quite a unique response and on reflection, could be attributed to a common feeling, often expressed, that our voices are sometimes 'not heard' by the larger, and more administratively central campus in Lismore.

Coffs Harbour campus is very keen to find its own points of differentiation from the rest of the university and to harness its comparatively small resources to create a joint research project that will 'put it on the map'. Apart from the IRG, the ORE has facilitated two research based discussions with academics and the SCU's Pro Vice Chancellor of Research. These discussions have fed into the IRG meetings so that, as well as the 'show and tell' aspects of the IRG conversations to date, academics have been keen to discuss how we might be able to harness our resources in a multi or inter-disciplinary capacity which is regionally relevant (Collen 2002). This is an excellent focus for the Coffs Harbour IRG and the ORE will continue to support this activity.

The establishment of the IRG has been useful because it identified that multiple work units have established different relationships with the same regional partners. As mentioned previously, we discovered that no less than three different work units had a significant relationship with a local business. Further discussion revealed that various staff members have approached our local Council with different ideas but have not kept the ORE in the loop in their negotiations. As the ORE manages the MOU between the university and our local council, it was extremely useful to us, and to SCU's relationship with Council, that these facts came to light. Furthermore, the ORE has added further value to the relationship by involving more staff in the delivery of a particular service. In another instance, we realised that both the ORE and another staff member were having conversations with Council regarding the same issue. We have since been able to concentrate our efforts on a united and stronger front in order to increase what we can offer to this valued partner.

The Coffs Harbour IRG is building our internal engagement and over time we hope this will enable us to better serve our business and community partners. As can be seen from this case study, we are already starting to see benefits to the quality of some of our external relationships as a direct result of the IRG and related conversations. Over time, we anticipate more learning about the efficacy of the IRG as an internal and external engagement tool, as we continue to employ an action research/action learning model.

Discussion

Some Impediments to Engagement and the IRG Process

The fundamental characteristic of the IRG is its capacity for multilateral communication. The optimum communication setting for the Group would see intelligence transacted back and forth via the IRG, to better inform the University community and the ORE. This network model of dynamic communication has the potential to build connectivity, to identify relevant linkages and networks and to establish, nurture and maintain productive relationships, both internally and externally. While this has been achieved to a degree, unforseen impediments have limited the IRG's capacity to operate effectively. These hindrances, particularly in relation to the Lismore IRG have resulted in it not achieving its full potential as a platform for institutionalised relationship building.

Much of this impedance may have its roots in the University's institutional culture that has yet to fully embrace the philosophy of engagement. This manifests itself in various ways; some schools take the approach that engagement is incorporated into their commercial research and consultancy activity therefore their contribution to the IRG tends to be somewhat superficial and focuses largely on the activities of individuals who have an understanding of engagement and who have adopted certain elements of it as a way to further their professional agenda.

The organisational structure of the University seems to create semi-autonomous work units that are largely outcome driven and require a timely return on any investment of time and resources, both human and material. Some schools take the view that engagement, like any other budgetary line item, comes with a cost and that this must be born by the school or work unit. An outcome of this perspective is that engagement becomes a discretionary activity that will only be pursued and supported if it can demonstrate well-defined and measurable outputs. However, engagement is essentially an exercise in human relationship development and as such, must adopt a highly flexible timeframe and an acceptance that predetermined outcomes may not be possible. Thus engagement and associated activity will always struggle to find its "best fit" within a structure that strives for certainty and predictability. The implications for the IRG, in relation to this approach, are firstly that an investment in the IRG must deliver some return, i.e. if we participate in the IRG, what is in it for us? Clearly if a work unit is not institutionally receptive to the concept of regional engagement, it is unlikely that the required investment will be made to reap the dividends.

Further to the notion of an institutional acceptance of engagement as a way of conducting scholarly and service activities, the University is yet to develop a clear policy on rewarding staff for the conduct of their academic work by underpinning it with the principals of engagement. Many academic staff are yet to fully accept that engagement is not an extra element of their work but a different way of doing it. Their careers are progressed by demonstrated capacity to conduct research, to teach and to undertake some form of service with the community. Until engagement is a seamless element of the research and teaching, it will be considered as an added extra to the academic process. Recognising this and rewarding engaged scholarship is to start the process whereby engagement becomes integrated with academic pursuits. The ramifications of this recognition, in terms of the IRG, would see a significant contribution to the institutional environment of engagement where the IRG operates. This is of particular significance in terms of a consistent message to the University's communities.

Another issue affecting the IRGs is that there is not a high level of deliberative engagement planning evident within the University's schools and faculties and where it is evident, it is usually driven by a champion who has experienced the benefits of engaged scholarship and research and understands its value. Without a plan for engagement there is no effective way of gathering intelligence or reporting on activities and thus the line of communication back to the IRG diminishes capacity to contribute to internal connectivity that leads to useful linkages with external individuals and organisations. Without a deliberate plan, long-term strategic engagement is nullified to the extent that, what *does* take place, is in essence, reactionary, opportunistic and incidental. This is not to say that significant engagement projects do not take place but that this seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

Membership

The membership of each IRG is a significant factor in its success as a dynamic engagement tool and at times the Lismore's IRG appears to have a sense of ambivalence. In some cases, staff have had their role in the IRG imposed upon them in addition to their already heavy workload. This situation inevitably leads to the engagement message being diluted and devalued within the school because of their capacity to devote sufficient time and effort, particularly in light of the lack of weight that is given to regional engagement as a stratagem for enhanced scholarship. It is important to have people involved in the IRG who are in a position to influence decisions on planning for engagement within their units otherwise their role as IRG representative is reduced to little more than that of a rapporteur.

It is of interest to note here that the chairing of the Lismore meeting was recently undertaken by a non-ORE member of the IRG and this resulted in broader group "ownership" and a very energised meeting. There were also some early signs that this may bring new purpose to the group and spark engaged projects that the group are keen to direct.

Both the Tweed and Coffs Harbour Campus IRG's, have learned much from the Lismore experience and have deliberately set out to 'attract' members to the IRG with the idea of trying to get a good mix of academic and non academic staff. Whereas membership of the Lismore IRG was originally by nomination from an academic school or work unit, the membership of the newer IRG's is entirely voluntary. Therefore the Coffs Harbour and Tweed Engagement facilitators have had to particularly focus on making the meetings relevant to potential participants. They are also advantaged in some ways by the smaller campus structure and staff numbers. In these situations, it is often strategically necessary for staff to make connections with like minded colleagues in cross disciplinary projects, in order to attract more funding and increase project capacity.

Communication

The potential of the IRG and related conversations to act as a conduit for multilateral communication and therefore improve both internal and external connectedness is immense. Of course, in any organisation, the impediments to good communication often mean that connectedness is compromised and that much good intelligence is lost along the way. This is of particular challenge when working within a multiple campus model and one where engagement is not firmly entrenched in policy or highly valued in general organisational culture.

However, we are beginning to see the benefits both internally and externally of the ORE engaging with staff through the IRG process. This has been most pertinently demonstrated in that, through IRG conversations, we have been able to better streamline the multiple and separate relationships which different work units have with particular community partners. This has allowed us to offer more support and human resources to the partner in a united and coordinated way. It is also demonstrated in the ongoing conversations happening on each campus to find multi or inter -disciplinary projects which are designed to directly benefit each constituent region.

We are hopeful that the connectivity which the IRG engenders will continue to contribute to the development of a culture where communication and cross disciplinary endeavours are seen as essential to good scholarship, bringing direct flow on benefits to our relationships with business and community partners.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, the engagement facilitators have reflected on their experiences of the IRG in relation to its capacity to influence internal connectivity and through this, the University's ability to grow quality external relationships with business and community.

While the focus of the IRG is on internal relationship development it also offers the university an effective and interactive tool which we hope will ultimately impact positively on our external relationships. It must be noted however that within the University there exist subtle cultural and policy based impediments to an internal engagement environment where robust networks can establish and nurture links with the University's business and community partners.

The IRG model has the potential to strengthen the nexus between internal engagement of staff and the establishment and growth of external relationships with the community and this is currently taking place to varying degrees. It is hoped that with the further development of processes that position the IRG's as familiar, visible, flexible and local, the reference groups can consolidate and extend their role as a '*dynamic conduit*' (Derrett, Strom & St Vincent Welch 2007) for internal communication resulting in direct and tangible improvements to our relationships with external partners.

The IRG is a relatively new initiative and the continuous application of an Action Learning model will provide the engagement facilitators with the means to reflect and assess the progress of this tool well into the future.

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Engaged learning and enterprise through the 'Ecoversity':
Implementing an engagement theory to meet sustainability concerns

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Abstract

Education has provided little leadership and few conceptual tools to assist us to better understand our place in leading the world towards a more sustainable future. We continue to educate society in ways oblivious to the mounting crisis of unsustainability (Orr, 1992) and rely instead on institutionalism, managerialism, cerebral capitalism and neoliberal constructs which have proven spectacularly disastrous in dealing with these critical matters. While universities have taken contradictory roles at various points through time, they have invariably reflected and challenged the culture of the day, tolerated diverse viewpoints, generated new ideas and inculcated wisdom. To do otherwise would be to produce 'people who will spend life locked in the prison of an untutored, unquestioning mind', and is 'probably the best way to ensure that catastrophe triumphs' It makes sense therefore that universities be at the centre of efforts to deal with sustainability matters.

We argue that the concept of the 'ecoversity' offers universities a useful framework for their own sustainability transformation and engagement with human capital and regional communities to tackle global sustainability matters in practical ways through relational learning in knowledge production and distribution. We also argue the 'ecoversity' is a vehicle for the practical implementation of an emerging theory of ethical engagement by universities of the kind proposed by Garlick and Palmer (2008) that sees curricular learning connected to relational ethics, community priorities and global concerns, as well as to their own greening operations and resident wildlife (Carter, Garlick, Matthews & Mayes, 2008; Garlick, Matthews & Smith, 2009).

The 'ecoversity' concept has at its heart the notion of leading by example to ensure that daily activities engage students and communities in understanding and active participation in what it means to address the 'unsustainable core characteristics of our time' (Jucker, 2002, p. 10). It provides a framework for relational learning and doing that connects the 'green campus' with curricular development, and extends into external partnerships and community relationships (Garlick, Matthews & Smith, 2009). It is a framework for all universities to engage on sustainability matters with their regional communities.

The review of literature will include themes of relational and contextual ethics (Bauman, 1995; Bauman, 2001; Davidson, 2000; Derrida, 2008; Smith, 2001), the role of higher education and its purpose in a world under threat (Arthur, 2004; Constandine & Marginson, 2000; Orr, 1991), ethics and university and community engagement (Garlick & Palmer, 2008) and the concept of the ecoversity (Garlick, Matthews & Smith, 2009).

Examples of university engagement with sustainability beyond the 'green campus' are drawn from the University of Bradford and the University of Plymouth in the UK.

The University of Bradford has branded itself an 'ecoversity', while the University of Plymouth ranks second on the UK green universities ranking.

The conclusions drawn are that solutions to some of the major global issues of the day, such as sustainability, must go beyond assumptions of human rationality. Scientific and technological achievement and current instrumentalist views of education, particularly higher education, as simply a means of gaining financial advantage and enhancing reputation, are not sufficient. We propose the ecoversity as a model of engagement to build new understandings of ourselves and our relationships with human and non-human others and with nature, and develop new ways of putting these engagements into practice. The ecoversity concept points towards an as yet indistinct sustainable future, but does not pre-emptively exclude future hopes and future possibilities.

Introduction

Engaging with difference

If for planetary sustainability we need a widespread human behavioural transformation from pervasive ingrained neoliberal anthropocentrism focusing only on human interest and those aspects of the physical landscape that bring utilitarian value, towards a biocentrism in which nature is respected for its uniqueness, wonder and connection to place through a relational ethic (King, 1997), how are we to do it? Education, the area to which we usually first turn for human transformation, has failed us when it comes to environmental matters (Orr, 1992); and 'institutional thickness' increasingly offloads the non-economic to 'third sector' agencies. Meanwhile, neocons assume a 'greenwash' persona to infiltrate these (otherwise well-meaning) 'third sector' environmental organisations; and universities increasingly move to funding-dependent behaviour (Garlick & Palmer, 2008). It is a daunting task. Where do we begin any transformation and how do we make the connection between theory and practice in an economy and society in which entity-based managerialism and risk aversion predominate and institutional discussion invariably centres on monetary cost and profit rather than on the common good?

Jamison (1998) suggests that to begin to address the contested terrain of environmental sustainability, its values, epistemologies and vocabulary, in order to ensure balance in current anthropocentric and economistic notions about nature, there is a need for:

> *...a discourse that permits deeper discussion of aesthetic, spiritual, religious, cultural, political, and moral values...it is possible that the present disorder regarding the human relationship to nature will not be successfully addressed until we have developed a richer set of positive visions regarding the proper human relationship to nature...and how to engage in ongoing dialogue with others about how our everyday actions help to produce global realities. Articulating these visions is not the job of academics alone, but also requires the efforts of writers, artists, and people from all walks of life (p. 191).*

The crisis of sustainability comprises problematic relationships and problematic understandings of those relationships. It is:

> *...both a crisis of the ways modern capitalist societies combine with nature and a crisis of understanding whereby the citizens of those societies fail to understand their relations with nature (Huckle, 2004, p. 34).*

Addressing these relationship challenges and understandings about global and local environmental sustainability within a context of a widening divide between humans and nature is what we have set ourselves to contribute to in this paper; a task we believe ought to take us beyond discourse and into real action. Elsewhere, we have suggested engaged learning and enterprising action contextualised by place and relational ethics as a framework that could assist with this (Garlick & Matthews 2008 & 2009; Garlick, Matthews & Smith 2009). In this paper, we build on these principles by promoting the 'ecoversity' as a university-community engagement mechanism that can accommodate difference among and between humans and nature in a learning environment that respects wonderment and uniqueness and generates practical outcomes of sustainability that are of ethical worth.

Following poststructuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida, we begin the task by recognising the significance of difference among and between humans and nature in various contexts – difference that requires close observation and relational (or engaged) learning, in the form of a *modus vivendi* (Naess, 1979) or *sensus communis* (Smith, 2001) that involves metaphysical as well as physical attributes, and a responsibility to act ethically in relation to these differences. Levinas (1991) has defined this relational ethic as an 'ethics of encounter' where the 'other' is revealed through its difference to us. Derrida (2002) however notes that a relational ethic can only manifest if, having become aware of an engagement need with a different 'other', there is responsibility for action beyond the encounter, as it opens up possibilities for the future that no prior knowledge might have identified. To suggest a human/animal or human/nature binary or separation is to assume a reductionist or universalist approach that only strengthens any such divide and limits our learning about future directions.

Engaging with difference assumes no pre-determined conclusions about the particular 'other', or the direction the engagement might take. There are no relevant principles or rules governing the acquisition of knowledge from the other through the engagement process, although as Buber (1965) explains, a prelude to this requires a resistance to objectification and an acceptance of a mutuality in understanding. In humanist terms, Bauman (1995) has defined his 'being for' form of togetherness along these lines:

> *Being tied to the Other by emotional means, on the other hand, that I am responsible for her/him, and most of all for what my action or inaction may do to her/him (p. 63).*

The parable of *Le Petit Prince* (de Saint-Exupery, 1991) and the Prince's devotion to his rose and his meeting with the wise fox demonstrates this same level of responsibility to engaged learning between the human and the non-human.

Next we suggest knowledge and learning. Here, following Orr (1992), we make the distinction between 'good', 'useful' and 'bad' knowledge, in sustainability discourse and action. This immediately presents us with a difficulty. Derrida (in Zylinska, 2005) noted this difficulty with regard to a failure to inquire into the full spectrum of interconnected possibilities and the consequential difficulty in presenting what 'ought to be' as opposed to simply 'what is'.

Specifically on matters to do with sustainability, Orr (1992) rightly reminds us that lack of an ecoliteracy in our education system has significantly contributed to our planet's current sustainability crisis:

> On balance, I think we are becoming more ignorant because we are losing knowledge about how to inhabit our places on the planet sustainably, while impoverishing the genetic knowledge accumulated through millions of years of evolution. And some of the presumed knowledge we are gaining, given our present state of social, political and cultural evolution, is dangerous; much of it is monumentally trivial (p. 152)

and

> A great deal of what passes as knowledge is little more than abstraction piled on top of abstraction, disconnected from tangible experience, real problems and the places where we live and work. (Orr, 2005, p. 88).

A second significant difficulty that needs to be addressed is based around the suggestion we have made elsewhere (Garlick, Matthews & Smith, 2009) that universities play an important role in sustainability solutions by facilitating engaged discourse and enterprising human capital through their dual functions of teaching and learning and research and innovation. We suggest that universities have a key leadership role in this because of their focus on learning and knowledge creation and distribution, their spatial distribution and their relative institutional freedom of thought and expression. However, again as Orr observes: '...under certain conditions, education might exert a positive influence on ecological behaviour, but these conditions by and large do not now prevail. Higher education, particularly in prestigious universities, is often animated by other forces, including those of pecuniary advantage and prestige.' (p. 150). Elsewhere, we have concluded that universities have failed Boyer's (1996) test of the common good:

> There is an assumption that the engaged relations between a university and its regional and local community is about creating something that is good for society and the environment in the traditional Dewey (1956) and Boyer (1996) way. In a heavily dominated neo-liberal world this public good perspective is a hopeful generalisation as, despite well publicised individual engagement good news stories, we know (however unfortunate or unfair that it sounds) that many universities engage only consequentially for recognition, prestige and power (Author & Palmer, 2008, p. 1).

A third difficulty with adopting a relational learning and doing approach towards our concerns about sustainability occurs within any community that desires to be an integral part of a learning program that is engaged with nature. Bauman (2007) notes the trend to community homogeneity, rather than difference, and a distrust of diversity and 'otherness' in a liquid neo-liberal world, giving rise to 'mixophobia' in communities. In such fragmented places all that can be expected are 'being-aside' and 'being-with' forms of togetherness (Bauman, 1995). Such forms of togetherness are limited to episodic and usually competitive encounters of individuals, in which they are seen as objects or entities rather than humans, non-human animals, or meaningful landscape, with all their respective and respected intrinsic qualities.

Smith's (2001) work around space and place also provides a context to mould the proximity of humans and nature into communities with moral and ethical values. His position gives humans the tools and the space to engage in a genuine dialectic, not only with each other but with the physical environment, rather than have their values determined by outside institutional forces.

Sustainability is 'about the terms and conditions of human [we would say planetary] survival', it points to a crisis and yet 'we still educate at all levels as if no such crisis existed' (Orr, 1992, p. 83). How we educate and what we do over the next thirty years is critical, something that is now being recognized in recent declarations and networks for sustainability such as, for example, University World News (http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20090524091553918) and the Talloires network (http://www.tufts.edu/talloiresnetwork/?pid=151&c=62).

In this paper we propose the model of the 'ecoversity' as a theoretical and practical framework that enables discourse and enterprising action through a process of place-specific relational learning between interest groups and nature. Our goal for higher education in this approach is to find practical and theoretical alternatives to the unrelational and unsustainable practices 'that got us into trouble in the first place'. (Orr, 1992, p. 24). The ecoversity approach proposes lifelong learning and enterprising action within an institutional and spatial context that focuses on sustainability issues and their solutions. Moreover, the ecoversity approach promotes a new and dynamic community-based form of ecoliteracy; one which involves relational learning about the sustainability of nature.

The role of higher education and its purpose in a world under threat

Universities have taken on contradictory roles at various points over time. They have reflected and challenged the culture of the day, be it oppressive or democratic, and have sometimes repressed, but invariably tolerated, diverse viewpoints. While it has been argued that historically, they have responded to rather than initiated social change (Silver, 2007), they nevertheless have the capacity to generate new ideas, innovate, and inculcate wisdom (Arthur, 2004; Constandine & Marginson, 2000; Orr, 1992). We argue that universities should quite rightly be at the centre of efforts to deal with sustainability matters and that to do otherwise, would be to produce 'people who will spend life locked in the prison of an untutored, unquestioning mind', and is 'probably the best way to ensure that catastrophe triumphs' (Arthur, 2004, p. 149).

Unfortunately however, the triumph of catastrophe now looms large on our horizon. The geological records, scientific data, and computer models analysed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2007 unequivocally affirm the warming of the climate system. Global mean temperatures are close to 2-3 degrees above pre-industrial temperatures. Global warming has been directly linked to human activity and despite all we know and have known about climate change science, global greenhouse gas emissions have increased by seventy per cent in the last thirty years (IPCC, 2007). Antarctic glaciers are already melting faster than previously anticipated. The UN benchmark for avoiding dangerous risk of irreversible climate change is to keep average global temperatures from rising more than two degrees. The Australian Government's plan to cut emissions to 5 – 15 per cent below 2000 levels by 2020, and by 60 per cent by 2050, are much weaker levels than those required of other developed nations.The Australian targets will not achieve climate protection, and even if every nation on Earth were to adopt and succeed in meeting Australian targets, global emissions would still be at a level inconsistent with long-term climate protection (Wilkinson, 2009). Even if GHG levels remain constant, and we halt emissions immediately, a further warming of one degree per decade is expected (IPCC, 2007, p. 45). An increase of six degrees will eliminate most life on Earth. This occurred 251 million years ago, when 95 per cent of the world's species were wiped out.

Currently 20-30 per cent of species risk extinction. According to the WWF report (2008) 'Australia already has the worst rate of mammal extinctions in the world' and '40 percent of mammal extinctions globally in the last 200 years have occurred in Australia'. Despite a relatively small population, Australians have managed to wreak havoc on a unique and fragile natural environment in a very short time period. Many species are only found in certain locations and settings. For instance, in April this year *The Australian* reported that Carnaby's Black Cockatoo is on the brink of extinction (Laurie, 2009). Carnaby's Black Cockatoos can only nest in very old gum trees in a small area of South Western Australia and land clearing has destroyed their nesting sites and their food source. To ensure their survival we need to restore their habitat in this part of Australia.

Governments in Australia and worldwide appear unable to act effectively on these critical environmental issues - a consequence perhaps of decades of entrenched post-colonialism, managerialism, cerebral capitalism and neoliberal practices. Through the Internet and global media, a dual local-global phenomenon is now appearing. Environmental activism previously predominantly related to local place-based environmental issues, has taken on a global relevance, and conversely, rapid engagement with and implementation of global environmental agendas has underlined, and renewed awareness of, the significance of the local level (Martello & Jasanoff, 2006).

In their accounts of institutions and processes designed to address global environmental governance Martello and Jasanoff (2006) argue that three things need to happen. First, global environmental governance solutions require local opportunities for expression; second, we need to realise that the identification, understanding and representation of environmental problems relates to the ways in which we choose to address problems. In other words, environmental knowledge is not objective or distinct from the power-knowledge formations of science and the local and national and supra-national politics that identify certain problems as meriting attention. Finally, effective governance requires innovations in power-knowledge formations to achieve well-articulated mechanisms of communication, translation and interaction.

For American sustainability educator David Orr (1992) it is not simply global governance that has failed us, but also the failure of education to educate. Education has offered few clear directions and conceptual tools to assist us to better understand ourselves and our responsibility to lead the world towards a more sustainable future. Indeed, many of the environmental problems we now face were actually created by educated people and this suggests that we need a different education, not more of the same (Orr, 1992). Through the concept of the ecoversity we believe there is an opportunity for a changed approach to learning and action that respects notions of difference through a context-grounded and wider relational ethic with global relevance.

The concept of the ecoversity

We argue that the concept of the 'ecoversity' offers universities a multi-objective vehicle for undertaking their own sustainability transformation, for building a stock of ecoliterate and enterprising human capital, and for engaging with their regional communities to tackle global sustainability matters in practical ways. The 'ecoversity' is a vehicle for the practical implementation and further development of an emerging theory of ethics and engagement by universities of the kind proposed by Garlick and Palmer (2008) that sees learning and research connected to relational ethics, community priorities and global concerns in relation to their own teaching, research, governance, greening operations and resident wildlife (Garlick, Matthews & Smith, 2009).

The 'ecoversity' concept has at its heart the notion of leading by example to ensure that daily activities engage students and communities in understanding and active participation in what it means to address the 'unsustainable core characteristics of our time' (Jucker, 2002, p. 10). It provides a framework for engaged learning among and between different people and with the diversity of nature and so connects but goes beyond the 'green campus' and sustainable curricular development, and into external partnerships and relationships (Garlick, Matthews & Smith, 2009).

The ecoversity concept is a holistic approach to education for sustainability based on ecological values and ethics. It is an approach which models practical and local applications in engagements through:
- Campus operations, estate and buildings, wildlife, energy, water, recycling (green campus)
- Curriculum and pedagogy (ecoliteracy and sustainability literacy)
- Research, innovation, policy and planning for the common good
- Community, businesses, schools, local and international partners.

Below is a refinement of a previously-developed schematic (Garlick & Matthews, 2008) which locates ecological and ethical values at the core of the ecoversity approach, to take into account both natural and artificial systems.
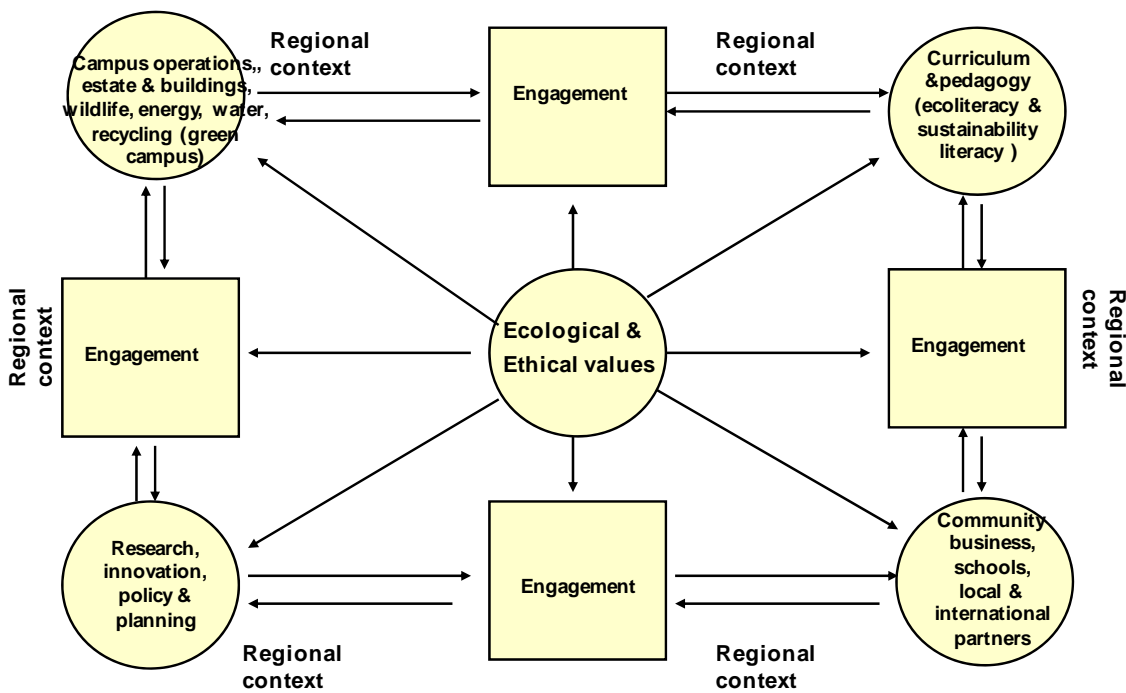
Examples of university efforts at engagement with sustainability beyond the 'green campus' can be found in the University of Bradford and the University of Plymouth in the UK. The University of Bradford branded itself an 'ecoversity' in 2005. Initially concerned with campus greening, Bradford took the opportunity to explore ways of promoting the health and wellbeing of staff and students, to create stronger links with local communities, and to undertake design and construction work based on agreed sustainability criteria.

'Ecoversity' was established as a university program, with a program manager and board to oversee the development of four project objectives: environment, community, education for sustainable development and economy. The University of Plymouth was awarded a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning – Education for Sustainable Development (CETL-ESD) award from the Higher Education Funding Council for England for a five-year period from 2005. The award was in recognition of existing and potential excellence in the sustainability field and provided for the establishment of a Centre for Sustainable Futures (CSF) with a remit to transform the University into an 'institution modeling university-wide excellence' in sustainability. To accomplish this aim CSF developed the '4C' approach to change, addressing the four dimensions of Curriculum, Campus, Community and (institutional) Culture. The model is the basis of the university's sustainability policy and strategic action plan to ensure the embedding of sustainability beyond 2010.

Following Sacks (2008), the goal of the ecoversity is to teach us what we are a part of. It does this by sharing knowledge, identifying local/global problems and solutions, stimulating ethical debates, challenging unsustainable development and the excesses of transnational capitalism (Garlick, Matthews & Smith, 2009). It is not therefore that sustainability should be integrated into universities, but that universities need to transform themselves into the integrated holistic communities implied by sustainability perspectives (Sterling, 2004). Elsewhere (Author & Palmer, 2008), we have argued that a theory of engagement will embrace characteristics of Bauman's ideal form of togetherness, 'being-for', supported by learning and a relational ethic that responds to difference in a spatial or community context. With this in mind, in the next section we discuss engaged learning approaches and locate them in an ecoversity framework. In the final section, we propose that an ecoversity approach is a theory of learning engagement which has at its core an understanding of relational and contextual ethics as applied to difference in and among humans and nature.

Engaged learning and the 'Ecoversity'
The educational legacy of John Dewey's work has taken engaged learning in two directions. The first relates to experiential, place-based learning approaches and the second to the 'scholarship of engagement' work of Ernest Boyer. In this section we discuss these approaches and argue that an 'ecoversity' approach incorporates components of both, such that the limits of each are addressed by the provision of a relational/contextual ethical core relating to ecological and environmental values.

Experiential learning is based on Dewey's argument that learning involves processes of active inquiry and that students learn better by doing, and through engagement and reflection on meaningful activities intended to devise solutions to real world problems (Quay, 2003). Engaged pedagogies enable learners to take responsibility for their own learning through interactions with others and the learning context to address authentic issues and problems for the common good. Learners become more motivated and work more effectively in collaborative groups and processes of interaction with teachers, educational settings, and cultural discourses (Quay, 2003). 'Situated learning' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) seeks to address misunderstandings that may arise from decontextual learning by locating learning in particular learning conditions. 'Communities of practice' are groups of people engaged in shared learning and human endeavor; examples might include engineers working on similar problems or artists seeking new forms of expression (Wenger, 2007).

Similar approaches are found in 'place-based education', a term used to refer to 'environmental education', 'outdoor education', 'service learning' and 'experiential education' (Knapp, 2005). In line with the work of the American ecologist and environmentalist Aldo Leopold, place-based learning highlights the importance of experience and interdisciplinary means of learning about the land in a way that embodies sensitivity to nature, aesthetics and ethics (Knapp, 2005).

One problem with place-based learning approaches is the assumption that the direct engagements provided by a nature-based experience automatically generate connections and commitment to nature. The problem, as Russell (1999) puts it, is that environmental issues are so urgent and pressing that educators have had little time to reflect on the assumptions implicit in their theory and practice. Our position is similar to that of conservationists, where despite enormous effort, passion and commitment, little appears to change:

> *We dart about, stamping at tiny smoulders in the carpet, rushing from hot spot to hot spot when all the while the roof is racing to a fire-storm and the walls are creaking towards collapse. People in the 'line' of conservation fire-fighting (there is nothing you could call "staff") have rarely had the time to draw back and take a painstaking look at what we are actually doing (Livingston, 1981, p. 13).*

It has been argued that the immediate, concrete experience emphasized by many proponents of experiential learning misinterprets Dewey's understanding of the relationship of experience to reflection (Miettinen, 2000). For Dewey experience is saturated with cultural and historical interpretations, such that what may appear to be fresh empirical experience may simply be everyday habits overlaid with cultural misconceptions. The capacity to involve oneself fully and openly in new experiences and to generate reflections and change is less straightforward than proponents of experiential education often suppose and 'the testimony of experience often means seeing though through the lens of the established and tradition, the self-evident' (Miettinen, 2000, p. 68). Dewey argues that learning requires a reflective analysis of philosophical cultural, social and psychological conditions (Miettinen, 2000). Dewey argues that primary experience is based in the habits and routines of everyday life. Problems, crisis and uncertainty occur when these no longer work. Primary experience gives rise to secondary experience, where the 'known' things of the environment are 'intellectualised' and constructed as objects of reflection, knowledge, thought and inquiry. A tentative working hypothesis is formulated and tested by thought and experiment and in light of available knowledge and resources. Only then is it applied in practice.

For Boyer (1990) engagement is an ethical imperative which requires universities to connect academic scholarship to the public sphere by producing of life-enhancing knowledge that serves the world by solving social problems (Barge & Shockley-Zalabak, 2008). Boyer's *scholarship of engagement* supplements the *scholarship of discovery* which comprises basic research concerned with advancing human knowledge. The scholarship of engagement requires universities to devise innovative activities which cut across disciplinary boundaries and the traditional triumvirate of teaching, research, and service. In Boyer's (1990) terms:

> *The most important obligation now confronting the nation's colleges and universities is to break out of the old tired teaching versus research debate and define, in creative ways, what it means to be a scholar (Boyer, 1990, p. xii).*

By engaging university scholarship with contemporary social problems, schools and communities, universities become an important locus for social action and change.

Unfortunately the approach to engaged scholarship popularised by Van de Ven (2007) misses the opportunity to relate to new forms of engaged learning and enterprise. It therefore misses the opportunity to address the big picture questions Boyer had in mind. Two further concerns occur to us in relation to the ethics of engaged learning. Firstly, the ethical biases and risks associated with collaborative research, where partners may have vested interests in the production of certain kinds of knowledge, as well as in limiting circulation of and access to knowledge in order to secure profits and monopolies.

Secondly, the respect for difference and openness to alternative understandings that are implicit and yet under-explored in 'scholarship of engagement' approaches. Below we propose that in relation to questions of sustainability what is required is the development of a relational or contextual ethics appropriate to engaged learning and enterprise.

Relational and contextual ethics

We have so far argued the problem of sustainability is such that we need a change in higher education. The ecoversity approach represents an innovative and creative effort in this direction. Above we point to the ethical gaps in current engaged learning and scholarship. In this section we sketch the outlines of a relational and contextual ethics, which heeds Derridian critiques concerning the limits of contemporary western philosophy, to further an understanding of ourselves in relation to other living beings and nature.

The Australian environmental activist Ian Lowe observes:

> Fundamentally, the present world is a long way from having the values needed for the transition to sustainability. We also don't yet have the knowledge base we need to interact sustainably with natural systems. Great changes can in principle be made by policy reform, which could dramatically cut resource demands and environmental consequences of our lifestyle, but the political will to implement such a strategy is nowhere in sight (Lowe, 2007).

Communities require a knowledge base that informs them about the complex natural systems of the earth so that they can make responsible and sustainable choices (Lowe, 2007). Importantly, this knowledge base and values require an ethics able to recognise the relationships of all beings to one another and an understanding of the dangers of dualistic forms of thought that separate human from animal, and nature from culture (see Plumwood, 1992; Warren, 1996). While ecological feminism offers a sound critique of these dualisms, it has yet to develop a relational ethic (Jenson, 2002). A Derridian philosophical perspective assumes that to understand ourselves and others requires that we interrogate how we come to understand ourselves in relation to others, where 'others' can be taken to refer to 'nature' in all its wonder, distinctiveness and uniqueness.

Derrida argues that western philosophy restricts our ability to understand ourselves – our being. We are only able to understand ourselves in relation to animal beings and this limits how we can understand ourselves and our place on this planet in the same way that De Saint-Exupery's *Le Petit Prince* tried to understand when he arrived on Earth from his small planet. This, as said earlier, he only discovered in relating to a fox, rather than to the powerful, conceited, weak, superficial, and greedy humans he met on his travels to Earth. Unfortunately, our representations of animals have enabled humans to be defined or understood as civilised, cultured, superior and human *because* animals are uncivilised, uncultured, inferior and bestial. In other words, our understanding of others in such terms creates an understanding of ourselves that occludes understanding of animal-others *in their own terms*. This is not the way to a relational ethic with nature that can meet the sustainability requirements of the planet.

The title of Derrida's essay, *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow),* plays with the Cartesian idea that we are thinking animals. If this is the case, what else might follow? One thing that follows is that we have a limited understanding of the astonishing plurality of beings contained by the term 'animal'. The second thing is that we are only able to express what we are not – namely that we are not animals. Western philosophy does not help us to understand the beings that we are. What is it that makes 'humanity' and what has to be excluded so that we can regard ourselves as 'humanity'?

A third consequence is that we fail to understand the historical, philosophical, rhetorical and religious forms of thought that constrain or enable the kinds of questions we are able to ask about ourselves and about others. Questions such as 'does their communication mean they talk?' 'Does their similarity to us mean they are like us?' 'Do we have a duty of care to sentient beings we eat and experiment on?' Finally, and most problematically, Derrida suggests that what follows could be that the conceptual and actual violence humanity perpetrates against the 'animal' fundamentally constitutes our very notions of responsibility and ethics.

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn are that solutions to some of the most significant global issues of the day, such as sustainability, must go beyond assumptions of human rationality and that scientific and technological achievement and current instrumentalist views of education, particularly higher education, as simply a means of gaining personal financial advantage, are not sufficient.

We propose the ecoversity as a model of engagement to learn new understandings of ourselves and our relationships with non-human others and nature in its own terms and in ways that not only respect uniqueness and wonder but evolve new ways of putting these engagements into practice to ensure a contribution to the sustainability needs of the planet. The ecoversity concept points towards an as yet indistinct sustainable future, but does not pre-emptively exclude future hopes and future possibilities.

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Framework to Evaluate Community-Based Learning Business Units

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Abstract

Business requires university graduates to possess contemporary theoretical knowledge and professional skills, knowledge and attributes. Community-based learning (CBL) is an experiential learning and teaching pedagogy that has been established as an effective methodology to meet industry needs. An expanding array of literature focuses on the impact of service learning on student learning outcomes, contribution to the community, and strategies for implementation in specific disciples such as arts, communications and nursing. Some previous research has examined the role of and need for staff and institutional support for embedding community engagement pedagogy within universities. However, there is a gap in the literature in regard to the efficacy of different modes of CBL within business schools. This paper seeks to address this gap by developing a CBL framework synthesised from the literature to identify ideal practices. The framework employs a matrix design comparing stakeholder roles and responsibilities with elements in constructive alignment. The matrix was tested using the University of Western Sydney's Bachelor of Business and Commerce degree (BBC). The BBC requires final year students (~2,200) to complete a mandatory engagement unit. Students select their engagement unit based upon their key discipline of accounting, management, marketing, or economics and finance. Despite engagement units varying by discipline, industry involvement, delivery and assessment, all units have a common objective of enabling students to work with industry partners to 'learn-by-doing' through the application of 'theory-to-practice'. Findings suggest that the framework is suitable for evaluating a range of CBL business discipline units, with the opportunity of identifying areas of potential improvement. The framework also provides a valuable tool to assist the design of CBL units to ensure key criteria are considered and incorporated as appropriate for a customised program.

Introduction

Despite many higher education institutions espousing a student-centred teaching philosophy, most universities rely on mass lectures and formal examinations to cope with increasing student class numbers, administrative requirements and economic pressures. Economic rationalism is forcing universities to rely on larger classes, more lecturing, and formal exams with multiple choice and short answer questions (Biggs, 1996). *Massification* and diversification of higher education systems resulting from economic globalisation, the emergence of an information society, new modes of knowledge creation and new professional requirements are pressuring universities to change their practices (Hyland & Rossin, 2003; Tynjala et al., 2003).

Teaching and learning has been identified as one area that needs to respond to these pressures, by both reflecting changing student profiles and preparing graduates for a workplace where students need to fulfil a more diverse range of specialist occupations (Tynjala et al., 2003). The literature reflects these concerns, suggesting that traditional pre-determined academic curriculums are too prescriptive, dated, ungrounded and inaccessible to some students, and use inappropriate assessment criteria (Johnson, 2000). Thus, the challenge for higher educational institutions is to develop new forms of teaching, practical training and cooperation with industry by combining working life, vocational training, and theoretical and practical knowledge to cater for regional and local needs (Tynjala et al., 2003).

One method to simultaneously meet the changing demands of students, the higher education system and communities is the use of a community-based learning [CBL] pedagogy. CBL facilitates changing from the conventional teacher-centred discipline-specific focus of higher education institutions to student-centred learning that engages with communities (Boud & Costley, 2007). CBL has been widely adopted in undergraduate degrees in the arts, teaching, communications, nursing, agriculture and information technology. However, adoption of CBL in business school curriculums has received less attention in the literature (Holland & Lee, 2008).

This paper seeks to address this gap by reporting on the curricular review of a range of CBL businesses units, using the case of BBC at the University of Western Sydney. This paper will address three objectives:

1. Develop a generic framework to evaluate CBL units appropriate to a range of business disciplines.
2. Evaluate the framework's efficacy by using a range of business engagement units to identify similarities and differences.
3. Identify key managerial lessons from using the framework.

Literature review

CBL benefits students and the community through an equal focus on student learning outcomes and gains for the community (Furco, 1996; Govekar & Rishi, 2007). The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2009) describes community engagement as 'the 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'. Three dimensions characterise community engagement: genuine partnership, reciprocity and exchange of information. Engaged scholarship aligns universities to their traditional missions of teaching, research and service to their communities by connecting students, academics and practitioners. These connections bridge the gap between theory and practice and overcome the problems of knowledge transfer between partners (Van De Ven, 2007).

Four groups inherent to CBL are students, faculty, institution, and partner/s and wider community (Van De Ven, 2007). Yet the interests and expectations of students, the community and academics may not align and thus programs need to account for all stakeholders' requirements (Tynjala et al., 2003). This pluralist perspective provides insight into the needs of each stakeholder, with the convergence of views suggesting that CBL programs help fulfil the needs of all stakeholders (Van De Ven, 2007). As such, each group should inform on the design, development and implementation of CBL programs (Gelmon et al., 2006).

As an alternative pedagogy to traditional university practice, CBL has various methods of delivery that include work-based learning (WBL), group work-based-learning (GWBL), curricular engagement (CE) and academic service learning (ASL) (Holland & Lee, 2008). WBL is described as independent learning *through work* (Johnson, 2000) or *at work* (Hyland & Rossin, 2003). WBL pedagogies – such as problem-based learning, work-based project learning and collaborative learning in real-life or authentic situations – help connect higher education and the workplace by allowing students to solve complex or poorly designed problems (Tynjala et al., 2003). Problem-based learning adopts the premise that students use their formal knowledge to solve a problem and identify solutions using a real-world situation as the starting point for study. Work-based projects encourage students to apply their theoretical knowledge and skills to develop concrete and practical solutions for a client organisation.

GWBL is a subset of WBL where teams of students are given a project brief and are required to plan, organise and deliver certain outcomes as agreed with the client (Hyland & Rossin, 2003). Collaborative learning requires cooperation with other students to solve problems and is increasingly being adopted in higher education, changing the role of the lecturer from project supervisor to learner advisor (Boud & Costley, 2007).

CE is a scholarly approach to connect students, academics and the community through learning, teaching and research partnerships to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Engaged scholarship encompasses activities of discovery, teaching, application and integration (Boyer, 1990, 1996). Scholarly engagement increases academic achievement (Stukas et al., 1999) and enhances student competencies through providing connections between theory and the real world, and increasing their ability to change with the environment and facilitate innovation (Govekar & Rishi, 2007). Outcomes of CE address identified community needs, promote students' civic and academic development, advance institutional scholarship and promote community well-being (Carnegie Foundation, 2009). ASL is subset of CE, where students work with and assist not-for-profit community groups and organisations.

All forms of CBL support the notion of working with community partners to assist students through learning-by-doing, active and experiential learning, reflective and metacognitive processes and collaborative learning. CBL provides a transition from teaching to learning, achieved by institutions concentrating on the application of knowledge, changing the focus from individual to team and community, including faculty, community and students in curriculum design, engaging in active student learning and encouraging continuous improvement (Gelmon et al., 2006). CBL has specific benefits: enhanced student cognitive and technical capabilities; developing a sense of responsibility; promoting self-efficacy; and improving relations between students, school and community (Holland & Lee, 2008). CBL differs from volunteerism (where the community is the main beneficiary) and internships or work experience (where the student is the main beneficiary), as both the student and the community are beneficiaries of the process (Johnson, 2000). WBL emphasises an individual's vocational development, and ASL focuses on the ideological principle of serving the community (Tynjala et al., (2003).

CBL is underpinned by several dimensions that include constructivism theory, situated learning theory, experiential learning pedagogy, problem based learning and active learning. Two broad theories that dominate higher education theory of teaching and learning and the nature of knowledge are *objectivism* and *constructivism* (Biggs, 1996). Objectivist traditions de-contextualise knowledge so it can be learned, transmitted and tested largely independently of the particular context by the teacher, that is, a teacher-centred approach.

In contrast, this paper adopts a constructivist perspective where learners are the centre of knowledge creation, learning takes place in individual minds and meaning is created by the learner's activities (Biggs, 1996). Biggs (2006) proposes that learning takes place through not what the teacher does but through the active behaviour of students. Constructivism supports the view that a fundamental role of the teacher is to provide supportive learning environments and activities that engage students with learning.

Socio-cultural and situated learning theories such as Situated Learning Theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Dewey's (1938) notion of learning-by-doing and the concept of experiential learning space (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) recognise the impact of the interaction of experience, physical space, social environment and communities of practice on a learner's development. Theories of situated learning support the notion that increasing students' participation in real-world practice provides rich and authentic experiences for the learner, different from the discipline-specific knowledge learnt at university (Boud & Costley, 2007).

Situated learning theory acknowledges the different learning environments of university and the workplace. Universities rely on formal, structured and planned mental activities for the student, using abstract symbols and emphasising generic skills, with students assessed primarily on individual tasks or tests. In contrast, workplace learning is mostly informal, unplanned and incidental; it usually involves collaboration among students to address tasks that require both mental and physical processes to solve more objective problems, and students acquire the situation-specific competencies required by industry (Tynjala et al., 2003).

Experiential learning is a learner-centric approach that facilitates deep-learning (Johnson, 2000) where students learn-by-doing (Hyland & Rossin, 2003) and reflecting on their experiences. Experiential learning theory (ELT) is an *active* learning pedagogy, described as a process where experiences are transformed and create knowledge (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Kolb's (1984) 'Experiential Learning Cycle' suggests that learning involves two interdependent dimensions – knowledge acquisition and transformation – with the learner continually progressing through the cycle of experience, conceptualisation, action and reflection. ELT recognises that learners develop knowledge by identifying and responding to the task at hand within a context of competing personal and environmental demands (Kayes, 2002). Experiential learning extends beyond the classroom, into authentic situations where students learn through the process of becoming a member of communities of practice (Kolb & Kolb, 2005), and thus is an alternative, effective and appropriate methodology for education in business schools to link theory and practice (Govekar & Rishi, 2007).

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a form of experiential learning that integrates theory and practice by giving students a problem, query or puzzle to solve. PBL builds on coursework through students being exposed to increasingly sophisticated and complex issues (Borin et al., 2008.) Students use their prior knowledge, professional and academic skills, and understanding of client requirements and situational contextual factors to solve the 'problem' (Pinto Pereira & Telang, 1993).

The Theory of Andragogy (Knowles, 1984) models adult learning and supports the notion of student-centred learning, where the student takes control of their learning and the role of the lecturer is as facilitator or advisor to the student (Boud & Costley, 2007). The theory proposes that adults need to know why they are being taught, and they learn best through problem-solving and when the subject is of direct value. Andragogy shifts the adult learner's focus from content to process, where the teacher's role is to guide students in complex real-life situations in which students need to structure the problem, research and analyse, make informed decisions and solve problems (Boud & Costley, 2007).

Despite the benefits of CBL using experiential and student-centred andragogy, traditional business education is criticised for its focus on 'surface learning' (Sayce, 2007) that is characterised by reliance on lower-order skills such as the retention of knowledge, comprehension and understanding of content (Lamb et al., 1995; Biggs, 1996). In contrast, most universities espouse graduate attributes that are dependent on 'deep learning' outcomes requiring higher-order skills, such as analysis, problem solving and critical thinking (Ponder et al., 2004). Higher-order skills are regarded as being more reflective of a student-centred deeper approach to learning and understanding (Sayce, 2007).

Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956) is a framework for appraising the ability of students to demonstrate their levels of understanding. The six levels of understanding, from low to high, are: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Similarly, the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome (SOLO) model (Biggs, 1996, p. 351) describes 'how a learner's performance grows in complexity when mastering many academic tasks' through five hierarchical levels, from pre-structural, uni-structural, multi-structural, relational to extended abstract. SOLO taxonomy ranks appropriate generic verbs to indicate higher levels of learning (such as reflect, hypothesise, solve complex problems and generate new alternatives) above low-level verbs (such as describe, identify and memorise). Bloom's Taxonomy and Biggs's SOLO model have several aspects in common: classification of learning objectives into hierarchical levels of understanding; a premise that learners must fulfil lower-order levels of understanding before moving to higher levels; the use of key words (e.g., list, apply, compare, compose and critique) to distinguish levels of understanding; and use of the hierarchies to structure and define learning objectives, activities and assessment tasks for curriculum design.

Biggs's (1996) notion of *constructive alignment* (CA) asserts that effective teaching and learning is achieved by aligning learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities (TLAs), and assessment. Biggs (1996, 2003) suggests the first step to achieve CA is to prescribe learning objectives that state the level of required understanding and how learners can demonstrate various levels of understanding. To encourage engaged and deep-learning, Biggs (2006) recommends that learning objectives should challenge students by incorporating high-order skills.

Constructive alignment (Biggs, 2003) recognises that the learning environment set up by the teacher supports learning activities to achieve the desired learning outcomes. Thus, the teaching and learning activities (TLAs) influence the performance of students against the learning objectives. The role of the teacher is to know and set up ways to get students to reach the desired cognitive level. In theory is should be possible to match TLAs to address specific learning outcomes (Biggs, 1996); however, many universities follow an economic rationalist approach and rely on mass lectures and tutorials. Traditional lecturing is regarded as a passive decontextualised mode of TLA that provides little incentive to challenge or question students' interpretations. Tutorials assist in elaborating, clarifying, challenging established conventions and sharing other students' perceptions, yet their efficacy relies on a tutor's expertise and group size and composition. Biggs (1996) warns of confusing teaching theory and naïve constructivism through the classification of teaching methods; for example, all lecturing involves transmission. Thus the construction of knowledge relies on the teacher's role, social or peer-controlled activities, and the individual's self-controlled activities in learning and study (Biggs, 1996).

Assessment has a dual role: checking student performance against the learning objectives and defining to the student what has to be learnt (Biggs, 2003). Assessment should address the level of achievement of the learning outcomes through performances in the TLAs. Others concur with the notion that assessment drives student learning (Boud et al., 1999; Ramsden, 1992; & Wass et al., 2001), and so there is a need to align student learning objectives, content, learning pedagogy and assessment techniques. Constructivism theory suggests critical reports, reflective journals and *portfolios* (where learners can select evidence that reflects their achievement of the unit objectives) may be more appropriate than traditional individual essays and summative exams containing short answer and multiple choice questions (Biggs, 1996).

The design of a service-learning curriculum is reported in various publications such as *Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction* (Heffernan, 2001), a best-practices guide in the design and implementation of service learning curriculum in *Service Learning Curriculum Development Resource Guide for Faculty* (Centre for Community Engagement, 2009), and a comprehensive guide for assessment of service learning and CBL in *Assessing Service-Learning and Civic Engagement* (Gelmon et al., 2006). This research builds on these guides and the literature to develop a framework to assess the efficacy of CBL business units.

Situation

In 2008, the Bachelor of Business and Commerce (BBC) was introduced into University of Western Sydney (UWS) as a generic undergraduate degree to streamline individual undergraduate business degrees across disciplines of accounting, economics and finance, management and marketing. As part of the BBC, each discipline or key program was required to develop a capstone engagement unit that employs CBL pedagogy. Engagement units are compulsory for the ~2,200 students who complete the BBC in their chosen discipline or key program each year.

The rationale for the introduction of engagement units is that students will develop an appreciation of the complexities involved in real-world business situations where there is no one right answer to a problem. By working in such situations, students can assimilate the knowledge they have gained throughout their courses in an applied unit. Therefore, engaged units expose students to real industry problems and issues. Engagement units are integral to UWS's mission to prepare career-ready graduates to meet the espoused needs of employers and to distinguish UWS business programs as industry-focused.

Under the guidance of UWS academic development staff, individual unit coordinators developed engagement unit outlines for 12 key programs. Due to the diversity and individual nuances of key programs, unit coordinators were encouraged to customise their units to meet students' needs, discipline-specific curriculum requisites, administrative requirements and the targeted community.

As part of the quality improvement program in the BBC, all engagements were reviewed after one year through an internal desk audit. This paper reports on the desk audit of the BBC's CBL units.

Methodology

The research followed two phases. The first was to review the literature to identify the key characteristics of scholarly engagement and curriculum design. The findings were synthesised into a framework matrix that identified key attributes of curriculum design of CBL units. The matrix methodology is conceptually similar to service-learning approaches to curriculum design (see Centre for Community Engagement, 2009).

The second phase was to assess the efficacy of the framework by testing a range of undergraduate engagement unit outlines using the case of the BBC at UWS. A panel of three experienced academics independently completed a desk audit of 12 different unit outlines based upon the framework. When necessary, academics sought further information and clarification from the unit coordinators. Findings from individual academics were collated and where inconsistencies were identified the panel used a modified Delphi technique to agree on the findings. Similarities and differences between units are reported in the findings. Throughout the audit, feedback from assessors was used to modify the framework to encompass unexpected findings and improve the framework's efficacy in analysis. The final version of the framework reflects the need to satisfy a range of CBL criteria to encompass different business disciplines of accounting, marketing, management, and economics and finance.

This research recognises the limitations of reliance on unit outline desk audits that do not account for the complex interdependent influences of teacher, student cohort, teaching environment and community partners. Feedback from each of these stakeholders would be required to complete a full assessment of CBL units and their performance. However, the purpose of the study was to develop a generic CBL framework that assesses a range of business units from unit outlines. Despite the recognition that the assessment process is subjective, adoption of an expert academic panel provides a level of amelioration for potential bias.

Findings and discussion

Phase 1 of this research developed a framework to examine CBL in business units. The literature review identified two constructs – stakeholder analysis and constructive alignment – as the basis of a framework for curricular evaluation of CBL units. A framework or matrix approach is conceptually similar to the Centre for Community Engagement recommendations for examining the roles and responsibilities of faculty, students and community organisations in service learning. However, the new matrix recognises the institutional contribution to CBL and adopts constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996) to examine learning objectives, teaching and learning activities and assessment. Examination of the four stakeholder groups (students, faculty, institution, and partners and wider community (Van De Ven, 2007)) reflected the intrinsic nature of an engagement pedagogy (Boyer, 1990, 1996; Furco, 1996) that features genuine partnership, reciprocity and exchange of knowledge as underpinning principles. Table 1 shows the synthesised framework that identifies key dimensions of CBL curricular design relative to each stakeholder and the principles of constructive alignment.

Table 1: Framework to analyse CBL engagement units

	Constructive Alignment (Biggs, 1996)		
Stakeholder	Learning Objectives (LOs)	Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)	Assessment
Student	▪ Opportunities for learning: ▪ Discipline specific ▪ Vocation and career ▪ Generic skills ▪ Personal development ▪ Interdependent learning ▪ Community & civic values	▪ Student-centred learning ▪ Self-managed learning processes ▪ Application of prior knowledge and skills ▪ Opportunities to work with partners	▪ Flexible methods to demonstrate learning outcomes ▪ Feedback from student experience to guide future improvements ▪ Explore career opportunities ▪ Increase appreciation of civic responsibilities

Faculty	▪ LO reflect what to learn in terms of performance?
	▪ What performance level is required?
	▪ LO to reflect higher order competencies eg. use of action verbs such as analysis, synthesis and critical evaluation
	▪ Alignment with course objectives
		▪ Do the TLAs align to the LOs and assessment items?
		▪ Experiential and active learning with opportunities for reflective practice
		▪ Situational based and opportunities to work with community partner
		▪ Problem-based tasks
		▪ Group based and collaborative learning
		▪ Lecturer as facilitator
		▪ Preparatory work for students prior to interacting with partners
			▪ Do the assessment items align to the LOs?
			▪ Flexible methods to demonstrate learning outcomes, such as:
			  – Portfolios
			  – Reflective journals
			  – Presentations
			  – Critical reports
			  – Vivas
			▪ Promote metacognitive and reflective processes
			▪ Opportunities to get feedback to facilitate continuous improvement?

Institution	▪ Recognition and role of CBL in:
	  – Units/courses
	  – Key programs and degrees
	  – Graduate attributes
	▪ Development of scholarly engagement
		▪ Documentation and risk management strategies and policies
		▪ Commitment of resources
		▪ Support for partnership initiation and maintenance
			▪ CBL integration into course design
			▪ Communicate outcome to internal and external stakeholders
			▪ Recognition and reward of faculty involvement with CBL
			▪ Managing and extending linkages with community

Partner/s and community	▪ Understand of the unit and course objectives ▪ Understanding their role and responsibilities ▪ Identifying and negotiating the problem and tasks	▪ Involvement with students in teaching, supervision, providing instruction, and feedback ▪ Partnership with faculty and institution	▪ Evaluation of student learning ▪ Feedback and evaluation of course design to identify areas for improvement ▪ Benefits to partner/s and wider community ▪ Opportunity for recruitment ▪ Opportunities for future involvement with institution

Phase 2 evaluated 12 CBL unit outlines by the academic panel using the framework developed in Phase 1. Overall, it was notable that each unit employed a unique and diverse combination of teaching and learning activities, assessment practice and community involvement within individual unit outlines, thus reflecting the individual characteristics of the discipline, faculty and student cohort. Similarities in learning objectives included:

- Student learning objectives targeted the development of competencies specific to their discipline, vocation and career, generic skills, and personal growth.
- Learning objectives included the use of higher order skills to facilitate deep learning such as analysis, synthesis and critical thinking.
- CBL units were used as integral course components that aim to develop career-ready graduate attributes.
- Few units adopted a service learning ideology where students contributed to wider community benefit, most units benefited individual organisations. Thus, CBL units may not have substantially developed students' civic values.

Similarities in teaching and learning activities included:

- Student-centred learning used activities where students took control of the task to solve a problem identified by either the students themselves, by the faculty or both through the application of prior skills and knowledge to solve the problem and present solutions based upon critical analysis.
- Activities included reflective and metacognitive processes intrinsic to TLAs and assessment activities such as reflective journals, critical reports and presentations.
- Preparatory activities, lasting 1–3 weeks, were undertaken prior to engaging with community partners. These activities focused on professional communication skills, working in groups and project management.
- Institutional support was provided for risk management and documentation.
- Individual faculty members managed partner relationships, with little overall institutional coordination and formalised support processes.

Overall, assessment activities aligned to the learning objectives and TLAs with similarities between units were identified as:

- Assessment schema employed a range of flexible group and individual activities such as reports, presentations, reflective journals and exams.
- Partners were used infrequently to assess student learning outcomes; only one unit employed community partners to provide summative and formative feedback.
- Mechanisms to invite student and partner feedback to improve the program were not widely adopted.
- Units provided few opportunities to communicate project outcomes for wider dissemination of the program to internal and external stakeholders and the wider community.

Despite numerous similarities between units, a wide variation in designing CBL curriculum was identified in the following areas:

- Community partners were involved in designing the problem/tasks, understanding the student learning objectives, and explicitly establishing their level of commitment.
- Level of experiential learning opportunities involving students in authentic situations allowed students to work with community partners. Variations ranged from partner visits to the classroom, students visiting partner premises for briefings, student interviews with industry, to fully integrated environments where students worked closely with partners to hold community events.
- Variations in the role of the lecturer extended from acting as facilitator or providing weekly lectures, to units where students were fully autonomous in their selection of the project, collection of the data, interactions with industry and report writing.
- Assessment practice varied by item and its overall contribution to final grade. Typical assessment items and their contributions to the overall student grade included individual and group reports (40–100%), presentations (10–25%), reflective journals (20–30%) and final summative exams (20–50%).
- Opportunities for students to gain employment and for potential partners to recruit graduates varied considerable between units.

The similarities and differences between CBL units reflect the diverse range of units, faculty and discipline requirements. However, the framework also identifies both individual units and institutional opportunities for improvement to better align to a CBL pedagogy.

Conclusion and implications

This paper reports on the curricular review of business units that adopt community-based learning (CBL) pedagogy in the Bachelor of Business and Commerce. The first objective was to review the literature in order to develop a generic framework to evaluate a range of unit outlines. Feedback from the academic review panel was used to modify the framework; the final version is shown in Table 1. The framework recognises the unique nature of each unit, with no one prescriptive model being suitable for all disciplines. Each discipline has to account for and leverage its institutional resources, students, faculty and community partners to provide a customised curricular design to ensure a sustainable CBL programs.

The framework reflects the key concept of mutually beneficial partnerships between students, faculty, institution and community stakeholders (Gelmon et al., 2006; Van De Ven, 2007). Following the notion of *constructive alignment* (Biggs, 1996), each stakeholder group has key roles and responsibilities in designing and setting learning objectives, teaching and learning activities, and assessment items. The framework recognises that teaching is a complex and interactive system involving teacher, students, the teaching context and the outcome. Each element is a mutually supportive part of a system and thus enhanced teaching should address the whole system, not just individual components such as new curriculums or methods (Biggs, 1996).

The framework articulates important CBL concepts such as experiential (Kolb, 1984), action and problem-based learning in authentic contexts (Dewey, 1938; Lave & Wenger, 1991). CBL offers an alternative pedagogy to traditional teaching, focusing on student-centred *deep-learning* processes to enhance an individual's discipline, generic, vocational, interdependent and civic understanding (Stukas et al., 1999). Learners work with community partners for reciprocal benefit and assist institutions in aligning and serving the needs of their communities (Furco, 1996). In support of these premises, Foster and Stephenson (1998) argue that CBL ideally involves activities that can be measured, problem-based, team-based, autonomously managed, improve organisational performance and are innovation-centred.

The second objective was to evaluate the framework's efficacy by using it to identify similarities and differences between business engagement units, with a view to identifying opportunities for improvement. Within the framework (Table 1), best practices in CBL are identified and thus establish a benchmark to test actual delivery across the range of business units. The table was modified if the review process identified inconsistencies in implementing the framework.

A comparison of the framework to practice revealed similarities and differences in the units' design and simultaneously highlighted opportunities for improvement. Similarities between the units were identified in student learning objectives facilitating higher-order deep-learning illustrated by the use of active verbs (Biggs, 1996; Sayce, 2007), student-centred problem -based activities (Ponder et al., 2004; Borin et al., 2008), use of teams to encourage collaboration between students (Rossin et al., 2003), inclusion of reflective practice (Kolb, 1984), use of a variety of flexible assessment schema (Gelmon et al., 2006) and development of career-ready graduate attributes (Van De Ven, 2007). Differences between the units included the quantity of preparatory work before the student went into the field, the change in the role of the lecturer to a facilitator (Boud et al., 1997), the level of authentic experience for students to work within their community of practice (Boud et al., 1997; Kolb & Kolb, 2005), and consistent assessment schema ranging from 100% based upon final report to use of summative exams at 40% of final grade. Closer inspection of these differences may help develop individual units to better reflect best practices in CBL.

Using the framework to evaluate unit curriculums identified specific opportunities for improvement to enhance the experience for all stakeholders independent of discipline. These improvements include the need to provide institutional support for the coordination and management of long-term partner relationships, integration of service learning projects to build student civic responsibilities, and opportunities to promote the projects to stakeholders and the wider community.

The third objective was to identify key managerial lessons from using the framework. Application of the framework to assess individual curriculums provided a pragmatic approach to the desk audit that encompassed major components of CBL. Findings from the audit were quickly generated and provided a holistic view that recognised the interdependence of the various competing influences in CBL course design and implementation. The framework identified *missing pieces* of CBL curriculums within units. Repeated applications of the framework adjusted key criteria within each unit to better meet the needs of stakeholders. Opportunities for improvement became evident when multiple units were analysed and similar patterns were identified independent of the discipline.

In addition to using the framework to evaluate individual units, the framework can easily be adapted for the design of engagement units as a frame of reference to ensure key criteria are incorporated. As a planning tool, the framework encourages course designers to consider the diverse aspects in CBL in their design from different stakeholder perspectives to ensure a holistic approach. Future research is recommended to integrate the framework with feedback from each stakeholder group to better inform on individual disciplines, cohorts of students and engagement modes.

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Integrating Academic and Industry Experts to Deliver Short Courses

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Abstract

Traditional higher education relies on academic staff to deliver and impart requisite knowledge and skills to students. More recently, the literature suggests that student learning outcomes are improved by employing engagement pedagogies where students work with community partners in real-world situations. Here students are immersed in complex settings and 'learn-by-doing' by applying theory-to-practice'. Engagement pedagogies commonly employed by universities include service learning, internships, clinical placements and work-integrated learning. However, the Australian Government has identified the need for universities to work more closely with industry to offer students alternative and flexible education pathways. This paper seeks to address this need by reporting and analysing the case study of the University of Western Sydney working with an industry partner to deliver a non-award intensive short program. The two-week program was designed with academic staff and industry practitioners providing students with a 'mini-MBA' learning experience. Qualitative data on the student experience were collected from written feedback before and after the program, and quantitative evaluations of 26 academic and industry sessions in terms of presenters' style, relevance and content. Analysis of the data suggests that hybrid programs using presenters from various backgrounds can offer significant benefit by engaging students with the subject material through the credibility of practitioners providing expert industry insight. The findings also identify the need to carefully manage and up-skill industry presenters to ensure their delivery meets student expectations. Recommended strategies to equip industry presenters include training in presentation, briefing sessions prior to presentations and the programming of individual sessions.

Introduction

Contemporary business education is criticised for its failure to equip students with sufficient educational breadth, especially in regard to the external business environment (Zlotkowski, 1996). Traditionally, many business schools rely on textbooks, case studies, teachers' insights and having industry employers talk to students to develop students' understanding of the 'real world' of business (Betts & Smith, 2000). Echoing these concerns, The Economist (2004) reports 'Business schools face more criticism of the quality of their work than they have ever done before', with concerns focused on the failure of business schools to teach the right things. The gap between industry practice and business education has been recognised by Donnan and Lee (2004), who propose that a contributing factor to the misalignment between academic curriculums and industry practice is the time delay in researching and translating current business practice into material available to students.

In addition to delays in accessing leading industry practice, several other factors have resulted in the *massification* and diversification of higher education: economic globalisation, the emergence of an information society, new modes of knowledge creation and new professional requirements (Hyland & Rossin, 2003; Tynjala et al., 2003). The Australian Government has recognised the need for higher education reform and calls for greater integration higher education sectors and industry (Bradley et al., 2008).

Thus, the challenge for higher educational institutions is to develop new forms of teaching, practical training and cooperation with industry by combining working life, vocational training, and theoretical and practical knowledge to cater for regional and local needs (Tynjala et al., 2003). This paper seeks to address this need by analysing and reporting the case study of the University of Western Sydney (UWS) working with an industry partner to deliver a non-award intensive short program to answer two research questions:

1. What is the student perception of their experience in the CBL program jointly delivery by academia and industry?
2. What managerial lesson can be learnt from this program?

Literature review

A community-based learning (CBL) pedagogy can simultaneously meet the changing demands of students, the higher education system and communities (Boud & Costley, 2007; Edwards & Mooney, 2001). Edwards and Mooney (2001, p. 182) define community-based learning (CBL) as 'any pedagogical tool that involves the community in the learning process'. Community engagement (CE) is described by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2009) as 'the 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'. CBL benefits the community and students through an equal focus on gains for the community and student learning outcomes (Furco, 1996; Govekar & Rishi, 2007).

Engaged scholarship supports the university philosophy of teaching, research and service to their community by linking students, academics and practitioners. As a proponent of engaged scholarship, Boyer (1990) argues that universities should be more responsive to the needs of their community and teachers should be *reflective practitioners* in the educational process. Connections between higher education and the community bridge the gap between theory and practice and overcome the problems of knowledge transfer between partners (Van De Ven, 2007). Typical examples of CBL in higher education include internships, experiential learning, volunteering, academic service learning, pre-professional experience, internships, cooperative placements, community service and applied learning (Edwards & Mooney, 2001).

CE is a scholarly approach to connect students, academics and the community through learning, teaching and research partnerships to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Engaged scholarship encompasses activities of discovery, teaching, application and integration (Boyer, 1990, 1996). Outcomes of CE address identified community needs, promote students' civic and academic development, advance institutional scholarship and promote community well-being (Carnegie Foundation, 2009). Through partnerships with the community, students develop an understanding of the issues facing agencies and organisation, resulting in the desire for students to become advocates (Yoder, 2006).

CBL is underpinned by several dimensions, including constructivist theory, situated learning theory, experiential learning pedagogy and problem-based learning. This paper adopts a constructivist perspective, where learners are the centre of knowledge creation, learning takes place in individual minds and meaning is created by the learner's activities (Biggs, 1996). Dewey (1938) advocated the importance of learning within real-life settings, an approach that supports theories of situated learning whereby students' increased participation in real-world practice provides rich and authentic experiences for the learner, different from the discipline-specific knowledge learnt at university (Boud & Costley, 2007). Universities rely on formal, structured and planned mental activities for the student, using abstract symbols and emphasising generic skills, with students assessed primarily on individual tasks or tests. In contrast, workplace learning is mostly informal, unplanned and incidental; it usually involves collaboration among students to address tasks that require both mental and physical processes to solve more objective problems, and students acquire the situation-specific competencies required by industry (Tynjala et al., 2003).

Experiential learning is a learner-centric approach that facilitates deep learning (Johnson, 2000) where students learn-by-doing (Hyland & Rossin, 2003) and reflecting on their experiences. Kolb's (1984) 'Experiential Learning Cycle' is one of the most widely accepted models of experiential learning where the learner continually progresses through the cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualisation and active experimentation (Kolenko et al., 1996). Kolb (1984, p. 38) describes experiential learning as an *active* learning process 'whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience'. Problem-based learning (PBL) is a form of experiential learning that integrates theory and practice by building upon coursework, with students using their prior knowledge, academic skills, understanding of client requirements and situational contextual factors to solve the 'problem' (Pinto Pereira & Telang, 1993).

Sustainable CBL programs require the development and maintenance of genuine partnerships between students, faculty and institutions, and partner/s and wider community (Gelmon, et al., 2006; Van De Ven, 2007). Adopting a stakeholder view, programs must be designed, developed and implemented to reflect each group's interests and expectations to account for all stakeholders' requirements (Tynjala et al., 2003). Orrell (2004) concurs with the notion that all parties need to gain explicit benefit otherwise the partnership will cease to be effective, and recommends that partner organisations become involved in the planning from the beginning.

For faculty, the student-centred learning approach of CBL offers an alternative to the traditional higher education teaching methods (Gelmon et al., 2006). Based upon the premise that the first concern of faculty is student education and development (Kolenko et al., 1996), *constructive alignment* (CA) (Biggs, 1996) asserts that effective teaching and learning is achieved by aligning learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities (TLAs), and assessment. CA follows the principles of *complementarity* theory (Edgeworth, 1881), recognising the mutually supportive and interacting elements of the learning process where changes impact on the whole system. Complementarity theory holds that that organisational activities and practices are mutually complementary and so tend to be adopted together, with each enhancing the contribution of the other. In essence, complementary systems will produce better synergistic effect than using a single or isolated resource for the same purpose (Milgrom & Roberts, 1990).

Biggs (1996) suggests the first step to achieve CA is to set learning objectives that challenge students by incorporating high-order skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation. CA recognises that the learning environment supports teaching and learning activities which in turn influence the performance of students against the learning objectives. A teacher's role is to design TLAs that assist students in achieving the learning outcomes.

Furthermore, construction of knowledge also relies on social or peer-controlled activities and the individual's self-controlled activities in learning and study (Biggs, 1996). Assessment checks student performance against the learning objectives and defines to the student what has to be learnt (Biggs, 2003). The literature (Boud et al., 1999; Ramsden, 1992; Wass et al., 2001) is consistent in recognising assessment drives learning and Biggs (1996) argues there is a need to align student learning objectives, content, learning pedagogy and assessment techniques. Similarly, Weigert (1998) suggests teachers must carefully align course objectives and assignments within community settings for effective CBL.

For industry partners, involvement with CBL projects offers multiple benefits that include additional capacity and resources to complete projects that would not be possible without student involvement, the prospect of recruiting students, potential for future involvement with institutions (Centre for Community Engagement, 2009), and opportunities for organisations to enhance their corporate social responsibility agenda. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is based upon the premise that business and society are interdependent, not distinct entities (Wood, 1991); indeed, the social responsibilities of firms extend to their employees, customers, suppliers and the community (Moir, 2001).

The literature holds divergent views on the empirical correlations of CSR expenditure and economic benefit to the organisation (Burke & Logsdon, 1996; Carroll, 1999). Firms adopting a neo-classical view believe that an organisation's social responsibility is limited to paying taxes and employing people (Moir, 2001). In contrast, others suggest CSR programs that align with and contribute to the organisation's mission can achieve long-term strategic goals despite incurring short-term costs, often measured by a correlation between philanthropic contributions or short term profits (Burke & Logsdon, 1996). Researchers continue to search for appropriate models to assess CSR performance (Moir, 2001), with Wood (1991) proposing a model based upon stakeholder theory aligned to the principles, processes and outcomes of corporate behaviour. Stakeholder theory of the firm (Freeman, 1984) is based upon the premise that firms are a series of interconnected stakeholders that must be managed. Stakeholders can be divided into primary and secondary groups. Primary stakeholders – such as employees, customers and suppliers – are essential to the continuity of the business. Secondary stakeholders are groups influenced by and transacted with, but not essential, to the firm's for its survival (Freeman, 1984).

Community partners bring significant benefit to the student learning process. The community-based learning literature (see Edwards & Mooney, 2001; Gelmon et al., 2006; Schon, 1983; Smith et al., 2007) recognises the contribution of community partners in providing an authentic environment for experiential learning and contributing to the learning process (Weigert, 1998). This contribution is particularly effective when industry experts are used as a resource to assist student learning in teams (Baldwin & Hoang, 2000). Partners are often highly skilled in working in specialist communities and are regarded by students as authoritative sources of information (Yoder, 2006).

Community-based learning is a student-centred experiential learning pedagogy. As such, the evaluation of the student's experience in the learning process is important to understand efficacy of the pedagogy. Further, it is argued that constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996) is a suitable framework to analyse students' experiences following the phases of learning goals, teaching and learning activities, and assessment of the program. Whilst it is acknowledged that faculty and industry partners' perceptions are equally important in CBL, this paper examines student views of their experience to inform on the development of similar programs.

Situation

Zawi (real name changed for anonymity) is major supermarket retailer with stores in every state in Australia. Part for their core offer to customers that provides a distinguishing positioning within the supermarket industry is their extensive fresh food departments which stock fruit and vegetables, seafood, bakery, small goods, dairy and delicatessen items. As a major supermarket, Zawi is a significant buyer from the agricultural sector, with some arguing that this purchasing power is creating an unequal power distribution in supplier-buyer relationships.

As part of Zawi's corporate social responsibility program, the chief executive officer has announced that they would develop and fund an intensive residential short course to assist future leaders in the agricultural or horticultural industries develop management skills. Expressions of interest from individuals were advertised nationally to identify 25 individuals aged 18–30 years who could demonstrate current managerial experience in the agricultural industry or relevant studies, potential leadership abilities, career aspirations, and an understanding of current issues facing the industry. Candidates applied online or via mail and were evaluated by Zawi using a comprehensive rating framework to determine suitability. Selected candidates were interviewed by phone prior to offers being sent.

Successful applicants had a wide variety of backgrounds, experience and vocations, and came from each State in Australia. Twenty-four individuals were selected from city and rural backgrounds, ranging from full-time students to employed people with Masters degrees, from self-employed owner-operators to mid-level managers working for multi-national companies, and from a range of agricultural production sectors that included fruit and vegetable, seeds, beef, lamb, wool, cotton and grains. Additionally, several successful candidates were from processing, distribution and retailing stages of the value chain.

UWS was invited to assist in the design and delivery of the program, initially described by Zawi as non-award 'mini-MBA'. UWS was to provide 'university style' theory and content through lectures in finance, marketing strategic management, value chain and agriculture. Zawi senior staff were to provide insight into the application of the theory in a retailing environment. In order to complement and reinforce UWS and Zawi content, expert agricultural industry perspectives were gained through presentations from growers, suppliers, government and industry bodies.

The program followed an MBA approach in terms of instructional level and use of a building-block approach to the development of student knowledge and competencies in key business areas. Industry presenters were initially scheduled to reflect the academic program, but their availability often resulted in the program being reorganised. Classroom activities were delivered in Zawi's premises, which were equal to, if not better than, most university postgraduate facilities and included presentations, case studies, expert panels, discussion forums and group work. Off-site study tours were strategically scheduled to reinforce content and provide breaks in classroom activities.

To provide an active-learning environment, a continuity case study was employed as a group learning activity. Students were organised into groups of five with each group having members with diverging vocations, experience and educational levels. Each group was required to develop a professional and justified business plan for the strategic investment in a selected agricultural industry as nominated by UWS. Groups presented on the final day to a panel of UWS, Zawi and industry experts.

Methodology

This study used the single case of the development and implementation of the Zawi mini-MBA. Constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996) was used as the framework to analyse student perceptions of the program in the stages of learning objectives, teaching and learning activities, and assessment. Data were collected from the students at each stage through qualitative and quantitative surveys.

Qualitative projective tests used a cartoon drawing for which the respondents suggest a dialogue between two characters (Zikmund, 2003), a technique used successfully in business studies (Lee & Holland, 2008). In the cartoon test administered on the first day, respondents were asked to fill in the bubble in the cartoon by answering two questions:
1. Why did you apply for the Zawi scholarship?
2. What do you want to get out of the next two weeks?

Similarly, on the last day students were asked: *Did the program meet your expectation?* All responses were voluntary and anonymous. Students were encouraged to be frank and were given as much time as they needed to complete the cartoon.

Written responses were transcribed into a Word document for cross-sectional indexing and thematic labelling. Transcripts were analysed using QSR NVivo according to recommendations by Bazeley and Richards (2000). Data were initially classified into themes with attributes emerging from the coding process. Attributes were identified using pattern matching to explore student perceptions and opinions of their experience. Numbers indicated attribute frequency occurrence and, while this was not a statistical test, the results revealed patterns in the data. Summation of frequency of occurrence of individual attributes was greater than the sum of the total responses, as respondents reported multiple attributes within their response.

In addition to the qualitative feedback, students were asked to rate sessions and their presenters using a quantitative 5-point Likert scale from 'totally agree' to 'totally disagree'. Individual sessions were rated on their style, relevance and content within 24 hours of presentation. These three items were combined to produce a single score to rank sessions. In addition, an overall rating using the Likert scale was conducted on the final day of all academic sessions, Zawi sessions, industry sessions, off-site study tours and group work activities to understand role each component has in the program. Any item that achieved a mean score of 3.0 and above was considered important (Kamhawi, 2008) as it indicated that respondents found the session agreeing or totally agreeing to the value of the session.

Figure 1 depicts the data collection instruments and the timing of collection within the constructive alignment framework.

Figure 1: Methodology for staged data collection
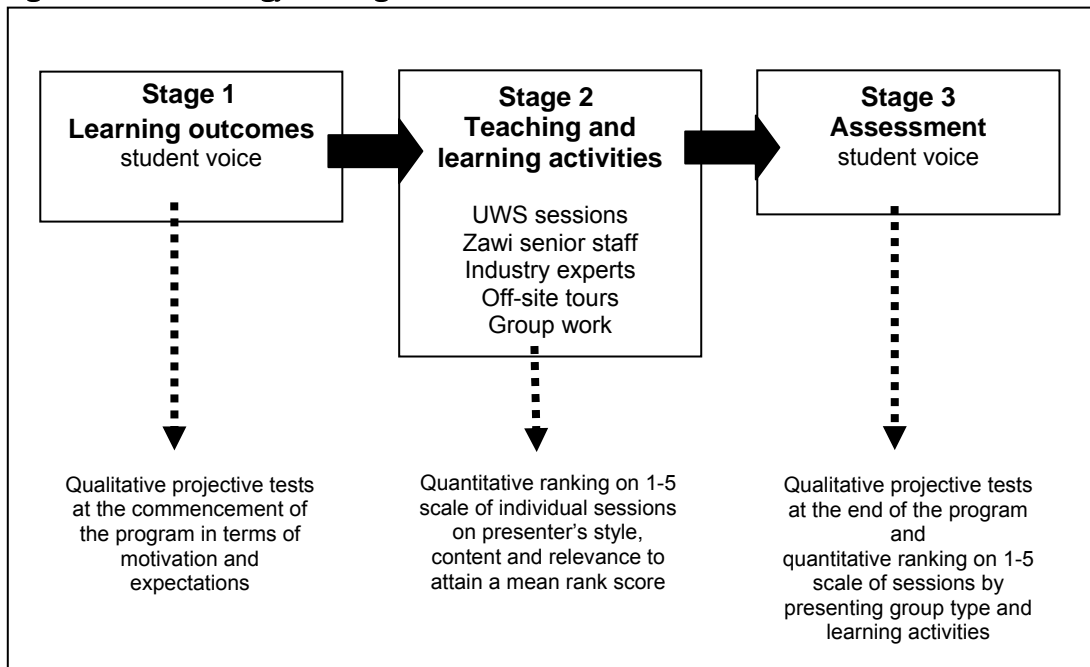
The study had limitations: student perception of their experience was analysed without the contribution of academic and industry voice; academic objectives, curricular design and assessment for the course were not assessed as this was a non-award course; response bias may have occurred despite the survey instrument being voluntary and anonymous; qualitative analysis relies on the interpretation of researcher, who in this case was trained and experienced; quantitative analysis using rating scales developed from several items are indicative only of the respondents' feelings; and reliance on a single case study with one cohort of highly motivated students may not reflect general population all postgraduate business students. Therefore, it is recommended that future research replicates this study to increase its reliability and new cases in similar programs being identified for examination.

Findings and discussion

Analysis of the response data (n=24) identified three main motivations to undertake the course: development of professional skills and knowledge (n=30), networking opportunities (n=7) and various personal reasons (n=4); see Table 1. The two most reported motivations were increasing knowledge in the agricultural industry (n=15) and development of management skills and knowledge (n=10). The results are congruent with the program's mission, as students self-selected for the program. Three motivations – networking with industry (n=7), required by employer (n=3) and to have a holiday (n=1) – were unexpected findings. The emphasis on networking suggests that, more than knowledge and competency development, business programs offer opportunities to establish professional networks.

Table 1: Pre-course evaluation 'Why did you apply for the Zawi scholarship?'

Construct	Attribute	Response
Development of professional skills and knowledge (30)	Increase knowledge about agricultural industry	15
	Develop managerial skills and knowledge	10
	Learn about Zawi	5
Networking opportunities (7)	Networking with industry	7
Required by employer (3)	Requirement of my job	3
Various personal reasons (4)	Plan to work for myself	1
	Personal challenge	1
	Recommended by others	1
	Holiday	1

Analysis revealed three student expectations of the course: content (n=30), networking (n=11) and personal development opportunities (n=6); see Table 2. Unsurprisingly, these findings were consistent with students' reasons for attending the program, shown in Table 1. Interestingly, two respondents recognised the opportunity to develop business contacts within Zawi, supporting the view that business courses provide opportunity for developing professional business networks.

Table 2: Pre-course evaluation 'What did you want to get out of the next two weeks?'

Construct	Attribute	Response
Content (30)	Better insight into agricultural industry	13
	Learn about management practices	13
	Learn about Zawi	4
Networking opportunities (11)	Networking with industry presenters & students	9
	Develop closer contacts with Zawi	2
Personal development opportunities (6)	Improve skills as a practitioner	3
	Application of knowledge	2
	Improve interpersonal skills	1

During the program, all 26 individual sessions were analysed, based upon a composite average of scores for the presenter's style, session content and relevance. Mean scores ranged from 2.2 to 4.5 out of a possible 5.0, with 20 scores greater than 3.0 indicating that the majority sessions were of value to the student group. The four off-site tours scored within the top 10 sessions (all above 4.0), indicating the group's preference to move from the classroom into an industry environment. The lowest six scores (below 3.0) were UWS and Zawi sessions, with each session consistently performing poorly across presenter's style, content and relevance. It is unclear if the low ratings were influenced by the presenter's style not matching student expectations, the inherently 'dry' nature of the content that did not appeal to the audience, the inability of the students to recognise the importance of the topic area, or a combination of all three aspects.

At the completion of the program, post-course evaluations through a projective test identified that 17 of the 24 respondents considered the program had met or exceeded their expectations; see Table 3. Networking (n=7) and personal development opportunities (n=4) were also identified but to a lesser extent. Respondents gave suggestions for improvement; however, responses did not form substantial themes.

Table 3: Post-course evaluation 'Did the program meet your expectations?'

Construct	Attribute	Response
Opinion of program	Yes, met all expectations	11
	Yes, exceeded my expectations	6
	Had no expectations	1
	Was as challenging as I thought	1
	Was more challenging than I thought	2
Networking	Great opportunities for networking and interaction with students and presenters	5
	Good mix of group members	2
Personal development	Developed skills and knowledge	4
Recommendations for improvement	More industry off-site tours	2
	More industry presenters	2
	More time to complete the group project	1
	More out of classroom time	1
	More in-class discussion time	1
	Include negotiation skills	1
Timing	Two weeks was a long time	1

A second survey was administered on the final day of the program, with respondents asked to rate sessions by group (UWS, Zawi and industry) and learning activities (off-site tours and group project). Results indicate the respondents highly rated the overall program (m=4.65, s=0.49), which was reflected in sessions by groups and learning activities scoring above 4.0; see Table 4. Ranking of the sessions identified industry presenters (m=4.79, s=0.41) and off-site tours (m=4.67, s=0.56) were most preferred.

Table 4: Post-course evaluation - Overall evaluation of sessions by group or activity

Group or activity	Mean	Standard deviation
Expert industry sessions	4.79	0.41
Off-site industry tours	4.67	0.56
UWS academic sessions	4.25	0.61
Zawi sessions	4.25	0.74
Group project	4.13	0.8
Overall whole program	4.65	0.49

Expert industry presenters were most highly valued as a group, reflecting the assertion that industry partners can be used a co-teachers (Weigert, 1998), with their specialist skills making them authoritative sources of information that are highly respected by students (Yoder, 2006). Students valued the reflections of experienced senior managers of large corporations who provided insights into national and global agricultural business practices. Off-site tours were notably popular with students, possibly because they allowed students a break in the intensive classroom-based activities, they provided a practical context for what was learnt in class, and they provided opportunities to see industry practices inaccessible to the general public.

Interestingly, the continuity case study that required the groups to develop and present a business plan to an industry panel was highly rated, despite the demanding nature of the project. Whilst the business plan was a hypothetical initiative and not part of a formal assessment protocol, students determined the level of effort they put into the project, with all groups actively competing to furnish a professional plan at the end of the 10 days. These results support the positive contribution to the learning process from student-centred learning activities (Gelmon et al., 2006), team-based problem solving as pedagogy to engage deep learning (Biggs, 1996; Johnson, 2000; Tynjala et al., 2003) and reflective practice (Kolb, 1984).

Conclusion and implications

This paper seeks to address the gap in the CBL literature in delivering business management courses through close collaboration of industry and academia. The study provides an exemplar of the potential for teaching in partnership, combining industry and academic expertise to deliver new ways of teaching as identified by the government, industry and academics. The paper analyses and reports the case study of UWS working with an industry partner to deliver a non-award intensive short program. The program is unique in its funding from industry partners to benefit future leaders in the agricultural industry and its use of industry experts as co-teachers.

The program was analysed using constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996) as the framework to align learning objectives, teaching and learning activities (expert industry sessions, off-site tours, UWS academic sessions, Zawi sessions, and a group project and presentation) and assessment. Data collection was limited to the students' perceptions of expectations, delivery and value of each component of the program, using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The first question was to assess students' perception of their experience in the CBL program delivered jointly by academia and industry. The students were aspiring future leaders in agriculture. They had made a significant commitment to participating in the program as many had to take time off work and/or completed their work remotely while attending the course. These commitments manifested themselves in participants having high expectations of the learning outcomes of the 10 days. Findings suggest that student motivation and expectations of the program fell into two main categories: content to assist in their development of professional skills and knowledge (both industry-specific and general management practice) and networking opportunities (with peers, presenters and industry), thus supporting the notion that students' generic and specific competency is developed through involvement with CBL (Lee & Holland, 2008).

Assessment of individual sessions throughout the program identified a preference for off-site industry tours; however, the analysis did not identify any patterns in preference for academic, Zawi or industry sessions. Site tours offer few opportunities for community engagement beyond the surface-level tourist view and therefore the challenge is to better integrate the community into the program.

Post-course evaluations identified the program's success at meeting the majority of student expectations, with several recommendations for improvement. In addition, quantitative evaluation of sessions by group or activity supported the qualitative findings that all sessions and the whole program were highly valued by participants. These results provide evidence to support the notion that CBL programs that involve a genuine partnership integrating academia and industry in design and delivery can meet learner objectives, as indicated in the literature (Gelmon et al., 2006; Van De Ven, 2007). The case highlights the potential benefits from close collaboration of industry and academic partners.

The second question was to identify managerial lessons that could be learnt from this program. Close collaboration between academia and industry in design and delivery is a potential model for other university courses. Each partner brings complementary and unique resources to the project and, in line with the theory of complementarity (Milgrom & Roberts, 1990), the benefits from mutually reinforcing learning experiences and synergy between partners and learning activities are recognised by participants.

The use of expert industry practitioners as co-teachers (Yoder, 2006), which bridges the gap between industry and academia as identified by Donnan and Lee (2004), was highly valued by the students. Industry presenters bring specialised knowledge and insight in contemporary industry practice (Yoder, 2006) that is not always accessible to an academic environment focusing on generic skills and abstract concepts (Tynjala et al., 2003). However, despite the ability of industry experts to be teachers, students expect presenters to have high levels of communication skills. Thus, there is a need to up-skill some industry presenters to ensure they meet students' expectations. Skill development would involve presentation training, planning of content and activities within each session, briefing sessions prior to sessions, and development of supporting media. The partners who were assisted in skill development in this program were more confident in their sessions and appreciated the help.

In contrast to traditional CBL programs (such as academic service learning and cooperative placements where community partners can assess their immediate benefit of involvement), Zawi's funding and resourcing demonstrates their commitment to a long-term CSR strategy (Burke & Logsdon, 1996), with the main beneficiary being the student and the communities in which they work. It is acknowledged that Zawi will eventually benefit from positively influencing future leaders and developing the intellectual capital of the agricultural industry on which it relies. However, short-term costs are significant, especially in light of the global financial crisis. It is argued that the expansion and sustainability of this and similar CBL programs rely on industry with long-term CSR strategies. Thus, a challenge for higher education is to develop explicit ways to publically promote and acknowledge the positive contributions from partners.

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Contextualising health promotion and health education in the undergraduate nursing curriculum and engaging regional communities and groups

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Abstract

The Nursing and Rural Health Unit of the Centre for Regional Engagement at Whyalla prepares students to become first-level registered nurses. The Unit is also committed to promoting and improving the health of the communities with which it engages. Health promotion and education are embedded in various courses in the curriculum; both students and lecturers participate in health-promoting activities for the wider community in order to link the classroom to real-life problems and community needs.

For the past six years, the students, under staff supervision, have been conducting health fairs in regional areas in South Australia, and, more recently, lecturers have extended similar activities to faith communities and community organisations. The health fairs, which present an exciting and unique opportunity for community outreach and engagement, aim to provide free health assessment and early detection of health problems, increase awareness of the impact of lifestyle choices on good health, allow students to put theory into practice, and contribute to the general health and well-being of the communities in which we operate.

Over 2,000 community members have participated in our health fairs to date. Post-health fair feedback from community members and students has been consistently highly satisfactory. Results of evaluations and anecdotal reports by participating community members revealed that this initiative was '*empowering*' and '*an excellent service to the community*'. The students reported that they gained an opportunity for real-life learning and skills practice. This initiative is a solid example of community engagement with clear mutual benefits for all concerned. Our Unit intends to continue conducting health fairs on a regular basis.

Introduction

The Centre for Regional Engagement of the University of South Australia at Whyalla is the only non-metropolitan university campus in the state. It caters for rural and remote communities through innovative ways of providing education. Despite its small size and rural location, the Centre, through its Nursing and Rural Health Unit, has demonstrated its ability to promote good health and be responsive to the health needs of its immediate community and of other more distant communities (Ellis & Penman, 2008). Consequently, the Centre enables the University to fulfil its role in community engagement and be recognised as 'a regional university with a clear commitment to contribute to economic, environmental and social development in collaboration with local councils and community groups, government agencies and industry' (University of South Australia, 2002, p. 2).

The links with communities have been made because of a number of motivations including a genuine interest in the health and well-being of the larger population. The University acknowledges that educational opportunities are constrained in rural and remote areas for various reasons relating to access and equity issues. Community members view the University as a resource and authority in the health field.

Previous experiences have shown that community groups approach the university campus seeking learning opportunities and answers to questions (Ellis & Penman, 2004). The campus, in turn, believing in and building on the strengths available within the community, endeavours to address community issues and problems and contribute to fostering stronger and healthier communities. The benefits for such community engagements are many and multidirectional.

While health promotion and education are embedded in various courses in the nursing curriculum, this is reinforced as both students and staff participate in health-promoting activities for the wider community. This paper discusses the health fair, one of the initiatives of the Centre, specifically undertaken by the Nursing and Rural Health Unit. The annual health fair is an example of a community engagement that aims to promote health and well-being in South Australian rural and regional communities. The paper highlights the benefits and implications of conducting health fairs, the partnership building approach employed by the Unit, and the challenges to overcome to ensure the success of this community-campus health initiative.

Background
Health fairs, presented in various formats, have been shown to be an invaluable service to communities and an exciting and rewarding experience for participants and organisers (California Congress of Parents, Students, and Teachers, 1997). While health fairs may be easy to implement, they require time to plan and organise. Based on the health fair model, a typical health fair is underpinned by: community reliance and coordination; use of trained volunteers; emphasis on service rather than data gathering; focus on education, screening, health counselling, local referral and follow up; and use of standard procedures to ensure the quality of the event (Alaskan Health Fair, n.d.).

It is vital to consider the logistics in undertaking health fairs. The *Health fair kit* (American Academy of Pediatrics, n.d.), *Health fairs at your fingertips* (California Congress of Parents, Students, & Teachers, 1997), and the *Health fair planning guide* (Pollard & Rice, n.d.) provide practical guidelines and recommendations in planning, implementing, and evaluating health fairs. The crucial steps undertaken include the organisation of content, personnel, venue, involvement of other health organisations, materials and equipment and evaluation of the event.

The community engagement project
For the past six years, on-campus first- and more recently second- and third-year students, enrolled in our undergraduate program, have been conducting health fairs in various local shopping malls at Whyalla and Mount Gambier, and lately lecturers have also extended similar activities to faith communities, such as the Whyalla Adventist Church, and community organisations, such as the University of Third Age, the Low-vision Support Group, and the Lions Club. A health fair was also a component of the Oodnadatta health and wellness program undertaken by the Unit in the past (Buzzacott, Oliver & Penman, 2003). The aims of the health fair are to provide free health assessment, detect early potential health problems, provide students the opportunity to practise their skills, and increase awareness of the impact of lifestyle choices on good health.

The two-day health fair typically has a number of components: a health check, which involves various body measurements, such as weight, height, body mass index, pulse, respiratory rate, oxygen saturation, blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol levels; a health inventory, which uses a 15-item health questionnaire surveying demographics and lifestyle; individualised health education based on the results of the health check; and referral to health professionals or health facility as appropriate.

Provisions were made for situations when measurements are found to be dangerously outside of acceptable ranges. A referral form is used to alert the participant's general practitioner and/or the local hospital. Following the screen, there is opportunity for nursing students to discuss and distribute educational materials about the impact of lifestyle on health and how health might be improved. The students, under the supervision of two faculty members, provide individualised health education and follow-up suggestions on various topics, such as good nutrition, exercise, relaxation and stress management, alcohol, tobacco and other harmful substances, sexual and mental health, healthy cooking, and various medical conditions, such as hypertension, asthma, and diabetes.

The content and format of the health fair varies slightly from year to year depending on factors such as curriculum requirements, student preparation, and previous community evaluations. The health fair features static displays, exhibits, brochures, leaflets, and other printed health materials, and health-related activities and demonstrations. Community members crowd around the resources and talk with students and/or participate in activities, such as hand massage, exercise ball, aromatherapy, and/or Tai Chi.

Participating community members are invited to evaluate the health fair using a brief survey and/or a comment book. The participating nursing students and lecturers evaluate the community-campus health initiative by means of critical reflection. Feedback from students, community members, and staff is paramount to the continued improvement of this initiative. In evaluating, it is important to determine whether objectives are met, who actually benefits, the impact on the community, strategies that worked and strategies that failed, and specific areas for improvement.

Benefits to students, local communities, and the university campus

Overall, the health fairs conducted have been highly successful and mutually beneficial. A large number of individuals (over 400 participants in some years) from rural and remote communities participated in the health fairs – over 2,000 community members to date. Post-health fair feedback and anecdotal accounts from community members and students have been consistently positive and satisfactory. The benefits to the community as well as the benefits flowing back to the students and the University are now examined.

The community members who participated in the health and wellness program at Oodnadatta benefited through the education, information and service that were provided. In addition, the project benefited the students, faculty members and the health service as well. The results of the project evaluation, completed by the students and health care professionals, revealed that there was much to be gained from participating in the health fair and community visit. The activity was beneficial to the community, and beneficial to students and staff personally and professionally (Buzzacott, Oliver & Penman, 2003 & Ford, 2004). There were diverse and numerous learning opportunities, and the results also showed that the students participating were keen to go back and be involved again in a similar program:

> *This was a fantastic opportunity to witness first-hand what we learn about in class. Talking to local people and health professionals has really given me a true perspective of the issues that I will be dealing with when I become a nurse in a remote area. Our confidence in our skills has increased, as well as giving us new experiences ….*

Likewise, the students involved in Whyalla health fairs report extremely positive experiences. This is because the students are afforded the opportunities for real-life learning and skills practice. The health fair provides an exciting and rewarding experience for students as they feel that they benefit by developing their skills. A student reflects critically on the impact of participating in the health fair and writes:

> Last year I was asked to participate in the health fair which was held in our busiest shopping centre in Whyalla. I found this an opportunity to demonstrate and practise my assessment, communication, and documentation skills.
>
> ...The health fair gives us students a chance to practise and perfect the skills of taking vital signs such as blood pressure, it is imperative that nurses perfect this (blood pressure) skill. By participating in the health fair, students are given the opportunity to practise and perfect their techniques with different types of people. Taking a simple pulse may seem fairly easy, but for students with little experience, it can be so hard to find, especially if the person has a faint heart beat or irregular. The health fair gave students the experience to practise assessing pulses.
>
> ...if our findings were that the person appeared hypotensive, hypertensive, overweight, underweight, etc. we were able to give them relevant information to take home and advise them to make an appointment to see their doctors. The health fair is a win-win opportunity for all involved.

The results of evaluations and anecdotal reports by participating community members reveal that this initiative was *'an excellent service to the community'*. The health fair is an avenue for raising public awareness of the influences of lifestyle, diet, smoking, alcohol use, exercise and access to medical consultations on good health. The following comments from some health fair participants, taken from last year's comment book, closely reflect previous years' evaluations as well:

> It is an opportunity to have myself checked because most often than not I don't take my health seriously.
>
> Very informative – fresh ideas in promoting health!!
>
> The health fair is a good idea. I received some very good advice.
>
> Good service. Thank you very much for your help.
>
> It gives me an idea of what's happening with my health.
>
> The health fair made people more aware of what's going on in their body.
>
> Very good service, it should be conducted more often.

While the university campus seeks to serve the community, the flow of benefits is certainly not unidirectional. The health fair is valuable for the nursing students. The staff members involved find them to be a source of considerable satisfaction. The positive publicity for the health fairs raises the profile and visibility of the campus and Unit in the community. By bringing together health professionals, future health professionals and community members, a health fair reaches out to educate community members, generate goodwill, and narrow the gap between academia and the communities. Some staff comments are as follows:

It provides our nursing students with a terrific and very realistic learning experience (Health fair provides mutual benefits, 2008).

*Their appreciation of the important role nurses have in health promotions in the community begins to fall into place after working on the health fair (*Health fair provides mutual benefits, 2008).

A novel, realistic and innovative way of teaching and learning … (Penman, Oliver and Buzzacott, 2003):
For the general public, it provides a very direct way to interact with the university, find out about what nursing students are learning and have a basic health assessment at the same time … it will provide an opportunity to not only practise and develop their health care skills but also learn the art of communicating effectively in a realistic client-nurse relationship. (Putting theory into practice, 2005)

Partnership roles of students, local communities, and the university campus

A partnership building approach with local communities has been employed in conducting the health fairs. A partnership is a relationship between individuals or groups working together for a common goal. Partners engage and enrich each other, and help each other reach their goals. The outcomes of partnership arrangements include: meeting objectives, increasing motivation, providing appropriate care, improving communication, and achieving better health outcomes (Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, 2008). Based on the underlying principles of experiential and service learning, the Nursing and Rural Health Unit has identified the local communities and groups as appropriate sites for students' nursing practice (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Emmett, Smith & Woods, 2008; University of South Australia, 2008). Experiential learning is a philosophy and methodology in which knowledge is created through the transformation of meaningful experience (Kolb, 1984). Service learning, a form of experiential learning, enables students to fulfil certain social responsibilities while actively learning.

Most important in building partnerships is that the goals of the partnership are clearly expressed and that the aims, objectives and strategic plan are understood and shared. These give the overall direction and set the targets to be achieved. It is also important to gain the trust and cooperation of community members. The health fair organisers accomplish this by listening to the needs of communities, respecting their inputs, and delivering an event that is highly professional. How community members are involved and benefited is clarified. Making sure the community knows about the initiative is imperative.

Partnership with students is built by communicating openly about the purpose of conducting the health fair, and their roles in it. Involving them early in the planning of activities, and giving them ownership of the activity, help strengthen the partnership. The nursing faculty ascertain that the students are thoroughly prepared for the health fair. The students are recognised for their contributions during the health fair and are given support and incentives (e.g. healthy meals).

The Unit is responsible for organising, implementing, and evaluating the health fair. It assesses the need for health screens and health education programs in the communities identified and determines the topics most pertinent for each community or group. For example, the health fair endeavours to provide information about conditions such as asthma, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol because a health survey found that these were the most prevalent conditions in Whyalla (Dal Grande, Dempsey, Johnson & Taylor, 2000).

Implications

The Unit has now adopted this health promotion activity as an annual event. The highlight of the evaluations is the positive regard the community members hold for the activity. But what could reasonably be achieved with a two-day health fair by nursing students? There is value in this activity as it encourages an ongoing relationship with the Unit, which benefits nursing students, staff, and communities and groups at the same time. The health fair is more than a one-off activity.

In regularly conducting health fairs, the Unit emphasises and encourages community members to take a proactive approach to health instead of a reactive one. Community members are encouraged and motivated to maintain a high-level of wellness and seek assistance to maintain and promote their health. They are taught that a regular 10-15 minute health check can provide useful information about their health status and that they can apply basic health principles of healthy living to prevent chronic conditions in the future (Ellis & Penman, 2003). Some participants note:

> ...There was a good opportunity for people to get an overall check, who normally don't go to the doctor like myself.

> Good quick available check up and health teaching with no fuss. .... More regular days like this would really benefit society. Thanks, a wonderful service to offer the general public.

Participants are empowered as they gain understanding and control over factors affecting health and as they take action to improve their circumstances (Israel, Checkoway et al., 1994, cited in Baum, 2000). A participant states:

> It is empowering. It gives me the tools I need to make better health choices. Hopefully, it will empower people to take control of their health.

Enabling participants to acquire usable knowledge and information, act on their needs, and become confident in managing their health, may contribute to capacity building and improvement of quality of life. A case in point is the detection of abnormal blood pressure and heart rate determinations in several participants which led to early diagnosis of hypertension and cardiac conditions, as shown in the following quote:

> ... A student nurse determined I had a fast and irregular heart rate during the health fair. I went to see my GP who diagnosed atrial fibrillation. I wouldn't have learnt about this had it not been through the fair.

Capacity building is the 'long term, voluntary process of increasing the ability of a country to identify and solve its own potential problems and risks and to maximise opportunities' (UNEP EIA Training Resource Manual, 2003, paragraph 1). At a community level, the resources and skills transferred to the communities during the health fairs can be seen as building community capacity. However, the transfer is not only confined to resources and skills, a better commodity is provided, as this participant conveys:

> At Westlands, the students were so helpful. They told me a lot of things and eased my mind a lot. The information gave me peace of mind. It has!!

The Unit supports and facilitates the ability of local people to detect and anticipate changes in their health, to reframe health problems in ways that they can understand, to find the resources that might help, and to prevent health problems rather than simply respond to problems. In better understanding their bodies and medical conditions, participants are challenged to think strategically and reflectively, thus facilitating informed decision-making. The health fair can very well contribute to the positive transformation of various communities because local people are viewed and valued as social agents. The health initiative may serve as a 'trigger event' that will instigate a learning process (Cranton, 1994), a process that will involve change.

The transformation happens when actions are taken to implement the insights following critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991). Lifestyle change incorporating self care, for instance, is an example of what might be achieved following positive health behaviour change. Through the support provided by the University, community members may be transformed into successful adult and lifelong learners (Ellis & Penman, 2003).

The health fair can potentially contribute to lifelong learning – developing a range of skills, and being able to identify problems and ways of approaching them. It is also about understanding and extending ways of learning to gain and apply new knowledge and skills (QILLL data-base, 2003). Consider a couple from a local church who learnt about the importance of monitoring blood pressure during a health fair:

> My husband's blood pressure was a bit high. …We bought a blood pressure machine to monitor our own blood pressure. …We also try to be healthy by eating the right food and walking regularly. The health fair encourages people to lead healthy lifestyles.

Challenges

For a health fair to be a success, careful organisation, good use of human and physical resources, and meeting the expectations of students and community members are all required. The close collaboration between the university campus, the regional communities, and the students ensure the success of this endeavour. The strategies to ensure the success of health fairs involve creating and maintaining partnerships with various community groups, and collaborating and networking during the planning of the project. In the case of our Oodnadatta health fair, the organisers worked very closely with the local health care professionals and community stakeholders, including Indigenous health workers, council officers, aged care workers, and primary school teachers. As much as possible, individuals from various sectors of the community are involved, and their expertise sought to ensure the success of the health fair. Other challenges are considered below.

The strong leadership provided by staff, such as the unit/school head, and the lecturers, cannot be overemphasised. These individuals function as champions, as they share their eagerness and passion for the initiative they are promoting. The staff organise the students, clarify the purpose and expectations, and provide useful feedback. For the participating students, finding the time and energy may be a challenge. The students need to learn the assessment skills and prepare materials quickly, and so they need to be focused and determined to make their contribution to the health fair. Also, while most expenses are covered within normal curriculum budgets, additional funding for glucose and cholesterol strips, fruit and other giveaways, prizes, and upkeep and repair of equipment are essential.

Conclusion

The health fair is a solid example of a university campus engaging with the community in ways that are mutually beneficial and collaborative. It highlights to the community members the importance the University places on health, identifying potential risk areas for local people, providing immediate results and advice, and benefiting community members, students and staff as they discuss health issues (Healthworks, 2007). Health fairs are an important component of preventive medicine.

Valuable learning transpired amongst all partners involved. Sustainable health outcomes can be achieved when local people are committed to working together as a community to find solutions by building on the community's strengths and assets. The University helps create opportunities in which capacity-building and lifelong learning can occur amongst community members and students.

Our Unit intends to continue conducting health fairs on a regular basis, with increasing frequency as suggested. There is also the possibility of extending this to other programs and activities as some additional community groups have already indicated their interest in pursuing similar health initiatives.

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Midwifery Partnerships: it takes two to tango

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Abstract

The shortage of midwives in Australia has been a concern to maternity units, women and the midwifery workforce for many years (National Nursing Review, 2002). Charles Sturt University (CSU) embarked on a novel approach to help address the shortage of midwives by engaging the area health services in the processes leading to the registration of registered nurses to be midwives. This case study describes the partnering of the University with many maternity units across Australia to theoretically and clinically prepare student midwives for registration as midwives.

The complexities of developing long term sustainable partnerships between the tertiary and clinical sectors are described here. The development of the partnership and ongoing interaction between the partners in all facets of the midwifery course is shown to have very successful outcomes. Key components for maintaining the partnering relationship including agreements and liaison between CSU staff and the maternity units are considered. The value of ongoing support mechanisms for midwifery facilitators and midwives is described as well as acknowledging and addressing strengths and challenges will be shown to result in among the most prolific output of midwives from any one organisation in Australia. Evaluations by students and maternity unit staff will be shown to play an integral role in maintaining and developing the partnership. Continuous liaison by the University and a sense of ownership by the hospitals has led to an increase in the number of student midwives graduating. This has ultimately contributed to some maternity units remaining open and others offering other midwifery related services because of an increase in their midwifery workforce.

Introduction

The increasing shortage of midwives in Australia has been a concern to women, families, maternity units and the departments of health throughout Australia for many years (National Nursing Review, 2002). According to the Australian Health Workforce Advisory Committee it was estimated there is a national shortage of 1850 midwives in 2005 and it was not expected that this dearth of midwives will improve in the near future (Clarke, Vernon & Weaver, 2005). While this critical shortage of midwives applies Australia wide, rural and remote areas are especially affected (Australian College of Midwives, 2007). To assist in addressing this shortage of midwives Charles Sturt University (CSU) developed an accredited midwifery course to offer to hospitals who wished to participate in midwifery education in 1990. Up until the early 1980s individual hospitals selected and trained their own midwives through what was known as the hospital system. After that the responsibility for midwifery training was transferred to the tertiary sector.

In 1991, a Director of Nursing (DON) at a base hospital in rural NSW had the foresight to realise that if rural hospitals did not once again participate in the responsibility for the training of midwives there would soon be few midwives left to provide midwifery cares to women and their families in rural communities. The DON diverted bequeathed estate funds towards supporting four student midwives and thus began CSUs new midwifery course.

The threat of a diminishing midwifery workforce in rural areas in particular was the beginning of very successful midwifery training partnerships between CSU and now, 59 maternity units located in five states of Australia.

The initial courage and commitment and sense of need by one hospital's manager has led to approximately 700 registered nurses qualifying as registered midwives with 65 graduating this year. It is known that approximately 80% of midwives who train in rural areas return there to work once qualified (National Nursing Review, 2002).

Rationale for the postgraduate diploma of midwifery course

Prior to preparation for course re-accreditation CSU conducted a needs analysis in 2006 to determine what women wanted in relation to maternity services, especially in rural areas. The results clearly indicated that women wanted to give birth as close to their families and communities as possible (CSU, 2006). At that time there were increasing fears that the closure of maternity units would result in rural women having to travel further from their homes to birth with 130 maternity units ceasing to provide maternity services since 1995 (Australian Rural Nurses and Midwives, 2007). The impact on women when they are forced to birth away from their communities is enormous and includes: financial disadvantage and family separation issues. It is also is culturally inappropriate for Indigenous women and denies midwives the right to practise the profession for which they are qualified in (Alston, Davies, Dietsch, Shackleton, & Mcleod, 2008).

A further stimulus for CSU to continue to develop and increase the number of midwifery partnerships is the gradual change in the direction of the midwifery profession. According to Pairman, Pincombe, Thorogood, and Tracey (2006) midwifery care is moving (albeit slowly) back to physiological care for women who are well, and away from the medical model of obstetrics that has dominated birthing in Australia for most of the twentieth century. Inherent in this new direction is the development of different midwifery models that includes *continuity of care*, *independent midwifery practice* and *team midwifery* all with a primary health care focus. These models of care encourage and support more flexibility in the preparation of midwives for registration to enable them to practise midwifery without the dominance of the medical model of obstetrics. This preparation can be undertaken in small and large maternity units and community settings where the student midwives can achieve the required standards to become a midwife. Evidence supports the notion that midwives who work in small maternity units provide equally high standards of maternity care as do the larger city maternity units (Bryers, Farmer, Harris, Hundley, Ireland, Kiger, Tucker & van Teijlingen, (2007); Dahlen, Sullivan, Tracy, Tracy & Wang, 2006). This is an important consideration because 70% of CSU's partnering maternity units are located in rural communities where units are smaller. However these units have demonstrated the capacity to provide the birthing services that women require within the parameters of the model of care available at the unit.

The success of the CSU Postgraduate Diploma of Midwifery (PGDM) course depends on the partnership that it develops with each individual maternity unit to ensure the student achieves the standards needed to practise as a beginner midwife in any geographical location in Australia (The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2006). "It takes two to tango" describes this genuine and committed partnership whereby both the university and the maternity unit agree to liaise and take responsibilities during every step of the student's journey in becoming a midwife. True collaboration between partners will benefit the university, maternity units and students alike ("University Partnerships", 2009). Martin, Phillips & Smith, (2005) write that for courses to succeed they need to be coordinated, sustained, long-term projects targeted towards a specific community.

The midwifery partners need a sound understanding and appreciation of the components that bring together a course that will meet the needs of birthing women into the future.

These components include: initial liaison between all stakeholders, accreditation of the midwifery course curriculum, clarification of roles, dissemination of course processes and procedures to midwives and students and course and maternity unit evaluations.

Partnerships – "open to interpretation"

Across Australia there is a variety of university courses that prepare student midwives for registration. In most cases the term "partnership" is not applicable, instead students are placed in a maternity unit for a period of time to meet their specific clinical learning objectives for that midwifery area, for example ante natal care. This model of midwifery education has been successful in preparing many students for graduation as safe, competent practitioners. Each State registering authority has clear guidelines about the content of midwifery courses and the manner of conducting the courses is dependent on the individual university's choice of course delivery processes. In South Australia, student midwives are not usually paid when they undertake clinical placements in maternity units that their university has negotiated for them. In NSW there is a variety of training structures for example, the student might be paid by a maternity unit during the block clinical component of the course (for example, 6 months per year); or, there is no payment at all during the undergraduate year. In Victoria it is common for the students to attend the clinical area for 4 days per week (for example, for a period of 8 months) and they are paid for 2 days per week only.

There are several downfalls with the above systems: students need to find other work, for example, as an assistant in nursing, to survive financially. Often the students are expected to be more self directed in their clinical learning which results in the midwives taking a less active role with the students' learning. Many midwifery courses in Australia have a 50% attrition rate with most states only graduating 30-50 students per year. This does not replace the departure rate where midwives are retiring or changing professions (Midwifery Workforce, 2007 & National Nursing Review, 2002).

CSUs partnering relationships are structured to ensure that the university and maternity units are accountable and responsible for ensuring that students meet the required registration standards. The hospital has more "ownership" of the students than for other models of midwifery education. The hospital selects their students through their usual employment processes and then pays them a fulltime or a .8 wage over the course duration. Partnering maternity units are informed from the start of the liaison process that they are responsible for paying the students a wage while CSU funds the travel costs that its academics incur for workshops and liaison visits. Martin et al (2005) believes that funding issues need to be defined clearly and early in the partnership.

The hospital often pays fees such as costs for attending residential schools and textbooks. As employees, the students' professional indemnity insurance is paid by the hospital. The students have a sense of belonging when they have this "home hospital". Often the students can stay in their home towns to study midwifery and complete their post graduate period there. In a 2008 survey conducted by CSU it was found that 70% of the midwives working in the smaller maternity units were CSUs ex-student midwives (CSU Survey, 2008). The impact of this is that if it was not for the CSU midwifery course these smaller units would probably be closed.

Partnering with CSU

CSU employs midwifery academics who through a partnering relationship with midwives in the maternity units work together to provide theoretical and clinical learning experiences for the students throughout the 12 month duration of the course. "Cross-institutional provision: what institutions really need to know" (2005) write that it is vital the appropriate staff are engaged at all levels of the partnership. This is easier to achieve when shared goals are understood at both strategic and operational levels. The course aims to avoid a "theory-practice gap" (Farley & Jordan, 2009) and instead provide these future midwifery graduates with the skills, knowledge, confidence and competence to practice their profession (CSU, 2009).

There is no specific "formal agreement" between CSU and the partnering maternity units as the course curriculum, approved by the Nurses and Midwives Board, New South Wales (NMB, NSW), is accepted as the "agreement". Neither CSU nor a maternity unit can alter any aspect of the curriculum without prior approval from the NMB, NSW. A quick reference to any point in the curriculum by CSU academics, midwives and students will quickly resolve any query.

The responsibilities of CSU and the maternity unit staff are designed to complement the total midwifery practice experience for the student. CSU academics are responsible for:

1. Curriculum development; conducting residential schools on-campus where course requirements and theoretical components are presented; and
2. Introducing the often daunting information technology "need to know" course aspects. They also try to foster the development of often, life long friendships that occur between many students.

The partnering maternity unit is responsible for selecting their student midwives from the pool of registered nurses who demonstrate a desire to practise midwifery. The maternity unit also undertakes to select a suitably qualified midwife who will be the student's facilitator.

This experienced midwife will be the student's advocate, confidante and accepts the responsibilities of organising rosters and clinical appraisals. The person who fulfils this vital role will be the contact person for CSU academics when the student's progress is discussed and has the responsibility of apprising the hospital management of the student's progress.

The unit also nominates midwives who are suitable and willing to be preceptors for the students. Preceptor role-modelling is essential to provide students with opportunities to learn and develop confidence and competence in the midwifery practice setting (Farley & Jordan, 2008). The partnering maternity units often state "we know if we are to keep them, we have to look after them".

**Mechanisms for developing and maintaining the partnership**

The orientation visit

Hospitals considering accepting a student midwife, inform CSU of their interest. The CSU practice coordinator or course coordinator will make the first orientation visit to the unit and discuss the course curriculum with key stakeholders including hospital management, midwives, prospective students and sometimes interested medical officers. These meetings can be described with a variety of terms including stimulating, intimidating, fearful and mostly interesting. Midwives worry about their ability to teach students, others do not believe they should have to teach students because they "are here to deliver babies". This is denying the ANMC (2006) Competency Standards for the Registered Midwife that clearly states that midwives "support students to meet their learning needs and objectives; contributes to mentoring, peer support and clinical supervision".

This initial meeting is a great opportunity for all parties to discuss and clarify what is needed for the successful outcomes of graduate midwives to be achieved. The midwifery facilitator will complete the Maternity Unit Accreditation form which provides evidence to CSU that the midwifery clinical experience requirements are able to be met. Some of the key components of the orientation visit include:

• assurances to facilitators and midwives of CSUs ongoing support to both students and themselves;
• discussion of the integration of theory/practice components; course structure and documentation;
• student study packages and workbooks;
• appraisals;
• the role of the facilitator in ensuring all NMB, NSW requirements are met;
• processes to be followed when students experience difficulties (CSU 2009).

This diagram shows the support that is given to the student
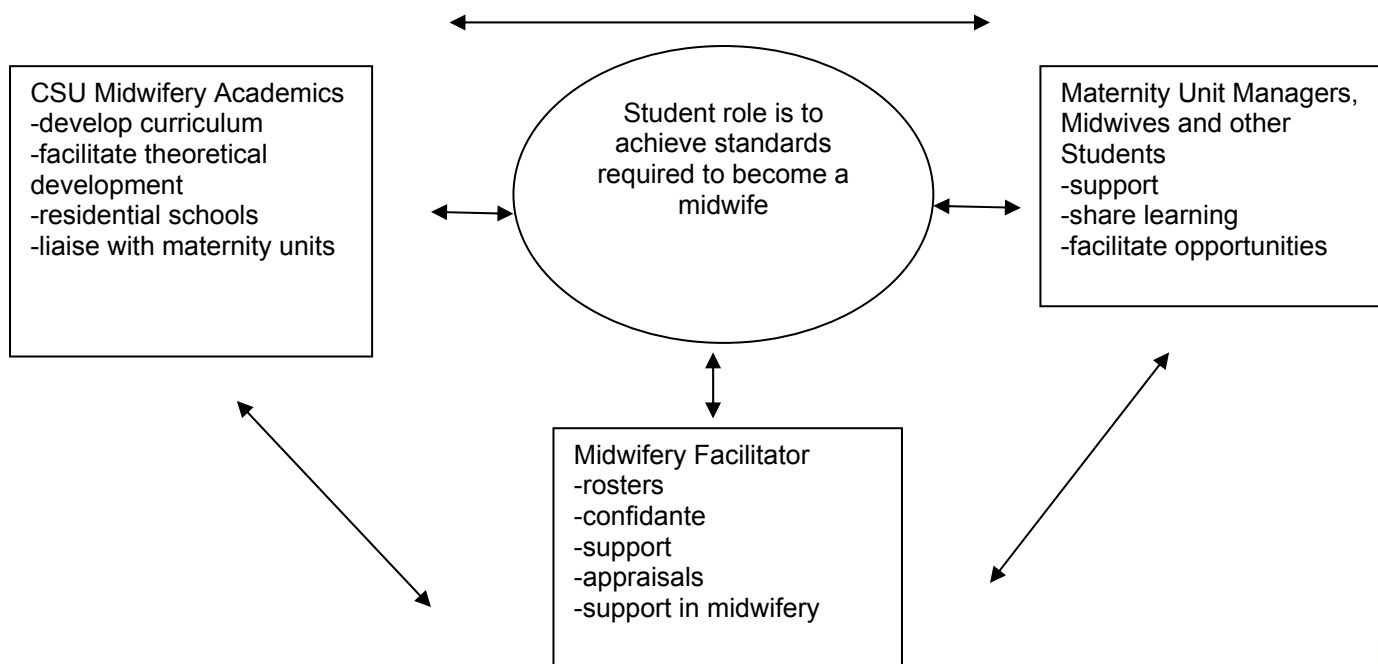
Continuing support mechanisms

Communication between partners is essential and will include "frequent, formal meetings" (Martin et al, 2005, p. 3). CSU and partnering maternity units have constant, ongoing dialogue to either address issues or just for "catching up" either in person or via electronic means. A member of the CSU midwifery academic team will make a follow-up visit within three months to any maternity unit that has accepted a student for the first time. From then on annual visits are made to each unit unless extenuating circumstances exist, such as if a student is having difficulty meeting the clinical midwifery requirements. Facilitators and midwives are offered facilitator and preceptor workshops to update them on course matters and to assist them to manage other student needs for example, academic writing. *Gravid Notes* is the newsletter that is circulated to students, managers, facilitators and midwives each quarter. This, along with the CSU forums and email system, provides avenues of two way communication between CSU and partnering maternity units on a continuous basis.

Evaluation process

The CSU/maternity unit partnership is evaluated at each annual visit to the participating hospital. Facilitators and students have the opportunity to attend a reciprocal evaluation at each of the five clinical appraisals. Further evaluation of the partnership satisfaction is undertaken during course review. Since 1991 CSU has been proud of the success of the course and the willingness of those concerned to discuss issues and accept suggestions for change. This allows partnering units to see that it is their course too rather than gain a perception that the course is directed from the proverbial "ivory tower".

Mechanisms between CSU and maternity units to ensure student learning objectives and student assessment standards are met

The clinical practice setting

The PGDM course bases its student clinical appraisals on the National Competency Standards for the Midwife (ANMC, 2006). The appraisal is used as a monitoring, reporting and teaching tool (CSU, 2009). When the facilitator informs the CSU teaching team that the student is under-performing in the clinical area, specific examples of concern are identified and learning objectives with a time frame for achievement are developed. This, together with added clinical support from designated midwives, usually assists the student to achieve the desired outcomes of midwifery competency. The appraisal also serves as a tool for documenting the student's clinical hours completed in each of the four clinical areas (ante natal, birthing, post natal and special care nursery). If the submitted clinical appraisal show that the student is deficient in clinical experiences or hours in any particular area, the CSU teaching team will liaise with the facilitator to alter the student's roster. It may also be necessary for the student to access a different maternity unit to enable the achievement of the necessary experiences/hours.

A key component of the partnering relationship is that evidence of the student's progress is transparent and available to all stakeholders. According to "Cross-institutional provision: what institutions really need to know" (2005) clear lines of communication are vital to all involved with the partnership and not just managers. Students are informed that if there are any aspects of their study that are a concern, either clinically or theoretically, the CSU midwifery team and maternity unit facilitator will work with the student to improve the situation. This process enables strategies to be prepared to assist the student to achieve the required outcomes. It also reassures maternity units that the person they are providing midwifery education to as well as supporting her or him with a wage and often fees, is progressing satisfactorily to becoming a midwife.

If this open dialogue was not maintained, hospitals would probably feel less confident in participating in midwifery education.

Concerns: The partnering maternity unit

Usually the student, maternity unit facilitator and midwives are well informed of the course requirements. They are committed to assisting the student to access the best possible learning environment whilst the student completes this very "full on" course. However, sometimes the "system" fails. The student might experience bullying from midwives and doctors or be expected to perform procedures/work for which they are not qualified as a student midwife, for example working in birthing suite unsupervised by a registered midwife. If the maternity unit is short-staffed, the student might also be expected to work alone and manage the care of many women on the post natal ward. This breaches the guidelines for the development of courses leading to registration as a midwife (NMB NSW, 2008). When partnering units fail to abide by any aspects of the course curriculum the CSU academic staff will liaise with the facilitator (and if necessary the hospital manager) to resolve the issue.

If the situation does not improve to meet the curriculum requirements CSU will withdraw that unit from the course. Van Eyk and Baum (2002) have the view that for issues to be resolved there needs to be successful and strong, established relationships where resilient trust permits sustained action to be taken.

In conclusion, the tango for these partners will continue. This will occur because for the last 18 years the course has successfully prepared a significant number of midwives who work in hospitals like those in which they were trained. Currently there are two intakes per year for the course, producing more than 60 graduates annually. There are increasing numbers of maternity units accepting students (four new maternity units already in 2009). The maternity unit staff in most instances, are committed to preparing midwives for the future and CSU will continue to develop midwifery courses that reflect the needs of birthing women in Australia.

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Teaching Open University Nursing Students: Primary school children contributing to undergraduate students' learning

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Abstract

During 2007 the Nursing and Rural Health Unit at the Centre for Regional Engagement commenced teaching the Open University Australia nursing program at the Whyalla Campus. The author was the course coordinator of Health of Infants, Children and Young People to an Australia wide group of students in a "virtual classroom". The online teaching was supplemented with a mandatory face to face workshop conducted in Whyalla as two of the assessments involved the examination of a school aged child which preceded a practical component. Large groups of twenty to twenty-five primary school children participated and were assessed by the nursing students at this workshop. Engaging primary school children in undergraduate teaching was an innovation in learning and teaching which provided the children with opportunity to participate in health promotion activities and learn from the nursing students. The involvement of the primary school children was enriching as the children were accompanied by their teachers who were able to follow-up in class the good health habits they had learned during visiting the University. On the part of the nursing students, they had the opportunity of working with children from a variety of ages and groups and experience how to interact when assessing a young child. The academic staff who worked with the students met their civic duty by engaging with the community and promoting good health.

The evaluation of the workshop provided outstandingly positive feedback about the innovation of engaging primary school children in undergraduate teaching which will be discussed in this manuscript. On reflection, the author believes that the success of this learning activity can be attributed to the use of an experiential approach consisting of use of history and current affairs to illustrate health issues, students using their own experience, honesty-investigating issue if very little is known about them. Even better at times is to involve the students in researching the topic and reporting back to the discussion forum, using personal research to inform teaching, being attentive to students' concerns and making the most of personal development opportunities in teaching and learning. These strategies relate well to the Qualities of a Graduate of the University of South Australia in particular to the disciplinary knowledge, communicating effectively, lifelong learning, working independently and collaboratively, engaging in effective problem solving and taking ethical action.

Introduction

During 2007 The Nursing and Rural Health Unit at the Centre for Regional Engagement commenced teaching the Open University Australia undergraduate nursing programs at the Whyalla campus. The author was the coordinator for Health of Infants, Children and Young People a second year subject in a new curriculum. This involved teaching in an Australia wide "virtual classroom" using online materials and discussion supplemented by a mandatory face to face workshop in Whyalla.

Whyalla is a regional centre in South Australia and an anticipatory guidance approach was required for the undergraduate students, many of whom were attending from interstate and in order to collaborate with the primary schools. Bringing diverse people, communities and organizations together is challenging due to social status, age group, organizational structures and geographic location and is an ongoing issue (Cherry & Shefner, 2004). The competing priorities of scientific competence and social justice within nurse education is also an issue that Clark and Redman, (2002) maintain can be overcome by the incorporation of service-learning into the nursing curriculum.

Engaging primary school children in undergraduate teaching was an innovation in learning and teaching which provided the children and their teachers with the opportunity to participate in health promotion activities and learn from nursing students with the teachers following up in class with the children the good health strategies learned during the visit to the University. The nursing students undertook vital experiential learning interacting with children from a variety of age groups and social backgrounds while the academic staff who worked with the students met their civic duty by engaging with the community and promoting good health. Clark and Redman, (2002) maintain that experiential learning involving civic engagement assists students to incorporate social responsibility into their professional careers and provides opportunities for professionals to explore social justice issues as is outlined by the Graduate Qualities of the University of South Australia and The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC, 2005) National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse. The Graduate Qualities of the University of South Australia and the ANMC National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse (2005) were linked to the mission statement of the primary school particularly in regard to respect, teamwork, critical analysis in a variety of situations, the wellbeing of the child and community engagement.

Review of the Literature

There is extensive literature on engaged community based learning in nursing using a wide variety of approaches as social responsibility is an essential framework in curriculum development (Connor, Kelley, Kun, & Salmon, 2008). Service-learning is defined as "the pedagogy that links academic study with the practical experience of community service" (The International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership, Declaration of Principles, 2003, p. 1). Service-learning provides student experiential education and service to the community and the success of the program is measured by the degree of student learning and the usefulness of the project to the community organization. Service-learning takes place in a variety of settings using a wide variety of models with reciprocity between the organizations as a basis (The International Partnership for Service- Learning and Leadership, Declaration of Principles, 2003 and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse, 2005). Laplante (2009) regards reciprocity in engaged community-based learning as a philosophy where everyone involved is both a teacher and a student and all participants are considered as colleagues. Laplante (2009) found that there has been very little research on nursing students' reflections of service-learning.

Chinn and Kramer (2008) and Freire (1993) and urge the development of the capacity to critically examine social contexts and to identify strategies for remediation and empowerment using praxis (reflection and action) in order to provide dialogue, mutual support and transformation. Service-learning provides an ideal opportunity for praxis.

The Ottawa Charter (World Health Organization, 1986) and The Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World (2005) both consider that an evidence based approach empowering individuals, groups and communities is now required for both policy and practice with the Bangkok Charter adding that health promotion is essential for good corporate practice ensuring the wellbeing of employees, their families and communities.

Catford (2005) highlights the domains of the Bangkok Charter in particular the areas of leadership, national policy development, program delivery, intersectorial collaboration and professional development. Whitehead (2001) considers health promotion as involving social, political and economic change using a holistic approach that involves educating the individual about their health needs with the nurse having a major role in attempting to address environmental and social issues which impact upon health. McMurray (2003) draws attention to the complexities of human behaviour that are integral in health promotion and highlights the need for programs that outline choices and offer access to resources providing communities with a sense of ownership in the changes. The World Health Organization Evidence Network (Wallerstein, 2006) concurs with its findings illustrating that the most effective health promotion strategies build upon and reinforce prior knowledge and participation ensuring autonomy in decision making as well as providing participants a sense of community and empowerment. It is essential that the wider community accepts responsibility for developing social environments conducive to good health and links between the health sector and the community need to be strengthened in order to promote equitable and sustainable gains in population health (Butler & McMichael, 2007).

The literature review revealed many examples of engaged service learning in undergraduate nurse education including those of Clark and Redman, (2002), Harwood, Kirkham and Van Hofwegen, (2005), Brown and Schmidt, (2008), Laughlin and Schwartz, (2008) and the University of South Australia. The School of Nursing, University of Colorado in 1997 revised its curriculum to provide a social justice focus (Clark & Redman, 2002) and used service-learning as one of the pedagogical models. The service-learning course was a requirement for undergraduate, postgraduate and doctorate students and demonstrated the School's policy of social justice. The students chose experiential learning activities from the course priority areas of minority health, poverty, environmental health and inequity of access to health services participating through community agencies identifying health needs, the effects of prejudice and poverty, environmental risks and the affect of health policies on individuals and community's ability to meet their health needs. The aims and learning objectives of this course were ability to assess and critique social attitudes and issues such as interpersonal, institutional, cultural, socio-political and financial affecting health, apply "social justice and ethical concepts to an understanding of socio-political health issues" (Clark & Redman, p. 447) and provide evidence of civic engagement and personal reflection (praxis). The undergraduate students were required to complete 15-20 hours of service-learning in teams with their chosen agency on a project chosen by the agency. The students were required to demonstrate advocacy for the particular community and to engage with colleagues and academics through written assessment and online discussion highlighting social justice issues. In order to achieve the desired learning outcomes and facilitate student learning university faculty were required to build or maintain partnerships with community agencies. As the students were from different academic streams there was ample opportunity for networking and sharing resources plus offering agencies enhanced services.

Evaluation of the course revealed that more time was required to develop the partnerships with the community agencies aiding their preparation to provide timely experiences. Some students were unfamiliar with the concepts of social justice and the agencies involved.

It was found that the school needed to develop a vastly wider array of partnerships, clerical support was required and it was difficult to coordinate the large volume of students with the limited support available.

Experiential learning in rural communities provides opportunities for community participation and Harwood, Kirkham and Van Hofwegen, (2005) in their qualitative research study found that service-learning partnerships should be developed in order to mutually benefit nursing students, nursing staff and the communities. Rural communities often suffer from limited resources, isolation, difficulty in accessing services and nursing staff often receive little support. However, the registered nurse in a rural community needs to be innovative and develop health partnerships and strategies in order to provide optimal care. There is also the opportunity to advocate for these communities. Harwood, Kirkham and Van Hofwegen, regard partnership and reciprocity as essential to service-learning with shared planning by university faculty and the community agency enhancing partnerships, students developing long term benefits, faculty profiting from the partnership in terms of scholastic opportunity and the community gaining services. Examples of service-based learning outlined by Harwood, Kirkham and Van Hofwegen, included breast cancer education to women in an area where breast cancer was prevalent, participation in a health fair for school aged children, developing a drug awareness campaign, providing health education in schools and providing assistance at immunization clinics. The nursing mentors and the students were challenged to use praxis, share perspectives and discuss community issues. Barriers to accepting a rural experiential placement included financial expense travel and accommodation but Harwood, Kirkham and Van Hofwegen, maintain that service-learning and rural health should be a significant component of the undergraduate nursing curriculum due to the enriched learning experiences. Information technology can assist in addressing issues of geographic isolation and improve communication by connecting academics, community service providers and nursing students while also providing essential knowledge and resources (Kenworthy-U'ren, 2008).

Large numbers of first year nursing students who were completing a service-learning module participated in Laplante's (2009) research project and several themes of reciprocity were revealed including relationships and attachment, planning, sense of accomplishment, professional socialization (the service-learning involved school-aged children and the students considered that the project helped to prepare them for a future role as paediatric nurses) and communication skills. The students appreciated the opportunity to learn from the children and their teachers and in turn provide learning opportunities. Service-learning assists in building nursing skills and research findings and course evaluations can be used to plan and improve learning experiences.

School aged children are a vulnerable population in the community and many health and behavioural problems are associated with low income, unemployment, low education levels and poor housing. Health behaviours such as poor nutritional intake, substance abuse and lack of exercise are usually established in childhood and contribute to conditions such as type two diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease in adulthood. Health budget cuts in many areas of the world, South Australia included, have reduced the numbers and hours of school nurses and increased burdens on teachers and school staff. Creighton University, School of Nursing (Laughlin & Schwartz, 2008) developed partnerships with schools using the schools as clinical sites for student experiential learning placements under direct supervision from the nursing faculty. Many of the schools were located in poor areas of Nebraska. The school children were screened and rescreened for vision, hearing, height, weight, blood pressure, dental health and scoliosis as recommended by the State Government of Nebraska and the National Association of School Nurses with the appropriate referrals being made. The schools were provided with online health resources developed by the nursing students.

Developmentally appropriate health promotion was given on a needs basis and teaching was provided to school staff on health management. Nursing students involved in the project showed enhanced understanding of the social determinants of health, ability to provide health promotion and analysis of child health data, provision of suitable management of common health problems, understanding of the community based role of the school nurse and advocacy for the children and staff. The evaluation of the project is ongoing using formal and informal assessment of the nursing students, formal evaluation of the nursing students by the school teachers and providing follow up with parents to address barriers to health care. Laughlin and Schwartz, (2008) have not provided any quantitative analysis of data to show improvement in child health.

Developing experiential learning for undergraduate students is a major challenge for schools of nursing worldwide and Brown and Schmidt, (2008) maintain that paediatrics is one of the most difficult areas in which to obtain experiential placement but it is essential for nursing students to have experience with children. Brown and Schmidt, (2008) assert that service learning enhances the interpersonal development of students through the development of leadership, communication and problem solving skills and benefits for the community include increased variety and quality of health services leading to changes in health behaviours with improved health outcomes. Brown and Schmidt, (2008) conducted a Girl Scout badge day as an effective method to develop the health teaching abilities of the undergraduate nursing students, at the same time meeting the educational needs of the children and attaining the achievement of civic duties for the nursing students and academics. The children were enticed to consider nursing as a career. The project required considerable planning and the responsibilities were shared by the academics and the Girl Scout leaders in turn delegating tasks to nursing students and scouts. The students were each required to interview and obtain health histories from individual girls, provide refreshments and health promotion activities and finally presenting the girls with their badges. Evaluation of the project was carried out by collecting evaluation forms completed by the scouts, service learning evaluation forms completed by the nursing students and formal assessment of the students' written assignments. The academics and nursing students debriefed immediately after the program linking their observations of the children to theoretical constructs.

The results of the nursing students' evaluations showed heightened awareness of community issues and the role of health educators. The Scouting Laws themselves reflect the graduate qualities and mission statements of many universities emphasizing service learning and community involvement and these partnerships are more likely to succeed as they have common values (Abernethy, Baldwin, Egan & Roberts, 2005) plus there are tangible benefits to both organizations. The badge requirements are already predetermined in the scouting manuals and resources and can be used as a ready-made guide for nursing students to organize health promotion activities. The Girl Scout badge day is an ongoing project under constant revision.

For several years, the Nursing and Rural Health Unit, Centre for Regional Engagement at the Whyalla/MtGambier Campus of the University of South Australia in partnership with the remote, mainly indigenous community of Oodnadatta provided health promotion activities with primary school children and other community members. Nursing students under the supervision of nurse academics and an Aboriginal Health Worker provided relevant health education and provided blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose checks to community members, operating from the Community Health Centre, the general store and the school.

This project also involved the nursing students providing service learning at the Coober Pedy Hospital where they learned about the role of rural nurses, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and attended sessional clinics provided by visiting health care providers in a multicultural setting. The program was well accepted by both communities and the nursing students but was ceased in 2005 due to the extreme remoteness of the locations and the difficulties with organizing transport and accommodation.

The Whyalla/MtGambier Campuses of the University of South Australia have continued to conduct annual health fairs in the local shopping centres with outstanding feedback. In 2008 academics and nursing students from the Whyalla Campus also participated in a second health fair in collaboration with the Lions Clubs of Adelaide and Whyalla.

The purpose of the project

The purpose of the project was to enrich the Open University Australia nursing students' experience by providing them with the opportunity to complete an assessment of a school aged child as part of their formal assessment and to provide groups of primary school aged children with the experience of engagement in a university nursing school setting, interacting with the nursing students and academic staff as well as engaging in health promotion activities. The project reflected the Graduate Qualities of the University of South Australia and the Mission Statement of the Nicolson Ave Primary school, particularly in regard to working collaboratively and effective problem solving. The learning objectives for the nursing students were to link the theories of growth and development of primary school aged children to nutrition, obesity, physical care, dental care and accident prevention and provide strategies for the prevention of chronic disease. The City of Whyalla is an industrial and multicultural regional centre with a high incidence of type two diabetes, respiratory disease, cancer and heart disease and there is scope for community-based partnerships providing health promotion to under-served, vulnerable population groups (Billings & Halstead, 2005). The children were from various cultural groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

Goals and benefits for each partner

The partners were The Centre for Regional Engagement (University of South Australia (CRE)), The Open University of Australia (OUA), the Nicolson Ave Primary School and Nicolson Ave out of Hours Childcare. The goals for the CRE were the development of the Graduate Qualities particularly in regard to Body of Knowledge, Life-long learning, Effective Problem Solving, Working Alone and Collaboratively, Ethical Action and Communicating Effectively. The Open University, Australia is a partner with seven universities including the University of South Australia (Deden & Hamilton, 2005) aiming to provide high quality tertiary education with the flexibility of face to face workshops and study online for students. Nicolson Ave Primary School aimed to develop the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of the children through the development of a physical fitness and nutrition program that enhanced the children's ability to understand, analyse and critically respond in a variety of situations (Mission Statement & Nicolson Ave Primary School, 2008). Nicolson Ave Out of Hours Care was accessed on occasions as some workshops took place during the school holidays, many of the children accessing this service were also from low income or culturally diverse groups and feedback showed that they had also benefited from the engagement with the nursing students.

Evidence of impact on each partner

Evaluation showed that the primary school teachers provided follow up health education in classes using the resources provided by the nursing students with excellent results. The teachers requested the online health materials and have recommended ongoing engagement with the University. The children critically analysed several aspects of the health promotion and expressed enjoyment of the activities such as the online food pyramid, observing the nursing students engaged in activities, receiving a healthy snack and a certificate of appreciation. There is no government school nursing service in South Australia (email communication M. Paech, April 23rd, 2009) and the project provided support to the teachers and the opportunity to detect and discuss health issues. The parents of the children also had the opportunity to express concerns about their child's health and to provide follow up at home.

The project was enriching to the University as the academic staff and the nursing students had the opportunity to develop and to demonstrate health education strategies. The students had the opportunity to interact with children from diverse backgrounds and learn assessment skills using their own experience and newly acquired skills. The academic staff met their civic duty of community partnership by engaging with the teachers to organise the project and to reinforce the health promotion strategies with the children.

Planning and activities

The planning involved aligning the project with the curriculum, lectures and online activities, the nursing students' preferences and then approaching the primary school or "out of hours care" facility. The school principal or child care coordinator was approached to gauge interest, check if the planned dates were suitable and then a formal letter was written inviting the carers, children and teachers to participate. The invitations were all enthusiastically received. Three workshop dates were agreed upon and online registration was set up for the students.

The Open University of Australia nursing students were notified of the workshops several weeks in advance as many were attending from interstate or remote locations. The students worked through online materials and exercises in preparation for the workshop; however, an anticipatory guidance approach was also required providing students with accommodation options and advising about the mandatory National Police Checks and Senior First Aid certification.   Most of the Open University students were mature-aged students with families and engaged in paid employment.

As large numbers of nursing students, teachers and children were expected the support of other members of the teaching team was vital and a clinician was contracted to help run the workshops.   The workshops were extensive with a large practical component on the management of common childhood health issues and then preparation of health promotion activities by the students. The teachers and children were greeted in the University grounds; an outline was given of the procedures and the children taken to the clinical area. The nursing students then provided the health promotion activities they had prepared on nutrition, hygiene, and bicycle and road safety and engaged the children to build on prior knowledge. Consent forms were checked and then each student was assigned a child and moved to a quiet area. The nursing students took baseline observations on each child and took a brief but detailed history including exercise levels, sleep patterns and 24 hour recall of food intake. The lecturers and teachers circulated among the students to address any concerns. Many children were initially nervous but the students quickly developed strategies to engage them.

On completion of the examination the children were presented with a certificate of participation and all engaged in a healthy afternoon tea of fruit and bottled water. The children were fascinated by the equipment, charts, skeleton, specimens and manikins and welcomed the opportunity to try many of them. The students showed the children around the University. The debriefing linked theory of child development to behaviour and revisited the social determinants of health. Further guidance was given to the nursing students on how to complete the assessment proforma, analyse the data and write on their reflections of the examination investigating which aspects of the workshop were successful and those that could be accomplished differently.

Ethical issues

A covering letter with a consent form outlining the details of the assessment was sent home with the children in order to obtain signed informed consent from the parents. Children who did not provide signed consent did not participate. These forms also provided the parents with an opportunity to highlight health concerns about their child. A valid National Police Check and Senior First Aid certificate were legal requirements for the participation of the nursing students.

Funding sources

The project operated under The Centre for Regional Engagement, Nursing and Rural Health Unit budget and no additional funding was sought. The academic staff, teachers and carers all volunteered their time. The primary school and the out of hours care venue were located near the University and transport was not required.

Lessons learned

The Graduate Qualities of the University of South Australia and the Mission Statement of the primary school matched and Clark and Redman, (2002) maintain that partnership using agreed upon goals and strategies is essential for successful service learning. The legal prerequisites, such as police checks and senior first aid certification for the nursing students were extensive, it is recommended that these become prerequisites for admission to the nursing program and that further secretarial backup is obtained for future projects due the large numbers of students and children involved. The dates for the project were arranged early so that nursing students could take advantage of cheaper flights and accommodation packages, work around family and employment commitments and to avoid clashes with school holidays and exams. However, there was a clash with a national literacy and numeracy exam restricting access to a wider age group on one of the workshop days. The partnership with the school developed with few difficulties but further alternatives need to be available in case of unforeseen problems, such as this exam or an outbreak of illness. The Girl Guides are being engaged in 2009 as Guiding has similar values to the schools and the University plus the children will also have the opportunity to undertake badge work. This will also extend the variety of partnerships and provide further opportunities to build upon children's knowledge.

The nursing students were provided with the opportunity to debrief after workshop using the child development theory, their own experiences and the examination proforma. The Open University Australia did not use the Course Evaluation Instrument or an evaluation of teaching survey therefore a "Tell Us" survey was conducted. The survey had a forty percent response rate revealing excellent feedback for the workshop, the quality of teaching and the engagement with the school. However, several students were concerned about the expense and difficulty of travel to Whyalla and some suggested the provision of travel scholarships.

Many of the nursing students suggested ongoing encounters and follow up with primary school aged children rather than a brief examination; this would also benefit schools as there are few school nurses, particularly in South Australia.

The formally marked assessment of the nursing students' proforma revealed heightened evidence of praxis with the majority of students displaying increased understanding of social issues, child development and health promotion (Kelley et al, 2008) using their own life experience to develop the reflections. The students' skills in history taking greatly improved with enhanced ability to analyse the data. Several students linked Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council, (2005) Competency 6 "plans nursing care in consultation with individuals/groups, significant others and the interdisciplinary health care team" to the examination of the child and the identification and prevention of health problems.

Future plans

The project is ongoing and evolving with on campus, off-campus and Open University Australia undergraduate students at the Adelaid, Mt Gambier and Whyalla campuses. The schools remain in the partnership and service clubs such as the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts are also being engaged as partners. Community profiles and needs will continue to be assessed and reassessed using dialogue.

Recommendations for others who may replicate the case model

Secretarial backup is essential due to the large numbers of participants involved. It is imperative to commence planning early and to regularly engage with the other partners to forestall problems and to stay on track. Build upon and maintain partnerships that have already developed using the organisations' mission statements and values to develop mutually agreed upon goals (Burman & Hubell, 2006) and yet be prepared to develop alternative partnerships. Votrubos (1999) argues that it is essential for academics to develop a visible role in the service of children and families through community-university partnerships but, Galer-Unti, Radius and Tappe, (2009) have found that many academics do not feel competent in teaching health advocacy and would benefit from professional development in the area of health promotion and advocacy. Radius et al (2009) and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (2005) National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse maintain that it is essential to identify and report specific health education requirements and requests and to identify and if necessary develop health promotion resources. Green and Kreuter (2005) recommend that the program be ongoing and developed further as their studies reveal that well planned health programs strengthen community cohesion, are an essential component of the health care system and provide cost effective support to community partners.

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Supporting Regional Small Businesses: a Collaboration between Higher Education and the Economic Development Board

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Abstract

The city of Whyalla is currently experiencing growth and change due to developments in the resources sector of regional South Australia. The sustainability of small businesses in the city is, therefore, of great importance as these firms face a number of risks and challenges as well as opportunities. This paper describes the results of collaborative research undertaken by the University of South Australia's Centre for Regional Engagement and the Whyalla Economic Development Board [WEDB]. The aim of the research was to inform the development of programs by the CRE and WEDB that may assist regional firms to enhance their sustainability through socially and environmentally responsible behaviours. Corporate Social Responsibility [CSR] is becoming a normal and expected element of doing business and is increasingly seen as a source of competitive advantage. The research specifically involved a qualitative strategy of investigation based on structured face-to-face interviews. The interview participants were the owner/managers of small businesses operating in the retail and services sector that had fewer than twenty employees. The study investigated the reasons for these firms implementing or not implementing socially and environmentally responsible initiatives and the types of support they may require to help them design and action such practices in their business. It was found that the majority of small business owner/managers were undertaking socially responsible behaviours. They did so because it was "simply the right thing to do" and it gave them "personal pride and enjoyment". Other frequently identified reasons were to "improve the image/profile of the business", "save costs", and as "part of a continuing process of building long-term value". The main reasons for not undertaking CSR initiatives were "time constraints", "lack of financial resources" and that "only a minority of customers prefer to buy from ethical businesses". Most of the small businesses had never received any moral, financial, technical or educational support for implementing CSR to benefit their business or stakeholders. There was a strong demand for programs to provide awareness of the principles of being socially and environmentally responsible and the benefits of environmentally and socially responsible practices. The findings of this research can be used by the CRE and the WEDB as a basis for supporting the small businesses so that they are better positioned to take advantage of the anticipated new opportunities in the market place.

Introduction

The city of Whyalla is one of the industrial hubs of the Upper Spencer Gulf in South Australia and has a population of approximately 22,500 people. Whyalla is currently in a unique situation as major growth in the regional mineral resources industry offers significant potential flow-on benefits for businesses in the city (WEDB, 2006). Consequently the city is undergoing considerable change and while its small businesses can look forward to taking advantage of new opportunities, they also face a number of risks and challenges. Competition from large multi-national companies that poach their staff and business is a major threat, and attracting more customers is a key challenge.

This paper describes the results of collaborative research undertaken by the University of South Australia's (UniSA's) Centre for Regional Engagement [CRE] and the Whyalla Economic Development Board (WEDB) to determine how the university and the WEDB may assist regional small businesses to enhance their sustainability through socially and environmentally responsible behaviours. The Whyalla campus of the CRE is the only regional university campus in South Australia. It seeks to be responsive to its community and through its networks contribute to the learning and capacity building of individuals and groups within the region (Penman & Ellis, 2003). The WEDB is a government-funded organisation established with the aims of "strengthening the economic base of Whyalla", "facilitating business growth" and "fostering an enterprise culture by assisting small and medium businesses to prosper and expand" (WEDB, 2006: 4,5).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is becoming a normal and expected element of doing business and is increasingly seen as a source of competitive advantage. A number of literature sources (Branco & Rodrigues, 2007; Deegan, 2002; Henderson et al., 2004; Parker, 2003) agree that one of the reasons why businesses should pursue strategies in social and environmental areas is to survive and succeed. The modern viewpoint of CSR implies that firms voluntarily integrate social and environmental concerns into their operations and interaction with stakeholders (Post, Preston & Saschs, 2002).

Background to the research

Sustainability

The literal meaning of sustainability is "making your company viable for the long term by managing according to principles that will strengthen, rather than undermine the company's roots in the environment, the social fabric and the economy" (Savitz & Weber, 2006 p. 26). A sustainable business conducts its activities so that benefits flow naturally to all stakeholders, including customers and suppliers, employees, and the community in which it operates. The principles of sustainability can improve the management of a business in three fundamental ways, namely by helping to protect it (reducing the risk of harm); run it (reducing costs, improving productivity, eliminating waste and obtaining access to capital at lower cost); and grow it (opening new markets, launching new products and services, increasing the pace of innovation, improving customer satisfaction and loyalty, growing market share, forming new alliances and improving reputation and brand value) (Savitz & Weber, 2006).

The term 'sustainability' is often used instead of 'corporate social responsibility', with 'sustainability' being the preferred term. Responsibility emphasises the benefits to social groups outside the business, whereas sustainability gives equal importance to the benefits enjoyed by the business itself. Also, the term 'business ethics' is considered too narrow in its focus to describe the social and moral responsibilities of businesspeople and the specific choices made by individual managers and employees. Sustainability is not merely a matter of good corporate citizenship, or business ethics, but "a fundamental principle of smart management" (Savitz & Weber, 2006).

In simple terms, sustainable businesses find ways of "doing good" and "doing well" at the same time. Savitz and Weber (2006) refer to the point where the pursuit of profit blends with the pursuit of common good as the sustainability "sweet spot". The concept of sustainability is based on the premise that businesses should create profit for their owners while protecting the environment and improving the lives of those with whom they interact. It can also be said that sustainability focuses on how society can benefit and derive value from businesses that are socially and environmentally responsible. According to Savitz and Weber (2006) the only way to succeed in today's interdependent world is to embrace sustainability. This requires firms to identify a wide range of stakeholders to whom they may be accountable, develop open relationships with them, and find new ways to work with them for mutual benefit. In the long term this will create more social, economic and environmental prosperity for both the firms and society.

Implementing CSR: Motivations and Barriers

In a study on social and environmental responsibility in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), Kusyk and Lozano (2007) identified internal and external drivers and barriers to SME social performance, based on internal decision making autonomy and external market pressure. Drivers are external and internal pressures to "aid, compel and promote" a SME with social issues identification, implementation and/or management. Barriers are external and internal pressures that "hinder, resist and stop" a SME from social issues identification, implementation and/or management. The study by these authors found that the most cited driver could be linked to the attitude dimension of the internal perspective, namely a "reflection of the owner/manager moral and ethical values". The main barriers were related to the resources dimension, namely "lack of justification of allocation of limited money and limited time". From an external perspective the most cited drivers were customers (improved image and reputation and customer loyalty) the supply chain and community. The most important external barrier was the "cost cutting top-down pressure from the supply chain". Other literature also suggests that SMEs are likely to experience barriers to implementing CSR initiatives including resource constraints such as financial, human and time limitations (Princic, 2003).

The Role-players: UniSA's CRE and the WEDB

Capacity building is a crucial component of community development, as it has the potential to transform communities (Penman & Ellis, 2003). In an article on community engagement between the CRE and the community of Ellis, Penman and Whyalla, (2003, p. 8) refer to "mutualism" in regional university-community links. They quote from a Community Business Partnership manifesto, which refers to a university and its community as "subsets of each other" which are "inextricably part of each other". Ellis and Penman, (2003) argue that mutually beneficial collaboration between university and community can "provide more efficient and long-term solutions to community issues and build greater social cohesion".

Key objectives of the WEDB are to support the creation and implementation of programs and projects that facilitate employment, and economic and community development for Whyalla. The WEDB encourages the practical involvement of firms in improving the general well-being of the local community (Arndt, 2006, p. 5). The University of South Australia is committed to both the creation and application of knowledge, and contributing towards the well-being of its community. The university also acknowledges that it has a responsibility to ensure that regional people have the skills necessary to contribute to the development of their community. The CRE is "a regional university with a clear commitment to contribute to economic, environmental and social development in collaboration with local councils and community groups, government agencies and industry" and a vital part of this duty (University of South Australia, 2002, 2). In engaging with community members the CRE contributes to the learning and capacity building of the individuals and groups involved (Ellis & Penman, 2003, 1).

The research

The research was undertaken as a collaborative project between UniSA's Centre for Regional Engagement and the WEDB to inform the development of programs to assist small businesses operating within Whyalla to enhance their sustainability through socially and environmentally responsible behaviours. According to Moir (2001) Australian business is experiencing a transition in expectations of its social role. Part of the reason for this is that the social role contributes to the continuing health and growth of business.

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:
1. What is the attitude of small businesses in the Whyalla regional area towards social and environmental responsibility?
2. What are the drivers and barriers for and against the implementation of socially and environmentally responsible initiatives?
3. What type of support, if any, is required to assist the small businesses to implement CSR initiatives?

Qualitative research was performed, specifically a hermeneutic study where participants were included based on their personal experience, as it related to the focus of the study. The research involved a qualitative strategy of investigation based on structured face-to-face interviews. Interviews were chosen because they provide rich and comprehensive data and enable the interviewer to repeat questions, explain their meanings, and press for more information if a response is incomplete or not relevant (Burns, 2000; Sweeney, 2007).

The interview participants were the owner/managers of small businesses operating in the retail and services sector within Whyalla as this cohort had previously been identified by the WEDB as a group needing assistance. In small businesses, ownership and management are usually not separated. Control, therefore, remains in the hands of the owners, which enables them to make choices about the allocation of resources. Hence, the attention given to and acceptance of a specific issue depends on the personal attitudes of the owner/manager (Sweeney, 2007). The owner/manager was, therefore, specifically chosen to access the potentially strongest influence within the firm. Suitable small businesses were identified from the WEDB database and a written invitation to participate in the research project was sent to them. Although there is no single, uniformly accepted definition of a small business, the criterion of firms with fewer than 20 employees was used to select the participants (Burgess, 2003). This criterion is in accordance with the Australian Bureau of Statistic's quantitative definition of a small non-manufacturing enterprise (Meredith, 1994).

The questions asked were central to social and environmental responsibility and focused on the following issues: demographics and background of participants; the attitudes of the small business owner/managers towards CSR; their reasons for implementing CSR initiatives; the barriers to being socially and environmentally responsible; whether the firms had received support (moral, financial, technical or educational) for implementing CSR initiatives; and what type of support may be required to assist them to design and implement such initiatives in their business. The interview questionnaire included open-ended questions designed to determine general perceptions about social and environmental initiatives and questions that required the respondents to identify items that they agreed with from a list of given statements and then rank the items they considered most important.

The questions were piloted on owner/managers of two small businesses in Whyalla that were not included in the main study. The interview questionnaire was also given to an independent academic who is an expert on data collection with a request to review its format and content and comment on its clarity, comprehensiveness and relevance. The aim of this preliminary investigation was to check that the questions captured the information required to complete the aims of the research and identify any ambiguities or problem areas. Changes were made to the questions on the basis of the responses.

In her research on the corporate social responsibility of Canadian small businesses, Princic, (2003: 10) found that the term 'corporate social responsibility' did not "resonate" with SMEs because it does not reflect their "hands-on involvement with the community, their environmental concerns and their relationship with other stakeholders". SMEs tend to define CSR informally. Sweeney (2007) also found that respondents from small businesses did not identify with the term 'corporate social responsibility' and believed it to be "grandiose", "daunting" and "confusing". CSR was, therefore, not the most appropriate term to use in the SME sector, especially as it contains the word "corporate". Hence, this study was not presented to the participants as being about CSR, but about business sustainability through social and environmental responsibility, amidst the challenges and opportunities of implementing such responsible initiatives.

The face-to-face interviews allowed contextualised discussion of the emphasis that was placed on social responsibility by the small businesses. During the interviews, notes were taken and the discussion audio-recorded. Recording the interviews allowed the researchers to participate in the discussions as well as taking notes. The interviews were transcribed and reviewed to ensure internal validity. The interview transcriptions were then summarised and categorised according to the predetermined set of themes using the software NVivo.

Eighteen small business owner/managers were included in the final sample. It is acknowledged that the small sample size limits the degree to which the results can be generalised.

Findings
The majority of the small business owner/managers interviewed were aged over 45 years (78%), had been operating their business for more than 20 years (39%), and employed between one and five people (67%). The older age of the owner/managers and the extended length of time they had been operating their business is noteworthy as these may be factors contributing to the attitudes of the business owner/managers.

Business Principles

During the interview the owner/managers were asked what they regarded as the most important principles that they followed in conducting their business. The most frequently reported responses were "superior customer service" and "honesty". Good staff, good manners, and friendly service were considered to be factors that would differentiate between competing stores. It was said that "people shop on your service and personalities". The importance of honesty "to yourself, to your customers and to your community" was emphasised. It was believed that "with honesty comes trust"; honesty in "the way we sell" and not misrepresenting products was regarded as vital, especially in a repeat business industry, where it "pays to do the right thing". These responses were followed in frequency by the principles of integrity, professionalism, being 'open', and establishing good customer relationships. It was considered important to maintain professional standards; that there was no pressure put on the customer; that customers were able to "feel as if they could ask for help"; and that the business was a "welcoming place". Other principles reported were respect (towards the people who worked for the business and the people who came into the business to support it) ethics, reliability, confidentiality, adaptability and the ability to grow with the demands in the field. Good communication (providing product knowledge and keeping customers up-to-date) and having unique products and competitive pricing were also given as important principles in conducting business.

The next question sought to determine how the small business owner/managers would like people to describe their business. The responses "professional" and "friendly" were given most often, followed by "fun". The participants generally wanted customers to think of their firm as a "friendly, happy business"; that customers liked going into their store and found it an enjoyable, comfortable experience. There was also a focus on the provision of prompt, quality, service. The owner/managers wanted their business to be perceived as helpful, reliable, and trustworthy; that customers were happy with their service, end product and back-up, so that they would return. The descriptions "unique", "versatile" and "innovative" were also mentioned, along with being "community minded", and "a good one stop business shop".

When asked whether they believed their business had a responsibility other than to be profitable, most owner/managers said "yes". They acknowledged that they were part of a community – part of the city/general community and part of the business community – and that they should be good 'corporate' citizens. Generally they believed they had a responsibility to everybody they interacted with, including other traders, suppliers, contractors and customers. This included providing support to local clubs and charitable organisations. They also acknowledged that as employers they had responsibilities in relation to work conditions, safety, social issues and the well-being of their staff. This responsibility was seen to extend to the families of their staff. A responsibility to "make it a pleasure to go to work" and to develop junior staff were also mentioned. Several firms considered that they had a responsibility to provide good quality products that the customer could enjoy; to ensure that suitable products and services were available to meet consumer needs; and to provide competition to benefit the community. One manager mentioned the importance of spending the dollars generated "in the town"; another referred to buying Australian-made products rather than importing products made overseas. Having a social conscience and being environmentally responsible were considered to be important factors in conducting business.

Implementing CSR

The majority of small business owner/managers were undertaking socially responsible behaviours. 78% of the respondents indicated that they did so because it was "simply the right thing to do" and it gave them "personal pride and enjoyment". Other frequently identified reasons for implementing CSR were to "improve the image/profile of the business", "save costs", and as "part of a continuing process of building long-term value" (67%). The responses are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: **Motivation of Small Business Owner/Managers to Implement Socially Responsible Behaviour**

	Item	N*	%
1	Is simply the right thing to do	14	78
2	Improves the image/profile of my business	12	67
3	Helps me make more money	9	50
4	Is what my clients/customers expect from me	9	50
5	Is what a law forces me to do	6	33
6	Helps me create a market niche	7	39
7	Gives us a competitive advantage	7	39
8	Is necessary due to the increased public demand for ethical products and services	4	22
9	Gives me personal pride and enjoyment	14	78
10	Boosts staff morale	8	44
11	Increases staff empowerment	4	22
12	Saves costs	12	67
13	Is part of a continuing process of building long-term value	12	67
14	Minimises the risk of damage to our own reputation due to dealing with socially responsible suppliers	7	39
15	Cut utility bills	11	61
16	Cut waste disposal costs	7	39
	Other	0	0

* "N" indicates the number of times the item was identified.

When asked to rank the three most important reasons for implementing such initiatives, items 1 "Is simply the right thing to do", 2 "Improves the image/profile of my business", and 12 "Saves costs" were ranked equally first (44%), item 9 "gives me personal pride and enjoyment" ranked second (33%), and item 13 "is part of a continuing process of building long-term value" (28%), third.

As shown in Table 2, the main reasons for not undertaking CSR initiatives were "time constraints" (72%), "lack of financial resources" (61%) and because "only a minority of customers prefer to buy from ethical businesses" (56%). Being unable to influence the nature of a supplier's products was also identified as a factor by 44%.

Table 2:   Barriers to Small Business Owner/Managers Implementing Socially
               Responsible Behaviour

	Item	N*	%
1	Lack of financial resources	11	61
2	Time constraints	13	72
3	My customers do not demand it from me	4	22
4	I don't think it will really make a difference to society	1	6
5	My business will not benefit from it financially	2	11
6	I'm not in the right industry to make a difference	1	6
7	I am burdened by industry regulations	1	6
8	I am burdened by technological overheads	1	6
9	I'm not in a position to influence the nature of my supplier's products	8	44
10	Customers are bottom-line oriented and base purchasing decisions on price above other factors	6	33
11	Only a minority of customers prefer to buy from ethical businesses	10	56
	Other	0	0

* "N" indicates the number of times the item was identified.

When asked to identify the three most important reasons for not implementing such initiatives, item 2 "Time constraints" (56%), item 1 "Lack of financial resources" (50%) and item 9 "I'm not in a position to influence the nature of my supplier's products" (39%), were ranked the highest.

Supporting SMEs

Most of the small businesses (67%) had never received any kind of support (moral, financial, technical or educational) for implementing CSR initiatives to benefit their business and stakeholders. However, there appears to be a strong demand for such assistance. The responses to a question regarding the types of support that would help them to design and implement social and environmental initiatives in their firm are given in Table 3.

Table 3:   Strategies that would assist Small Business Owner/Managers to Implement Socially Responsible Initiatives

	Item	N*	%
1	Awareness programs to the principles of being socially and environmentally responsible	12	67
2	Awareness programs to educate consumers on the impacts of their purchasing decisions	11	61
3	Information sessions on the business benefits of environmentally and socially responsible practices	10	56
4	Information sessions on policies regarding quality, the environment and stakeholders	7	39
5	Information sessions on general business principles	9	50
6	Workshops to learn from your peers about their experiences	10	56
7	Hands-on support programs in aspects of running your specific business	9	50
8	Assistance with the strategy/strategic plan for your specific business	10	56
9	Tools to measure the impact of the initiatives on your business	8	44
	Other	0	0

* "N" indicates the number of times the item was identified.

Programs to increase awareness of the principles of being socially and environmentally responsible were most in demand (67%). As shown in Table 3, programs to educate consumers on the impacts of their purchasing decisions (61%) and information sessions on the benefits to business of environmentally and socially responsible practices, workshops to learn from peers about their experiences, and specific assistance with strategic planning (56%) were identified by more than half of the participants. 50% of participants indicated that they would benefit from information sessions on general business principles and hands on support in aspects of running their business.

Discussion and conclusions

The focus of previous CSR research has been predominantly on larger firms with little attention given to the socially responsible activities of SMEs; small businesses are often not researched because it is too expensive to reach them (Blackburn, Rutherford, & Spence, 2000). However, in today's marketplace it is becoming more important for all firms to demonstrate that they are operating in a manner that is supportive of society and its objectives. This research sought to determine the attitude of small business owner/managers operating in the retail and services sector within Whyalla towards CSR initiatives. It found that the principles regarded as being most important in conducting business were 'providing superior service' and 'being honest'. The owner/managers would like their businesses to be described as professional and friendly and also community minded. They believed they had a responsibility other than to be profitable and acknowledged they were accountable to the broad community that they were part of. Many businesses were involved in CSR practices. Generally they did so because it was the "right thing to do" and gave them a sense of pride, but also because it could save costs, improve the image of the business, and build long-term value. These findings align with the comments of Fassin (2008) who argues that it is often wrongly assumed that CSR is non-existent in SMEs because they do not formally report on CSR. According to him, most SMEs regard their informal responsible behaviour as normal, simply because they 'feel right' and it is the 'decent thing to do'.

The main reasons for not undertaking CSR initiatives were lack of time and money. However, the inability to influence the nature of suppliers' products and the belief that only a small proportion of customers would be concerned with the ethical nature of a business when considering a purchase, were also notable factors.

Most of the businesses had never received any moral, financial, technical or educational support for implementing CSR. There was a strong demand for programs to provide awareness of the principles of being socially and environmentally responsible and to educate consumers on the impacts of their purchasing decisions. Information sessions on the business benefits of environmentally and socially responsible practices, workshops to learn from peers about their experiences, and assistance with a strategy for their specific business were requested by more than half the respondents.

The findings of this collaborative research can be used as a basis for generating programs that will enable the CRE and the WEDB to play an active role in developing sustainable, socially responsible small businesses in the region so that they are better positioned to take advantage of the anticipated new opportunities in the market place.

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