



A U C E A

**Australian Universities Community  
Engagement Alliance**

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**Section 1 Refereed Proceedings  
Section 2 Non Refereed Proceedings**

***ENGAGING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE***

**University of The Sunshine Coast  
Sippy Downs**

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Section 2 papers were presented at the conference but were not refereed.

Some papers submitted to these Proceedings have been identified by an expert Editorial Panel as of particular merit. They have been further refereed by the Panel and included in the AUCEA e- journal, the ***Australasian Journal of Community Engagement, Volume 2 No 3 Spring 2008*** (ISSN 1833-4482). In this case, only the abstracts are included in these Proceedings.

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## **Section 1: REFEREED PROCEEDINGS**

### **Enhancing School to University Engagement: An Investigation of Three Pilot Programs.**

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#### **Abstract**

*Regional growth and sustainability is an issue of concern to many rural and peri-urban regions of Australian including outer eastern Melbourne which has experienced a decline in relative economic growth. Regional growth and competitiveness objectives can be realised through a culture of enterprise and education. Educational institutions have a key role to play because of their capacity to add to human capital and regional outcomes generally (Garlick, Taylor & Plummer, 2005). An audit of current regional skills and knowledge in the outer east of Melbourne conducted in 2007 demonstrated declining skill and knowledge requirements for the occupations of regional residents (Langworthy, Esposto & Feldman, 2007).*

*Concurrently the region has also experienced lower participation and retention rates in higher education than the State of Victoria on average*

*A study of student aspiration undertaken in collaboration with 21 secondary schools in outer eastern Melbourne in 2006 investigated the aspirations of Year 10 students. Two hundred and forty-five students completed a survey instrument designed to gauge the links between parental, school and other influences on student attitudes. The study also investigated the combined effect on aspirations generally and more specifically on academic work and enterprise aspirations. Most of the surveyed students indicated that they planned to go on to study at university (Langworthy, Mawson & O'Connor, 2007).*

*However, the current destinations of school leavers in the Outer East indicate a much lower actual participation in tertiary education. Of those students who are offered tertiary positions, fewer students take up the offer compared to students across the state of Victoria on average. The reasons most often cited by school leavers in the Outer East for not studying are that they are 'not ready', 'it is irrelevant' or that they are 'not sure of coping' (Centre for Post Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning, 2006). Therefore, although the majority of year 10 students in the Outer East of Melbourne may aspire to university, not all will actually turn the aspiration into reality (Langworthy, Mawson & O'Connor, 2007).*

*A range of models involving the engagement of universities with schools in order to increase higher education participation (for example, Farrell & Farrell, 2000; Monash University, 2006; Stuart & Murray, 2006; University of Pennsylvania, 2006; Koerner, 2006; University of Western Sydney, 2007) demonstrate the effectiveness of engaging university students with school students.*

*This paper examines the regional impetus for school and university engagement and the effectiveness of three pilot programs undertaken in collaboration with regional secondary schools in the outer east of Melbourne in 2007.*

*Initial evaluation of the pilot indicated that both university and school students report high levels of engagement in their learning. University students were able to identify graduate attributes developed in the process whilst surveyed school students demonstrated stronger intention to attend university.*

**Key words:** Student aspiration, engagement, Higher Education participation

**Full paper available in the AUCEA e-journal Spring 2008 [www.aucea.org.au](http://www.aucea.org.au)**



## USC Students in Fiji: A Win-Win Educational Experience in Sustainability

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Ms Gayle Mayes, Dr Dana Thomsen, Elizabeth Ryan, University of the Sunshine Coast

### Abstract

*Experiential education strategies in the formal education context should be real, that is, education should be about life itself and not mere preparation for life (Dewey 1938, p. 25).*

*This paper discusses the development, design, and outcomes of a pilot research and education field trip to the Fiji highlands by a small group of third year students from the University of the Sunshine Coast. The trip was designed in response to the needs of a village that wanted to develop a small scale sustainable tourism venture (Weaver 2000). The achievable recommendations given by the students to the village resort owner were intended to enhance the economic, cultural, environmental and social sustainability of the micro business, which would in turn, empower the owner and his staff, offer training and employment to the villagers, and most importantly: assist in building a much needed school for their children. The desired outcomes of the experiential approach to educating for sustainability were: empowerment, enhanced self-efficacy and confidence in applying and implementing sustainable cultural tourism practices, putting sustainable theory into practice, increased confidence levels in recommending and implementing sustainable practices in the students' own countries.*

*The expedition was organised by a tourism lecturer from USC and Fiji Dreaming, a fledgling sustainable tourism business on the Sunshine Coast that aims to inspire people to travel responsibly and learn about other cultures through cultural immersion, community engagement, and adventure-based experiences. The company supports local indigenous communities whilst providing travellers with the opportunity to participate and contribute to an authentic travel experience with a transformative purpose. Over the past two years Fiji Dreaming has performed the vital role of "cultural broker" and taken schools from the Sunshine Coast to Fiji for cultural tourism experiences. Similarly, the pilot program in this paper was designed to combine sustainable theory, practice, research and education for University level students.*

*Not only did the students deliver a comprehensive set of achievable short and long term recommendations to the owner of the primitive resort that were accepted and appreciated, but the cultural immersion experience proved to be intense, emotional, highly motivating, and both powerful and empowering for the students. Students were asked to reflect on the experience as an important part of the experiential education process. Self-reported impacts of the expedition on the international group of 10 students were: students were able to apply university theory to practice; each student's career interests and directions were confirmed; individual levels of sustainability, self efficacy and self-confidence were increased; and intentions to behave and act more sustainably were stronger. Most importantly, students felt competent in transferring the learning and education about sustainable travel, tourism and development from Fiji to other destinations, including their own countries. Students also expressed a strong desire to return to Fiji and/or go to other developing destinations where they could build on this introduction to involvement in small scale sustainable developments in the Pacific Islands and the Asia/Pacific region.*

*All objectives of the expedition were achieved including the identification other opportunities to respond to the needs of the same and other villages in Fiji over a long-term basis using the combination of adventure, meaningful travel, research, education and regional engagement. This style of research/education expedition approach to educating for sustainability offers numerous and worthwhile opportunities for responding to the needs of the region, such as: ongoing research; learning; cultural connection; potential for involvement of the students, staff, and the entire University community in service activities in Fiji and other developing Asia/Pacific destinations; work integrated learning and internships.*

**Key Words:** small scale, sustainable tourism, cultural tourism, Fiji highlands, community engagement, experiential education.

### Introduction

Ecotourism and responsible tourism are both increasingly popular forms of tourism (Panos, 1997) that appeal to ecologically and socially conscious individuals who want to minimise their effects not only on the environment but also on the culture and society of the areas visited. The University of the Sunshine

offers several courses in ecotourism that focus on practices that are ecologically and culturally sustainable, provide for education and interpretation, and also make a contribution to local communities (www.usc.edu.au). As part of a suite of courses, this paper reports on a pilot experiential learning initiative that saw students travel to the Fiji Highlands to plan a small scale sustainable tourism venture. This pilot course was particularly significant not only because of its contribution to the sustainable development of the local community but also because of the authenticity and quality of the of the students' learning experiences. This paper discusses the possible contribution of ecotourism and cultural tourism to the sustainable community development of small island states, the type of social learning experienced by community and student volunteers and the role of experiential learning in this process. It then continues to discuss the role of such experiences in learning for sustainability.

### **Learning sustainability through ecotourism**

Fiji, a small island state, is located in the Asia-Pacific, a region of rich diversity, but with wide socio-economic disparities, suffers from some of the same issues as many other countries in the region. The region endures persistent problems of sustainability, including environmental degradation, poverty, and inequality (Tilbury, Goldstein, Ryan 2003). Aware of these issues, community-based ecotourism is a popular and effective way to bring development to people living in the 'South' and there are a plethora of examples where ecotourism has been adopted as a form of community-based sustainable development. One such prominent example is the "Teach Inn Uganda" featured in the recent BBC production *Millionaire Missionaries*. Community-based ecotourism has many advantages that make it effective as a community development tool. When managed effectively, ecotourism: combines education and interpretation as part of the tourist offer (Denman, 2001); provides alternative income and employment for local communities (Denman, 2001); develops not only indigenous community's appreciation of natural resources, but also of their own cultures and builds pride and self-confidence (Scheyvens 1999); provides authentic learning experiences and empowerment for all involved through capacity building; and is locally owned and provides direct benefits to the local community.

However caution should be exercised against uncritically accepting ecotourism as the solution to development in all Asia-Pacific nations (Scheyvens, 2001). As Cater notes, "there is a very real danger of viewing ecotourism as the universal panacea, and the ecotourist as some magic breed, mitigating all tourism's ills" (Cater, 1993; 85). Scheyvens (2001) asserts that ecotourism can only contribute to these goals if the community's voices and concerns are incorporated into the project's design from conception to implementation becoming truly community-based.

Cognizant of the concerns of Scheyvens and Cater, it appears that one way ecotourism can contribute to local communities is to foster experiences with the potential to provide development opportunities for both local communities *and* tourists through learning. Indeed, ecotourism is well placed to combine experiential learning and social learning such that participants can contribute towards sustainability.

Experiential learning is a cyclical process that builds upon learners' experiences leading to the acquisition of new knowledge. This process involves planning, observation, thinking, experimentation, reflection, and review (Kolb, 1984; Dewey, 1938). By engaging in these activities, learners construct meaning in a way unique to themselves, incorporating the cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects of learning. Dewey maintained that the community was integral to educational experience and that through experiential learning, or learning by doing, individuals could be challenged to go beyond the bounds of traditional teaching and learning methods which would not only improve themselves, but also contribute to the improvement of their communities (Dewey, 1916). Research on the use of community engagement as an experiential learning model in tertiary education provides a persuasive argument for its value (see for example Bednarz 2008; Billig & Waterman, 2003; Grundy-Warr, 2006). Experiential learning situations provide practical experiences, opportunity for deep reflection, motivation, engagement, challenge, reward and authentic, 'real-life' learning experiences for students.

Similarly, social learning refers to learning from others (e.g. through imitation) (Bandura, 1977). It also involves an iterative process whereby the learner changes and is changed by their environment (Pahl-Wostl and Hare, 2004). Milbrath suggests that social learning can contribute to sustainable communities by assisting us to 'learn our way out' of difficulties (Milbrath, 1989). Building on the work of Milbrath, Tàbara and Pahl-Wostl (2007) have examined processes of social learning to assess how they can contribute towards sustainability. They point out that social learning is not synonymous with sustainability learning as social learning processes do not 'necessarily improve what we consider as essential for the long-term sustainability of social-ecological systems, namely, the co-adaptive systemic capacity of agents to anticipate and deal with the unintended, undesired, and irreversible negative

effects of development' (p.1). In other words, sustainability learning is concerned with a particular content and seeks to develop capacity and overcome many of the dualisms prevalent in society towards a sense of commonality (Tàbara and Pahl-Wostl, 2007).

Consequently, it appears that authentic ecotourism experiences (that combine experiential and social learning with the expressed intention of providing development opportunities for both local communities and tourists through capacity building) offer significant potential for achieving sustainability learning.

### **The role and opportunities of USC as a regional university**

The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) is a regional university and characterised by its commitment to regional engagement and sustainability with these themes underpinning both the mission statement and strategic plan of the university ([www.usc.edu.au](http://www.usc.edu.au)). Garlick (2000) points out that there is no agreement on what defines a regional university or a set of defined regions for development. Thus, the Australian Commonwealth approach has been to allow communities to define their own region (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002: 48). This provides an opportunity for USC to position itself as a global university specialising in regional issues and is demonstrated by the inclusion of regional issues in both its teaching (e.g. Rural and Regional Sustainability) and research activities (e.g. the Regional Sustainability Research Group). Indeed, activities in regions such as those within the Pacific Islands are of significant importance to Australia as the Hon Duncan Kerr SC MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs pointed out in a recent speech:

Australia's national interests are intimately tied to those of our near Pacific neighbours. Our interests are best served by a stable, prosperous and growing Pacific neighbourhood (Canberra, 18 April 2008)

Building on the regional ethos of USC and the importance of working with Pacific nations, the pilot course examined in this paper has the potential to overcome the 'North' and 'South' dualisms that characterise and constrain many capacity building efforts to ensure transformative experiences for both local communities *and* tourists. In this way, the pilot may be differentiated from other tourism and development practices in its ability to achieve sustainability learning.

### **Rationale**

The owner of Fiji Dreaming, a fledgling sustainable tourism company and a lecturer in tourism sat across a table at the café at the University of the Sunshine Coast in 2006, brainstorming ideas for community engagement activities for university staff, students and the university community. One concept from the pool of ideas was boldly selected as a pilot study. The aim was to engage and involve a small group of university students with a small village in the highlands of Fiji where a school was needed. One of the village chiefs owned a small and very basic "resort" with one large Fijian hut and several smaller huts located several kilometers from the main village. The "resort" could accommodate the students and also had potential as a small scale eco and/or cultural tourism "resort" that could employ a group of the nearby villagers. An increased flow of volunteer tourists to this "resort" could in turn contribute to the building of a school in the village. The "resort" owner therefore needed assistance with developing and enhancing all aspects of the facility. The students could develop an appropriate set of recommendations as a means to assist the resort which would also assist in funding and building a small school. A Pacific Island community was in need. USC responded with a bold plan. Students responded enthusiastically.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The overall aim of this pilot was to design, conduct and then evaluate the success and outcomes of a sustainable tourism research and education field trip to a primitive "resort" in the Fiji highlands for a small group of students at the University of the Sunshine Coast. The major outcome was to develop a set of recommendations to assist the "resort" in increasing the number of tourists to their business which would firstly create a cash flow through to the village. The "resort" would also be assessed by the students on its potential to offer small scale sustainable cultural experiences to tourists who were interested in meaningful travel experiences such as research, building a school or community service.

The objectives of the pilot field trip were:

- To use experiential education as the teaching and learning approach,
- To offer an experience that any second or third year student at the university could participate in,
- To take only a small group of students as the pilot – numbers were limited to 10,
- To put sustainable theory into practice,

- To give the students the knowledge, skills and framework to undertake a site assessment,
- To develop the confidence of the students in research, preparation, writing and reporting on short, medium and long-term SMART strategies that are culturally appropriate, economically viable and achievable for a small scale sustainable cultural tourism business,
- To empower students and enhance their self-efficacy in designing and communicating appropriate short, medium and long-term recommendations for the small scale sustainable tourism business
- To motivate and empower the village resort owner and his staff in choosing and implementing a number of the short-term feasible recommendations,
- To suggest ways in which the village could increase their quality of tourism and hospitality service and products including education and training of the staff and villagers,
- To give the village resort owner a variety of recommendations that may enhance the economic, cultural, environmental and social sustainability of the micro business, and
- To increase the students' motivation and confidence in making a difference in their own countries by: behaving and acting pro-sustainably and making recommendations and/or implementing more sustainable practices in their countries of origin.

### **Project Design and Methods**

A trip itinerary based on the aims and objectives was developed over several weeks by the owner/manager of Fiji Dreaming and the tourism lecturer. Three meetings were advertised and attended by a number of adventurous students; four were from universities in Sweden, Germany and Korea. Two of the students were male, eight were female and the average age of the group was 22.4 years.

Attendance and successful completion of all of the field trip assessment items could be used to gain credit towards their university degrees. A variety of cultural and adventure-based activities were planned as well as the academic sessions, including immersion in the Fiji culture, Fijian language lessons, participating in traditional feasts and rituals, cooking, weaving, tending crops, visiting waterfalls and stopping briefly to shop in two local Fijian markets. The trip departed immediately after the final exams in November 2006, and the students returned 10 days later.

Two field booklets were compiled for the students by the lecturer. One contained the trip details, information about the history, politics, culture and economics of Fiji and 24 blank pages for writing, recording and reflecting on the education and learning from each day's experiences and activities. The second booklet contained a selection of readings relevant to the trip, including articles on ecotourism, carrying capacity, frameworks for ecotourism site assessments, sustainable tourism businesses and impacts, ecolodge designs, financing, marketing, interpretation and cultural change.

The 10 students worked initially in small groups who chose the topics that would become their area of expertise, then taught the other small groups about their chosen topics. The groups then used their topic to develop and design appropriate methods for assessing a particular aspect of the "resort" site. The results of their visit to the village, their observations, the primary and secondary research and qualitative and quantitative site assessments were compiled and analysed. Recommendations were then formed based on their research, reading, interviews with other guests at other resorts visited, the Fijian staff and owner of the "resort", Fiji Dreaming staff, and their previous knowledge.

The written report was then checked and formatted into achievable short, medium and long term goals by the lecturer and the Fiji Dreaming staff. Each group then produced their part of the comprehensive written report and confidently delivered an informal and relaxed oral presentation of the main points to the Fijian village "resort" owner. The students' presentations were outstanding and the rest of the night was spent dancing, singing and partying in celebration of the success of the expedition. The students realised that their work was well received and through the meaningful experience, both the Fijians and the USC group had become friends and felt a strong bond and connection for each other.

To evaluate the success and outcomes of the trip the students were given a questionnaire based on the USC Graduate Attributes and the original objectives of the expedition to complete on the plane back to Australia. The questionnaire included 71 Likert Scale items grouped under the broad categories of understanding, thinking and learning, interacting and communicating. Students indicated their perceived amount of change that occurred as a direct result of participating in the expedition by circling a number from zero to 5 where a score of 0 = no occurrence and/or development, 1 = minimal level of occurrence and/or development, 2 = some level of occurrence and/or development, 3 = moderate level of

occurrence and/or development, 4 = high level of occurrence and/or development, and 5 = very high level of occurrence and/or development. After the trip, several questions on the instrument were discarded due to their inappropriateness. This occurred because the lecturer had not been on the trip before and included some items which were not applicable to the experience.

Each attribute and/or concept had between two and 10 questions. For example, Leadership and Interpersonal Skills had 10 questions. The results for each attribute where multiple item scales occurred were added and an average score was reported (see Table 1). The last two items on the instrument had 10 point Likert Scales and asked students to rate their trip as part of their overall university experience.

## Results and discussion

This section briefly discusses the results of the multiple item questionnaire where students reported on the amount of change that had occurred. Each of the items in the instrument received a rating of between 3 (moderate level of occurrence) and 5 (very high level of occurrence) out of a possible score of 5 by the students. A summary of the results are presented in Table 1. The last two questions received high scores of 9.5 and 9.2 out of a possible 10 (see Table 1).

**Table 1 Student responses to Graduate Attribute Questionnaire**

<i>Questionnaire item</i>	<i>Average score</i>
<b>Attribute: TO UNDERSTAND</b>	
To have relevant, discipline-based knowledge, skills and values	4.1
To be able to apply and evaluate knowledge	4.5
<b>Attribute: TO THINK</b>	
To reflect and assess the resources of an area considering a SSSD project To value and respect reason associated with SSSD (SSSD) projects	4.6
To plan, manage, and complete a small scale sustainable tourism project	4.0
To be able to reason competently	4.0
<b>Attribute: TO LEARN</b>	
To be self-aware, independent learners about all aspects of small scale sustainable development To undertake appropriate research for a sustainable tourism development project	4.1
<b>Attribute: TO INTERACT</b>	
To be able to interrelate and collaborate with people from a developing Pacific island nation To value and respect difference and diversity in the Pacific Islands	4.8
<b>Attribute: TO COMMUNICATE</b>	
To speak, listen and write competently	4.2
<b>Other attributes</b>	
Self-respect and a sense of personal agency	3.7
To have a sense of personal and social responsibility	4.5
Leadership and interpersonal skills	4.3
To be constructive and creative, To be enterprising, To solve problems	4.5
To have initiative & independence, To have innovative approaches to challenges	4.6
<b>Overall scores</b>	
The importance of this course in your overall university experience.	9.5
'The value of the course as a part of your entire degree	9.2

When students were asked what aspects they enjoyed most about the Fiji Dreaming/USC experience, their answers ranged from: "the whole experience was amazing" and "everything", to "the close relationships established with the Fijian family"; "getting to know the people, culture and realising how lucky we are in Australia"; "a memory for life"; "an amazing emotional experience"; "problem solving and having to think outside the square"; "gaining valuable experience for future similar opportunities"; "applying a range of interdisciplinary academic/theoretical principles" and "the activities".

This is an amazing once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for all to be involved. Regardless of personal and professional differences, everyone is able to contribute to, and benefit from this experience. The things I

have learnt and experienced on this trip simply cannot be learnt or experienced within a classroom or workplace. (Feedback from one of the students)

## Conclusions

Based on the original aim, objectives, desired outcomes and results, the pilot trip was a success and exemplar of win-win outcomes for all stakeholders, including the Fijian highland village, the owner and staff of the Fijian resort village, the University of the Sunshine Coast, the 10 students, the Faculty of Business, the Fiji Dreaming staff and the lecturer. This trip recognised the powerful educational potential of a reciprocal community engagement activity between USC and Fiji. Such ecotourism and educational experiences have the potential to yield rich returns on investing time, effort and energy into human capacity building and community engagement projects between USC and Fiji across all three faculties.

## Recommendations

Fiji as a sustainable tourism destination, international culture, diverse society, and third world economy offers Australia and its students a rich and varied source of experiential education and learning opportunities now and in the future. These cultural trips can not take place without the expertise, ability and leadership of the Fiji Dreaming staff as cultural brokers. A strong relationship based on trust between the Fiji Dreaming staff, village, and resort village is essential.

The potential for delivering intense, powerful, meaningful cultural experiences in Fiji definitely exists. This pilot successfully laid the foundation for future educational expeditions to the same and similar destinations offering a mix of education and research, adventure, and small scale sustainable travel practices. The Fiji Dreaming staff and the lecturer plan to offer differing multi-disciplinary opportunities across all three faculties of USC who seek a similar experience. Possibilities also include community service activities based on community and environmental health, first aid, agriculture, engineering, agricultural tourism, sport, and education.

On a final note, because the workload component was perceived as being inconvenient and at times excessive by the students, the theory component of the course work could be delivered at USC prior to departure as the foundations for the trip, allowing more time for activities and applying the sustainable theory in the field situation.

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## SIFE UQ: Capacity Building through Engaged Scholarship

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### Abstract

*Much is written of the need for universities to develop stronger community linkages to respond to the complex social issues of the 21st century. A growing body of literature exists on university and community engagement and in particular on how individual university and community partnerships are fostered and sustained. University and community partnerships span boundaries in an effort to address social issues through collaboration between community members, practitioners, and academics. Universities can engage and partner with internal and external communities in a number of ways. Community partnerships may take many forms in an effort to share numerous and varied institutional resources: universities may partner with communities through the provision of student volunteers, infusing experiential education into the curriculum, by allowing staff and faculty to engage in direct service, and by supporting partnerships between the university and community members in order to identify and address pressing social needs through research and commercial efforts. In addition, partnerships may be formed with various communities: a few such examples include schools, not-for-profit community-based organisations, local businesses, or industry.*

*This paper will focus on one of the community partnership approaches – student volunteers. The Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE) organisation was established in 1975 in the United States of America. It was originally a regional leadership training program attended by university students who were required to teach their communities what they had learned and then be judged competitively on the outcomes of their efforts. The mission of SIFE is to provide tertiary students with an opportunity to make a difference in their communities and to develop leadership, teamwork and communication skills through learning, practising and teaching the tenets of their academic discipline to enable others to participate more fully and effectively in the economic and social life of the nation. To expand this organisation internationally, SIFE Global was established in order to provide other countries with the opportunity to participate in the development of university students and their communities through encouraging them to participate in 'service learning' through the SIFE approach.*

*The University of Queensland (UQ) founded a SIFE chapter of the SIFE Australia Ltd organisation in 2004. SIFE Australia Ltd is an unlisted, not for profit, public company, limited by guarantee, funded by generous financial and in-kind assistance by leading Australian corporations. Growing from strength to strength SIFE UQ plays a pivotal role in the development and maintenance of community engagement initiatives for UQ, currently only on the Ipswich Campus but with plans to expand to the St Lucia Campus. The organisation provides members the opportunity to develop leadership, communication and teamwork skills by designing, developing, delivering and documenting community outreach projects that educate students and community members and foster innovation and enterprise. Students apply the knowledge they are gaining at university to build community capacity as well as develop their own skills in their area of expertise. The mission of the SIFE UQ organisation is to: Effect social change through free enterprise education and social entrepreneurship by connecting **uni** with **community**.*

### Capacity building: Student and community

One of the key elements of the SIFE philosophy is the endeavour to pursue community and student capacity building. Capacity building relates to a range of activities by which individuals, groups and organisations improve their awareness, skills, knowledge, motivation, commitment and confidence in a common area (Perlman, 1995). The process of capacity building can increase the range of people, organisations and communities who are able to address problems, and in particular, problems that arise out of social inequity and social exclusion. Individuals involved in SIFE projects have the opportunity to enhance their capacity as a student and as a member of the community.

Student capacity of a university is another potential asset to communities (Markus et al., 1993; Perlman, 1995). Students have access to university resources, research skills, the luxury of critical thinking, and usually an objective and neutral approach to problem-solving that communities lack (Teatler, 1981). This partnership can be mutually beneficial especially when addressing community problems. As noted by the Office of University Partnerships (1994:1), "if cities are to meet the daunting challenges that confront them, the colleges and universities that are so prominent in their economic, social, and cultural



lives must be fully engaged in the effort.”

Some universities see the benefits of having their students work on real-world issues (Rodin, 2005; Reardon, 2005; Ruch and Trani, 1995). For example, the university’s curriculum and teaching methods can be made more relevant and grounded in “realities.” Communities have significant capacity to address and solve their own problems as McKnight and Kretzmann (1993) have argued. Local knowledge and expertise is important and extensive, and must be acknowledged by universities as a significant asset in community-based research initiatives. LeGates and Robinson (1998:315) also remind us that “academics must divest themselves of their expert status and meet the community on level ground, willing to learn as well as to teach.” Universities cannot be isolated from their surroundings -- professional schools find it in their best interest to have some involvement or connection to their communities (Keating and Sjoquist, 2002).

As Lynton and Elman (1987:31) further note, “active involvement of university students from many disciplines in a variety of applied and externally oriented professional activities is the best way -- indeed perhaps the only way -- to bridge the current pedagogical gap between theory and practice.” Indeed, the interaction can be mutually reinforcing and enriching (Ruch and Trani, 1995). Universities are places that educate key players in civic life such as government leaders and professionals (Thomas, 1998). Students benefit from direct, hands-on learning experiences that can be invaluable in shaping their world-view, research, and job skills (TD Bank Financial Group, 2004; Cisneros, 1995).

By getting students involved in community-based engagement projects, they will have the chance to apply theories learned in their classrooms to practical problems. Students who work on a community project add to the academic benefits of being close to the project site and develop a sense of civic responsibility among students (Bok, 1982, 1992).

A number of case studies of university and community partnerships conducted in recent years evidence the challenges and benefits associated with initiating and sustaining partnerships with locally based organisations (Brabeck, et al., 1998; Braskamp and Wergin, 1998; Dugery and Knowles, 2003; Mayfield, Hellwig and Banks, 1999; Maurresse, 2001; Weiwel and Lieber, 1998). A significant amount of the existing literature provides findings on the ‘best practice’ in developing and cultivating student-based engagement in community partnerships (Baum, 2000; Dugery and Knowles, 2003; Mayfield, 1999; Schumaker, Reed and Woods, 2000; Wiewel and Lieber, 1998). Such literature is useful in helping us understand those factors which encourage or hinder the development of partnerships which collectively can strengthen overall engagement. Researchers (e.g. Dugery and Knowles, 2003) found that students reap multiple benefits from participating in community-based engagement projects. One such benefit is that problem solving, planning and responding to real and immediate social needs can refine skills developed through tertiary studies. Also among their most interesting findings, were that increasing the accessibility of universities to community is an essential factor in building successful partnerships. The potential for institutional growth in establishing university-community partnerships is enhanced through initial community interactions with students. Therefore, experiences had by both students and community can play a pivotal role in developing future academic and commercial relationships. The road to university accessibility has been long and many changes have occurred to now embrace a new era of collaboration and partnership.

### **Capacity building through engaged scholarship**

The SIFE approach to involving students in community-based projects does not take away from the scholarship of the experience. Boyer (1990) proposed four views of scholarship that collectively fostered a more socially responsive and intellectually coherent approach to academic inquiry. Fairweather (1996) noted that research universities’, such as UQ, privileging of research is associated with a diminished focus on teaching and the community service mission. These trends present a fundamental challenge to organisations such as SIFE UQ which seeks greater community engagement. Boyer (1990) identified and responded to this challenge in his work on engaged scholarship.

Boyer’s (1990) notion of engaged scholarship is a critical concept that gives research universities a framework to rethink how research and scholarship are considered and conducted. Boyer (1990) suggests four ways of thinking about academic scholarship and the recognition accorded to them. Boyer’s (1990) Engaged Scholarship Framework

Engagement Type	Details
<b>Scholarship of Discovery</b>	Highlights the value of research for its own sake, it is characterised as general research and contributes to the intellectual vitality of the disciplines.
<b>Scholarship of Integration</b>	Impresses the need for scholars to give meaning. By drawing together and interpreting diverse perspectives, new insights are brought to bear on original research.
<b>Scholarship of Application</b>	Denoting movement toward engagement, a dynamic process that is reciprocal, with scholarship proving its utility through its benefits to the public good.
<b>Scholarship of Teaching</b>	Teaching educates and nurtures future scholars and knowing and learning need to be communal acts.

Boyer's conception of engaged scholarship continues to influence current thinking about how research universities might reorient themselves to their community mission by fostering a more integrated notion of research and scholarship (Boyer, 1996; Gelmon and Agre-Kippenham, 2002; Holland, 1997; Plater, 1999).

Universities that embed engagement have not abandoned traditional scholarship. Instead they are broadening their view of scholarship by applying it to critical issues and problems that threaten the quality of life in their local communities (Holland et al., 2003; Martinez, 2000). The manner in which universities go about teaching, how students and other audiences learn, and what is learned, ultimately, affects pedagogy. Working directly with community partners exposes students to the knowledge, experiences, and values of persons outside of the formal classroom (Rodin, 2005; Ruch and Trani, 1995). Students and community are exposed to different life experiences, values, and expectations that help broaden understanding of community and university issues (Markus et al., 1993). As citizens of the community, students bring all kinds of skills to a community -- and often use them to enrich the community. By definition, the partnerships require students to collaborate with community residents and stakeholders. Doing so teaches project collaboration and collaborative learning (Campus Compact, 2000; Kupiec, 1993). To present examples of SIFE UQ's engagement practices, details of the following projects have been provided: St Paul's Variety Market, SeniorNet Survey, and the Financial Literacy Program for Young Women.

#### **Example project One: St Paul's Variety Market**

The city of Ipswich backs onto the western suburbs of Brisbane where boundaries between the two cities have become blurred. Recent years has seen Ipswich experience substantial growth with many new industrial and residential estates expanding both the city's population and its boundaries. Whilst this growth has seen investors and home buyers move into the city's many suburbs the inner city has been slower to change and indeed is currently experiencing a downturn in business activity due to the recent opening of a new shopping centre just over the river from the city's centre. Several financial institutions, service providers, and retail businesses have left the city centre to relocate to the new shopping centre whilst others have closed down altogether. Although on the surface this would appear to ring a death knell for the inner city, long term expectations for the area are high. The current downturn in business activity having been anticipated and incorporated into an ambitious plan being implemented by the Ipswich City Council which will ultimately see the city's centre become a commercial hub for professional organisations whilst the river area will become an inner city centre for social activity, eventually linking the city's professional hub to the new shopping centre across the river.

Although the long term outlook for the city's centre is positive, historically and still to some degree today, the area has been home to a large lower socioeconomic population. Many retirees and pensioners reside in the area whilst the city's proximity to the local campus of the State's oldest university, attracts tertiary students into the inner city and surrounding suburbs. It is predominately to this segment of Ipswich society that the St Paul's Variety Market caters. The Market operates out of the St Paul's Anglican Church premises which are centrally located just opposite the Ipswich Civic Centre in the heart of the city. The Market has been in operation for some 15 years having expanded from its humble beginnings in the grounds of the church to its current more permanent arrangement within the church's buildings some seven or eight years ago. Since moving into the church's buildings and undergoing a name change, from Paddies Market to the St Paul's Variety Market around the same time, St Paul's has experienced a downturn in business.

The SIFE UQ team was approached, via their faculty advisor, to examine St Paul's business and marketing plan to determine how to establish a sustainable source of funds for the Market. Two SIFE UQ members, second and third year Management and Commerce students consulted with St Paul's staff and conducted a SWOT analysis of the business to identify any issues or needs impinging upon the Market's success. With the assistance of the Market's staff, various issues were identified, these included: minimal marketing resulting in low visibility of the Market; name change confusion; lack of knowledge of local target markets; inaccurate advertising in local newspapers; aging workforce (staff and volunteers) and insufficient staff; physical layout of the Market not conducive to ease of access; congestion of stock within the premise; and an ad hoc pricing strategy.

As a result of the review, SIFE UQ worked with the staff at St Paul's to deliver a business plan designed to improve the Market's long-term goal of achieving increased revenue whilst continuing to deliver accessible and inexpensive stock to its vast and wide ranging clientele base. At the same time, SIFE UQ students assisted St Paul's staff with the design and production of marketing materials to increase the Market's visibility. SIFE UQ members visited the site and engaged with Market staff discussing options and providing recommendations for improving operational practices, such as incorporating price tagging of garments and establishing more defined floor arrangements for stock to improve the Market's physical appearance and ambience. As well, it was agreed that the building in which the Market's were located, though earmarked by the church for refurbishment in the future, was in desperate need of refreshing and so a working bee was organised by St Paul's staff to paint the rooms and refresh the Market's appearance. SIFE UQ funded the purchase of new stereo system to provide background music further enhancing the Market's atmosphere. Other improvements earmarked for action by St Paul's staff included introducing clothing racks for hanging garment for better viewing and the introduction of carry bags for customers to take their purchases away with them.

SIFE students spent approximately 38 hours engaging with St Paul's staff taking advantage of knowledge gained through scholarship to assist staff acquire new skills and learn new practices towards improved financial outcomes for the Market. Feedback from St Paul's would indicate an upturn in business of approximately 20% that can be attributed to greater visibility of the Market through improved marketing efforts and less specifically, the greater ease with which clientele can negotiate the markets. The engagement process has directly impacted between 25 to 30 individuals from St Paul's and SIFE UQ, and indirectly a much larger segment of the local community's lower socioeconomic residents. Through engagement scholarship SIFE UQ students have assisted St Paul's staff to become more successful as entrepreneurs whilst helping to build capacity for both the individuals involved and the community in general.

### **SeniorNet Survey**

The SIFE UQ team were approached by the local Ipswich senior citizens Internet based organisation, SeniorNet Association, to provide assistance in determining the needs and expectations of its members towards directing ongoing member services. Association committee members were concerned about a current trend of decreasing membership and increasingly fewer users of the Association's Internet services. After an initial meeting with Association committee members to scope out the project and to discuss possible outcomes for SeniorNet, it was agreed that an opinion survey would need to be undertaken to first establish the current beliefs and expectations of the Association's members: the survey to be designed and formulated by SIFE UQ on behalf of SeniorNet.

SIFE UQ coordinates a student placement program that assists students requiring placement as part of their degree program to find suitable arrangements. As both the community engagement centre for The University of Queensland, and the current home of SIFE UQ in Ipswich, the UQ Boilerhouse Community Engagement Centre agreed to provide placement for students through the SIFE UQ program. SIFE UQ students from the Human Services degree seeking placement were introduced to the SeniorNet project and asked to devise an appropriate survey to gather responses regarding SeniorNet member services. The students were placed under the supervision of the UQ Boilerhouse Director for the development of the survey instrument.

Using skills and knowledge acquired during their university studies, and with the guidance of the UQ Boilerhouse Director, students developed quantitative and qualitative survey questions through a combination of engagement and research processes: Internet research on current SeniorNet activities and services; literature reviews to determine best practice for successful survey application; advice on instrument structure and question framing from the UQ Boilerhouse Director, SIFE UQ Faculty Advisor,

and course supervisor; and ongoing advice and feedback from SeniorNet committee members regarding issues requiring clarification by members through the survey.

Students were required to follow university ethical clearance processes before implementing the final survey. Currently, formal confirmation of ethical clearance is pending. Upon receipt of this advice, the survey will be released via the SeniorNet website and through direct email distribution to Association members. Although students involved in developing the survey instrument have now completed their placement program, the project will continue with other SIFE UQ placement students taking on the task of gathering and analysing the survey data. This will require incoming students to maintain relationships already forged between SIFE UQ, the UQ Boilerhouse, and the client, SeniorNet, and continued involvement in the process of engagement scholarship applying knowledge and skills gained in study, imparting these to their client, and hopefully gaining reciprocal knowledge and skills from those with whom they engage.

### **Financial Literacy Program for Young Women**

As mentioned previously, the Ipswich community serves a predominately low socioeconomic market. According to an ASIC (2003) report, children from low-income families are at a greater disadvantage in gaining knowledge and access to financial skills. In addition, research would indicate that females tend to be less financially literate than males. In response to this trend, SIFE UQ launched a new program at the beginning of 2008 that targeted young achieving female students in their senior year at high school (16 to 18 years of age) wishing to improve their financial literacy and long term potential capacity as future leaders and mentors of tomorrow. The unique approach taken for the program comes from the integration of foundational financial literacy topics, such as saving, budgets and debt; understanding financial records, financial products and service; spotting a scam or improper conduct; financial technologies; and, entrepreneurship, with themes such as personal development, self-esteem, bullying, and mentoring.

In order to trial the program for two school terms, SIFE UQ successfully obtained funding from the HSBC financial organisation. For the first term of the program's operation participants were limited to three senior year female students from Ipswich's Bremer State High School to enable a trial of both the programs framework and content. The second term is currently being conducted with improvements made to the program from the feedback received through the evaluation process. The comments received commended the program on its use of a professional facilitator with 10 year experience in providing workshop content and processes specifically aimed at a youth audience and the scope of content selected. Elements of the program identified as areas of improvement were isolated to advertising and promotion of the program.

The overall goals of the program are for the provision of an educational program that enables young women in the Ipswich community to learn and mentor others in the ability to make informed judgements and decisions regarding the use and management of money based on a clear understanding of self and the effects others can have on their identity. In addition, SIFE UQ's objectives in delivering this program were to develop content that was applicable both now and into the future; to deliver a program to participants within a limited time frame of six weeks; to train participants as mentors and instruct them on the use of the program; and, to evaluate the program for ongoing application.

By seeking to facilitate a knowledge shift in a low socio-economic community, this program has the potential to yield significant benefits in at least two areas. Firstly, participation of youth can contribute to the enhancement of community well-being by helping to address key social issues that stem from educational problems. Secondly, maintaining and advancing Australia's competitiveness in the globalised economy requires citizens to have strong financial skills and knowledge, especially future generations.

In order for the program to be sustainable, the program has a mentoring system embedded in the program which provides the participants with access to support and resources, regular consistent contact, detailed goals, objectives, and timelines for all aspects of the program. In addition, to support the promotion of this opportunity to young women in the community, ongoing marketing and public relations, continued training and updating of content and bi-annual evaluations will be implemented. The SIFE UQ team has plans to also expand the program by running teacher and parent workshops as well as involve the financial industry and several State Government Departments who have shown an interest by offering funding and in-kind support.

## Learning's, sustainability and benefits

From the example projects discussed above, and the many more experiences had by the SIFE UQ students, collaboration, trust and communication have played a large role in developing and maintaining relationships with the community. Wiewel and Lieber (1998) emphasise that collaborative planning between partners is essential and that it is through a systematic and incremental process that solid relationships are built. Such incrementalism fosters a shared understanding of desired outcomes and fosters a process through which trust can be carefully and slowly developed. Furthermore, Schumaker, Reed and Woods (2000) found that successful collaboration required a high level of trust, clear and frequent communication, and a shared vision. Collaboration, relationships and trust are themes that arise time and again throughout the literature on community engagement.

Some central and informative themes emanate from the experiences had by the SIFE UQ organisation on the development and sustenance of partnerships. First, developing a strong foundation for engagement requires planning and clear communication of partners' respective responsibilities and desired outcomes. Second, trust, relationships and collaboration must be developed over time. This is the basis for sustaining effective engagement practices that are mutually fulfilling and productive. Third, the supporting university plays a crucial and direct role in developing engaged relationships. They also benefit from their engagement – their research links are enhanced when applied to the exploration of critical community issues and their understanding of the phenomena under investigation is enriched.

Although SIFE UQ has had many successes but there are many current issues related to the SIFE UQ organisation that threatens its sustainability. These issues range from problems with student recruitment to levels of commitment and support (from students and the institution). In order to start addressing the issues related to organisational sustainability, the following suggestions are made:

- Embed engaged scholarship in the culture (SIFE UQ and institutional);
- Develop new project and program ideas (use recent University needs analysis);
- Implementation of an evaluation framework; and
- Strategic approach to addressing current issues related to SIFE UQ.

Overall, from the projects that SIFE UQ has participated in to date, there have been many benefits to the students, the University and the community. Some of those benefits are:

- developing effective and relevant projects and programs that relate to society's needs;
- involving students in the discovery and application process, thereby fostering highly-valued workforce skills and practical knowledge;
- attracting additional sources of funding;
- increasing research productivity and opportunities through new partnerships;
- renewing public confidence in the University and a sense of public purpose for the University;
- renewing the role of higher education and, in particular innovation, in the community;
- enhancing 'town-and-gown' relationships; and
- making the University's world class 'research' and 'teaching and learning' more visible.

## Concluding remarks

In conclusion, student lead organisations such as SIFE can stand to gain by fostering collaboration between university students and community organizations. Students can contribute to the local community by applying their research skills, knowledge, and expertise to real world problems. Australian universities can help foster a culture of engagement by developing new and improved ways of supporting students, strategies and other revitalization initiatives, and funding opportunities. Even though many benefits have been shared by students, universities and communities, issues of sustainability will still be an important element for SIFE organisations to address. It is suggested that a culture of engagement be embedded, continue to develop new ideas, evaluation be implemented, and a strategic approach to addressing current issues be taken.

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## Responding To Student Poverty: Teaching Social Entrepreneurship through Finance for Life and Sife at the University Of Western Australia

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### Abstract

*Finance for Life (FFL) is a financial literacy development programme that was formulated by SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise) students at the University of Western Australia (UWA) to respond to youth poverty and, in particular, university student poverty. FFL addresses this challenge by trying to improve the financial literacy of secondary school students prior to exiting high school and entering university. SIFE and FFL illustrate two additional aspects of interest to universities; firstly, that universities can engage with the community through these student activities and secondly, that FFL and SIFE provide an approach which universities can use to 'teach' social entrepreneurship. The aim of this paper is to explore these claims and describe a conceptual framework that draws on Habermas (1984, 1968). This informs a future research agenda.*

**Keywords:** social entrepreneurship, teaching, university-community, nexus

### Introduction

The need for financial education for young people has never been greater. While there are a growing number of financial products available that are also growing in complexity (Russell, Brooks and Nair, 2006), results from surveys such as the 2006 Australian Financial Literacy Assessment (AFLA) confirm that while Australian 14 to 16 year olds understand their consumer rights, they lack the financial skills to complement their consumer awareness. In response to these statistics, Ralph Norris, the Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth Bank, stated that "if Australia's young adults are to survive in a complex and competitive financial world they need financial education programs that will give them one of life's most important skills – how to manage their money." (Norris, <http://www.commbank.com.au/foundation>)

The Finance for Life (FFL) program developed by SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise) UWA (University of Western Australia) students responds to this challenge by addressing the financial literacy of secondary school students *prior* to exiting high school. Results confirm that FFL has made a positive impact on the financial literacy of recipients. However, the experience of developing and implementing FFL and SIFE reflects an interrelationship between issues that are of broader interest to universities. The first is that these projects provide the university with the opportunity to engage with the community at many levels. However, because the *raison d'être* of SIFE and subsequently FFL is to respond to real-life community needs, we suggest that the FFL/SIFE experience also exemplifies an approach that universities can use to teach social entrepreneurship. We define social entrepreneurship as an entrepreneurial activity that is market (economic)-related but primarily motivated by social rather than market objectives. The aim of social entrepreneurship is to activate social change rather than only realise market-related objectives. We suggest that the FFL/SIFE experience exemplifies this definition.

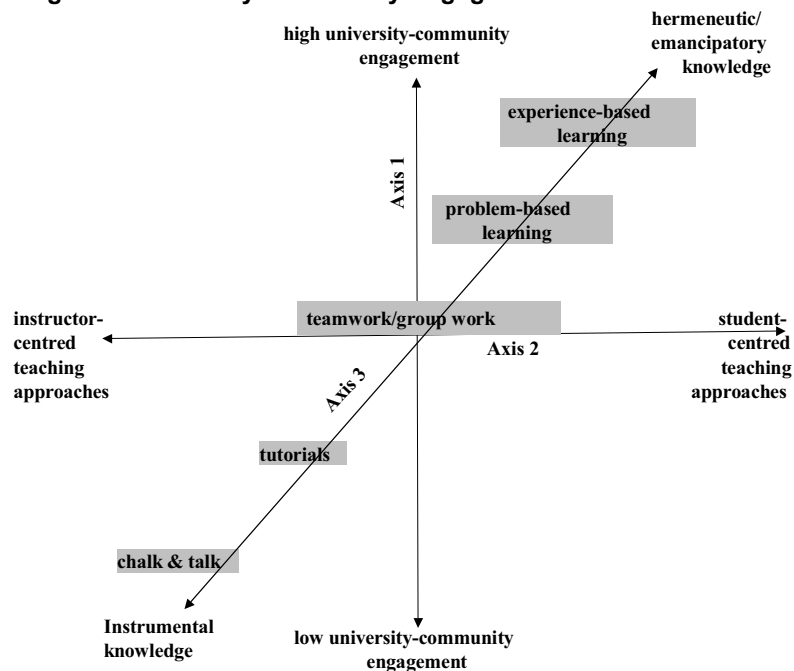
We further suggest that the experience of FFL/SIFE has assisted us to begin conceptualising our teaching and learning approaches to social entrepreneurship. Although there are numerous social theorists to draw a context for this understanding, we believe that aspects of the social theory developed by Jurgen Habermas are most helpful. While appropriating Habermas' concepts we note the development and changes in his thought over time. However, our intention here has been to refer to specific Habermasian concepts as a way of framing our discussion, rather than engaging in depth with Habermas per se.

We have found the use of Habermas' concept of the lifeworld and colonisation (*Theory of Communicative Action*, 1984) and his understanding of the connection between human interests and knowledge (*Knowledge and Human Interests*, 1968) by those theorising teaching and learning approaches to citizenship education to be of great assistance (Brookfield, 2005; Crick & Joldersma, 2007). However, we are also attracted to Habermas because, like social entrepreneurship, Habermas' project was aimed at changing social practice (Roderick, 1985). Thus, drawing on Habermas, we have developed a conceptual framework that begins with unravelling why challenges exist in teaching social entrepreneurship in universities, and concludes with describing responses to these. We conclude from

this discussion that approaches to teaching social entrepreneurship must parallel the principle that cognition is developmental, or developing an understanding of social entrepreneurship in learners is a developmental process. We subsequently suggest that approaches to teaching social entrepreneurship may be viewed as 'stages' of 'circling teaching methods' (Seymour et al., 2008) that facilitate learners along a continuum towards self-reflective learning, or what Habermas refers to as emancipatory learning. Our discussion also shows these stages correspond to different degrees of a 'nexus' in university-community engagement.

These interrelationships are diagrammatically represented in Diagram 1 and we use the FFL/SIFE experience to illustrate these interrelationships. It should be noted that the diagram is not three-dimensional but only aims to summarise interrelationships between teaching approaches to social entrepreneurship, the knowledge's that these seek to foster to assist students learn about social entrepreneurship and the relationship to levels of university-community engagement.

**Diagram 1: Interrelationships Between Teaching Approaches to Social Entrepreneurship, Knowledge and University-Community Engagement**



Source: adaptation of Seymour et al., 2008

The aim of this paper is to explore these interrelationships. After briefly elaborating on what we mean by social entrepreneurship, the paper explores how both SIFE and FFL exemplify social entrepreneurship in formulation and implementation. Results from the programme confirm its potential in activating social change. The paper then explores how FFL/SIFE illustrate the university-community nexus as depicted in axis 1 of Diagram 1, before providing an explanation of the conceptual framework supporting axes 2 and 3. We then discuss how FFL/SIFE UWA student feedback supports some levels of our conceptual model and conclude with a brief discussion of how this framework informs a future research agenda.

## EXPLAINING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

While the term social entrepreneurship appears to have mainly taken its meaning from cases such as *Ashoka* which was founded by Bill Drayton in 1980 to provide seed funding for entrepreneurs with a social vision; and the spectacularly successful case of *Kiva.org*, (<http://www.kiva.org>) a micro-lending venture founded by Matt and Jessica Flannery, Alvord et al., (2004) reflect a growing body of literature when distinguishing social entrepreneurship as embodying three aspects. Social entrepreneurs use business skills and knowledge to create commercially viable enterprises that accomplish social purposes; social entrepreneurship pursues innovation for its social impact rather than attaining economic viability or meeting ordinary business criteria; and, social entrepreneurship is a way to catalyse social transformation well beyond solving the social problems that are the initial focus of concern.



Our own definition conflates these aspects and we define social entrepreneurship as an entrepreneurial activity that is market (economic) - related but primarily motivated by social rather than market objectives. Thus social entrepreneurship aims to activate social change rather than solely realise market-related aims. The next section describes the bases upon which SIFE and FFL fulfil this definition.

## **THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP NATURE OF SIFE AND FFL**

SIFE is a university student activity that aims to 'make a difference' in the community within the framework of a market model. Operating at both the national (SIFE Australia [www.sife.org](http://www.sife.org)) and international (SIFE International) level, SIFE offers universities an opportunity to engage with the community through student activities that are meaningful to community life. Thus, SIFE reflects a core sentiment of social entrepreneurship: a market-related activity that is nonetheless primarily inspired by social rather than market aims.

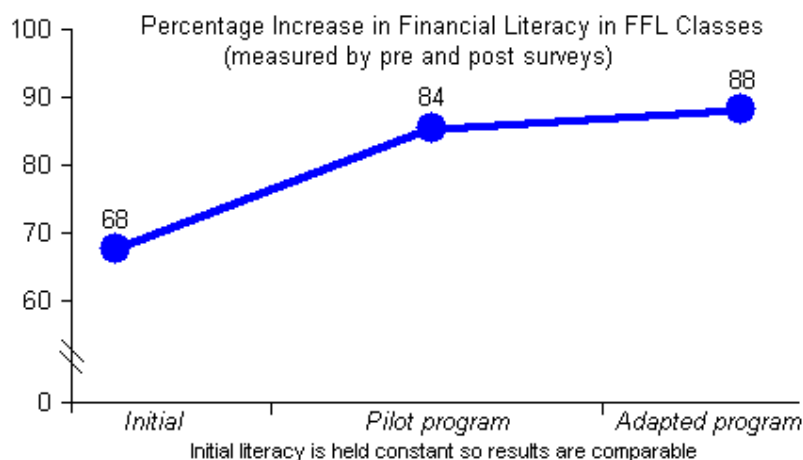
FFL reflects a similar sentiment. Its development by SIFE UWA students was inspired by reports about the effects of lack of financial education on increased levels of student debt and poverty (SIFE UWA Annual Report, 2007). Thus the inspiration for the development of FFL by SIFE UWA students mirrors a defining characteristic of social entrepreneurship: that is, FFL was primarily inspired by the desire to meet social needs. Further substantiation that this desire underpins FFL is that FFL/SIFE schools were deliberately selected on the basis that the school community's socio-economic profile classified them into the lower to middle socio-economic groups within the Perth metropolitan area (SIFE UWA Annual report, 2007).

The results showing development of financial literacy by FFL recipients supports the claim that (like social entrepreneurship) FFL is also a programme that aims to 'make a difference'. The original FFL programme consisted of a short presentation covering topics such as basic personal financial management skills, problems associated with debt, and saving and investing to reach financial goals. This presentation was followed by an interactive game in which students were provided with the opportunity to make saving, spending and investing decisions in a simulated 'real world' setting. The game progressed over several rounds with different scenarios in each round.

To increase the reach of the FFL programme, an internet-based resource kit that allows a single person to run the programme in a classroom setting has now been developed. The resource kit closely mirrors, yet extends the current workshop and includes access to all the materials required to run a presentation as well as a web-based game. In addition to making saving, spending and share investment decisions, the online game also involves students in making ethical decisions based on their job, the ability to borrow from the bank, and invest in property. Finally, the web-based game has an inbuilt mechanism that will allow measurement of long-term impacts through six-monthly email quizzes administered after programme completion. The development of the online resource kit is currently at prototype stage. A trial version available for implementation in test schools will be conducted in August/September 2008, with conceptual improvements to be made after this point.

This discussion confirms that SIFEUWA students have undertaken a process of continuous refinement of the FFL programme to improve its effectiveness over the three years of operation. This was especially in refining aspects such as the game's operation following pilot implementation. Reflecting these improvements, results from self-report pre and post surveys with FFL recipients from the initial to the adapted programme, confirm that improvements in financial literacy match these FFL modifications. Figure 1 illustrates this trend.

**Figure 1: Percentage Increases in Financial Literacy in FFL Classes, Initial to Adapted Programme**



More significantly however, results from self-report pre and post surveys with students as shown in Table 1, show the positive impact that FFL has had on the *development* of financial literacy in recipients. The results also confirm that the programme has consistently generated these positive results across time periods. While positive, it is nonetheless worth noting that there may be a halo effect influencing results. This is due to the fact that the same cohort of SIFE UWA students has managed FFL since its inception. Thus, increase in their confidence in implementing FFL undoubtedly influences the performance of FFL recipients.

**Table 1: Pre and Post Survey FFL Results, 2005 – 2007**

	Pre	Post	% Change
2005-2006	69	85	23
2006-2007	68	88	29

Feedback from both students and teachers add further confirmation that FFL reflects the SIFE mantra of 'making a difference' to the development of financial literacy in recipients.

*"Your professionalism and commitment was first class. The program taught students a skill that is not taught in the curriculum."* Teacher1, 200

*"That was great! When are you coming back?"* Student, 1, 2005

*"The game was so cool! I can't believe we didn't win though. Can we play again?"* Student, 2, 2006

*"The students never usually concentrate for that long. They are going to remember this for a long time."* Teacher, 2, 2006

While these results confirm that FFL can be considered as a social entrepreneurship activity, responses from FFL/SIFE UWA students also confirm the potential that this programme has in teaching social entrepreneurship. When asked to describe the purpose of SIFE, a common response from a focus group conducted with FFL/SIFE UWA students (n = 4) was "To help university students help the community" (Student A, 2008). When asked to describe social entrepreneurship, students generally described it as "innovative projects and activities in the community" (Student B, 2008) and when asked whether FFL reflected their definition of 'social entrepreneurship', all responded in the affirmative.

In summary, we suggest that FFL/SIFE resonate with the principles underpinning our definition of social entrepreneurship and illustrates an approach to teaching social entrepreneurship. However, the experience of FFL/SIFE also illustrates the potential that teaching social entrepreneurship has in facilitating levels of university-community engagement.

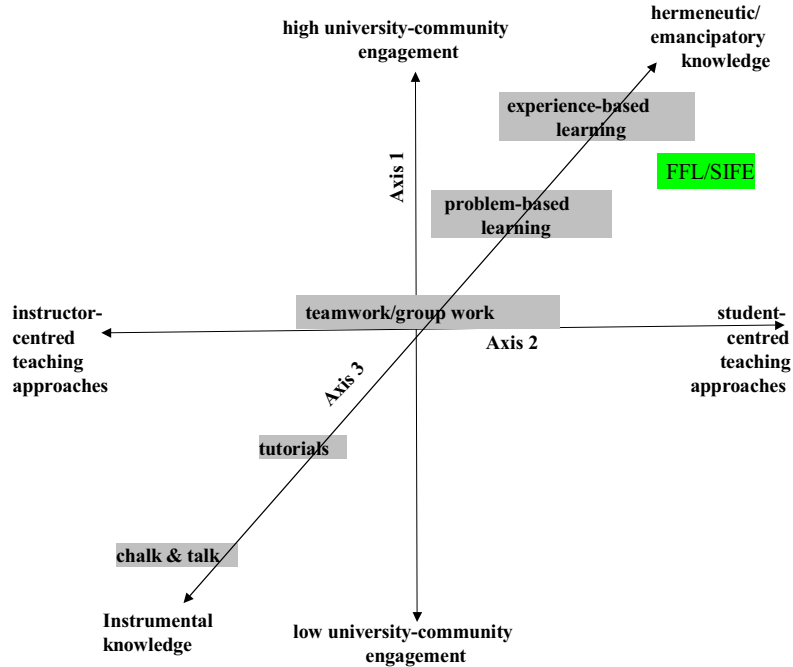
## **ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY**

FFL has currently reached over 450 Year 10 students and been implemented in both private and public schools. To administer the programme, contact was made with senior school administrations, who were provided with a briefing about both SIFE and FFL. Once approval was granted, contact was established with a designated teacher to arrange for implementation of the programme. This description of the implementation of FFL with schools and community education personnel illustrates one level at which this programme facilitated university-community engagement. However, the development of FFL by SIFE UWA illustrates another level.

Support to develop FFL resources was initially provided by the HSBC Bank through their HSBC Financial Literacy Skills Programme. However, once the decision was made to develop a web-based resource kit, additional funding was required. Marsh Civil Engineering Contractors Pty Ltd (Marsh Civil), a local Western Australian engineering company, provided this additional funding to support development of the internet-based resource kit. Marsh Civil is a second-generation Western Australian family business company. Support from this company was generated as a result of contact with the company through another SIFE UWA programme, the Easy Entry Option. This programme aims to enhance the awareness of Western Australian family businesses of strategic business development issues (SIFE UWA Annual Report, 2007).

We suggest that the experience of FFL/SIFE in relation to university-community engagement reflects the concept of a 'nexus', that is a connection between two or more entities. Our experience of FFL/SIFE leads us to describe the university-community engagement in this programme as a nexus because the programme is dependent on the involvement of both community and university. That is, FFL/SIFE can only operate with community engagement but, to operate, FFL/SIFE necessitates university support. Thus, on a continuum from high to low, FFL/SIFE requires high levels of a university-community nexus. Diagram 2 shows this.

**Diagram 2: SIFE/FFL and Interrelationships Between Teaching Approaches to Social Entrepreneurship, Knowledge and University-Community Engagement**



Further implications for approaches to teaching social entrepreneurship emerge from noting this. In Diagram 2, the FFL/SIFE position is associated with student-centred, self-reflective approaches to teaching and learning using methods ranging from teamwork/groupwork to experience-based learning (axis 2). The diagram also indicates that as a social entrepreneurship activity, FFL/SIFE aims to enhance students' emancipatory critical interests-knowledge (axes 3). The next section explores how Habermas' concepts have informed our conceptualisation of these interrelationships.

**CONCEPTUALISING INTERRELATIONSHIPS**

Habermas is often described as a critical theorist though he himself states that he was not schooled in this tradition and knowledge of it came through his own self-education (Brookfield, 2005). Deflem (1994) states that the starting point for Habermas' theory of communicative action (1984) is *rationality* and the process of rationalisation in the history of society. Habermas subsequently distinguishes two types of rationality: a cognitive-instrumental rationality which reflects a goal-directed or 'ends' action by a social actor; and communicative rationality which is aimed at reaching understanding in social action.

Roderick (1985, p 206) states that for Habermas, “rationality can be predicated of human beings and their symbolic expressions, and of both speech and action”. That is, rationality (or the process of rationalisation) helps us know what we know and why we know it. However, it is because rationality in Habermas’ view emerges from the truth and effectiveness that social actors claim in using speech and (thus) action, that Habermas notes the space for social critique: that is, the meaning (or rationality) attached to speech and action are fallible, can be wrong and can be criticised hence providing the opportunity to, as O’Donnell suggests (1999, p251), *reconstruct* rationality (or the history of society) and develop new meanings to what we know and why we know it.

For Habermas, this quest is however affected by what he referred to as the colonisation of the life-world by two social systems that emerged with the increasing differentiation of society: one economic and the other political. Defined by Habermas as “the indirect context of what is said, discussed, addressed in a situation” (Habermas, 1987a, p 131 in Brookfield, 2005, p 1141), Cohen and Arato (1992, p 427-428) deconstruct the concept of the life-world when noting that, for Habermas, the life-world has three structural components: culture or the particular traditions of a community, the network of solidarities or society and finally processes of socialisation or personality development that formulate identities. Thus for Habermas, the life-world is the bearer of the symbolic reproduction of culture, society and personality and thus it is the life-world that supports social integrality.

Habermas argued that while we expect that the life-world will also become rationalised with the increasing differentiation (or rationalisation) of society, implications for integrality emerge from this interactive effect between the rationalisation of society and the life-world. That is, interaction occurs because society or social systems depend upon the life-world for the reproduction of socialised individuals and cultural traditions (for social integrality), while the life-world becomes increasingly rationalised as social systems become more differentiated and complex (Roderick, 1985, p 213).

As a result of differentiation and the influence of economic and political systems in the rationalisation process of society, the bases upon which social integrality is secured extends beyond the symbolic level of the life-world (that is shared understandings of culture, society and personalities) and embraces materialist symbols, that is money in the case of the economic system and bureaucratic power relations in the case of the political system. The concern for Habermas is that as western societies rationalise, these symbolic forms of communication have colonised (or come to dominate) the life-world with the effect, as Roderick states, of “cross(ing) a crucial threshold when inherently communicative structures are damaged” (1985, p 214).

Crick and Joldersma (2006, p81) argue that this ‘crossing’ is of particular concern in the case of citizenship education (and O’Donnell, 1999, in the case of self-reflective learning) when colonisation of the life-world by the economic and political system includes domination of the institutions of civil society (such as educational facilities) that are responsible for the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld (that is, the shared understanding of the traditions, solidarities and identities which form the basis for social integrality). This is because when these institutions of civil society are colonised by one or both of the social systems, the symbolic reproduction of society is at stake. There is an essential loss of meaning and cultural impoverishment of society as social cohesion or integrality of society comes to rely on either the integrative functions of money (as in the economic system) or bureaucratic power (as in the state system).

Crick & Joldersma (2006) illustrate the significance of this in relation to citizenship education. Effective citizenship requires learning how to participate in civil society (Crick & Joldersma, 2006, p 81). Thus, if the institutions of civil society are dominated (or colonised) by a materialist discourse stemming from either the economic or political (or both) systems rather than aimed at fostering a symbolic reproduction, then too will ‘citizens’ come to act, and ‘citizenship’ be interpreted by these discourses. Agency or the willingness of individuals to act in ways other than those that synchronise with these discourses (for example be motivated by non-economic rationales seeking non-bureaucratic relations) thus becomes limited.

Similarly, given that the social is the inspirational base for social entrepreneurship, teaching social entrepreneurship (like citizenship education) also requires engagement with civil institutions at the level of symbolic reproduction, rather than only economic or political. Thus (and again as in citizenship education) if these institutions are dominated by an economic exchange or bureaucratic discourse, challenges emerge in teaching social entrepreneurship. However, another Habermasian framework – knowledge/interests - assists us in conceptualising a response to this problematic.

In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas identifies three human interests – instrumental, hermeneutic and emancipatory – each of which he associates with a particular knowledge (Habermas, 1968). Instrumental interest reflects purposeful intervention by humans and is associated with a technical, objective knowledge that in personal lives assist the individual to adapt to external conditions of life and on a societal level delineates a person's participation in 'work' or in the materialist reproduction of society. Secondly, there is a practical interest of intersubjective understandings or a practical interest in unravelling the hermeneutics of the social world. This second interest Habermas associates with the knowledge developed by human disciplines such as history or the social sciences and is considered a strategic knowledge as the individual draws on this knowledge to position themselves in the web of social relationships. Emancipatory interest is Habermas' third form, which he associates with the knowledge generated by the critical sciences. Reflecting the individual's personal world, this interest is associated with self-reflection. Individually, this interest may free the person from the constraints of current roles, interactions, identities, interpretive patterns and norms to 'construct' a 'new' identity; or might cause society to question legitimised traditions, solidarities and identities that previously fostered social integrality (Crick & Joldersma, 2006; Guo & Sheffield, 2006).

As with Crick & Joldersma (2006) in reference to citizenship education and O'Donnell (1999) in the case of self-reflective learners, we too suggest that it is Habermas' third interest/knowledge that should guide approaches to teaching and learning in social entrepreneurship. However, as Crick & Joldersma (2006) note, this implies the adoption of a 'care-based' philosophy (Crick & Joldersma, 2006) in teaching and learning approaches. However, adopting this perspective in universities presents a major challenge. As education increasingly becomes dominated by Habermas' concept of the economic system and educational objectives are aligned with 'economic' rather than 'symbolic', facilitating a 'care' discourse in a civil institution that is dominated by a discourse of accountability becomes problematic (Crick & Joldersma, 2006). In addition, factors such as large class sizes coupled with differences in individual student attributes (an example being age levels), influence faculty towards pursuing more instructor-centred (e.g. lectures) rather than student-centred interactive teaching strategies (e.g. teamwork, problem-based learning). As a result, teaching and learning approaches at universities more closely resemble the Habermasian concept of instrumental interests and positivist, objectivist knowledge. However, working with this reality, we suggest that Habermas once again offers an opportunity to inform us about 'practical intentions' and respond to this dilemma.

If we were to view Habermas' interests/knowledge as existing along a continuum ranging from instrumental to emancipatory, we could similarly position approaches to teaching and learning as paralleling that continuum. Axes 2 and 3 in Diagram 1 attempt to depict this. Thus, instructor-centred approaches to teaching and learning (axis 2) align with realising Habermas' instrumental interest-knowledge (axis 3), whereas student-centred self-learning approaches align with the concept of emancipatory critical science interest-knowledge.

By adopting this perspective, we suggest that teaching approaches in this area may reflect 'stages' that parallel the principle of developmental cognition in learning; but also provide us with 'practical intentions' to respond to the effects of colonisation of the life-world by economic and political discourse. When viewed as stages in teaching approach, our teaching methods subsequently become an 'ongoing circling' (Seymour et al., 2008) that facilitates learners along a continuum towards attaining (hopefully) self-reflective or Habermas' emancipatory learning.

To illustrate in the case of teaching social entrepreneurship, instructor-centred 'chalk and talk' techniques may be gainfully used to facilitate instrumental knowledge such as awareness of cases of social entrepreneurship and/or mechanisms for establishing social entrepreneurship ventures. However, student-centred teaching approaches that engage students in either experiential or problem-based learning methodologies facilitate emancipatory knowledge/interests. This can be through utilising pedagogical approaches such as grounded theory. Grounded theory informs a process of learning from interactive involvement in a 'real situation' with the phenomena under study (Schwarz, 1985). In a grounded learning approach, the student experiences the conceptual material firsthand, thereby 'learning by doing'. Participants learn by taking control of the design and implementation of their project, as well as assuming accountability for project outcomes (Mosca & Howard, 1997).

Implications for the 'nexus' between university-community also emerge from this discussion. That is, where there is an instructor-centred teaching approach to social entrepreneurship that is aimed at facilitating instrumental knowledge/interests, the level of university-community engagement can remain low. This is because given the level of interest/knowledge desired; the focus is on understanding content thus making instructor-centred teaching an appropriate approach. However, as the requirement

for better understanding of process issues increases, teaching approaches must engage those other than faculty alone, in order to be able to better educate students about both content and appropriate use of that content. Given the focus on the social or community in social entrepreneurship, teaching social entrepreneurship has to therefore engage the community, thus requiring a high nexus of university-community engagement.

While assisting us to conceptualise our teaching approaches to social entrepreneurship, the question that remains unanswered is whether our learning interventions will encourage our students to engage in social entrepreneurship post-university. While only longitudinal studies will assist us in answering this question, focus group results with our SIFE/FFL students provides some guidance.

### **ILLUSTRATING WITH SIFE UWA/FFL STUDENTS**

All of our FFL/SIFE UWA students were studying commerce and were in an advanced stage of their study programme, that is, at least third year. All respondents were also above the age of 21 years. We had three females and one male in our group of respondents.

When asked about their involvement in extra-curricular activities, our respondents were able to demonstrate a 'track-record' of 'care' that prefaced their university career. This included activities such as coaching junior sports teams on a voluntary basis and participating in the Red Cross Soup Patrol. However, our respondents confirmed that this philosophy had extended into their university career. For instance, in addition to their SIFE/FFL activity, respondents were also involved in activities such as mentoring first year rural University students. Thus it was no surprise that while confirming that the experience of SIFE/FFL had expanded their appreciation of social entrepreneurship, all respondents stated that it had enhanced an already developed predisposition towards social entrepreneurship, rather than given birth to a new awareness. As one respondent said when asked whether the SIFE/FFL experience had motivated her to think about social entrepreneurship she said, "no, (it) was something I was already motivated to do".

While heartening, these results raise questions about the efficacy of our learning interventions in teaching social entrepreneurship. Again, our focus group results provide some guidance that may be useful. When asked what they saw as the benefit of SIFE/FFL, our respondents suggested that their involvement had assisted them to develop "useful skills that I may not have otherwise had the opportunity to develop" (Student C, 208). When asked 'why' these were useful, respondents suggested that, once more, this was because they could be used to "improve community life".

These results generate many more questions than they answer. However, they provide overall support that teaching approaches such as FFL/SIFE provide an opportunity to teach social entrepreneurship. The results also imply that it may be appropriate to approach teaching social entrepreneurship as a series of stages whereby, depending on a student's "life-world", they may be disposed to learning about social entrepreneurship through an experience-based, high university-community nexus approach such as SIFE/FFL; or by an instructor-centred content driven approach utilising 'chalk and talk' and perhaps tutorial/small group discussion techniques.

### **Conclusion**

In addition to providing a conceptual framework for teaching social entrepreneurship, the discussion presented here frames an ongoing research programme in this area. The FFL/SIFE experience has however triggered additional subsets that we are keen to explore. The first is further exploration of the interrelationship between teaching and learning approaches, social entrepreneurship and the university-community nexus as depicted in Diagram 1. More specifically, a research agenda to explore the cumulative effect of teaching strategies on levels of student engagement with social entrepreneurship emerges. The related implication is to further explore the interaction between levels of university-community engagement and engagement with social entrepreneurship ventures by students. The third and final research interest is investigation of the interrelationship between student variables such as life stages, age and gender, prior experience and study programme as per involvement in social entrepreneurship. We suggest that by identifying these future directions for research, this paper reflects the AUCEA Conference theme of "engaging with sustainable futures". That is, pursuit of these knowledge's through future research will undoubtedly support the quest for a more sustainable future.

However, the case of FFL/SIFE UWA resonates with the AUCEA theme at other levels. The FFL/SIFE programme seeks to enhance sustainability at the level of the individual by trying to prevent student

poverty through enhancing financial literacy of individual students. In addition, the programme deliberately targets secondary students from socio economic areas characterised as middle to lower class in programme delivery. The FFL/SIFE programme thus aims to stimulate long lasting social change in FFL/SIFE programme recipients that may not otherwise have access to learning about managing financial matters.

By reformulating FFL into a web-based programme, SIFE UWA is also aiming to ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme. This is supported by the fact that FFL engages the community and university in both supporting and delivering FFL/SIFE. Finally, through illustrating how social entrepreneurship may be taught in universities, FFL/SIFE unravels the possibilities to enhance university student awareness about pursuing social entrepreneurship ventures post-University to trigger meaningful social change. Whether this impact is long lasting has yet to be seen.

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## APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE RESEARCH ITEMS USED IN PRE AND POST SURVEYS

Q. If you put \$1000 in the bank, with a simple interest rate of 5% pa how much money would you have at the end of the year?

- \$1000
- \$1005
- \$1050
- \$1500

Q. Which is most risky?

- Saving money in the bank
- Investing all your money in one share on the stock market
- Investing all you money in two different shares on the stock market
- Investing some money in the stock market and saving some in the bank

**APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS USED FOR EDUCATION FACULTY**

Likert scale of 1-5: 1 = low and 5 = high.

How attentive and responsive were the students (with 3 being an ordinary day)

Do you think the lessons presented in finance for life will stay with students as they enter their working lives?

How effectively does our Finance for Life program teach students financial literacy?



## Hope as a Basis for Understanding the Benefits and Possibilities of Community Engagement

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### Abstract

*Community engagement is crucial to Australian Catholic University's mission. The university's Institute for Advancing Community Engagement is dedicated to forging partnerships with communities in Australia and overseas, with a strong focus on working with disadvantaged people to build capacity and create new opportunities. The Institute's activities include providing education programs for homeless and marginalised adults in Australia, and teacher training courses and health clinics for people in East Timor. The present paper discusses the documented outcomes of these and other initiatives, and analyses them in terms of Hope Theory. A substantial body of research has demonstrated that those with higher levels of hope are more able to effectively make decisions and pursue their goals, and enjoy better physical health, psychological adjustment, and academic performance, among other positive outcomes. It is argued that increases in hope underlie the observed benefits of the Institute's community engagement work, and a strong array of empirical evidence and theoretical reasoning is provided in support of this view. The hope-focused perspective is presented as a key framework for understanding how community engagement projects, such as those of the Institute for Advancing Community Engagement, lead to positive outcomes for communities, and how the quality and sustainability of this work can be enhanced.*

*Community engagement initiatives take many distinct forms, and are evaluated in many different ways. Some initiatives aim to provide education, others welfare, still others healthcare, and so on. In assessing such efforts, researchers often find that the benefits of community engagement go beyond the discrete effects of the specific forms of assistance offered in these initiatives. Take, for example, a hypothetical program that offers education courses to disadvantaged community members. As expected, the students who participate in these courses become more educated, and thus more able to access employment or further education. The results of the program evaluation confirm this. But the participants also seem to have benefited from the program in other ways. The researchers suspect that a deeper, more encompassing impact has been made in the lives of the community members; one that goes beyond the stated aims of the program. What is this impact? In the present paper, it is argued that a key benefit of community engagement, common to all successful community engagement initiatives, is the increase of hope. We propose that hope theory offers a distinctive and useful framework within which community engagement can be understood, evaluated, and expanded.*

**Keywords:** hope, community, engagement, pathways, agency

### What is Community Engagement?

In order to explore community engagement in this context, it is necessary to outline our understanding of what engagement is, at the fundamental level. Cohen (1989) offered a definition of engagement with regard to the delivery of human services for homeless people: "*Engagement* is defined as the process of establishing mutual respect and trust in the helping relationship" (p. 505). Egan et al. (2005) expanded this definition to apply it to the community as a whole, conceptualising *community engagement* as the process of "establishing trust in the broader community" (p. 5). Mirroring this, ACU National has stated that it values community engagements as "affirming relationships that depend on trust and genuine partnerships with community organisations, institutions, and corporations". An engaged person is one who feels connected to their community or neighbourhood, belongs to positive and rewarding social networks, and maintains meaningful links to their society and its institutions. Disengagement occurs when people lose trust in their communities, and disconnect from those around them. Community engagement initiatives aim to increase levels of engagement in communities where there is disadvantage, marginalisation, or social exclusion.

Expanding upon this definition, ACU National's Institute for Advancing Community Engagement describes community engagement as:

*...the process through which ACU National brings the capabilities of its staff and students to work collaboratively with community groups and organisations to achieve mutually agreed goals that build*

*capacity, improve wellbeing, and produce just and sustainable outcomes in the interests of people, communities, and the University (ACU National, 2007).*

This description, while written specifically with ACU National in mind, captures the nature of community engagement work as it is practiced by all manner of universities, community organisations, and other institutes and agencies. The key features of community engagement efforts are collaboration, mutual benefit, capacity-building and sustainability.

Related to engagement is the concept of 'empowerment'. Levels of engagement are heightened when community members are *empowered* to reconnect with society (Stewart & Bhagwanjee, 1999). Many community engagement initiatives focus on empowering communities through the provision of education, health, or welfare services, and by forging new relationships between community members and social institutions, such as universities. Cohen (1989) captures the nature of empowerment when she describes it as meeting "the critical human need of being an effective and creative participant in one's environment" (p. 507). This description highlights the inherent link between engagement and empowerment: unless a person is empowered – that is, able to participate effectively in their environment – they will not be engaged with the social environment that surrounds them.

### **Hope, and Hope Theory**

C. R. Snyder's pioneering theory of hope has allowed psychological science to build a substantial body of knowledge on what has come to be acknowledged as a crucial aspect of human cognition. According to hope theory, the construct of hope is understood in terms of three key components: goals, pathways, and agency. These dimensions of hope are outlined as follows:

#### **Goals**

All purposeful human behaviour, by its very nature, is goal-driven (Snyder, 1995). As such, the goals for which people strive are central to their lives, and their sense of wellbeing often hinges on whether or not their goals are reached. Hope is defined as *goal-directed thought*. Of course, hope is not relevant in the case of trivial or minor goals, such as the goal to brush one's teeth in the morning. Nor is it relevant when the goal in question is either certain to be attained or impossible to attain, because there is little use in hoping for that which is guaranteed, or for that which will never eventuate. In short, hope theory "is concerned with goals that are at least of moderate importance and intermediate in their probability of attainment" (Snyder et al., 2000, p. 748). Those high in hope approach their goals with positive emotions, a focus on success, and a sense of challenge, while those low in hope approach their goals with negative emotions, a focus on failure, and a sense of ambivalence or intimidation. High hope persons are more likely to set realistic, well-defined goals for themselves, and are more likely to divide their goals into more manageable sub-goals, to facilitate progress towards the grander goal. In contrast, low hope persons are more likely to set goals that are too large or too difficult to attain, and are more likely to have poorly defined goals that are not divided into sub-goals (Snyder, 1995; Snyder, 2002).

#### **Pathways**

A person's sense of hope is determined in part by their perception of the available routes by which they might reach a given goal. When a person perceives that there are few such routes, or when the available routes are ineffective or become obstructed, then their hope is diminished. 'Pathways thinking' refers to a person's cognitive appraisal of the available pathways leading to goal attainment. It also refers to the process by which a person generates plausible pathways by which they could achieve their goals (Snyder, 2002). In other words, those higher in pathways thinking are better able to perceive or construct effective routes to their goals. They can also think of a greater number of workable routes, and are more able to generate alternative routes when the original ones become unexpectedly obstructed.

#### **Agency**

In order to reach a goal, a person must not only have access to workable pathways leading to the goal; they must also believe in their own capacity to actually follow these pathways. They must possess a sense of agency sufficient to motivate them along the path to goal attainment; they must perceive themselves to be effective, capable agents (Snyder, 2002). 'Agentic thinking' refers to the self-referential beliefs and thoughts held by a person regarding their own ability to pursue their goals. Those higher in agentic thinking make more positive appraisals of their own abilities, and are more motivated to attain the goals they have set for themselves.

Bringing the three dimensions of hope together, the overall construct of hope is defined by Snyder (1995) as “the process of thinking about one’s goals, along with the motivation to move toward (agency) and the ways to achieve (pathways) those goals” (p. 355). Pathways and agentic thinking are reciprocally derived and mutually reinforcing (Snyder et al., 1991). In other words, when a person’s pathways thinking is enhanced, and they become more able to generate effective pathways to their goals, it is likely that they will then become more motivated to follow these routes. Conversely, when a person becomes more motivated to pursue their goals, it is likely that they will thus be more energised to think of workable routes to their goals.

In all, those who are more hopeful are more likely to pursue their goals effectively, and thus are more likely to reach their goals. Further, when the pursuit of a given goal is hampered or made impossible, high-hope people are better able to refocus their energies on new goals, not letting past failures unduly disrupt subsequent efforts (Snyder, 1995). Indeed, high-hope individuals are more likely to view their failures as lessons, from which they can learn how to more successfully pursue future goals (Snyder et al., 2000).

Within hope theory, hope is cognitive; it is goal-directed *thinking*, and emotions are affected by the success or failure of goal-pursuit (Snyder, 2002). Those who are making good progress towards their goals, or who reach their goals, experience positive emotions. Those who are not making progress, have encountered setbacks, or have failed to reach their goals, experience negative emotions (Snyder, 1995). Of course, the consequences of goal-pursuit go beyond these effects on affectivity. The very direction of a person’s life is determined by whether or not they reach their goals, such as being admitted to a certain university, being hired for a certain job, being able to start a family, being able to advance their career, and so on. As such, hope is a crucial factor in determining the quality and direction of a person’s life, and the promotion of hope should therefore be viewed as a key aim in efforts to improve the lives of people and their communities. While hope is commonly treated as a trait, with a person’s hopefulness remaining relatively stable across time and situations, this does not mean that hope cannot be altered. Even at the dispositional level, hope can be enhanced over time by counselling, therapy, and other life experiences (Snyder, 1995), such as involvement in community engagement initiatives.

### **Benefits of Hope**

The positive outcomes of hope have been documented in numerous empirical studies. Those with higher levels of hope are not only more likely to reach their goals, but they also have a greater number of goals, have more difficult goals, and view their goals as challenges (Snyder, 1995). Other benefits enjoyed by high-hope people include superior coping skills, better recovery from injuries, less burnout at work, greater levels of happiness, and lower levels of distress (see Snyder, 1995, for an overview of the research on these benefits). Hope has also been associated with better physical health, psychological adjustment, academic achievement, and athletic performance (see Snyder, 2002). In all, there is a substantial body of evidence attesting to the positive impact of hope in many areas of life, and it is clear that hope deserves attention as a central factor in determining whether people enjoy wellbeing, success, and happiness in their lives.

### **Linking Community Engagement with Hope Theory**

Community engagement initiatives can be understood as fundamentally hope-enhancing, exemplifying as well as promoting hope in communities. In support of this perspective, the ways in which community engagement leads to heightened pathways and agentic thinking will be examined, and specific examples of recent community engagement initiatives will be discussed in terms of hope theory.

### **Community Engagement as Enhancing Pathways Thinking**

Community engagement initiatives can be characterised as providing community members with new, effective pathways, by which they may reach previously inaccessible goals. For example, education programs offer pathways to further learning, healthcare programs offer pathways to greater physical and mental wellbeing, and welfare programs offer pathways to better standards of living. For community members, to be involved in community engagement is to be exposed to new pathways for pursuing previously unreachable goals, and to experience what it means to follow these pathways successfully. The experience of identifying and following specific pathways within a particular community engagement initiative can teach general lessons to community members about how to perceive and

generate pathways in other areas of life. So, for example, a community member involved in an education program will follow a pathway towards the goal of furthering their education, and in doing so their overall pathways thinking will be heightened, allowing them to pursue non-education-related goals more successfully. In other words, by pursuing the specific goals of the initiative in which they are participating, a person will learn general lessons about how to follow pathways, and this learning experience will enhance their pathways thinking and thereby increase their sense of hope. Equipped with greater levels of pathways thinking and hope, this person will be better able to formulate and pursue goals in other areas of their life. The literature on hope theory supports the proposition that learning to generate and follow pathways in a specific domain of life can generalise to other domains.

### **Community Engagement as Enhancing Agentic Thinking**

In addition to providing workable routes towards specific goals, community engagement initiatives enhance the sense of agency of participating community members. Indeed, merely by delivering community engagement initiatives, community workers send the message that they believe in the capacity of community members to make positive changes in their lives, and connect more fully with society. This message is empowering, and as such has the potential to be internalised by community members, who could thereby come to believe more strongly in their own abilities as effective agents. By participating in community engagement programs, community members should realise that such initiatives would not exist were it not for the belief that the participants, even those who are most disadvantaged, have the ability to successfully follow the pathways offered by the initiatives. Recall that empowerment is a crucial way in which to heighten levels of engagement, and that empowerment involves meeting the human need to feel like an effective agent in one's environment. Clearly then, empowerment can be equated with the enhancement of agency: those who more strongly perceive themselves to be effective agents are those with higher levels of agentic thinking. By promoting agentic thinking, community engagement initiatives empower participating community members, who will thus be more likely to engage more completely with society.

### **Mutual Reinforcement in Community Engagement**

It should also be remembered that pathways and agentic thinking are mutually reinforcing. Thus, whenever a community engagement initiative leads to increases in pathways thinking, a corresponding increase in agentic thinking can be expected, and vice versa. If, as argued, community engagement programs promote both pathways and agentic thinking, then this mutual reinforcement should produce greater total increases in hopefulness than would be expected if the two forms of thinking were considered separately. As such, community engagement should be viewed as a highly potent means by which to increase hope, and to thereby facilitate the attainment of important goals held by community members.

### **Realisations of Hope: ACU National's Community Engagement Work**

Having shown, in principle, how community engagement initiatives can promote increases in hope to the benefit of community members, this paper will now provide three examples of how this has occurred in practice. ACU National has long been involved in community engagement work, and in 2006 it created the Institute for Advancing Community Engagement (IACE). IACE is responsible for maintaining, advancing, and creating community engagement programs, in partnership with community members, community organisations, and other universities and agencies. Three of its initiatives demonstrate the impact of community engagement upon levels of hope: primary teacher education programs for students in East Timor, teacher education programs for Indigenous Australian students, and tertiary-level humanities courses for homeless and marginalised Australian adults.

It is no coincidence that the three aforementioned initiatives all aim to deliver *education* to community members. IACE views education as a transformative process (Howard, Cooke, & Butcher, 2007), so often necessary as the foundation upon which other achievements and advances are built. A well-educated person typically has access to innumerable opportunities, careers, occupations, and advantages that are not available to those whose education has been minimal or non-existent. For this reason, education, like community engagement, can be seen as fundamentally hope-enhancing (Snyder, 2005). With more education come more opportunities and thus more pathways by which to reach important goals, and with more pathways comes greater agentic thinking. The transformative nature of education, and the sense of achievement and success that comes with completing an educational program, are also likely to lead to improvements in agentic thinking, which in turn facilitates the identification of new and more effective pathways. Of course, as the following examples will show, the community engagement initiatives developed by IACE and its community partners are hope-

promoting not only by virtue of their being educational: the ways in which they are structured and delivered also lead to increases in hope within the participating communities.

### **Teacher Education for East Timorese Students**

In 1999, the people of East Timor (officially the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste) declared independence from Indonesia in a popular referendum, supervised by the United Nations. In the years since, armed conflicts with anti-independence militias and civil unrest in East Timor have added to the difficulties inherent in building a new nation. As part of the reconstruction and development efforts within the nascent republic, the Instituto Católico para Formação de Professores (ICFP; formerly the Catholic Teachers College) was established at Baucau in 1999 (see Beck, 2006, for a discussion of the college, its establishment, and its subsequent development). The college's Bachelor of Teaching program, which provided primary teacher education to students throughout East Timor, was officially validated by ACU National, before ACU National began offering its own Bachelor of Teaching degree through ICFP. ACU National has been an active supporter of ICFP in various other ways, and one of the key foci of the university's community engagement work has been on assisting with the enhancement of East Timor's teacher education capacities.

Presently, IACE is collaborating with ICFP on a project titled 'East Timor Capacity Building: Sustained International Collaboration'. The project aims to assist ICFP in developing the skills and capacities of its staff and students, along with the college's resources, infrastructure, and sustainability. It is hoped that this will lead to the international recognition of ICFP and its academic programs. Indeed, ICFP 'Vision Statement' asserts that the Institute is "committed to being a lighthouse for advancing East Timorese curriculum and education" (see Beck, 2006, p. 148). This commitment is mirrored by the IACE agenda for its collaboration with ICFP, which states that the college is to be "a sign of hope for the people of East Timor during the period of nation building" (IACE, On-line).

Reports on the teacher education courses provided by ACU National through ICFP indicate high levels of student satisfaction and a high retention rate (over 96%) (IACE, On-line). Between November 2006 and October 2007, 97 East Timorese students graduated from the college; they are now qualified as primary school teachers with a degree from ACU National. An additional 150 students were enrolled in the Bachelor of Teaching course as at October 2007 (IACE, On-line). The graduates and students of ACU National/ICFP are in an ideal position to be the future leaders of East Timor (Beck, 2006), and to communicate the college's message of hope to school students and community members throughout the nation.

The engagement between East Timorese students and ACU National is a prime example of how levels of hope can be raised within communities. Through the training of East Timorese citizens to become the educators of the next generation of East Timorese school children, communities throughout the country have become empowered (Beck, 2006). Not only is education necessary for continued human development in East Timor, but the successful completion of the Bachelor of Teaching program provides a model of successful goal pursuit to those citizens who might be ambivalent about their own goals and aspirations. The graduates of the program are living examples of the attainment of significant goals. They are a source of hope before they have even entered a classroom to teach primary school students. And in fulfilling their roles as the educators of East Timor's children, they will continue to demonstrate to their students the process of pursuing goals with hope and success.

### **Teacher Education for Indigenous Australians**

Historically, the Indigenous peoples of Australia have suffered oppression, discrimination, disadvantage, and dispossession, often at the hands of the state and its representatives. At present, the effects of these injustices are still being experienced by Indigenous Australians, who on average are less advantaged compared to non-Indigenous Australians in many areas of society, including participation in higher education (Howard et al., 2007). Recognising this inequity, and the potentially empowering effects of participating in education, ACU National created a teacher education program specifically for Indigenous students. The first participants in this program began their studies in 1989, and the program has been evolving ever since, becoming increasingly sensitive and responsive to the particular needs and circumstances of students from Indigenous Australian communities. Evaluations of this program have indicated that it has been an effective pathway by which Indigenous Australians can access higher education and receive the training necessary for them to return to their communities as qualified teachers (Howard et al., 2007).

The structure of the program presents a clear example of how to successfully pursue goals. Rather than

entering immediately into a Bachelor of Teaching course, the Indigenous students who enrol in the program are first required to complete an Associate Diploma in Aboriginal Education. By beginning with a less demanding course, the students are able to grow accustomed to university-level studies in a less stressful context. Upon completing the Associate Diploma, the students are then able to progress to the Bachelor of Teaching program, by which time they have become sufficiently experienced and familiarised with ACU National and the demands of its units of study (Howard et al., 2007). This structure is reminiscent of the process by which high-hope individuals approach and pursue their goals: large goals are divided into more manageable sub-goals, and so the large goal is pursued one step at a time. In the case of ACU National's teacher education program for Indigenous students, the larger goal of earning a Bachelor of Teaching degree and becoming qualified to teach in classrooms is preceded by the more manageable goal of completing an Associate Diploma in Aboriginal Education. Thus, the very structure of the program is such as to promote hope and to model the high-hope way of pursuing goals. Indeed, a recent assessment of the effects of the Indigenous teacher education program delivered the following conclusion:

Having the teacher education program in phases enabled Aboriginal people to succeed at an Associate Diploma level thus providing the impetus and aspiration to continue (Howard et al., 2007, p. 197).

Not only does the structure of the program foster hope within individual students, but the students' successes inspire and motivate others within their communities. Hope is thus promoted at the community level as well as at the individual level. The Indigenous students model success to other Indigenous Australians, and demonstrate the importance and value of receiving an education and of educating others in turn. One example of this process of modelling and inspiration was provided by Howard et al.'s (2007) case study of Sharon, an Indigenous Australian who completed the teacher education program. In one of a series of interviews, Sharon pointed out that she was initially motivated to enter the program after observing that an elder Aboriginal lady had successfully completed the Associate Diploma component. Thus, the educational success of one Indigenous student revealed an effective pathway by which another Indigenous person could reach an educational goal. Pathways thinking is improved by observations of the viable pathways travelled by others, and agentic thinking is enhanced by observations of the success enjoyed by those who follow these pathways.

Another key feature of the structure of the Indigenous teacher education program is that it does not require its students to be on campus throughout the entire semester. Rather, it requires each student to stay on campus for a one-week residential stay twice per semester. This allows the students to stay within their communities for the majority of the duration of each semester. Allowing the students to maintain a high level of contact with their communities is not only expressive of the responsiveness of the program to the needs of Indigenous peoples, but it enables the students' influence as role models for the rest of their communities to be all the more strongly felt. A message is sent to the students' communities that Indigenous people do not need to abandon their communities in order to participate in university-level education: there exists an effective pathway by which community roles and educational goals can be simultaneously fulfilled.

### **Humanities Education Courses for Homeless and Marginalised Adults**

Since 2003, ACU National has collaborated with a number of community agencies, principally Mission Australia and the St. Vincent de Paul Society, to deliver tertiary-level, community-based humanities education courses for homeless and socio-economically marginalised Australian adults (see Egan et al., 2006, for an overview). These courses are based on the original 'Clemente Course' devised by Earl Shorris and described in his book 'Riches for the Poor' (Shorris, 2000). Some of the Australian iterations have retained the 'Clemente' label, while the others are called 'Catalyst' programs. Collectively, they are known as the 'Clemente-Catalyst' program. The Clemente-Catalyst program is now offered at nine sites across Australia, located in the cities of Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Canberra, and Ballarat (Howard & Marchant, 2008). The program is offered to those who typically have great difficulty accessing higher education, or who are too disengaged from society to enter directly into mainstream tertiary courses.

At each Clemente-Catalyst site, one unit of study is offered per semester. Once an individual has completed four units (i.e., two years of participation in the program), they are eligible to graduate from ACU National with a Certificate in Liberal Arts, a non-award, accredited university qualification. Earning the certificate often leads to opportunities for further university study at the Bachelor, Masters, and even Doctoral levels. Each unit of study provides education in a particular area of the humanities, such as ethics, history, drama, politics, literature, and art theory. The units are taught in community settings,

such as the community centres operated by organisations such as Mission Australia. This ensures that the disadvantaged adults who participate in Clemente-Catalyst can undertake their studies in an environment in which they are most likely to feel comfortable and secure (Howard & Marchant, 2008).

Evaluations of Clemente-Catalyst have provided compelling evidence for the increases in hope experienced by those who participate in the program. The findings derived from structured interviews carried out in 2006 with the participants from the inner-city Sydney and Brisbane sites, reported by Howard and Marchant (2008), suggest that Clemente-Catalyst can lead to increased levels of hope amongst its participants. The participants reported improved self-perceptions, a greater regard for their own capacities, increased confidence and motivation, enhanced self-esteem, more positive appraisals of the future, and a heightened sense of agency and control. These positive outcomes suggest that the hopefulness of the participants was promoted through their involvement in Clemente-Catalyst, and that by the end of the year they were thinking more positively about their life opportunities (i.e., they perceived a greater number of workable pathways to their goals) and about their capacity to harness these opportunities (i.e., they perceived themselves to be more motivated and capable, with regard to pursuing their goals). In addition to these 'internal' (i.e., intrapsychic) benefits, those who participated in Clemente-Catalyst now enjoy the external benefits of having access to the numerous opportunities that come with having a tertiary-level education. These opportunities often serve as pathways to the various goals held by the participants, such as the goal to engage in further university education, or to undertake employment within a desired career path. The newfound accessibility of these pathways, provided by the education received through Clemente-Catalyst, in turn fosters hopeful thinking via the enhancement of pathways thinking. Overall, the Clemente-Catalyst program promotes hope at numerous levels. It not only allows its participants to experience the successful pursuit of educational goals, but it opens up new, previously unavailable pathways.

### **Conclusion: Ways Forward**

From the theoretical reasoning and practical examples presented in this paper, the case has now been made that hope theory offers an excellent framework for understanding the nature and benefits of community engagement. This paper represents the beginning of what is expected to be a promising program of inquiry into how this framework can be employed in future research and initiatives. Indeed, it is recommended that future community engagement programs be conducted with an explicit emphasis on hope, and that reliable measures of hope (such as the Trait Hope Scale, see Snyder, 1989; Snyder et al., 1991) be utilised in assessing how the programs affect levels of hope in participants and community members. By making hope central to an initiative, and using measures of hope in evaluating the outcomes of the initiative, the thesis that increased hope is a crucial element of community engagement could be definitively tested. Future studies should seek to carry out such an investigation.

Hope, being goal-oriented, is inherently focused on the future; on ways forward. If reach, influence, and sustainability of the community engagement movement are to be increased, it must be continually informed by new explanatory frameworks, and the new insights they offer. Hope theory presents itself as a key pathway leading to new knowledge of community engagement, and to new and more effective methods of working and engaging with communities. Enhancing community engagement in this way is surely a goal for which all can strive. Indeed, in the words of Snyder himself, we need to build "environments in which people living and working together can interact in a supportive atmosphere so that both individual and collective goals can be met" (Snyder, 1995, p. 359). For the sake of a sustainable future, we must continue to create communities of hope.

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## Community Engagement Research: A Question of Partnership

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### Abstract

*This paper puts forward a research framework within which future community engagement initiatives can be delivered and evaluated. The framework, known as the 'methodology of engagement', has been developed from reviews of and research within a number of community engagement projects that have been carried out by Australian Catholic University, and recently by the university's new Institute for Advancing Community Engagement. Within the Institute's community engagement research methodology, the participants in an initiative are active collaborators in the research process; they are not subjects to be studied and examined. The participants work with university investigators to shape the direction of evaluations and to formulate research questions. They share ownership of the research and make crucial contributions to the way in which it is conducted and documented. The methodology of engagement was developed in order to address the need for community members to feel genuinely engaged in the research carried out in their communities, and to feel respected and dignified in the process. The methodology ensures that community members are partners not only in the implementation of community projects but in their evaluation as well. The present paper reports on the origins and nature of this research methodology, and how it has been employed within the Institute's recent projects. The paper suggests principles by which to address the issues that arise in the utilisation of the methodology, and discusses what lies ahead as the methodology continues to expand and evolve.*

*In recent years, the importance of community engagement has been increasingly recognised by universities throughout the world. A substantial amount of work has already been done with regard to illuminating the nature of community engagement and how to implement it, but there is much that remains to be examined with respect to its nature and effective implementation. The present paper presents a partnership model for planning, implementing, and researching or reviewing community engagement initiatives. The model aims to guide future practitioners and community workers while also facilitating a fuller understanding of community engagement and its various dimensions. For the sake of conciseness, this paper focuses primarily on community engagement initiatives in which universities and their staff and students engage and work with community members. Nonetheless, it is argued that the partnership model of community engagement advanced in this paper can be employed with regard to any community engagement initiative, such as those developed by community organisations, welfare agencies, and other not for profit community based organisations.*

**Keywords:** community, engagement, partnership, collaboration, participation

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## Use Of The E-Word: What Exactly Is “Engagement”?

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### **Introduction**

During 2007, development commenced on a website at the University of Western Sydney (UWS), College of Business that would facilitate a greater sharing of information in “Engagement in Teaching and Learning” an arena being hallmarked as critical to the educational direction of the university in this decade.

The development team had previously enjoyed success in partnering with local businesses, for the conduct of various courses, but was not entirely sure that it understood the true meaning or the boundaries inherent in the term “engagement”. Confusion was exacerbated by the coincidental announcement by the son of one of the team members, that he and his girlfriend had just announced their “engagement. Thus began the mission of trying to better understand through secondary and primary research, the concept of “engagement” or the “E-word”.

This paper examines in detail, the many components of these definitions in the context of an exploratory research project involved in the development of an Engagement website at UWS providing a wider understanding of the “E-word”, and commencing the establishment of a theoretical framework and a typology of engagement in business education depicted by the 3 C’s of collaboration, complexity and contract.

### **The Need for a Definition of “Engagement”**

An initial dictionary (Collins Concise Dictionary 2006) search was both confusing and concerning – a number of meanings of the term “engage” emerged including “to secure the services of”, “to reserve”, “to become intensely involved with”, “to be occupied or busy”, “to bring a mechanism into operation”, “to pledge to be married” or “to begin an action with an enemy”. The search results provided no real clarification of the definitional boundaries required for the website project - and raised some concerns about the son’s mission!

Thus began an early drive to endeavour to discover exactly what was meant by “engagement” in the context of teaching and learning. Holland, Jackson, McKenna and Scott (2005) commented, in the context of reviewing the engagement concept and context at UWS that “a fundamental and urgent priority must be to develop institutional language for engagement that promotes a consensus view among staff, students and community” (p. 3). An endeavour to analyse the language of engagement or use of the E-Word, in the context of business education in particular, is a principal aim of this paper.

At UWS as in all modes of teaching and research, engagement entails a set of best people, practices and methodologies to facilitate program quality, project design, partner communications, logistical management, and staff development. One of the key goals of such an infrastructure is to eliminate confusion over engagement terminology and practice. This became part of the duty of the newly-formed engagement unit in 2007, which set as its aim for best practice in engagement via an effective infrastructure model which is facilitative not directive, encouraging innovation, flexibility, and adaptability within a core context of fundamental commitment to coherence, quality and sustainability (Holland, 2005, p. 8). This program recognised that engagement necessitated recognition of individual and collaborative efforts across schools and colleges, to provide the intellectual energy and content of engagement with more cogent and efficient leadership and infrastructure supplying practical support, training, facilitation, documentation, quality assurance and coordination. It was noted at UWS that “a fundamental and urgent priority must be to develop institutional language for engagement that promotes a consensus view among staff, students and community “ p 3. Some confusion exists about the rhetorical distinction between engagement, outreach, and public service, all of which are considered to be valuable components of the contribution of a university to its broader community. However, the level of scholarly value differs, with engagement enhancing teaching and research quality, and not merely offering a service

### **The Engagement Literature**

A brief search of academic educational literature for indications of the parameters of the concept of “engagement” revealed terms such as “academic service learning” (Madson and Turnbull, 2006), “authentic learning” (McKenzie, Morgan, Cochrane, Watson and Roberts, 2002), “experiential

education” (Edwards, Money and Heald, 2001), and “constructivist teaching” (Murphy, 1997), all indicative of the concept of education partnering with external organisations (especially businesses) to provide students with real-life experience, with a possible benefit to the partnering organisation. In particular, The American Association of Higher Education defined Academic Service Learning as “the intellectual and civic engagement of students that links the work students do in the classroom, to real-world problems and world needs”. McDonald and Dominguez (2005) describe service learning as a blending of both service and learning goals in such a way that both occur at the same time and are enriched and supported by one another. Nathan and Kielsmeier (1991) describe service learning as a teaching and learning method that connects meaningful community service with academic learning, personal growth and civic responsibility. Service learning also places young people in a situation where they can learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organised service experiences. The Commission on Natural and Community Service has defined *service learning* as a method: under which students learn and develop through active participation and collaboration with the school and community; that is integrated into the students’ academic curriculum or provides structured time for students to think, talk, write or observe during an actual service activity; that provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations; and enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community (National and Community Service Act of 1990).

### **The E Word – General Community Engagement**

Holland et al. (2005, p. 4) suggest that the term *community engagement* describes the intentional collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. Further, community engagement is described as a mode of teaching, learning, research and scholarship, distinguishable from *outreach* and *public service* through an intentional knowledge exchange relationship and negotiation between the internal and external partners. An engagement contract will involve the overall nature of the exchange, expected individual and collective outcomes, roles and responsibilities, and benefits or outcomes that should benefit both university and community. They further describe community engagement program criteria such as: partnerships grounded in special expertise of each collaborating organisation, joint exploration of goals, expectations and limitations; clear benefits, roles and responsibilities for each partner; and focus on knowledge exchange, shared learning and capacity-building.

### **The E Word – General Engagement in Teaching and Learning**

Holland et al. (2005, p. 5) define community engagement in teaching as *Curricular Engagement*, involving students, staff and community in interactions that address community-identified needs, while deepening student learning of course content and learning objectives. They suggest that engaged learning (also known as community-based learning or academic service-learning) is distinguished from other forms of experiential learning by the intent of creating direct benefit for community partner and by the design of the community partner in the design of learning activities and the teaching of the student. They further define *Internships, Practica and Cooperative Education* as work-based experiences meant primarily to enhance students’ carer exploration and their development of professional skills related to a particular discipline. In these experiences students are usually working under the supervision of a practicing professional and while the students may develop a project or product, the primary goal is their own professional development and enhancement of career-related skills. They suggest that engaged learning strikes a balance between learning benefit for the student and direct benefit to the community partner, recognising the unique knowledge assets of the community partner or setting. As such, engaged learning emphasises joint planning between the staff and community partner to identify activities that meet a specific community need or opportunity, while providing a specific learning opportunity for the student. In addition, Holland et al. (2005, p. 5) describe curricular engagement as typically being implemented in courses where one or more learning goals call for an experiential approach and access to community expertise or community venues to meet those learning goals. They suggest that such learning goals usually relate to course content, but they may also include learning goals related to the *social and civic development* of the student, and the ambition of the institution to link education to the skills of participation in a diverse, knowledge-driven democratic society.

### **The E Word – Engagement as Outreach and Public Service**

Holland et al. (2005, p 4) describe *outreach and public service* as a more one-way extension of academic information or direct services to external audiences through modes such as adult and

continuing education; cultural events and services (lecture series, award programs, concerts, theatre, exhibits, museums etc.); access to facilities; clinical services; fee-for-service consultation; professional development conferences and workshops; library services; and various forms of technology transfer. In such spheres the community benefits from university expertise, resources, strategies and programming skills so that general or targeted audiences may attend or request to enrol for such services. They further suggest that public service includes forms of “public scholarship” provided by academics in community settings (such as occasional speeches for lay audiences, media interviews, expert testimony, or board membership). In addition they note that “personal service” such as volunteering for sport or charitable organisations, while admirable, is not an indicator of the university’s intellectual contribution to community capacity.

### **The E Word - Engagement in Research**

Holland et al. (2005, p. 6) define engagement as research and knowledge generation as *Scholarship of Community Engagement*; a specific conception of academic work that connects the intellectual assets of the institution (i.e. academic expertise) to public issues and questions such as community, social, cultural, human, business/industry, and economic development. Engaged staff use their knowledge and academic expertise to create exchange relationships with external, community-based sources of expertise and knowledge. This differs from commercial research in that the collaborative work or joint exploration with a community-based partner involves joint definition of the research problem, study design, data collection, analysis of results and results reporting. The National Science Education Standards (1996) suggests that student involvement is also beneficial in such engaged research via: experience in the richness and excitement of knowing about and understanding the natural world; use of appropriate scientific processes and principles in making personal decisions; engagement in intelligent public discourse and debate about matters of scientific and technological concern; and Increasing economic productivity through the use of knowledge, understanding and skills of the scientifically literate person in their careers. Such engaged scholarship may take many forms including the formal methods of *community-based participatory research*, and, *participatory research*, and, *participatory action research*.

Although there may well be overlap in some educational circumstances and/or institutions between engagement in research and engagement in teaching and learning, this paper will focus predominantly on the latter construct. It is recognised nonetheless that curricular engagement and engaged scholarship can be united through the introduction of community-identified questions into programs of *undergraduate research* (Holland et al. 2005). In such forums students are forming vital links between academic research and public applications by exposing students to research problems and possible solutions, possibly translating research knowledge into marketable items for the public.

## **APPLICATION OF ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES IN A TEACHING AND LEARNING CONTEXT**

### **Introduction**

With the benefit of some clarification of the E-Word, a project commenced at UWS and is still in progress, to develop an Exemplar Intranet (WebCT) site providing an engagement learning guide and instructional resource collection for College of Business engagement subjects. It was felt that this would provide a university-wide model for the process of embedding engagement into certain courses based on their exploration and articulation of specific learning goals and experiences for students, combined with an interest expressed by external local organisations to form industry-university partnerships.. This project involved the author and colleague conducting qualitative in-depth interviews in the College of Business, as well as studying relevant literature and documents. A brief summary of some of the findings will now be presented.

### **Summary of Findings**

#### **Issues of concern in running engagement units:**

- concern about inclusion of an “engagement” element providing teaching staff with overburdened workloads;
- this particularly applied in units with large cohorts, where discipline is already a concern;
- concern about coordination of management of internal university requirements and external partner requirements;
- concern about the time and effort involved in academic staff finding adequate external partners and projects in any one semester;
- concern about level of academic direction or interference with student work when the client is an

- external partner;
- concern about contribution and conduct of student group members in an engagement unit;
- and
- concern about whether or not student participants should receive remuneration for their services to the partnering organisation.

**Some suggested solutions to perceived problems:**

- suggestion that “engagement” duties and achievements be more
- recognised in university workloads, and in tenure and promotion
- policies;
- that the teaching of large units incorporating engagement be provided with additional assistance to facilitate smooth administration, academic gains and a rewarding outcome for all internal and external participants;
- suggestion that course design and management involve input from external partners to facilitate beneficial exchange of academic and industry developments;
- the appointment of an engagement coordinator whose responsibility has been to aid in the search for, and management of, engagement partnerships;
- accepted different levels of supervision and editing of students’ work across units;
- setting of guidelines, discipline rules for group members, and within-group assessment methods; and
- debate continues over the contentious issue of student remuneration on engagement projects.

**Types of engagement in teaching and learning projects employed in the College of Business, UWS**

**Internship** involves students spending a pre-determined number of hours working at the workplace of an engagement partner, gaining a range of workplace experiences thus providing a reciprocal benefit to the organisation. In general, internships may be paid or unpaid (voluntary), and the engagement partner is required to provide supervision. The internship is usually part of an overall UWS unit, so academic credit is awarded based on satisfactory performance.

**Internship example:** Law students are required to spend a set number of hours in the degree program, gaining experience in community law, often at Community Legal Centres (these centres operate as a safety net, providing legal assistance for people who are not eligible for legal aid). Students gain essential work experience and in return facilitate the Centre’s future functionality through such contributions as development of a brochure or information sheet.

**Engagement Partnership Projects** involve students forming a liaison with an engagement partner organisation for the purpose of completing a specific applied task, thus utilising the knowledge from their discipline. In general, such projects: require academic supervision; are assessed as part of an academic unit; do not remunerate students, but the engagement partner reimburses project expenses; require students to work in teams; involve student teams working on real business problems, the solution to which represents value to the partner; require teams to report results to the partner (often orally and written).

**Engagement Partnership Project example:** In the final year unit *Marketing Planning Project*, each class of approximately 30 students is allocated a business partner and business scenario. The class has a semester in which to identify a “business problem”, collect background information, outline a SWOT analysis, then develop a marketing plan for the business entity. For this project, the class is sub-divided teams of four to six students; each team is required to complete a separate but related strategy.

**Group Learning Projects** involve scheduled visits by engaged business partners to UWS classes. They provide corporate background information, current challenges and opportunities, and/or business problems that may provide a basis for a class engagement project. Class arrangements, preparation tasks, number of visitations, and the nature of related assessment tasks may vary. The main principle is that information conveyed during the class visits form the nexus of the student project task. Graduate Learning Projects facilitate engaged teaching and learning to cohorts of variable sizes.

**Group Learning Project example:** The unit *Contemporary Management Issues* provides an in-depth analysis of key issues confronting managers in a rapidly changing world. A key element of the subject is the class visit (two visits per semester) by corporate representatives who will discuss real-life issues

and challenges. Students will address these in several components of their major assignment.

**Business Research Projects** facilitate students gaining indirect exposure to the real business world, by researching an aspect of relevance to the theoretical context of their study. Dimensions of the projects: usually involve primary and secondary research; require discussion of the nature, purpose and scope of the project with lecturer (and partner) at the outset; often requires a partner proposal; may involve allocation of topics to students/groups by the lecturer or may be selected by students; usually relate to topical business scenarios of interest to the partnering organisation; may incorporate visitations to external sites; may involve client presentation orally and/or written.

**Business Research Project example:** Applied Marketing Research is a final year undergraduate unit in which one team of approximately four students works with a specific client partner. Over the thirteen week semester student teams work through the full spectrum of the research process from problem definition, and delineation of research questions, methodology plan, field work management and written and oral results presentation.

**Case Study Exercises:** Most business text books intersperse theoretical learning with real-life case studies that are topical, written in an interesting manner, and reflect a particular theoretical aspect. In general, as pertains to text book cases studies as a tool for engagement learning, the case study usually describes a real scenario with exercises/questions attached, requiring application of a theoretical concept to an application. Students learn from reading the case, possibly undertaking additional research, and answering the attached questions.

**Case Study Example:** Most text books include case studies, for example, “*Marketing*” by Phillip Kotler et al. (2007), Pearson Education Australia, pp. 149-158: Case Study ‘Fast Fitness: Planning for a Growth Business’.

### **Implications of the use of the E Word in the Practical Context**

The above summary of the UWS Engagement in Teaching and Learning program provides only a brief overview of the issues and concepts being explored. It nonetheless provides an insight into some of the practical issues, in a university actually embarking on an engagement program, and not merely speaking the rhetoric of engagement policy. Considerable writing explains the importance of engagement policies that reflect intellectual and community partner interests and that serve the expected benefits and outcomes for students, staff and partners. However little is actually written about the practicalities of achieving these ideals in the student and teacher classrooms and the partners’ boardrooms.

The final section of this paper takes a broad perspective of the contextual issues thus far covered relating the use of the E Word in education in general, and in teaching and learning specifically, to examine a possible typology of engagement (Thompson, 2007) that might more theoretically frame some of the practical issues and solution covered earlier in this paper.

### **Towards a Typology of Engagement - the development of a typology of engagement learning – the 3 C’s**

Although a study of relevant literature depicts engagement or academic service learning (ASL) in a positive light, it also reveals a plethora of educational situations under the ASL banner, ranging from student workplace visits, practitioner campus visits, problem-solving by student teams, student placements, and student voluntary services (Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley and Colby, 2005). The variation in such engagement situations has led this author to recognise the need for identification of a typology of engagement that will simplify the ASL process. Several categorisation systems are examined, from which I have identified three specific constructs that are pertinent to ASL. I have labelled the three constructs “the 3 C’s of engagement learning – Collaboration, Complexity and Contract”. These form the basis of a generic typology of engagement. The background to each construct will now be examined.

#### **Collaboration**

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (NSLC) website suggests that it takes time to develop a fruitful partnership, and thus suggests a four-stage process consisting of: *networking* - the simple sharing of information for the benefit of both parties; *coordination* - a willingness to alter activities to

achieve a common purpose; *cooperation* - the building on coordination by involving shared resources; and finally *collaboration* - ensuring that partnerships and personal relationships are sufficiently developed to facilitate a mutually beneficial integrated project. It is also recognised that true collaboration is a long-term process, going through many revisions as environments and relationships change. Guidelines for the facilitation of this process involve advice pertaining to: establishing mutually suitable goals; operating in an environment of honest and open communication; and setting tasks that have beneficial outcomes for all members of the partnership teams.

The NSLC approach is useful in depicting the increasing level of partnership commitment encountered in the development of an ASL relationship. However, it fails to depict the increasing levels of student knowledge and expertise inherent in progression through a qualification program. In general, students only embark on ASL at a later stage in their degree program, when they have the skills and maturity to be of assistance to their partnering organisation. Thus, throughout their degree program, their assessment tasks move from hypothetical to realistic scenarios and outcomes. This is in keeping with the Biggs (2002) *structure of the observed learning taxonomy* (SOLO) framework which advocates learning via successive layers of sophistication, and leads to the second C of ASL presented in this paper, that of *complexity*.

### **Complexity - Biggs' structure of the observed learning taxonomy (SOLO)**

Biggs' taxonomy describes a systematic and progressive way by which a learner's performance grows in complexity over time, and with the adoption of varying tasks. The taxonomy is used as a guide for the formulation of specific targets and the assessment of specific outcomes in an educational context. As such the gradation of tasks and assessments ranges from:

- A a very simplistic and face-valued comprehension (*pre-structural*);
- B through recognition of a *uni-structural* set of separate components;
- C through recognition of a *multi-structural* set of additive concepts;
- D through a conceptual barrier where more than one concept may be seen in related contexts (*relational*);
- E to the eventual appreciation of all components as a conceptual integrated whole (*extended-abstract*).

The progression through this taxonomy involves a gradual movement from set-answer and quantitative assessment methods to more creative, unique and qualitative assessment methods that constitute a set of cumulative procedures from A to E (Biggs, p.2), which enhances the principles established via the *collaboration* typology. Table 1 combines the typologies of NSLC with Biggs' taxonomy to propose a typology of engagement applicable to a typical university engagement partnership, with a business or community partner. This example assumes that an educational partnership has been established between a final year undergraduate marketing research cohort, and the sugar industry, with the research objective being "to research the role of technology in the marketing of sugar". The combined Biggs' and NSLC approach is constructive in detailing increasing levels of complexity in assessment and learning tasks, from the student perspective, along with increasing levels of cooperation, from the partners' perspectives. However, a deficiency in the above typologies combining collaboration and complexity is the issue of *contract* - who gives and gets what in the engaged learning partnership? It is this point that this paper will now address.

### **3. Contract: service and reward expectations and outcomes**

The issue of contractual arrangements associated with ASL has been discussed by Kolenko et al. (1996), Madsen and Turnbull (2006), Gallego (2001) and Powles (1994, 1996). In general, engagement-based units in university programs necessitate the allocation of student and staff resources so that students gain learning experience, based on real-world problems, the solution to which provides utility to the engagement partner. However, in a practical context, it is often difficult to delineate student engagement on a contractual basis. This paper therefore introduces a further typology, labelled the *contract* typology, which defines at one end of the spectrum "voluntary" engagement and at the other "paid" engagement (Thompson and Holland, 2007). The contract typology, presented in Table 2, raises many questions that require further research. However, it serves to remind all ASL participants, that there are many facets of an engagement contract that need to be considered from the outset. As with any "marriage", these issues won't come to the fore if the relationship is harmonious. However, if differences arise, then some form of relationship contract to fall back on, may be beneficial to both sides of the partnership.

## Conclusion

Engaged partnership frameworks suggest differing partnership designs or taxonomies of partnership types, depending on the varying tasks and purposes of partnerships that call for different roles and levels of interaction. Sandman (2003) suggested: service relationships with fixed time and task; exchange relationships – involving exchange of input, process and output information; cooperative relationships with joint planning and shared responsibilities on long-term projects; and more complex system and transformative relationships aiming for long-term organisational change.

There is a noted need for engagement partners to move from being “reactive” to being “responsive or intentional” in their partnership relationships and their impact on teaching and research (Holland et al., 2005). However it is also noted that the strategies attached to each goal are often very broad, and devoid of any action or decision-making framework. This may be because of lack of clarity in terminology which creates some confusion regarding the boundaries and dimensions of engagement work. Overcoming any state of confusion about terminology relating to the use of the E Word, and the establishment of a typology of engagement in teaching and learning, if not in the other areas of engagement discussed, would be a huge step forward. That academic engagement programs involve teaching and research in a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity is an exciting challenge in university education.

## Future Research

The above research reporting is based on the preliminary stage of the development of a typology of engagement in teaching and learning. Further work remains to be done to refine the typology, and consider unique and insightful ways that it might be applied to the practicalities of classroom education at university level. Despite the best of managerial and theoretical perspectives on an issue as complex as engagement, at the end of the day we are dealing with the education of young people, often in groups, for whom the practicalities of education also must be understood. An understanding of the theoretical possibilities might assist with this mission.

**TABLE 1: The combined NSLC (Collaboration) and Biggs' (Complexity) Typology**

Type	Description	Elements	Example
<b>A</b> Pre-structural	Simple assignment; student secondary research on evidence of IT usage by sugar industry in office or manufacturing.	Statistics on IT usage in sugar industry Office Manufacturing	Examining Government or industry statistics for evidence of technology usage
<b>A + B</b> Uni-structural	Additional secondary research; on use of technology in marketing in sugar industry.	Specific academic publication research on IT and 4 P's in sugar industry	Searching academic and industry publications for other research on use of technology in the pricing, promotion, production or distribution – of sugar.
<b>A + B + C</b> Multi-structural	Additional primary exploratory research on the sugar industry.	Coordinating secondary and exploratory primary research	Discussions with industry leaders, and Focus Groups, to ascertain level of IT usage in marketing
<b>A + B = C + D</b> Relational	Actual partnership with industry; students identify a research problem, set research objectives; and conduct descriptive research.	Coordinating secondary, exploratory and descriptive primary research	Conduct of Survey research to help solve research problems defined by the industry.
<b>A + B + C + D + E</b> Extended abstract	The IT problem will be conceptualised into a causal (relational) model, and researched.	Conceptualisation of elements and linkages in a causal model	Conduct of an experiment. Identification or verification of a conceptual model.



**TABLE 2: The Contract Typology**

<b>Engagement Category</b>	<b>A Coop Students</b>	<b>B Interns e.g. nurses</b>	<b>C ASL Academic Service Learning</b>	<b>D Volunteers</b>
Selection	On merit	Compulsory	Compulsory	Voluntary
Payment to student	Yes	No	No	No
Payment of fees by student	No	Yes	Yes	No
Task Definition	Set according to client needs	Standard set of tasks	Client & lecturer delineation	Suitable to volunteer
Assessment	Not usually	Yes. Standard competencies assessed	Yes. Client satisfaction and uni assessment	No
Academic credit	Not usually	Yes	Yes	No
Academic Supervision	Not necessarily	Yes	Yes	No
Project outcomes	Student work experience; temporary assistance to client	Examination of student competencies; Temporary assistance to client	Field experience; Temporary assistance to client	Community assistance
Guarantee of quality outcome?	Merit selection of should ensure reasonable quality	No. Student may not prove competent.	No. Student may not prove competent.	No.
Client acceptance of risk of quality of outcome?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Implication of poor quality outcome?	Termination of student employment	Student is not allowed to progress	Student does not pass course. Client disappointment.	Volunteer not invited back.
Legal Implication of poor quality outcome	None	None	None	None

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## **Indigenous Health Workforce Needs: Sustainable Community/Tertiary Sector Partnerships To Build Successful Careers In Nursing For Indigenous Students.**

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### **Abstract**

*The only University campus in the Peel Region of Western Australia, and the only university with an Indigenous Dean of Nursing, places Murdoch's Peel Campus in an ideal situation to construct sustainable regional and community partnerships to build successful careers in nursing for Indigenous students. Such partnerships are critical to address the disparity in the number of students who are Indigenous and who will move into health careers. Of the number of students enrolling into university nursing courses, less than 1% of them are Indigenous. The overwhelming health needs of the Indigenous community must to be met by Indigenous nurses prepared to lead culturally appropriate health care delivery and effect changes to health policies. This is clearly not achievable if the percentage of Indigenous graduates does not increase*

*Murdoch's School of Nursing has established two entry pathways into the Bachelor of Nursing and both will benefit the Peel and South West regions of Western Australia by increasing the number of Indigenous nurses in the currently under-supplied health system. The Nursing Combo commenced in 2005 and resulted from a Challenger TAFE sector partnership, while Koort Mooditj commenced in 2007 and resulted from a strong community partnership. Both programs support students' learning with unique and well developed relationships with Challenger TAFE, the community and region*

*The quality initiatives are aimed at two major problems facing Indigenous people - poor education and poor health. Successful educational initiatives can significantly contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of the Indigenous communities. As noted by the IHEAC report "the Higher Education sector in preparing educated people for leadership roles has a vital role to play in raising the health education and economic outcomes for the Indigenous community overall"*

*The Nursing Combo links an existing TAFE Certificate IV in Aged Care to the Bachelor of Nursing and provides a "taster" of university level units for a cohort with historically low aspirations. Five Indigenous students have started their nursing careers in this program and the first graduates will commence practice at the end of 2008. They represent 3% of the four cohorts of students enrolling in the Nursing Combo.*

*Koort Mooditj is a four week intensive pre-nursing program and is a further step for the School in providing ongoing support and tutoring within a flexible framework to assist Indigenous students through their University studies. Ten students entered the Bachelor of Nursing through this pathway. Two will commence graduate practice at the end of 2009. The ten Indigenous students represent 8% of the students enrolling directly into the Bachelor of Nursing in 2007 and 2008.*

*This paper will present the successes to date and discuss the challenges and how those are being met through the established partnerships.*

### **Indigenous health workforce needs: sustainable community/tertiary sector partnerships to build successful careers in nursing for Indigenous students.**

The only University campus in the Peel Region of Western Australia, and the only university with an Indigenous Dean of Nursing, places Murdoch's Peel Campus in an ideal situation to construct sustainable regional and community partnerships to build successful careers in nursing for Indigenous students. Such partnerships are critical to address the disparity in the number of students who are Indigenous and who will move into health careers. Of the number of students enrolling into university nursing courses, less than 1% of them are Indigenous. The overwhelming health needs of the Indigenous community must to be met by Indigenous nurses prepared to lead culturally appropriate health care delivery and effect changes to health policies. This is clearly not achievable if the percentage of Indigenous graduates does not increase.

While articulations are standard processes between universities and the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sectors Murdoch University and Challenger TAFE have extended the standard model to include simultaneous enrolment of students into both Institutions. This successful model could well be replicated elsewhere. Partnerships to date have focussed on a traditional internal mode of enrolment however as is well known opportunities for students to engage in the culture of universities enhances their satisfaction and therefore retention in the course. The Indigenous population in Western Australia is approximately 2% of the general population and if universities are going to move to greater success in getting Indigenous students from remote locations and engage them in further education then these partnerships must grow, particularly with the VET sector.

Traditionally universities sought funding for outreach initiatives from the Commonwealth Government. While there is a commitment from the Federal Government for 11.5 billion dollars over the next five years there is a need that far exceeds that amount. Thus we are proactively developing partnerships with private industry, particularly the mining industry. In doing so it is worthwhile exploring non-traditional paradigms of learning thereby engaging students from remote communities.

Murdoch's School of Nursing has established two entry pathways into the Bachelor of Nursing and both will benefit the Peel and South West regions of Western Australia by increasing the number of Indigenous Registered Nurses in the currently under-supplied health system. The Nursing Combo commenced in 2005 and resulted from a TAFE sector partnership, while Koort Mooditj commenced in 2007 and resulted from a strong community partnership. Both programs support students' learning with unique and well developed relationships with Challenger TAFE, the community and region.

Higher Education is central to the aspirations of Indigenous peoples for a rightful place in Australian society (IHEAC, 2006). Murdoch University has a very strong commitment to disadvantaged groups in the community and as such, special assistance with pre-admission and enrolment advice is available to intending Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In addition to TEE and mature-age entry, Murdoch University encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may not have had an opportunity to complete formal schooling, to apply for alternative admission into tertiary study. The University has three campuses - South St established 1973, Peel established 2004 and Rockingham established 1996. The Peel and Rockingham regions have low participation rates in higher education and low tertiary education aspirations and compared with the remainder of WA have a higher proportion of the population who left school before the age of fifteen years (Unwin, 2005) .

Indigenous populations in these regions have grown in the past 15 years. For example, between 1991 and 2001 the census records an increase of 249%. In 1996 the Peel region had an Indigenous population of 898 which climbed to 1178 just 5 years later. There are currently 441 Indigenous students enrolled at schools within the Peel region. This represents 2.9% of the total population of the Region (15, 292) (Peel Development Commission, 2006). Of these students 166 are in high school and 275 are in primary school. This demonstrates a current and future need for University education for these children.

In 2004, Murdoch University commenced the Nursing program, its first course at the Peel campus, located in the South West of Western Australia. As the only University Campus within the region Murdoch University has a responsibility to provide a means of improving the future for these students and, by providing the Region with Indigenous nurses assists in improving the region overall. Currently Murdoch University School of Nursing has two programs in place to attract, support and provide alternate entries to University for Indigenous students. These are the Careers Nursing Combo (this will now be referred to as Nursing Combo) and the Koort Mooditj (Strong Heart) Pre-Nursing Course (this will now be referred to as Koort Mooditj) programs. The lighthouse project was built on these two programs, the former of which is now into its third year of successfully attracting students, and expanded them considerably. Culturally appropriate supports and resources will be developed and made available through this project and these will be used in the longer term beyond the funding period. The School of Nursing, through its Indigenous Head of School has a clear and strong commitment to increasing the number of Indigenous nurses in higher education programs.

Murdoch University's Peel Campus is geographically co-located with two other education sector providers: Challenger TAFE and Mandurah Senior College at Mandurah which is in the Peel Region of South-West of Western Australia. This location creates a number of natural opportunities for the three sectors to collaborate and partner in unique educational and promotional offerings. The School of Nursing has established close ties with both. Further, the combined Peel Education Training Board

meets regularly to explore means of advancing education pathways within the Peel Region. The close relationship that exists between the three sector providers creates a culture of mutual support and assistance that benefits students within the region.

Within Murdoch University, the Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre (Kulbardi) has a long tradition of interacting and/or partnering with industry, other service providers and government bodies to augment in-house knowledge with current trends and developments. This valuable activity ensures that students studying at Murdoch University have access to the most up-to-date and reliable information available. Further, this ensures that Murdoch University is widely able to promote Indigenous tertiary pathways through wide and varied channels. All of these activities value add to the goals within the School of Nursing to enable the education of more Indigenous nurses and towards the School of Nursing business plan to consolidate networks and partnerships between the School and Indigenous community organisations.

The School of Nursing acknowledges that several organisations operating in Western Australia that are well positioned to provide advice on areas of Indigenous health and employment opportunities. Examples of these are government agencies such as the Office of Aboriginal Health, the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Industry and Resources, who provide information to guide decisions within the School on needs of Indigenous students and potential options. This advice is gathered through the University, School and Kulbardi partnering networks, ensuring the cutting edge knowledge for staff.

The School of Nursing has also established close ties with Peel Health Campus resulting in the joint appointment of a Professor of Nursing with Community Nursing expertise co-located at both campuses. This has led to a number of collaborations between the School of Nursing and the Peel Region. A research collaboration between the Institute for Child Health Research (and its Director Professor Fiona Stanley) and the School of Nursing has resulted in a number of substantial grants. The School of Nursing gained a second Professor of Nursing with the promotion of Rhonda Marriott, Head of School to full professor. Both Professors have extensive interest in the health determinants of Indigenous people and their combined interests forge additional partnerships which place the School in a strong position to support Indigenous students in their learning.

As the only University campus in the Peel Region, Murdoch University is in an ideal position to establish ongoing partnerships with other private and government institutions. Given that the School of Nursing is just 4 years old, the healthy number of partnerships and collaborations developed indicate the capacity to undertake this particular project.

The quality initiatives are aimed at two major problems facing Indigenous people - poor education and poor health. Successful educational initiatives can significantly contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of the Indigenous communities. As noted by the IHEAC report (2006) "the Higher Education sector in preparing educated people for leadership roles has a vital role to play in raising the health education and economic outcomes for the Indigenous community overall".

### **The Peel Nursing Combo Program**

In 2005, Murdoch University and Challenger TAFE launched a unique course, known as the Careers Combo Program at Peel in Nursing and Business. The Nursing Combo links the existing TAFE qualification Certificate IV in Aged Care to the current Murdoch University nursing degree and provides a "taster" of university level units for a cohort with historically low aspirations. This is a one-year program specifically designed for students who are not University ready or who are undecided regarding their future study direction. It has also been shown to be valuable for capable and competent students lacking the confidence to undertake undergraduate program. Combination courses will involve TAFE enrolled students undertaking two Murdoch University units as part of their TAFE course. Successful completion of the Murdoch University units provides students with the opportunity to enrol in the corresponding full award course subject to meeting entry requirements and availability of places. In these courses, students undertake both TAFE units and first year University units. Upon completion of the Nursing Combo the students receive a Cert IV in Aged care work from Challenger TAFE plus additional university units. Students can choose to continue with TAFE studies into Diploma or Advanced Diploma qualifications or can progress directly into the Bachelor of Nursing with credits received for university units completed. Alternatively students may bridge into the Bachelor of Nursing through an intensive enabling course, the Koort Mooditj course for Indigenous students. To date, this partnership with Challenger TAFE has proved extremely successful, with 60 students enrolled over the past three years and doing well. The high demand for these places has resulted in an intake for 2007 of 60 students and 41 students in 2008. The advantage of this approach is that students do not need to

decide to strive for TAFE or University at the end of Year twelve, delaying that decision a further year thereby allowing some maturing and also some real experience in either educational institute prior to making that choice. Students who lack confidence to try University study can enrol in this program for a Cert IV and at the same time “taste” university study. This builds confidence prior to committing to University level study.

The Australian Qualifications Board encourages course articulation across sectors and Murdoch University was congratulated for taking this initiative with Challenger TAFE. Moreover, this was applauded recently by the Australian Universities Quality Agency: “AUQA commends Murdoch University for flexibility in meeting the learning needs of a broad array of students such as through the creation of Careers “Combo” courses at the Peel campus”

The Combo program has now been offered for three years and its success is worth sharing. Its potential for enabling Indigenous students has yet to be fully realised, however it is our belief that this established best practice will provide culturally appropriate and sensitive teaching, benefiting not only Indigenous but non-Indigenous students as well

The value of this program can be seen by the progress of students in the Nursing undergraduate program following completion of the Combo program. A large proportion of these students in the undergraduate program maintain grades of Distinction or Credit. Thus it needs to be stressed that students entering the Combo program are not necessarily low achieving students but may simply be unconfident or more cautious than those entering the undergraduate program in the mainstream. In addition the students’ perceptions of the value of the Combo program is best gauged by the rapid growth of the program over the four years of its life. Starting with just 20 students in 2005 this number rose to 60 students in 2007 and dropped slightly to 41 students in 2008.

The partnership between Murdoch University and TAFE remains strong therefore the continuation of this program is promising. The enthusiasm that students maintain for this program is overwhelming thereby ensuring that the program has positive ambassadors in the community.

The success of the nursing combo program when contrasted against the poor enrolments in other combo programs from the same university is perplexing. One possible explanation for this may be related to the lower socio-economic categories of the Peel and Rockingham regions where long term unemployment has been a major factor (Unwin, 2005; Lucks and Durack, 2001). In view of these problems Nursing may be seen, quite correctly as a career that has no risk of unemployment and therefore a safer alternative.

### **The Koort Mooditj Enabling Program for Indigenous Students**

Indigenous Students have additional entry routes into Nursing at the Peel campus of Murdoch University. The School of Nursing provides an intensive bridging course for Indigenous students wishing to enter Nursing but without the requisite skills and knowledge. The Koort Mooditj program provides the students with practical hands on demonstrations and supportive teaching in communication, problem solving, basic science, basic maths and introductory nursing. This builds confidence within the student helping them realise that university studies are achievable.

Koort Mooditj is a four week intensive pre-nursing program for students to enter the Bachelor of Nursing and is a further step for the School in providing ongoing support and tutoring within a flexible framework to assist Indigenous students through their University studies.

The program directly benefits the Peel region delivering an increased number of professionally and practically trained people in the currently under-supplied health system, and provides a pathway to the full nursing degree. Thus this initiative is aimed at two major problems facing Indigenous people, poor education and poor health.

Murdoch University is meeting the challenges Indigenous students have faced to date with the following implementations:

The Academic support provided to Indigenous students is initiated during the Koort Mooditj programme, by inviting every member of staff to be part of the four week intensive pre-nursing programme, either in a teaching capacity or providing specific information related to their specialty or discipline. This contact time was extremely positive for both staff and students and allows for the introduction of the staff, and the opportunity for the staff to work as a team and collaborate on the course work and day to day tuition. Establishment of a good rapport was thought to have been instrumental in the learning process,

and has been positive for staff relationships. This support is also provided in the clinical areas when the students are exposed to clinical hospital settings. One to one tutoring was available on commencement of the degree course, or in small groups with an external tutor of their choice, or a third year student enrolled in studies at the campus. The students were encouraged to seek additional help in areas where they may have had limited knowledge such as maths, if they have had gaps in their formal education. This study time has been invaluable for the students, and has provided confidence, and a belief that they can succeed.

The access to scholarships has enabled assistance to alleviate the financial pressures faced by Indigenous students, and ensured that they have been able to secure vital materials required for the course. Pastoral care support has been provided by several mentors involved with the students. These mentors have included third year students who have expressed a wish to impart their knowledge especially before exam times. The students have a mentor who provides day to day flexible support and encouragement to ensure that the students meet their goals and reach their potential. Strong friendships have been formed with this security, as the students have endured personal and family situations where additional support and understanding have been required to ensure they are able to continue with the demands of the course. All staff have gained an understanding from the strength and determination these students have exhibited in order to overcome their personal challenges, and the direction required for teachers to assist them.

Cultural support is available from our Indigenous staff, and from the Indigenous Head of School, who is a constant source of inspiration to both staff and students. The students acknowledge Professor Marriott as a role model for nursing and for her commitment to fully support the students, taking a keen interest in their study and progress, and creating a strong cultural awareness in the University. The staff readily discuss cultural issues and gain advice and insight to enable a culturally appropriate environment and further their existing knowledge. The university also includes cultural awareness in all units; this is seen as very positive by the students.

The support has been present outside the University for the students as they have taken the opportunity to be involved in community groups and to promote nursing as a career, with local communities. They have developed the confidence to speak in public and to the media demonstrating their growing confidence and professionalism.

As a result of the support offered to them these students demonstrate a passion to succeed and to make a difference for their own people, and inspire others to study at a tertiary level.

This paper has presented the successes to date and discussed the challenges and how those are being met through the established partnerships that Murdoch University has created.

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## Disciplinary Knowledge and Community Needs: The Future of Academic Disciplines in the Engaged University

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### Abstract

*Theoretical models such as Mode 2 research (Gibbons) have been advanced to describe a process of 'user-led' knowledge creation that poses fundamental challenges to the traditional disciplinary organisation of knowledge within universities. Consistent with these models, many within universities have spoken of the need for 'inter-disciplinary' (or 'trans-disciplinary') approaches to university knowledge creation, particularly in research, often underpinned by new institutional arrangements that seek to break down discipline-based departments or faculties. At the same time, reward and quality systems such as competitive research grant schemes and peer-reviewed journals often continue to privilege traditional disciplinary knowledge, and at least in the short term remain more powerful drivers than the trans-disciplinary rhetoric.*

*This paper considers factors internal and external to the university that have challenged traditional notions of 'disciplinarity' and the likely impact of community-university engagement on the future of academic disciplines. It uses the humanities and the business disciplines (particularly public relations) as case studies of the problems and opportunities that attend academic disciplinarity in the engaged university.*

**Keywords:** academic disciplines, interdisciplinarity, community-university engagement, business disciplines.

The disciplinary division of knowledge, together with its institutional expression in schools, faculties and other units, is fundamental to long-held notions of the unique way in which universities operate as knowledge organizations; it also underpins notions of academic freedom and the privileges of the academic profession. As one writer puts it, 'Academic freedom not only protects sociology professors from the interface of trustees and public officials in the exercise of their jobs as teachers and scholars; it protects them from physics professors as well' (Menand, 1996, p. 17). Yet academic 'disciplinarity' has been under fire for some time from at least two fronts. On the one hand, a demand for 'inter-' or more recently 'trans-' disciplinary approaches has emerged since the late 1960s to produce what is often presented as a more politically and socially engaged scholarship. Typically this movement finds expression in new 'fields' that deliberately eschew disciplinary categorisation such as 'cultural studies', 'women's studies' and even 'science studies'. On the other hand, the rhetoric of community engagement is one force associated with a challenging of disciplinary boundaries as perceived impediments to outcomes such as vocational courses, applied research and university-industry partnerships.

Despite these developments, rumours of the demise of disciplinary scholarship appear to be grossly exaggerated. Relatively conventional understandings of academic disciplinarity still underpin faculty/school structures and many courses, even if recent years have seen a proliferation of supposedly interdisciplinary research institutes. Disciplinary protocols also dominate most reward processes in academia such as publication in prestigious journals, assessment of grant applications and promotion opportunities. In this paper I want to investigate the relationship between a contemporary community-university engagement agenda and debates about academic disciplinarity (and inter/trans-disciplinarity). In particular, I want to ask how both internal and external imperatives are changing the disciplinary organisation of knowledge, and what this might mean for engagement.

The two ways of thinking about academic disciplines outlined above can also be approached historically. In her seminal book on Interdisciplinarity, Klein points out that the interdisciplinary movement of the twentieth century is in many ways an attempt to create 'a modern equivalent of the older, comprehensive theory of knowledge' (1990, p.28). The unified, theologically oriented medieval conception of knowledge expressed in the seven branches of the university curriculum consisting of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric and logic) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music) eventually broke down following the liberation of science from theology and philosophy in the 'scientific



revolution' of the seventeenth century and the breakdown of science itself into a multitude of specialities through developments such as the spectacular growth of experimental science during the nineteenth century. The interdisciplinary movement of the twentieth century was in part an attempt to overcome this fragmentation of knowledge, particularly by offering undergraduate students a 'general' education as an antidote to specialisation. In Australia this movement took institutional form through developments such as the opening of Griffith University (founded 1971, first students 1975) with an explicit interdisciplinary agenda and an organisation based on four multidisciplinary schools rather than traditional disciplinary faculties.

The interdisciplinary movement has also been closely associated with what Klein calls 'interdisciplinary problem-focused research'; that is, it is a logical corollary of the realisation that solving the complex problems of the modern world, from climate change to AIDS, requires the attention of more than one discipline. The most spectacular examples of such research have in fact taken place outside the academy – the Manhattan project, NASA, the British work on radar during World War II and so on. But this is a model that universities have strenuously attempted to emulate through interdisciplinary research institutes, research partnerships with commercial firms and the like. It lies behind, for example, the restructuring of research arrangements at Queensland University of Technology, particularly the creation of four university research institutes that provide an institutional space for disciplinary experts to come together, sometimes in collaboration with external partners such as commercial firms or hospitals, to address real-world problems on a project basis (QUT, 2007, pp. 39-40). Michael Gibbons has characterised such an approach to research as 'Mode 2' knowledge production, where research problems are defined in the context of application, or practice, rather than in terms of disciplinary protocols. While 'Mode 1' refers to the specialised disciplinary structure that still informs the organisation of intellectual activity in most universities, Mode 2 attempts to generate knowledge that is not merely 'reliable', according to disciplinary experts, but 'socially robust' in that it 'takes the search for knowledge solutions beyond a dialogue of experts and ...embraces wider social participation in the research process' (Gibbons, 2003, p.116).

The relation between these forces inside and outside the university is nicely summarised in an OECD document of 1982 paraphrased by Klein (pp. 37-8):

Exogenous interdisciplinarity originates in the continuous momentum provided by "real" problems of the community, enriching and interrogating endogenous university interdisciplinarity, which is based on the production of new knowledge with the aim, more or less explicit, of realizing the unity of science. ... A complex technological society, in the logic of the exogenous argument, has problems that require interdisciplinary solution. It is an argument that has been heard since the start of the century, but it has assumed an increased sense of urgency as the magnitude of the problems mounts and calls for praxis increase.

In this reading, internal and external imperatives for interdisciplinarity are in a kind of creative tension rather than mutually exclusive: the search for the unity of science may, in part, serve the purposes of solving real-world problems.

One significant issue is the way in which interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation informs long-term disciplinary structures within university teaching and research. It can be argued that a university system like Australia's, which its strong vocational element and its deliberate eschewal of the Oxbridge model (Marginson & Considine, 2000), has always possessed an interdisciplinary element, as it were within its disciplinary structure. One classification of academic disciplines (adapted from Nicholls, 2005, pp.74-5) categorises disciplines according to both the internal logic of their development and their relation to the outside world:

- Hard pure knowledge (physics, chemistry and other foundation science disciplines; cumulative, atomistic knowledge development with a quantitative bias; competitive but gregarious knowledge communities)
- Soft pure knowledge (history, anthropology and other foundation humanities disciplines; reiterative, holistic knowledge development with a qualitative bias; scholarly enquiry typically a solitary pursuit)
- Hard applied knowledge (engineering and other applied science disciplines; concerned with mastery of the physical environment and geared toward products and techniques)
- Soft applied knowledge (education, management and other disciplines that depend on soft pure knowledge; orientation to professional practice and protocols and procedures).

Disciplines associated with both 'soft' and 'hard' applied knowledge can be seen as interdisciplinary derivatives of their respective pure domains. Arguably both types of soft (inter-)disciplines have been

central to Australian higher education from the outset – from medicine, engineering and law in the four universities founded in the nineteenth century to our current preoccupation with business, education and nursing.

These examples suggest that the imperative towards interdisciplinarity inspired by practice and application can in turn be thought about as two parallel processes. New disciplines at the intersection of existing disciplines usually emerge either through the formulation of new research questions (e.g. bioinformatics, medical engineering) or from the practice of professionals in the workplace (e.g. disaster management, most of the business disciplines such as management and marketing). Of course, the ‘applied’ disciplines of law and medicine have a venerable presence in the university curriculum: in continental European universities, faculties of law and medicine operated alongside the liberal arts virtually from the outset (although they were integrated into the English university curriculum only at a much later stage). How much, however, does the emergence of the ‘engaged’ university, with its attempt to adapt its organisational and disciplinary structure to the needs of external stakeholders, and particularly the business community, compromise or question the traditional strengths of the university?

One way of approaching this question is to juxtapose the largely celebratory narrative of the emergence of the ‘engaged university’ over the past two or three decades with narratives of university decline over the same period. Typical of the first narrative is John Clarke’s (2006) division of the history of Australian universities into three periods: the first (1851-1945) characterised by small-scale universities with a mission to train social elites; the second (1946-1983) with an emphasis on research as the main source of prestige, and the means by which universities distinguished themselves from the new college sector; and only the third, post-1983 era, seeing the emergence of engagement as ‘a major institutional factor reflecting institutional relevance’ at least in part as a response to the more interventionist policies of the post-1983 federal Labor government. The post-1980 period has also, however, been seen as the culmination of a longer period of university decline in at least two recent works written by (and from the point of view of) humanities scholars (Newfield, 2003; Readings, 1996). An Australian collection of essays (Coady, 2000), controversially initially rejected by a major university publisher, could be seen as another example of this narrative of university decline. Slaughter and Leslie (1997) have coined the term ‘academic capitalism’ to describe the same period, even though their tone is more analytical than elegiac (and their particular focus is on commercial research rather than the functions of the university overall). For Slaughter and Leslie, the willing embrace of the blandishments of the market may precisely undermine older, non-market, understandings of the ways in which universities engage their communities: ‘Participation in the market began to undercut the tacit contract between professors and society because the market put as much emphasis on the bottom line as on client welfare’ (p. 5).

It seems to me that these two apparently diametrically opposed judgements about the same period may be fruitfully approached through the lens of academic disciplinarity, and particularly by looking at the ways in which the academic disciplines have shifted in response to what can be seen either as a new willingness to engage with the community or an unholy scramble to bend to the dictates of the market. Newfield’s argument is that while the American research university has always been beholden to business to some extent, recent developments – particularly the growth of applied research and the marginalisation of the humanities – have fundamentally altered the historical balance between the professedly non-market humanism of the university and its reliance on the market. More pessimistically, Readings argues that the unifying cultural mission of the university has been abandoned, wrecked on the reefs of a bland managerialist rhetoric of ‘excellence’ on the one hand and the decline of the nation-state as the sponsor of national culture on the other.

It is interesting that both Newfield and Readings were trained and worked in the discipline of literary studies, a discipline that in most English-speaking countries experienced spectacular growth during the post-war period only to see an almost equally spectacular decline after about 1980 (e.g. Newfield, 2003, p. 208). The study of literature, which has been traditionally organised according to national literatures (English literature, American literature etc), has been adversely affected not only by the decline of the humanities generally in favour of more vocational courses (particularly business) but also by the rise of ‘new humanities’ fields such as cultural studies, media studies and women’s studies. Readings goes so far as to equate the emergence of ‘cultural studies’ as an interdisciplinary field with the effective end of ‘culture’ as a meaningful object of study, and with it much of the traditional cultural role of the university. Yet it could equally be argued that literary studies itself has been complicit in vitiating its own disciplinary integrity. The remarks of the novelist and (now former) literary academic David Lodge in the preface to his influential 1988 anthology of literary theory suggest the seeds of this process:

... the recent theorization of literary studies has borrowed its terms and concepts very largely from other

disciplines – linguistics, psychoanalysis, philosophy, Marxism. In the process, literary criticism has been drawn into the vortex of a powerful new field of study in which all these disciplines are merged and interfused, and which goes under the name of 'theory'. The aim of this collective enterprise would seem to be no less than a totalising account of human consciousness and human culture (or else a tireless demonstration of the impossibility of such a project). A good deal of what goes on in university departments of language and literature nowadays, and is written in journals ostensibly dedicated to literary criticism, is contributing to Theory in this wide sense. (Lodge, 1988, p. ix)

Ironically the quest for 'Theory' in the post-modernist new humanities manifests itself in an aspiration for the 'unity of science' that has distinctly modernist, not to say medieval, overtones.

Debates about the integrity of new interdisciplinary fields such as cultural studies may appear merely arcane to those both within and outside universities who are focussed primarily on the imperatives of practice and problem-solving. Yet as some critics of cultural studies (e.g. Frank, 2000) have pointed out, it is often a short step from a critical preoccupation with popular culture to a rather uncritical celebration of 'cultural' activity that is almost entirely commercially driven. Another by-product of this trajectory of cultural studies in its short history is the notion of the 'creative industries', which effectively turns the term 'cultural industries', used pejoratively by the Frankfurt School Marxists, on its head. The creative industries idea, which has provided the basis for a reorganisation and rebranding of QUT's creative arts and media offerings, proposes and indeed celebrates the breaking down of boundaries both between high and low culture, and between culture and the market (e.g. Cunningham, 2002). The theorising of cultural studies academics about the creative industries (e.g. Hartley, 2005) in a sense adds intellectual legitimacy to what some may consider simply commercial activities. The role of the university is redefined from the traditional humanistic one of fostering critical thought and engagement with cultural tradition to that of giving graduates a set of capabilities, including business skills as well as creative ones, that will equip them for the fast-moving world of the creative industries where technology, business and creativity coalesce.

The creative industries idea provides one response to what appears to be a largely intractable problem for the humanities in the contemporary university. The disposition to a critical stance, particularly pronounced in the theoretically driven 'new humanities' of the past twenty to thirty years, makes it difficult for humanities scholars to collaborate with external partners such as business and community groups. At the same time, the humanities' traditional claims to their own version of real-world engagement – the argument that 'knowledge of rhetoric and classical liberal arts was ... the key to worldly power' (Fuller, 1993, p. 130) – have faded in a mass higher education system where a university degree is far from a guarantee of professional employment. Beyond the creative industries idea, a new vocationalism, and a new rhetoric of community engagement, seem to be emerging in the attempts of some humanities programs to rebrand themselves as the study of 'social impact' or 'social entrepreneurship'. It remains to be seen, however, how successful such programs are in their vocational outcomes and attractiveness to industry partners, at least to the extent that they genuinely remain humanities-based.

Perhaps the most interesting domain, however, in which to examine the challenges which community engagement poses to traditional notions of academic disciplinary lies in the burgeoning area of business studies. The academic study of business, more than perhaps has been admitted, poses significant difficulties for traditional notions of the role of the university. Its acceptance as a mainstream part of university study was opposed strenuously by early twentieth-century intellectuals such as Thorstein Veblen, who saw business courses as betraying the academic ideal of 'disinterested science and scholarship' (Veblen, 1993). That battle has certainly been lost, with the most recent statistics indicating that 28.5 per cent of students in Australian universities in 2007 were enrolled in programs under the broad field of 'management and commerce' (DEEWR, 2008). However, doubts remain about the legitimacy of the business disciplines, particularly those beyond relatively established disciplines such as economics and accountancy. An examination of some of these disciplinary issues will serve to illuminate some of the highly contested space between the traditional claims of academia and those of the corporate forces that are the effective clients of business faculties.

In a sense 'new' business disciplines such as management and marketing are some of the most problematic instances of 'soft applied knowledge'. As Fuller puts it, comparing science and the social sciences, 'disciplinary histories of the social sciences more easily show the rhetorical seams of appearing to "represent" the world without substantially "intervening" in it' (1993, p. 125). Fuller is speaking about relatively established social science disciplines such as economics and psychology, but his point is even more relevant to the 'business disciplines'. Disciplines such as management,

marketing, and public relations provide yet another dimension to the debate about disciplinarity as each of these domains has coherence primarily, both historically and rhetorically, not as an academic or intellectual pursuit but as a business practice. In other words, the whole *raison d'être* of these disciplines, and the source of whatever academic prestige and popularity they may have, arises from the fact that they do intervene in the world rather than merely pretend to describe it objectively.

The business disciplines are subject to a number of often conflicting rhetorical and ethical imperatives. On the one hand, these disciplines derive their legitimacy from their ability to produce trained technicians who can take their place generally in quite specific roles in the business workplace – for example, as junior managers within specialised sections of corporations devoted to human resources or marketing. Indeed the degree of homology between the internal structures of university business faculties and those of the typical modern corporation, with schools or departments closely echoing the nomenclature of major corporate divisions, is significant evidence for the degree to which the modern university has become entwined with the corporate power structure. At the same time, academic practitioners of the business disciplines must pay at least lip service to specifically academic traditions and rituals such as intellectual independence (especially from vested interests), collegial governance, intellectually grounded rather than purely vocational pedagogy, and a commitment to generating knowledge that is significant according to disciplinary protocols rather than necessarily useful to particular constituencies.

The attempt of the business disciplines to be simultaneously instrumental and 'academic' has always been problematic, and perhaps no more so than when seen from the perspective of disciplinarity. It could be argued that the business disciplines are not real academic disciplines at all but merely applications of pre- and co-existing disciplines that have a more robust intellectual integrity. Thus management, for example, could be seen as largely parasitic on sociology, and perhaps aspects of philosophy and psychology. But it would also be simplistic to say that an instrumental focus necessarily undermines disciplinary status. Indeed the relationship can be quite the opposite. What Fuller calls 'the epistemic superiority of the natural sciences', for example, rests largely on the visibility of 'astronauts going up in space or nuclear bombs being exploded' (p. 131). What seems to be most significant for the business disciplines is the degree of contentiousness about the particular outcomes to which they are oriented – activities which might be construed as primarily serving the interests of powerful, perhaps even obnoxious, private interests rather than fairly uncontroversial human needs such as those served by medicine or aeronautical engineering.

A question for a contemporary engagement agenda is to what extent the construction of disciplines apparently beholden to the corporate world represents a necessary engagement with contemporary community needs, or merely a sell-out of the university's critical and humanising function. The implication of the burgeoning business academy in the failings of 'late' or 'consumerist' capitalism make it a fairly obvious target for radical critique, particularly inasmuch as this affiliation is perceived as a betrayal of the university's traditional mission. A recent example of such a critique (Ehrensals, 2001) is tellingly titled 'Training Capitalism's Foot Soldiers'. Perhaps a more interesting question, however, is the stance of individuals – or whole disciplines – within this probably ineluctable business-academic juggernaut. As Ehrensals puts it, 'we can distinguish between being a professor of management and being a social scientist studying management behavior' (p. 113).

This formulation may be helpful in considering the disciplinary status of public relations, which has been one of the most conspicuous beneficiaries of the 'new' university, in arts and social science as well as in business faculties. Academic public relations has been widely criticised for its failure to come to terms with new intellectual currents emanating from the social sciences, the humanities, and even the hard sciences (Leitch & Neilson, 1997; McKie, 1997). Conversely, public relations theory and scholarship seem to have had little impact outside the narrowly defined discipline, even in such a closely related field as communication (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 645). Yet rather than seeing these failings simply as reflecting the limitations of individual scholars or institutions, we might ask whether they are to some extent the inevitable product of a particular stance inseparable from the mainstream view of public relations as an academic discipline. It is difficult to see how, for example, public relations academics can profoundly embrace the radical critiques of the Frankfurt School and other strands of 'critical theory' while the underlying rationale of the discipline remains to legitimate, and serve the interests of, a particular business practice. One article that does attempt such a stance (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000) feels constrained at the outset to 'pose contrasting definitions of public relations as a professional activity and as an intellectual domain' (p. 3). The very need to make such a claim shows the extent to which public relations as an academic discipline has been constructed around the needs of the industry that it (apparently quite willingly) serves.

Yet if public relations academics were to redefine themselves as disinterested 'social scientists studying public relations', what disciplinary integrity would be left to public relations as distinct from, say, sociology or even cultural studies? The anxiety lurking behind this question may account for what to an outsider must seem the quite extraordinary proliferation of 'disciplines' (or sub-disciplines) concerned with what we might broadly term 'business communication'. Zorn (2002) draws attention to the historically constructed, and largely unhelpful, distinctions between public relations, organisational communication, and business communication (narrowly conceived as concerned primarily with skills) itself. But we could also point to many other established or emerging disciplines that claim to be describing much the same territory, particularly within marketing (marketing communication, internal marketing, social marketing), management (management communication, organisational theory), and the emerging field of 'business and society' (issues management). What seems to differentiate these so-called disciplines is not so much the object of study – they all claim to be dealing with the interaction, particularly the communicative interaction, between organisations and their social environment – but the particular intellectual traditions and professional affiliations they bring to bear on this largely shared object of study. We could say in general, for example, that critical theory has been much more influential in the organisational communication and business and society literatures, than it has in the public relations or marketing literatures. In turn, such distinctions seem to depend on the professional affiliation of the discipline – for example, the close link of both public relations and marketing to the business workplace seems to largely preclude the critical gaze on the business reality that is their object of study.

Finally, it is worth noting that the 'demarcation disputes' within the business communication disciplines contradict the move towards interdisciplinarity in the humanities, the social sciences, and even to some extent in the hard sciences discussed above. Many of the interdisciplinary projects located in 'new humanities' fields such as cultural studies concern the broad area of 'promotional culture' (e.g. Turner, Bonner & Marshall, 2000) that we might expect would also engage public relations scholars. However, the prevailing, narrowly practice-based, definition of the public relations discipline seems largely to preclude such interdisciplinary engagement.

I have dwelt on the example of the disciplinary status, and the relation to the world of practice, of the business disciplines and of public relations in particular, in order to make a more general point about the dangers, and opportunities, that attend a university curriculum and research agenda that draws much of its legitimacy from the world of practice. The ideal of community engagement, and a university responsive to the needs of the real world, can too readily degenerate into an abject serving of the needs of the corporate world. New fields that would seem inherently interdisciplinary, such as public relations and other business communication fields, are often in fact oblivious to the findings of surrounding disciplines and seek to emphasise largely specious disciplinary demarcations. Rather than mediating between the world of practice and the critical and disinterested traditions of the academy, much knowledge production in these narrowly defined disciplines simply furthers the interests, and addresses the day-to-day needs of, industry and its attendant corporate power structure.

The questioning of traditional notions of academic disciplinarity discussed in this paper is of course part of a larger questioning of the privileged place of universities in a distributed knowledge society. Without trying to return to a golden age of university dominance, a constructive community-university engagement would recognize and build on the unique cultural baggage that universities bring with them. As the British sociologist Gerard Delanty points out, the new centrality of knowledge and culture may make the role of universities more important in their ability to link culture and technology, the market and larger notions of citizenship:

Neither the capitalist-driven market nor post disciplinary managerialism will provide the solution ... to the challenges that technology pose. The solution resides in linking the challenge of technology with cultural discourses. Universities are among the few locations in society where these discourses intersect. As sites of social interconnectivity, they can contribute to the making of cosmopolitan forms of citizenship. (2001, p. 158)

A constructive community-university engagement agenda will precisely avoid such 'post disciplinary managerialism' in order to find new ways in which both traditional disciplines and new modes of interdisciplinary scholarship can engage with the community in making 'cosmopolitan forms of citizenship'.

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## Mapping Disadvantage: Creating Pathways

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**Professor Hilary Winchester, Mr Marc Shannon, Ms Roslyn Clermont, Ms Julie Kalms, Ms Mandy Giles, University of South Australia**

### **Abstract**

*Northern Adelaide is an area where 50% of new jobs will require a university degree, but where participation in higher education is low. In 2007 the University of South Australia (UniSA), through its flagship northern Adelaide engagement unit, University of South Australia Northern Adelaide Partnerships (UNAP), commissioned a project to collect, collate and analyse base data relevant to tertiary education access and success rates for the northern Adelaide community. The purpose was to identify trends in access and success, and to examine comparative results between and within the local government areas. The resulting information would help focus resources on strategies to increase pathways and access to higher education for students in the northern Adelaide region, a recognised area of high socio-economic disadvantage.*

*Data from a range of sources was collected: the University; the South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC); South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS); South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST); and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The study covered Australian students only, for a five year period. In addition, UNAP analysed current engagement activities between the University and northern Adelaide state schools.*

*The data highlighted a critical point: that the rate of northern Adelaide students completing their secondary school with a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER), which is the basis on which universities in South Australia offer places to school leavers, is less than half the average rate for metropolitan Adelaide.*

*Information from the study was provided to UNAP's management and advisory groups, including the UNAP Advisory Group which includes key members of the northern Adelaide community. The information and feedback from management and advisory groups enabled UNAP to make informed decisions about the critical points that impact on student access to higher education and to identify potential areas for collaborative action to achieve improved access. In this way, the mapping study provided new direction and dimensions to revitalise existing relationships and generated ideas for specific partnership activities.*

*UNAP has presented the findings to DECS, northern Adelaide state secondary school principals, District Directors and other key stakeholders. Collaborative groups and partnerships have been formed to develop new strategies directly relevant to the findings. UniSA is using the mapping study to renew its commitment to the community and establish purposeful links with DECS and schools to improve access to higher education.*

**Full paper available in the AUCEA e-journal Spring 2008 [www.aucea.org.au](http://www.aucea.org.au)**

## Indicators for Effective Partnerships: Organisational Implications for Measuring Service to International, National and Local Communities

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Palermo, Dr Josephine Palermo, Lecturer, School of Psychology, Deakin University

### Abstract

*Substantive university-community engagement activity is transformative. Within this activity, members of each organisation come to deepen their understanding of their and their partner's work. The consequences of this activity often include reshaping organisational policy environments to support engagement.*

*Deakin University's next Strategic Plan 2008-2012 will be titled 'Delivering Effective Partnerships'. In 2007 we conducted research to develop and test measures that could be used to assess the effectiveness of Deakin's partnerships. Potential measures were explored through scoping interviews with key informants, an on-line survey completed by Deakin partnership coordinators, and partnership case studies.*

*In addition to exploring a range of potential measures, our research also documented a high degree of organisational commitment to delivering effective partnerships. However findings also suggested that there were some gaps in relation to defining the nature and scope of partnership activity, and in adequately supporting the level of deep collaboration required for mutual reciprocity and transformation. Importantly, however, we also identified a range of contingent organisational issues that need to be considered when developing the Strategic Plan:*

- *How to include the values and scholarship of engagement into policy and practice about partnerships;*
- *How best to define what 'partnerships' can be, how they fulfil community engagement, and what an effective partnership would look like in various contexts;*
- *How to ensure that Deakin's corporate culture and practices support the notion that effective engagement is a two-way process that can – and must – result in transformation not only for the university's partners, but also the university;*
- *How best to ensure that the University's governance, management and administrative processes support effective engagement:*
- *How best to organise Deakin's policy environment and activity across the university to support the delivery of effective partnerships;*
- *How best to establish a coordinated knowledge management system across the university to support staff in their efforts to establish, monitor, evaluate and report on their partnership activity*
- *How to ensure that community engagement is built into staff performance planning and review cycles, work plans, and promotion assessment criteria.*
- *The resources that will need to be allocated to assist all staff to deliver effective partnerships*

*This paper will describe our research, and discuss the implications of these findings for all universities seeking to achieve substantive engagement with their partners.*

**Keywords:** measurement, evaluation, organisational policy development

**Full paper available in the AUCEA e-journal Spring 2008 [www.aucea.org.au](http://www.aucea.org.au)**



## **Sustainable Futures by Design: Enriching the Balance Between Engagement Processes & Outcomes**

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**Dr Les Dawes & Mr Shannon Satherley, Queensland University of Technology**

### **Abstract**

*Design projects by engagement develop innovative responses to the needs of communities seeking direction toward sustainable futures. The quality of an engagement partnership between community and university plays an important role in the efficacy of this response. Quality partnerships draw on the knowledge and capacities of all partners, and also contribute something to all partners. Thus an appropriate balance is needed between engagement processes and outcomes.*

*In design engagement projects, there is danger of a pattern forming whereby communities provide opportunity, resources and consultation only at the commencement of a project, with the university providing completed designs at the end. While design academics are primarily interested in the processes of student learning (Smith et al 2005), communities understandably prioritise project outcomes, and there is potential for the design teams (students) to feel uncertain about their role. In this scenario, community partners' involvement in the design engagement process needs to be enriched in order to better produce innovative and responsive outcomes, both in terms of their sustainable futures, and the pedagogical needs of the university partners.*

*Queensland University of Technology Schools of Design and Urban Development are undertaking a series of engagement projects designing for sustainable futures in response to the needs of communities in sensitive Queensland regional environments. Our projects perform an 'integrative and innovative role in the cultivation of equitable and sustainable regions' (Forrant and Silka 2006), with senior students developing innovative design outcomes focused on sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental futures.*

*In this paper, we examine the balance between design engagement processes and outcomes through the trajectory of these projects. Lessons learned from past projects informed the planning of our current 'Port of Bundaberg' project, in which we prioritise enrichment of the process-outcomes balance. It builds on projects at nearby coastal Poona and Bargara, having the potential to develop existing and new quality partnerships and further our contribution to the sustainable future of the globally significant Great Sandy Marine Park.*

*In responding to the needs of communities seeking direction toward sustainable futures, student designers require a rich understanding of the community and region. We find this is best achieved through an ongoing conversational process between the differing forms of knowledge and capacities embedded within both community (Armstrong 1999, Thomas 2006) and university partners. As our projects demonstrate, innovative design for sustainable futures needs quality partnerships based on an enriched balance between engagement processes and outcomes.*

**Keywords:** sustainable futures, engagement, processes, outcomes, sensitive environments

**Full paper available in the AUCEA e-journal Spring 2008 [www.aucea.org.au](http://www.aucea.org.au)**

## Improving River Health Using a Citizens' Panel

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**Katie Le Blanc, Nicole Kennon, Department of Primary Industries**

### **Abstract**

*The aim of this project was to involve the broader communities of the Loddon and Gannawarra Shires, to assist in reconciling conflicting views on how to protect and enhance river frontages for users of the Loddon River between the Kerang and Loddon Weirs, and to ascertain if the Citizens' Panel process would be more efficient and effective than past community engagement methods used in the region.*

*We used a collaborative process between the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, Department of Sustainability and Environment, North Central Catchment Management Authority, Department of Planning and Community Development and local landholders.*

*The Citizens' Panel event involved 15 randomly selected community members to deliberate and learn about the various key issues through a site tour and presentations from various stakeholders including a local indigenous representative, Catchment Management Authority, farmers adjoining the Loddon River, a Landcare representative, an environmental enthusiast, Monash University and the Department of Primary Industries.*

*The event culminated with the Panel proposing a series of recommendations which focused on education; fencing; and planning, management and monitoring. The main learning's from the Citizens' Panel were:*

*To reduce possible lag time in action plan development, the process should be run by the agency responsible for addressing the recommendations.*

*There needs to be some level of controversy in the issue being investigated to enable a variety of opinions to be presented.*

*Panellists found it a rewarding process that increased their awareness and knowledge of their local environment.*

*The Citizens' Panel process is a useful method for gaining community opinion/ideas and appears to be faster than traditional focus groups. It is also more rewarding for all participants and organisers alike.*

*The recommendations developed during the Citizens' Panel have been handed over to the responsible river management authority and it is hoped that they will be used to strengthen future river health outcomes relating to the Loddon River.*

**Keywords** Citizens Panel, Citizens Jury, Collaboration

### **Introduction**

The Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) aims to engage rural communities and empower them to effectively manage change effecting social, environmental and economic conditions.

DPI aims to incorporate their stakeholders, including community, in the planning stages of projects with the intention of developing a sense of community ownership and acceptance of project outcomes (Carson, 2003).

DPI generally uses the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Community Engagement spectrum. The spectrum consists of five levels of engagement - inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower (IAP2, 2008). This spectrum is important because it allows us to design our projects with specific groups/stakeholders in mind while considering movement through the various levels of engagement throughout the life of the project. The level of engagement DPI employs is determined by the objective of the project and who the stakeholders are.

The concept of the Citizens' Panel process was originally developed in the early 1970s by Ned Crosby while writing his doctoral thesis on social ethics. Originally the process was intended to improve understanding and empathy among citizens (Jefferson Centre, 2003).

A Citizens' Panel process had not previously been used by DPI for resolving Natural Resource Management (NRM) issues. Frequently DPI community engagement planning processes have proven

to be very resource (time and financially) intensive. The Citizens' Panel technique had previously been used for NRM by other Victorian organisations with reasonable success. We believed the Citizens' Panel would provide an opportunity to collaborate with the community in making river frontage management decisions in a cost and time effective manner.

A Citizens' Panel was also seen as an avenue for all views to be heard on the issues associated with the river frontage management of the Loddon River, with the provision of extensive background studies being provided during the process. It would enable both concerned citizens and experts alike to have their input included as part of the decision on river frontage management. Because of perceived conflicting points of view regarding the management of the river frontage zone, the Citizens' Panel methodology was deemed ideal for blending those views together to develop a common outcome. By using a process which involved the majority of stakeholders having input in the decision-making process associated with river frontage issues, we hoped to improve ownership over the ultimate decisions made by governing bodies, in this case the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA) (Twyford et al, 2006).

A collaborative project was developed between DPI, Department of Sustainability and Environment, NCCMA, Department of Planning and Community Development and local landholders, all of whom made up the projects Advisory Committee.

Panel participants were informed by invited presenters and asked to collaborate in the development of recommendations for future river frontage management. We also sought to empower Panellists in their knowledge of local NRM issues. Several presenters from various organisations were involved in the process by offering different information focused on river frontage issues to the Panel.

This paper outlines the method used to undertake the Citizens' Panel and provides an overview of the outcomes including an intensive evaluation and the synthesis of lessons learnt by the project team.

## **PARTNERS DRIVING THE PROCESS**

DPI promotes the sustainable development of primary and energy industries for the benefit of all Victorians. Partnerships are critical to the work of DPI, and we collaborate with all tiers of government, farmers and other land managers, along with industries, Catchment Management Authorities and Landcare groups on a wide variety of rural programs and projects.

The NCCMA is responsible for coordinating natural resource planning and management in North Central Victoria. The NCCMA is responsible for coordinating Australian Federal and State Government investment in regional NRM (NCCMA, 2008).

Farm Services Victoria (FSV), formerly Catchment and Agriculture Services, a division within DPI, works in a collaborative partnership with the NCCMA with a Memorandum of Understanding stating that FSV is the preferred service provider for environmental projects. This partnership allows for a coordinated and integrated NRM delivery at the farm scale. This close relationship resulted in the Loddon River Frontages Citizens' Panel Project – the focus of this paper.

## **BACKGROUND ON THE CITIZENS' PANEL PROCESS**

A Citizens' Panel is an innovative process used to involve the community in complex decision-making. It involves bringing together a randomly selected representative sample of citizens who are briefed by organisations and groups with differing points of view, on the background and current thinking associated with a particular issue. Panellists are then asked to discuss and identify possible processes to overcome the issue and present them to the governing organisation/s.

There are a number of key elements involved in a Citizens' Panel, these are:

**Project Manager** – employee of the organisation who co-ordinates the project

**Facilitator and Co-Facilitator** – experienced in Citizens' Panels, who facilitates the event and provides support to the Advisory Committee throughout the planning phase

**Advisory Committee** – a group of selected representatives from the partner organisations involved in the project, as well as selected community members who are responsible for key process decision-making and providing support to the Project Manager

**Charge** – the key question focusing on the issue the Panellists are to consider during the panel process

**Panellists** – randomly selected community members who form the Panel

**Key Presenters** – specifically selected representatives from various organisations who have specialist knowledge about the Charge (also known as Expert Witnesses)

**Chair** – a well respected community member responsible for coordinating panel proceedings

**Recommendations** – responses developed by the Panellist, addressing the issues identified in the Charge.

## PLANNING THE CITIZENS' PANEL

As indicated in the previous section there are many steps and roles involved in planning and implementing a Citizens' Panel. It is important to clearly define all roles and process steps at the beginning of the project.

The Loddon River Citizens' Panel was coordinated by a Project Manager. One of the first responsibilities of the Project Manager was to appoint an independent Facilitator. The selected Facilitator had extensive experience in facilitating Citizens' Panels. A Co-Facilitator from a local partner agency was also appointed to shadow and assist the Facilitator and to build experience and skills in Citizens' Panel facilitation within State Government Departments associated with NRM issues.

The Advisory Committee was established early in the project and met four times in the lead up to the Citizens' Panel event. Their main tasks included developing the Charge, Panellist recruitment and selection method, Key Presenter selection and background information development. They also provided input on selecting the Chair, Panel agenda, event logistics and media outreach.

Developing the Charge was the Advisory Committee's first task. Addressing the Charge was the key undertaking of the Panel and it took the form of a question that the Panellists addressed and answered during deliberations. It was important that the Charge be seen as unbiased and acceptable to all stakeholders. It also guided the agenda, Key Presenter selection, the deliberations, and the form of the Recommendations.

The Charge the Panellists were asked to consider was *'What recommendations do you suggest we consider to protect and enhance the values of the Loddon River Frontages between the Kerang and Loddon Weirs?'*

Once the Charge was developed the Advisory Committee identified individuals or groups who they thought could best provide the information required to enable the Panel to answer the Charge. Individuals knowledgeable about the various aspects of the issue served as Key Presenters by giving a brief presentation and answering questions at the Citizens' Panel event. Eight Key Presenters were selected to represent the various view points on the topic.

The next key step in the planning process was to recruit and select the actual Panel members.

"Although a Citizens' Jury cannot be a statistically representative sample of the general population, it is possible and important to put together a Panel whose composition broadly reflects that of the wider society" (Carson, 2003).

The Advisory Committee took careful consideration in deciding how to recruit and select Panellists. It was decided, out of fairness and logistical ease, to recruit by undertaking a random mail-out to one third (approximately 4,000) of households across both the Loddon and Gannawarra Shires using addresses from their rates databases. Households were sent an invitation asking if they would be interested in participating in an exciting and innovative event to discuss local waterways. The specific topic was not disclosed to avoid bias and influencing participant's opinions on the issue. Respondents were asked to answer brief questions about themselves which were used in the selection process. These included sex, age, address, educational qualifications, occupation and ethnic origin.

Eighty-five responses were received from the mail-out. While there was a sway towards older people (55 years and older) and a fair majority of farmers among the respondents, overall there was a good mix from which a diverse Panel of 16 were randomly selected. Once selected, the successful candidates were contacted by phone to confirm their availability and then sent a formal letter informing them of the project's objectives. They also received balanced background information on the topic to brief them on the issue and set the scene for what they could expect at the Citizens' Panel.

The final planning step was to develop the agenda.

"Since key components of a Citizens' Jury project are the thorough education of the jurors and the

opportunity for thoughtful deliberation, careful attention needs to be paid to the structure of the agenda for the introductory, presentation and deliberation days” (Jefferson Centre, 2004).

As this was a trial process the Advisory Committee and decision-making bodies decided that media publicity would not be sought at the time of the event as they did not want the process to be impacted by external sources that may not have understood the process. However, after the event a DPI Media Release was distributed to local media, an article was written for DPI’s farmer magazine “News and Views” and a DSE Community Engagement Newsletter informed the community of the event. Several presentations were also given to various groups including the NCCMA Board and the North West Community Engagement Community of Practice, on the outcomes and learning’s of the project.

## **THE CITIZENS’ PANEL EVENT**

The Advisory Committee decided to hold the Panel event for two and a half days, over a weekend in an attempt to make it accessible to as many people as possible. All costs for accommodation, meals and refreshments were covered as well as a sitting fee and travel allowance for Panellists.

Day one included an introductory session, one presentation and a bus tour of the Loddon River to give Panellists a visual representation of the issues. Seven presentations were given on the second day, commencing with more broad presentations to set the scene and give a general overview, followed by more specific presentations. Each Key Presenter was allocated 15 minutes for their presentation. The Panel was then given 15 minutes of private deliberation to discuss what they had heard and prioritise the most appropriate questions, then returned to question the Key Presenter for a further 15 minutes. The final day, was dedicated to deliberation enabling the Panel to answer the Charge. A variety of deliberation techniques were used by the Facilitators, from working in small groups on different sections to deliberating as a whole group.

The Panellists took the task very seriously and were determined to produce Recommendations that would benefit all stakeholders of the Loddon River. This resulted in some flared emotions as each Panellist put forward their opinion. However with the assistance of the Facilitators the group managed to reach a consensus within the time frame. Once the Panel had concluded their work they presented their Recommendations to representatives from decision-making bodies the NCCMA and DPI in the form of a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation.

The Recommendations focused on three main areas.

- Education – improved stakeholder communication; education for laypeople of Aboriginal sites; education to improve community and landholder value of riparian zone (people will only protect what they value); improved local and Indigenous knowledge should be an important aspect of education regarding the riparian zone; and promote the Loddon River as a community asset, especially to schools.
- Fencing – fencing of the river frontage should be of the highest priority; fencing should be compulsory and no cost to the farmer; funding applications need to be streamlined and simplified; a farmer incentive to fence may include revision of fencing contracts (with government) regarding farmer responsibility for fence replacement due to flooding; incentives are required to encourage riparian zone repair and regeneration beyond the immediate main channel; and monitoring is required to ensure fencing projects are completed and meet their purpose.
- Planning, Management and Monitoring – agencies need to make research results, outcomes and recommendations available to the community; NCCMA outcome monitoring needs to be based on integrity and ethics, accountable, transparent, respectful and clearly defined; Whole Farm Planning programs need to incorporate riparian management; and recommend a review of environmental flows in the area addressing environmental impacts such as sediment build up and weed infestation.

Overall the decision-making bodies and Advisory Committee were impressed with the Recommendations made by the Panel. The commitment shown by the group to develop Recommendations that would benefit all stakeholders was encouraging. The Recommendations are currently sitting with the NCCMA and it is hoped they will be used as a basis to strengthen future river health projects along the Loddon River.

The NCCMA has proposed the establishment of a committee to review the Recommendations for development of an action plan to implement those that are feasible. Once the action plan has been completed it will be communicated back to the Panellists and other stakeholders involved, informing

them of the outcomes and why certain Recommendations could not be actioned.

## **EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS**

A DPI Evaluation Officer was appointed to ensure the process was transparent and unbiased to the general public and decision-makers, and to increase trust and respect for the Recommendations and outcomes of the Panel event. Evaluation was undertaken to investigate the effectiveness of the Panel event, the Panel process and its suitability for future use in NRM and to suggest improvements. The evaluator utilised four different methods during the process.

Feedback sheets were completed by Panellists on Day one and Day three of the Panel event to assess change in their knowledge, understanding, involvement, expectations and enjoyment. Variations of the feedback sheets were also completed by the Facilitators and Chair.

A 'Reflections Journal' was provided to each Panellist for recording insights and experiences during the event. The journal was based on questions from the Evaluation Framework for Community Engagement by the IAP2 (Hendricks, 2007). The IAP2 framework identifies six key areas (inclusion, integrity, deliberation, influence, capacity and decisions) against which community engagement events can be evaluated.

A debrief session was held with the Advisory Committee (including Project Manager and Facilitators) after the event. The debrief covered both involvement in the Advisory Committee and the Citizens' Panel event. A discussion on what happened, what worked, what didn't work and what improvements could be made for future Citizens' Panel Advisory Committees and events was covered during a two hour session. Use of the Citizens' Panel Recommendations and future actions were also covered during the debrief.

Lastly a feedback sheet was sent to Key Presenters using internet based Survey Monkey to seek their feedback on the Panel process and their role.

## **Results/Findings**

Overall, the Citizens' Panel process was well received by Panellists, Key Presenters and Advisory Committee members. The opportunity for community members to be meaningfully involved in a decision-making process was embraced by Panellists, who showed a willingness to be involved and took seriously their responsibilities to produce a list of Recommendations to address the Charge.

The site visit was an important part of the process to set the scene to ensure all Panellists could visualise the issues when Key Presenters were providing information on the issues and opportunities regarding the Loddon River frontage. Furthermore, the site visit allowed an opportunity for Panellists, the Project Manager and some Key Presenters to meet each other in an informal setting.

The time allocated (two and a half days) was sufficient – while many of the Key Presenters and discussions may have been rushed it was felt that, had the process gone for longer, Panellists would become overwhelmed, tired and would not necessarily produce a better outcome. Fewer Key Presenters, tighter control on presentation length, and more time for discussion were suggested by Panellists to improve the presentation component of the event.

Clear role requirements and expectations are fundamental for all involved in the Panel process so that the project proceeds smoothly, objectives are achieved and time utilised wisely. The distribution of background information prior to the Panel event is essential for all participants (whether Panellists, Key Presenters, Chair or Facilitator). It would be beneficial to check with all participants immediately prior to, and at the beginning of the Panel event to ensure they are comfortable with their role and expectations. The Advisory Committee must ensure that the Facilitators and Chair are able to fulfil their roles as the success of the Panel event will be largely influenced by the management of the event. It is preferable to appoint Facilitators who are experienced in the Citizens' Panel process, and to use Panel events as opportunities to mentor facilitators new to the process.

The Panellists appointment process should ensure that all sectors of the community are represented. Key sectors (such as Indigenous/ethnic citizens and youth) were not represented in this Panel. The means of distributing the invitation to participate through rate notices may have unintentionally overlooked some sectors of the community. The Advisory Committee must take into consideration

some Panellists may have limitations that detract from their ability to fully participate in the process, and ensure systems are in place to manage or minimise potential issues/concerns.

The Citizens' Panel process requires a lot of planning prior to the Panel event. The availability of time and resources is a major consideration when contemplating the use of the Citizens' Panel process.

We would also like to highlight the fact that the Facilitator commented that she was most interested in the use of the Reflective Journals for evaluation and the way the analysis was presented in terms of relationship between success statements and questions. She had not seen any Citizens' Panel evaluation that examined the expectation of participants and believed that all comments were direct 'food for thought'.

There is an expectation by Panellists that their Recommendations will be acted on. The Panel process needs to be a genuine opportunity for community members to be able to influence or contribute to discussions and decision-making on an issue. Panellists should be encouraged to specify who they want to make decisions, rather than generalising, such as 'they' or 'government'. Post-event communication with Panellists, Panel applicants and the wider community is imperative to ensure Panellists feel that their contribution is worthwhile and will assist the community in viewing this process as a valuable community engagement opportunity.

### **IMPORTANT LEARNINGS**

There were a number of lessons learnt by the Project Manager and Advisory Committee throughout the project, some of which are explained below.

**To reduce possible lag time in post event action plan development, the process should be run by the agency responsible for addressing the Recommendations.**

"For Citizens' Juries to be effective tools of participation there should be strong links back to the decision-making body" (Carson, 2003). One of the important promises from the Citizens' Panel event was to provide feedback to the Panellists so that they know that their Recommendations, time and effort has been seriously listened to and considered. As previously mentioned the Citizens' Panel project was a collaborative process between DPI and NCCMA. DPI was primarily responsible for the co-ordination of the project and NCCMA was responsible for addressing the Recommendations. Even though the NCCMA had an active member on the Advisory Committee, DPI could not guarantee what would happen to the Recommendations once they were handed over to the NCCMA.

For a more fluid process, ensuring the Panels' Recommendations are actioned within a reasonable time frame and therefore all participants are informed of the possible outcomes, it would be recommended that the agency responsible for addressing the Recommendations (in this case the NCCMA) be responsible for running the process. However, it must be noted that in cases where there are a number of agencies responsible for the issue being faced (such as in the majority of NRM projects) there may be difficulty in identifying the key agency to organise the process. In cases such as these it would be important to ensure that all agencies involved have an equal role, all be part of the Advisory Committee, and a written agreement exists stating that the Recommendations will be responded to within a predetermined time post Panel event.

**There needs to be some level of controversy in the issues being investigated to enable a variety of opinions to be presented.**

According to Carson (2003) a Citizens' Panel is most useful "when there are competing vested interests, high stakes in the outcome, where decisions made will have an impact on the broader community, where there is scientific uncertainty (ie not a single generally accepted scientific opinion) and there are high levels of risk involved."

When determining the focus topic for the Citizens' Panel, project co-ordinators considered the management of the Loddon River frontages to be fairly controversial. This was thought to be reflected in the wide variety of Key Presenters involved in the Loddon River Citizens' Panel process. However, the general facts provided by all Key Presenters seemed to point to the same conclusions so that by the end of the two and a half days the Recommendations seemed quite evident. During the evaluation process one Panellist commented "[there were] some very consistent and common thoughts amongst most speakers, leading the Panel perhaps to a particular decision or recommendation."

Organisers believe that if a more diverse focal topic and therefore range of opinions had been presented it may have promoted more in depth discussions and allowed for more creative and unique Recommendations.

**Panellists found it a rewarding process that increased their awareness and knowledge of their local environment.**

Evaluation identified the intended agency and community goodwill created through the Citizens' Panel process truly engaged the community, was powerful and should be embraced and strengthened. The benefits of the process go further than the Recommendations the Panellists provide, it also gives the Panellists an opportunity to gain insights and knowledge about issues of importance in their region, networking with other community members and organisations, and may potentially lead to further involvement of Panellists in other community issues, events and/or groups. One Panellist commented *"I've gained a lot of valuable information from the speakers and learnt quite a bit. I hope my recommendations go towards building a different water frontage for the Loddon."* While another said *"[the event] widened my conservation network throughout the Loddon."*

**The Citizens' Panel process is a useful method for gaining community opinion/ideas and appears to be faster than traditional focus groups. It is also more rewarding for all participants and organisers alike.**

The project team found the Citizens' Panel a worthwhile process for encouraging community input. "A Citizens' Jury allows decision makers to hear directly from citizens and to learn about their values, concerns and ideas regarding a particular issue or problem" (Jefferson Centre, 2004).

While the planning phase to run a Citizens' Panel is quite lengthy (up to six months) overall the process was thought to be more time efficient and cost effective than previously employed engagement methods, with considered, informed and constructive Recommendations produced at the end of the two to five days. Furthermore, it encourages organisations to seek alternate points of view on community issues and strengthen the ties between government organisations, and relationships between government and community representatives.

The majority of participants, including the Advisory Committee members, found the process and event very rewarding. One Panellist commented *"I can use this process/information to have positive outcomes both professionally and private"* and one of the Facilitators mentioned *"[it was a] pleasure to assist a group to assess technical information and write strong achievable recommendations."*

## **Conclusion**

Effectively engaging communities in the planning and decision-making processes of government can improve the quality of policy being developed, making it more practical, relevant and accepted. The project's lead agencies viewed the Citizens' Panel process as a valuable community engagement tool, allowing a strong involvement from a range of stakeholders throughout the process; a greater awareness of river frontage health (including cultural heritage) to be developed by Panellists; and a useful tool for community networking. The Citizens' Panel process was also deemed to be a resource (time and financial) effective and efficient way of engaging the community in decision-making and planning processes. Using community engagement tools such as the Citizens' Panel also assists in building more resilient relationships with community and strengthens their ability to join with government and other stakeholders in dealing with complex issues and change. However, these relationships will only grow and prosper if promised actions are implemented.

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## Developing an Integrated Program of Community-Engaged Teaching and Research from the Bottom Up – Or: How Does an Individual Academic Practice Engagement in Australia Today?

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### Abstract

*Defining community engagement as collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity, this paper focuses on how interested academics can build a career that includes community engagement, even if their immediate environment has not (yet) embraced the concept. Indeed, the paper focuses on situations where promotion and other forms of recognition are primarily or exclusively based on publishing in peer-reviewed journals and on attracting external research income.*

*The paper starts from engaged learning as a particular kind of experiential learning characterised by its emphasis on reciprocal learning and reflection on the learning process itself. It then develops the idea that engaged teaching and partnerships can lead to opportunities for engaged research that is also characterised by an emphasis on knowledge development, which is shared by the academics and their partners, and on the self-reflectivity of this knowledge development process. The paper then outlines the implications of undertaking this process in reverse, starting with community-engaged research in preparation of community-engaged teaching and learning.*

*The paper shows how this reversal can allow academics to gain recognition according to the established criteria of publications and external research income while at the same time creating the conditions not only for their own community-engaged research, but also for a better recognition of community engagement in their discipline and as a consequence also in their institution. This process hinges on the emphasis on reflection of the learning process itself, which is typical for community engagement and which connects with epistemological discussions in each discipline or discipline area.*

*The paper posits that economics is not the only academic discipline that could greatly benefit from such an emphasis on the value of this kind of reflectivity in research.*

**Keywords** Community engagement, economics, epistemology

### Introduction and Background

This exploratory concept paper presents the results of a year's worth of reflections on an attempt at introducing community engagement into an economics department at an Australian university. The university as a whole had embraced community engagement at the very top level and the leadership had followed through on their commitment by establishing a central unit responsible for the support of community engagement at all levels. In the newly introduced common degree in the business faculty, to which the economics department belongs, each student has to undertake a community-engaged capstone unit in his or her discipline.

Economics as a discipline is in its theoretical endeavours arguably the academic discipline most hostile towards recognising the value of community engagement both in teaching and in research. This particular economics department, however, used to pride itself as being a pluralist one, where a wide range of theoretical views and approaches are not only held by staff, but also taught to students. It is within the resulting tensions that these reflections on what an academic with minimal support from colleagues and immediate superiors can do to include community engagement in her or his career planning.

As will become particularly evident by the end of the paper, what follows is not a tried and tested recipe, but rather part of my own attempt at making it work. The very writing down and publishing of my reflections in this conceptual paper can be seen as the proverbial proof of the pudding, testing in first person whether the approach can work. Detailed elaborations on the various concepts developed here will need to make part of further research.

## COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING AND RESEARCH

### Community-Engaged Learning

In the preparation of the capstone unit I relied mainly on US American literature on service learning – not for particular theoretical reasons, but rather because here I found the only material that vaguely related to economics (McGoldrick 1998, McGoldrick, Battle and Gallagher 2000). Following Sarena Seifer and Kara Connors, I see service learning as one form of experiential learning, with the following specific differences: ‘the value proposition of service-learning is not as one-sided as it is with volunteering, nor does service learning have the technical or the individual development focus of an internship or field study’ (Seifer and Connors 2007: 6)

Having stated that there are literally hundreds of definitions of service-learning, Seifer had written in an earlier publication that ‘service learning has its theoretical roots in experiential learning theory;

- is developed, implemented, and evaluated in collaboration with the community;
- responds to community-identified concerns;
- attempts to balance the service that is provided and the learning that takes place;
- enhances the curriculum by extending learning beyond the lecture hall and allowing students to apply what they are learning to real-world situations; and
- provides opportunities for critical reflection (Seifer 1998: 274).

I want to acknowledge at this point that it is indeed problematic to equate service-learning with community-engaged learning. I mean problematic here literally as worthy of being seen as a problem that needs to be investigated without pre-empting the outcome of the investigation. So at the end, once I have investigated the question further, I may or may not see this tentative equation as a problem.

I will come back to this issue in the first part of the last section, but for the time being I define community engagement as a collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. In so doing I tentatively identify two key aspects for community-engaged learning: I see community-engaged learning as a form of experiential learning with an emphasis on (1) reciprocal learning and (2) reflection on the process of learning itself.

It is this second emphasis that is of particular importance in the context of introducing community engagement into the discipline of economics. If community-engaged learning is characterised by the reflection on the very process of learning, then students who embark on this journey, will not limit their thinking to the ways of learning, but will very quickly include the content of their learning into their reflections, as the following example shows.

Reflections of this kind have led a group of French students from the most prestigious schools of economics to publish a petition on the web in June 2000, from which very quickly a worldwide movement grew, which in the English-speaking world is called the *post-autistic economics movement*. A brief yet relatively comprehensive overview over the history and development of this movement is provided in Fullbrook 2003. More information can be found on the movement’s website at [www.paecon.net](http://www.paecon.net) .

There are also less dramatic examples, but they all show that this kind of reflection will almost inevitably lead students to investigate epistemological questions, in other words, to raise questions around each discipline’s fundamental questions of *How do we know what we think we know?* Depending on the level of self-reflectivity in a particular discipline, this will lead to more or less serious frictions with the teachers and other academics. In any case, however, these questions will open an area of research, where community engagement can make particularly interesting contributions.

### Community-Engaged Research

In this context I define community-engaged research along similar lines as community-engaged teaching or learning, as a form of research with a conscious emphasis on (1) knowledge that is jointly developed by academics and community partners and (2) self-reflectivity of the knowledge development process itself.

Such a definition allows me to clearly distinguish between community-engaged research and applied research. The contribution the community partners make to knowledge development is a constituting

element of the former, as distinguished from the latter, where pre-existing knowledge in the discipline is applied to a particular situation. In other words, for research to qualify as community-engaged research it is necessary for the disciplinary knowledge to be augmented by what the community partners contribute.

This then begs the question how this concept of community-engaged research differs from participatory action research. While I explicitly recognise that there are a wide variety of definitions of participatory action research, I am using Steven Jordan's seminal 2003 article *Who stole my methodology? Co-opting PAR* to highlight some relevant differences.

Jordan outlines the two senses in which participatory action research (PAR) has traditionally been a methodology of the margins: first, PAR's rejection of the notion that social research could be value-free, objective or scientific by denouncing this notion as an ideological position trapped in capitalism's power relations, and second, PAR's inherent link with the struggle of oppressed or subordinate groups to improve their situation. He adds that it's commitment to linking social justice with research is yet another reason why mainstream social science has relegated PAR to the fringes of legitimate social research' (Jordan 2003: 186).

If community-engaged research is at the 'fringes of legitimate social research' – and I am not claiming it necessarily is or should be there – then it is there for different reasons. Community-engaged research shares with participatory action research the concern for an active role of the community partner in the development of knowledge, which ensures a specific contribution to the disciplinary knowledge. But community-engaged research does not necessarily share an inherent link with the struggle of oppressed or subordinate groups that is constituent for participatory action research – at least in its non-coopted form. Thus, any fringe status community-engaged research may have in a particular discipline must come from its second conscious emphasis mentioned above, that of 'a self-reflectivity of the knowledge development process itself'.

However, if in a particular discipline the thinking about the process of knowledge development leads to a position at the 'fringes of legitimate social research' in that discipline, it is actually the discipline itself that has a few questions to answer. I will come back to this issue in the last section of this paper.

At this stage I want to conclude this first section of the paper by summing up the argument so far: starting with a definition of community-engaged teaching and learning that borrowed heavily from literature on service-learning, I develop a notion of community-engaged research, which I then distinguish both from applied research and from participatory action research. However, when considering how an individual academic can practice engagement in Australia today, the movement does not have to be from community-engaged teaching and learning to community-engaged research, the development can also be vice-versa. This is the topic of the next section.

## **HOW TO PRACTICE ENGAGEMENT ON YOUR OWN**

This section is concerned with the situation of those of us, whose institution may have taken on board community engagement at an institution-wide level, with or without having established institution-wide support structures, but whose discipline and immediate superiors have not (yet) embraced the concept.

### **Common Australian Realities**

While various forms and degrees of engagement are entering the visions and mission statements of many Australian universities, the daily realities of teaching and research look different for a great many Australian academics, as the consequences of those beautiful statements have often not impacted on the ways in which workloads are allocated or promotion applications assessed. All too often the yardsticks are still limited to publications in scholarly journals and, may be, attraction of external research funding.

In this situation I propose using the development from community-engaged teaching and learning to community-engaged research outlined above in reverse, as a strategy that allows you to practice engagement while still measuring up to the established yardsticks – and once your institution gets around to recognising engagement in its own right for promotion and workload allocations, you are up there with an impressive track record already.

The remainder of this section will outline a possible strategy to achieve this end, while the following section will discuss some implications in more details.

## **Outline of a Possible Strategy**

The basic outline of this strategy is very simple indeed: start with community engaged research in a field in which you are interested, publish and attract external funding for your research, and then develop opportunities for your students to join in with community-engaged teaching and learning opportunities that are backed up by the research infrastructure you have developed, rather than by support from your immediate institutional surroundings.

To begin with, I want to acknowledge that while this plan sounds straight forward, it is easier said than done, and, as usual, the devil is in the detail. First of all, the plan assumes that you can set up community-engaged research more easily than community-engaged teaching. This is of course only true in so far as you have more control over your research than over your teaching, which is not necessarily the case in all institutions.

Second, this plan also assumes that you can gain at least the same support for community-engaged research as for other research. This is only the case, if your 'loneliness' in wanting to embark on community engagement is due more to the specifics of your discipline than the specifics of your institution. However, if this is the case, it is likely that the institution-wide research support structures are more open to community engagement and its particular opportunities than your immediate institutional surroundings, including your departmental colleagues and leadership.

Thirdly, you will need to harness any institution-wide support structures for community engagement to support you in your research. While community-engaged research is not at the core of what most support structures have been set up to do, it is likely that many people working there will be interested in what you are planning to do. In many cases you will be able to harness an interest on the part of both the research and the community engagement support structures to work with you and with each other, as they both can gain from the collaboration.

At this stage I would like to stress the importance of looking for allies right from the start – building up relationships with community partners is a long-term endeavour, and there will inevitably be times when it all gets too much for you alone and you curse the day you embarked on this venture, no matter how strong your convictions may be that community engagement is the right way to go.

After all, the very fact that you are convinced this is at least one of the right ways will make you feel even lonelier in relation to your immediate colleagues, who do not share your views and who, at least at those times when the going gets tough for you, appear to have chosen the easier way to quicker success. At those times the opportunity to ring up a senior colleague in the institution's research or engagement office for a quick debrief can be a life-saver for your sanity – and is likely to help you solve the problem that got you down in the first place.

## **First Steps to Consider**

This sub-section outlines some issues to be considered at the very beginning, when you choose the field in which you want to develop partnerships that are interesting to you and interested in undertaking community-engaged research together with you. I acknowledge that there will always be an element of chance in the people you actually meet and with whom you form good relationships. Yet it pays to think about a few issues more systematically in light of what you want to achieve with the community engagement on which you are about to embark, in particular, if you are doing it in an immediate environment that is not (yet) supportive.

I recommend you consider all the research areas that interest you, then think about all the community partners with whom you could start building relationships, and then choose one that relates to the following issues:

(1) As you will eventually want to develop community-engaged teaching and learning opportunities for your students, choose a research area that can provide content material that can be integrated into some of your coursework teaching. This will allow you not only to enrich your existing teaching with some of your research results, but also to build on your established relationships when you will be ready to organise practical opportunities for your students' engagement activities.

(2) If community-engaged research is characterised by a conscious emphasis on knowledge that is jointly developed by academics and community partners, then you will need to choose from all the

possible community partners those whose contributions are most likely to develop the existing discipline knowledge further. In other words, you will be looking for a community partner with an issue or problem, for which it is not immediately clear how to go about finding a solution – otherwise it would be applied research. This means that your research will necessarily produce significantly new knowledge – with all the glory once you are successfully published, but also with all the difficulties, rejections and delays this entails in the process of eventually getting to be successfully published.

(3) The second characteristic of community-engaged research mentioned above was the emphasis on the use of self-reflectivity in the knowledge development process itself. While not many community partners will have talked about the issues at stake here in these terms, you can check this relatively easily: if they would be happy with you doing what traditional or applied research in the discipline would do, they are not the right partners. You would be looking for a community partner whose problems can not be easily solved with what is already known in the discipline.

In addition, however, you would be looking for a community partner with whom you can discuss the epistemological issues raised by the way in which you are going about the research together. This includes a wide range of issues around the question *How do we know what we think we know?* In these discussions you would want to be able to include issues about the key differences between your joint research results and traditional research, as well as about the different beneficiaries of both kinds of research. I will discuss this point in more detail in the last section.

(4) Should you at this stage still have several topics and / or community partners to choose from, you may consider that community-engaged research activities that are of sufficient interest to the community partner are likely to generate some form of research income external to your institution, at least as time goes on and both partners can apply for funding from third parties. So partners' abilities to either have their own funding or to support you in applying jointly to third parties may also be a consideration in your decision.

## **SOME IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS**

This section will consider two of the four issues mentioned above in more detail. The first and the fourth issue mentioned are related to academics' career development and the objective of integrating community engagement in a situation where the immediate environment is not (yet) supportive of community engagement. The second and third issue, however, are closely related to the nature of community engagement itself, and hence it may be worthwhile considering them in some more detail, in particular for disciplines, where considerable resistance against community engagement is common.

### **Community-Engaged Research Is Necessarily Critical Research**

If I can choose between different community partners, with whom I could undertake community-engaged research in the field in which I am interested, and if each of them has something unique to contribute, my choice of partner will have an impact on my research results.

This follows logically from the first emphasis that is typical for community-engaged research, the emphasis on academics jointly developing knowledge together with their community partners. It is also the context for the second emphasis that characterises community-engaged research, the emphasis on self-reflectivity, on jointly thinking about the very process of the knowledge development itself.

Thinking about the process of knowledge development together with my community partner raises questions about our understanding of knowledge, of how knowledge is acquired, and of how knowledge is recognised as knowledge, rather than dismissed as one belief amongst others. The very definition of community engagement requires us to think about these and related so called epistemological questions – and this will be resented by those, who think the tried and tested ways of their discipline are not to be questioned and need not be discussed as part of the very research itself. I will talk more about these kinds of reactions in the last part of this section.

In order to be able to think about the process of knowledge development in a structured way, I will follow Sandra Harding's clear distinction between method, methodology and epistemology. Harding (2004: 457) describes methods as techniques for gathering evidence and argues that in principle three ways of proceeding in gathering evidence can be distinguished: listening to informants, observing behaviour, or investigating historical traces or records, including statistics.

Harding clearly distinguishes method from methodology, which she describes as 'a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed; it includes accounts of how "the general structure of theory finds its application in particular scientific disciplines" (Caws 1967: 339)' (Harding 2004: 458). Thus, methodology is looking at how a particular theory is being used in a particular situation by a particular

team of researchers.

An epistemology is a theory of knowledge addressing questions that deal with *How do we know what we think we know?* Harding writes: 'Sociologists of knowledge characterize epistemologies as strategies for justifying beliefs: appeals to the authority of God, of custom and tradition, of "common sense," of observation, of reason, and of masculine authority are examples of familiar justificatory strategies (ibid.).

Epistemological questions thus would include the questions raised by Harding: Who can be a 'knower'? What tests must beliefs pass to be recognised as knowledge? What kind of things can be known? (ibid.) But they also include questions like: Who determines which questions are being asked? Which limitations are acceptable consequences of which methods of inquiry? Which disciplinary boundaries serve which interests?

Community-engaged research requires that my community partners are included not only in the development of knowledge, but also in the thinking about how we develop knowledge together. My choice of community partner will thus have a big impact on the joint answers to some of the epistemological questions just raised. Hence the reasons why I choose a particular partner need to be part of my epistemological discussions – obviously I can no longer limit my 'methods chapter' to questions of methods.

### **An Illustration**

I will attempt to use some of the considerations in Michael Darcy's 2007 article 'Place and Disadvantage: The Need for Reflexive Epistemology in Spatial Social Science' in *Urban Policy and Research* to illustrate some of the consequences of community-engaged research I have outlined above. I have chosen this article because Darcy discusses here how the lack of epistemological considerations influences traditional research, not community-engaged research. However, his story lends itself to illustrate how the choice of two different community partners could have led to two different outcomes – even if in both cases joint epistemological considerations had taken place. Darcy himself reflects on community-engagement elsewhere and in a different context (Darcy et al. 2008).

Darcy is interested in how spatial social science uses spatially aggregated statistics in the context of public housing policy development in Australia, where a trend towards using regeneration activities and tenure diversification policies can be observed, with the aim of overcoming 'concentration of disadvantage' and of achieving its counterpoint, 'social mix'.

In this situation Darcy could consider undertaking a community-engaged research project. He could choose as a community partner one of the State Housing Authorities and evaluate what they could contribute to his research. Most likely State Housing Authorities could provide a lot of statistical data for him to analyse, may be more than any other spatial social sciences researcher ever had available. He would be likely to get access to the Authorities' long-term planning documents, which he could evaluate against a wide range of statistical data and projections.

Would this partnership allow the two partners to develop significantly new knowledge together, knowledge that goes beyond what applied research could have achieved? Which research questions would the two partners be likely to identify for their joint research? What epistemological questions would they want to raise, and how would they relate to the questions of 'social mix' and 'concentration of disadvantage'? Which limitations would they find acceptable consequences of the methods they would choose for their research?

However, Darcy could also choose a community partner from among the many tenant organisations and make use of the rich tapestry of experiences their members can contribute. He could rely on publicly available statistical data, disaggregate them and augment them with qualitative analyses based on the stories of the members of the tenant organisation. Which new knowledge would this partnership develop, beyond that which applied research would achieve? What would be likely research questions of interest to both partners? Which would be the key epistemological questions in this partnership? Are they likely to question disciplinary boundaries or particular established tests beliefs must pass to be recognised as knowledge?

I have developed the two choices Darcy could make here purely for illustrative purposes. As the title of his article shows, he has already identified a need for reflexive epistemology among those who are currently undertaking spatial social science in the field. He does acknowledge that '[g]iven the predominance of housing policy and management institutions in research funding, it is inevitable that

social scientists must make their work relevant to the policy process' (2007: 358). Yet the article clearly outlines some of the pitfalls that result from a lack of epistemological considerations – and who the winners and the losers of this state of affairs are. Thus as a whole the article provides a good illustration of why we are more likely to ask some epistemological questions in some partnerships, and other epistemological questions in other partnerships.

#### Resistance from Colleagues Who Are Comfortable in Their Ivory Towers

While the previous part of this section illustrated the impact of different partnerships on the epistemological questions likely to be raised, this part will look at the epistemological questions raised by those who resent and resist the introduction of community-engaged research in their discipline.

One reason why academics in some disciplines resist the introduction of community engagement is exactly their lack of self-reflectivity, their active or passive refusal of considering any epistemological questions at all. A beautiful and provocative illustration for this state of affairs has been written by Sandra Harding in the inaugural issue of the journal *Feminist Economics* under the title 'Can Feminist Thought Make Economics More Objective?' In this article Harding demonstrates that it is not feminist analysis that introduces value-laden statements into an otherwise value-free economic discipline, but that it makes visible the value-laden statements that permeate economics as a discipline.

Community-engaged research operates in a similar way: by openly discussing the epistemological questions the academics and their community partners will address, it raises the question which epistemological questions traditional ivory-tower research raises – or not. I can not sum the issue up better than did one of the bright students in the capstone unit mentioned earlier when she came to me after having investigated the poverty trap for about 10 weeks and said: 'It almost appears to me as if economics as a discipline always stands on the side of the rich.'

Hence, it is not surprising that those colleagues, who are comfortable in their ivory towers with their unreflected epistemologies, resent the provocation that community engagement presents for them. In disciplines like economics, where the mainstream of the discipline has circled the wagons against any epistemological questioning in an aggressive way, there are only limited publication and promotion opportunities for those who do not adhere to the dominant but implicit epistemology.

In such a situation it is important for a successful use of the strategy outlined here to consider carefully how to develop a publication track record in community-engaged research in the discipline in question. One way I am considering is to start publishing discipline-related community-engaged research first in community engagement journals. The next step would include publishing in interdisciplinary and methodology journals by focusing on these aspects of the community-engaged research.

And once I will have gained recognition for my work by those familiar with its methodological and epistemological aspects, I can hope to start publishing in my own discipline of economics – may be.

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## **Community Planning For A Sustainable Future: University, Local Government & Other Stakeholders**

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### **Abstract**

*Fruitful relationships, developed over time among higher education, local government and other stakeholders in South Australia's second-largest regional city, have been mutually beneficial. The Centre for Regional Engagement at the University of South Australia (UniSA) campus has provided educational and research programs to meet the needs of local commerce and industry and of a range of government, non-government, and community organisations. Business and industry have offered guidance concerning University research directions and new study programs, and have made available student placement opportunities and subsequent graduate employment. The support given to the campus has been invaluable for its development.*

*Community engagement has become a mantra of local government, industry, and higher education, as evidenced by Local Government Act requirements and current mission statements. Collaboration by UniSA, through its Centre for Rural Health and Community Development, with the Whyalla City Council in producing the Whyalla 2022 Community Plan provides a recent example of such links. A detailed, well-publicised process was formulated, the input of community members and stakeholder groups being an essential component.*

*From this process there are lessons to be learned by all stakeholders that could improve future engagement, and these are explored in the paper. Collaboration, cooperation and continued engagement will nurture current links, thereby ensuring a sustainable future for these relationships and also for the community in which these stakeholders live and work.*

**Full paper available in the AUCEA e-journal Spring 2008 [www.aucea.org.au](http://www.aucea.org.au)**

## Coast: Engaging For a Sustainable Future through Broadcast, Dialogue and Partnership

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### Abstract

*In 2005, a new television series, Coast, reawakened the United Kingdom's interest and enthusiasm for its coastline. Co-produced by The Open University (The OU) and the BBC, Coast has engaged a wide audience, not only with our coastal heritage, but has helped to provide a focal point for discussions about our environmental future.*

*Based on the series, The OU has developed, delivered and evaluated a series of nationwide face-to-face and online projects designed to make the coastline, its heritage and future, relevant to adults and children alike. This paper highlights how a spectrum of different approaches, delivered by a university alongside a range of local and community partners, can be brought together to engage often new audiences with environmental issues. The evaluation, and its results, are shared and discussed, highlighting the lessons learned for the future.*

### Introduction

Since its inception in 1969, the Open University has been making radio and television broadcasts alongside the BBC. Initially an important part of our distance-learning teaching strategy, our broadcasts now represent a major element of our outreach strategy: both attracting new students and offering learning opportunities to those who might not otherwise have access to them. Creating an interest in subjects ranging from physics, to arts, languages and music, the OU's programmes often engage with wide audiences. Programmes in which there is a strong environmental or natural history theme in particular are often seen to be highly successful at delivering science learning opportunities. (Dingwall and Aldridge, 2006)

Despite the high number of viewers, maintaining the audience's interest beyond the programmes themselves can often be difficult. After the viewers are interested, how can they be more thoroughly engaged with the issues and areas discussed within a programme? In the past, the OU's response has been to encourage learning, in terms of our own courses, as well as general information. The OU produces a "print-item" to accompany its programmes, often including further information and lists of relevant OU courses. For the sixth series of *Rough Science*, presenters each gave one of their favourite experiments for viewers to try at home, which were produced as a series of glossy cards. The OU and the BBC also have a joint learning web portal – [www.open2.net](http://www.open2.net) - to which all viewers are directed at the end of each co-produced programme. Open2.net includes academic articles, interactive games, quizzes, as well as links to other sites.

Promoting learning is one of the main objectives for OU/BBC broadcasts. Often programmes reach new audiences in a way that other outreach initiatives are unable to do. The audiences' reaction to programmes such as *Coast* suggest that more can be done, perhaps moving beyond learning alone to learning and engagement. For the purposes of this article, the term *learning* is used to describe a more formal learning. In the case of The OU, this might include courses, lectures or talks. *Engagement* is used to describe a more active interest in a particular subject, including workshops, taking part in discussions, informally visiting an area or volunteering.

A key problem with a project with a limited budget is maintaining engagement beyond the lifetime of the series or a funding period. The project team decided to utilise the internet as a mechanism for doing this, due to the relatively low cost, accessibility and flexibility inherent in a website. We believe this approach could provide relevant and accessible information and activities which could be made available for a significant period of time, even to those not normally reached by our activities. It also provided the opportunity to explore outreach activities with the potential to "go viral", and therefore reach an even wider audience. More problematically, however, making activities available online, particularly through the OU/BBC learning site, depends on viewers both having access to the internet and a sufficient amount of interest to look for a particular programme or item. A second method for

engaging audiences is to meet them face-to-face. Face-to-face events offer an opportunity for a longer and deeper engagement and are often enjoyed by staff as much as the participants themselves. The drawbacks are often that they are relatively expensive in terms of numbers reached, compared to online activities, and are more difficult to plan in terms of overcoming barriers to engagement. Moreover, the team was keen to ensure that a number of different routes to engagement were made available through the online and face-to-face activities.

## Methods

The television series *Coast* was first broadcast in 2005 as part of Trafalgar 200, a nationwide celebration of the Battle of Trafalgar. The programme was co-produced by the Open University and the BBC. The brief of the programme was simple: it sought to journey around the coast of the United Kingdom and tell stories about its geography, natural history, geology, its history and current state. *Coast* sought to engender not only an enthusiasm for the UK's coastal heritage, but also an interest in its future. It took a broad view of the interplay between the social, economic and environmental roles of the coast. Among a vast array of subjects, the programmes examined the future of oil imports into one of the UK's ports, the production of wind power on the Scottish island of Lewes, coastal and marine wildlife.

*Coast* proved to be a surprise success. In August 2005, *The Times* commented, 'Britain's love affair with the sea shore has been reawakened by a BBC series that has become this year's surprise hit.' (Sherwin, 2005) The first series generated approximately 4.1 million viewers per episode, and around 18 per cent of the audience share on each occasion. The success of *Coast* was evidenced both by the high numbers of viewers and high audience appreciation indices. Indeed, 45,947 viewers logged on to the website or called the OU for a free print material pack – including more information about the series and the stories it told. Not only did viewers enjoy the programmes, but it seemed to inspire them to go out, visit and engage with the coast.

Viewers commented that the series sparked a new interest in the coast and cast a new light on often forgotten areas. The main themes that arose from the comments received – beyond those about the programmes themselves – were that the public were interested to find out more and they wanted to know about how they could get involved with the areas near them. One viewer commented, for example, '...I have already learned things about my own area in Devon, but can't wait for the rest of the series.' (BBC, 2005) Another wrote, 'The programme that went out on Sunday mentioned volunteering. Could you please let me know the dates that have been set up for the beach clean-up?' The momentum for activity was clear. Although viewers were able to access the internet, read the articles and take part in the interactive activities available, the route from interest in the series to engagement with the coast and the surrounding issues of sustainability was difficult to follow.

The OU's BLAST! (Broadcast-Linked Activities in Science and Technology) team, planned two projects – each as a 'route to engagement' - based on the experiences and comments from the first series of *Coast*. One of the issues that arose from the comments received after the programmes was that the public wanted to be able to find out more about the area around them, as well as about volunteering opportunities. The first, funded by the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund, was a series of face-to-face events, designed to provide engagement opportunities for adults and children. The second, funded by the Crown Estate, was a series of online activities, as well as information on national and local volunteering opportunities. Each project sought to engage those who had been interested in the *Coast* series, but who were not experts in the field, or already particularly engaged with it. The face-to-face events in particular aimed to attract lower socio-economic groups who might not otherwise attend a university engagement event.

We obtained funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund which enabled us to deliver eight face-to-face *Coast* events around the country. The aims of the events were build upon the success of *Coast* and enable the public to find out more about the UK's coastline; to highlight education and local volunteering opportunities for further engagement with the coast; to encourage communities to engage with local issues that affect the coast and sustain their interest; to evaluate the project and develop a model of good practice for engagement with coastal issues. The objectives were therefore to develop and deliver face-to-face interactive events; involve national and local organizations; work with local groups and venues to choose relevant, local issues to discuss and record issues discussed; evaluate each activity and produce a report and toolkit, based upon our experience.

We received confirmation that we had been granted funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund in April

2007. The project had originally intended to be run over the summer vacation (end July and August) that year. Although the planning and delivery time was considerably shorter than we had originally anticipated, we decided to run the project at the original proposed time, but needed to considerably revise our schedule. We chose eight venues around the country to host the events, spreading them nationally throughout the UK (including Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland) and regionally (London, East of England, Yorkshire, North East and South West). The eight events were run with the help of local Open University staff, using some of the university's thirteen regional offices. Marketing staff supported the project with OU information, as well as advertising the events locally and to their students. We were also able to employ OU associate lecturers in each area to help staff the event, in addition to the rolling team of central staff who attended each event. The activities were developed by contracted staff – associate lecturers, regular consultants and others.

Each event included number of components. The family workshops available including boat-making, using recyclable materials, for younger children; electricity-generating windmill and geology workshops for older children. Adults were encouraged to participate in all of the workshops so that they became family learning opportunities. We also had a postcard workshop in which we invited local people to bring their own postcards and help to create a scene which showed how the local area had changed over time. We ran discussion events at six of the eight events. Where we were unable to run discussion sessions, we ensured that we had talks from *Coast* presenters about the making of the series and some of the stories that emerged. Finally, we invited local community or volunteering groups to take part in the event, offering a means to highlight local opportunities to engage with the coast. Local OU marketing staff also attended to highlight relevant courses at each event. We also worked alongside local partners to attract audiences to the event, which is discussed more fully below. The activities, the discussion events in particular, were evaluated by an independent consultant.

## **Discussion**

For the events themselves, partnerships with the venue were one of the most prominent factors for success. The Great Yarmouth event at the Time and Tide Museum is an example of this and proved to be one of the most successful we ran in the series. Time and Tide is run by the Norfolk County Council. The museum was established in 2005, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and charges an entrance fee to all visitors. It is housed in an old herring smoke-house in the centre of Great Yarmouth and has strong links with the local community. An agreement was made with the museum that we would contribute £1275 in to order to make entrance free for all throughout the day of our event. The local links with the museum enabled us to promote the event more effectively among local media, including a radio interview on the morning of the discussion. The arrangement with the museum proved to be a great success and attracted 350 people to the museum that day – well above their usual attendance during August.

A second example of successful partnership working was the event at The Deep aquarium in Hull in Yorkshire. An agreement was made with the museum that we would contribute £2000 to provide 450 tickets for local Sure Start groups. Sure Start is a government initiative to promote learning among families with a low socio-economic status. The tickets were distributed among Sure Start groups in a number of different postcodes, with which the aquarium already had links. This approach was enormously successful in terms of bringing audiences to our event. Generally the audience for the Hull event, according to the occupation information given on the forms, were of a lower socio-economic group compared to those who had filled in the evaluation at other events. (Pontin, 2007) By contrast, in the areas where we were unable to set up effective local partnerships we were less able to attract audiences to the event. In Cardiff, for example, the attendance at our event was affected by other activities happening that day.

The face-to-face activities were a successful means of delivering engagement. The postcard activity, although relatively simple, was a great opportunity for discussion. Although many people were unable to bring their own postcards, it provided a talking-point, particularly for older adults. The most effective method for this workshop was to ensure that a member of staff was available to chat about what was on screen and ask questions about how the area had changed. It raised important issues about coastal development and how the coast could be preserved in the future. The windmill workshops acted as a good engagement opportunity for both adults and children. In particular it focused discussion on the offshore windfarms around the UK. (These could be seen at or near Great Yarmouth, Hull and Aberdeen.) When asked what they liked most about the coast, one child who had taken part in the workshop responded, 'It generates most electricity by using wind turbines in the sea and there are lots of fossils you can find.' Another commented, 'Because of all the wild life and natural energy source –

great place to play.’ The success of the geology workshops was dependent upon the expertise and enthusiasm of the person delivering them.

As mentioned above, we ran discussions on local coastal issues at six of the eight events. These included Marine Habitat and the Marine Bill (Plymouth), coastal development (Belfast) and access to the coast (Sunderland). The discussion topics were chosen after speaking to local experts, non-governmental organizations or councils. Local experts were invited to speak and then open a discussion with the audience. Generally, the discussion sessions were less well-attended than the main workshops. The independent consultant suggested that this might have been because of the term ‘experts’ in the publicity or that the events were held at the wrong time of day (although we were careful to vary the times of the discussions, from the afternoon to the evening).

Those who were able to attend the discussions were highly positive about them. In Aberdeen, one audience member said that she enjoyed ‘knowing about what’s on our doorstep, and I love programmes about the coast, etc.’ Other participants at the Aberdeen discussion said that it had inspired them to ‘walk more’ and another took down the details of each of the speakers in order to invite them to local community meetings in their area in the future. One participant said that the event has inspired them to ‘Find out more about what’s happening locally.’ The discussion in Northern Ireland had similar outcomes. Although the majority of attendees were professionals in the area, it offered a rare opportunity to bring them together, especially as members of the local planning office were represented. The comments received as a result suggested that there was a level of engagement, in terms of generating interest in the coast, learning and opinion-sharing between the public and local professionals who work on the coast.

Overall, the comments received showed evidence that people were inspired to engage with the coast, beyond the original event. Ensuring that local volunteering groups were represented, where we could, was an important part of this. The discussions also gave the audience access to speakers and information about local groups that they might not otherwise have had. After the discussion in London, one person wrote on their evaluation form that they planned on taking part in the Thames Clean-Up event mentioned. In Great Yarmouth, after discussions with staff at the venue another commented that she would investigate the work taking place on the Wash. Some adults mentioned that they planned to go on more walks, look around during their walks or look out for the geology and fossils.

The independent consultant, at the end of the project, made the following summary: that the events offered a high quality learning experience to all; that staff were hard-working, enthusiastic and offered creative and lively activities; that publicity was, in places, poor but that it improved throughout the course of the project. Creating successful publicity, in terms of attracting people to each event, was the most difficult part of the project. In essence, we learned that our press releases were too early (two weeks before each event), that leaflets were not always successful in targeting our audience, even when sent to a number of local libraries and community centres, and that pick-up by journalists was sporadic. However, when we were offered them, local radio interviews were relatively successful in terms of attracting audiences. One of the main findings, in terms of generating audiences, was not to rely on press releases and leaflets alone. Venue co-operation and support, where available, offered access to local e-mail lists, ‘What’s On?’ guides, as well as local media links.

The online activities followed the events. A range of activities were produced, as well as information about how to get involved with the local coast. The first was interactive activity was designed to show and explain coastal change over time. It used historical maps provided by the National Maritime Museum and the Sefton Coastal Project, as well as modern maps, provided by the Hydrological Office. Explanations for the visible changes in coastline and shifting silt were provided by OU academic staff. (See Figs 1. and 2.) The second interactive was a game entitled ‘Coastal Manager’. ‘Coastal Manager’ sought to highlight some of the issues involved with managing the coast. Academic staff supported the project through advice and provided background text for each available option, working alongside the web development team to produce a structure for the game. (See Figure 3) The game set up thirty different scenarios, twelve of which would be selected at random for each user iteration. The scenarios included ‘situations’ such as floods or oil spills; ‘planning applications’, including wind farms, tidal barrages, bird watching centres and factories; and ‘petitions’ for painting the local lighthouse, protecting local marine wildlife and repairing the pier. The user is given a random amount of ‘Shoreville Shillings’ at each new iteration of the game. Finally, the user’s success is measured against a number of criteria: economy, fish stocks, biodiversity, water quality and pollution. The ‘background text’ was designed to provide text from which the user could make an informed decision. (See Fig. 4)

The 'routes to engagement' sections included pages on local and national volunteering, interviews with people who work on the coast and information about skills that might be useful for finding out more about the coast (mapping and dealing with data). At the time of development there was no existing central repository for information about getting involved with the coast. The volunteering pages were therefore meant to act as a guide for those who wanted to find out more. Since December 2007, there have been 7419 unique visitors to the *Coast* pages, of which [ ] per cent have visited the Coastal Manager, [ ] per cent the coastal mapping activity and [ ] the volunteering pages. Further evaluation is currently taking place and will be made available through our website (<http://blast.open.ac.uk>) soon.

## Conclusions

The face-to-face activities developed and delivered were designed to support the television series *Coast*. Based on a divergent model of engagement, the team sought to provide activities that appealed to a range of ages, groups and locations throughout the UK. The success of the project was that we were able to achieve a genuinely diverse number of activities which, to a varying extent, offered real engagement opportunities.

The lessons we learned from the project were that using local partners to help deliver the events is crucial, particularly for a nationally-based institution such as The OU. Although regional offices were able to provide staff and some marketing support, the events with the most attendance were thoroughly supported by the venues who provided expertise as well as access to groups which a higher education institution finds difficult to reach.

Providing a number of different learning opportunities was similarly integral to the project and enabled us to cater for a range of age groups (from senior citizens to children under five) as well as groups with varying interests. The online activities similarly represented a number of different 'paths to engagement', from online learning activities to finding out more about the local area.

In many cases it was evident that discussion sessions provided opportunities for engagement which members of the public would otherwise not have had. For example, in Northern Ireland, they enabled disparate groups of both professionals and non-professionals to interact in a way often not possible, or simply not provided by other forums. In Sunderland, Hull and Aberdeen, audiences stated that the events provided them with information regarding their local areas, filling a niche not serviced by other outreach activities.

Useful lessons were also learned at other, less well-attended components of the *Coast* events. Although these events clearly offered real opportunities for engagement with local coastal issues, a number of factors needed to be considered.

The most important of these is ensuring that advertising, publicity and marketing are not neglected in the development of the events. Budgeting for these should be considered integral to all outreach projects and not a minor component to be added after the rest of the programme has been developed.

As the fourth and fifth series of *Coast* are currently being recorded, the lessons from this project will ensure that outreach initiatives for these series builds upon the successes and lessons learned throughout 2007.

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## Voices from the Field: Partnership to Improve Experiential Learning

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### Abstract

#### *Aims*

*This paper focuses on the development of a partnership between the Nursing and Rural Health Unit of a regional university campus and regional health agencies that provide placement opportunities for students. It explores the collaboration that transpired in order to meet the educational needs of the partner organisations, undergraduate students, program and course requirements, and new health agency staff. The paper outlines the lessons learnt in building quality and sustainable partnerships over the last five years, and reports on the evaluation of the conduct of preceptor ship workshops, which was a major initiative that resulted from the partnership.*

**Full paper available in the AUCEA e-journal Spring 2008 [www.aucea.org.au](http://www.aucea.org.au)**

## Understanding The “Partner” In Partnerships: A Review Of The Literature On Effective University-Community Partnering

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### Abstract

*Sustainable and effective university-community partnerships are not easy to create, yet they are an integral part of student community-based learning (Enos & Morton, 2003). To date, the main emphasis in most university-community partner research has been on the participating students, with a paucity of attention paid to the equal partners in the venture – the local community organization members (Bushouse, 2005). In this paper, the extant literature on effective university-community partnering is reviewed and key themes are drawn to assist practitioners and researchers who are involved in the design, execution and analysis of partnership programs. The goal of this paper is to highlight issues related to effective university-community partnering, with an emphasis on issues raised from the community partner perspective. This paper should provide a benchmark for academics and community members to use as they embark upon their first, or develop their existing, university-community partnership programs.*

*The issue of sustainability in terms of effective university-community partnership programs is an issue that has become increasingly important over the past decade (Minkler et al., 2006). In fact, collaborative programs aimed at community development have grown at an unprecedented rate over the past decade (Rich, Giles, and Stern, 2001). The most recent example of this in Australia was the May 8, 2008 announcement of the newly established partnership between Macquarie University and the Australian Volunteers International (AVI) organisation. The academic push toward partnership formation is, at least partially, due to the fact that “collaboration has become pivotal in ensuring quality postsecondary education” (Kisker, 2007, p.282). Today, we have research evidence that students, universities and communities are each positively and significantly impacted by university-community partnership experiences (Florence, et al., 2007). In the extant literature there are frequent calls for this type of partnership, an example is Sarah Flicker and her colleagues’ statement “it is now time to increase collaboration across and between communities and universities. As complex urban challenges become increasingly intractable, approaches that draw on the capacities and assets of all institutions are necessary” (Flicker, et al., 2007, p.239).*

*Although partnership programs are not new to academic environments, they are rapidly becoming the norm in university educational programs. Partnership programs are required for many of today’s best practice teaching tools (e.g., internship programs, practicum experiences, community engagement projects). Today’s partnership programs provide more than a simple “off-campus” location for student experiences. Education today pushes students to synthesise and evaluate (e.g., Bloom, 1956) as well as search for deep understanding (e.g., Biggs, 1999) about the economic, social and organisational systems of which they are contributing members. Partnership programs in today’s educational environments are designed to create a high level of awareness for students and community partner representatives, such that participating members can see beyond the borders of organisations to create opportunities for reciprocal learning and development (Paules, 2007). This type of vision and awareness is required for success in today’s professional world. To achieve sustainability (both in terms of high quality partnerships as well as environmental and social sustainability), organisations today are entering into long-term cross-sectoral partnerships (Bendell and Murphy, 2002) as members of what is now being called “The Partnership Society” (Googins and Rochlin, 2000, p.127).*

*The purpose of this paper is to review the extant literature on university-community partnerships. An underlying goal of this work is to provide a resource for faculty and community members to increase the quality of current and future partnerships while reducing and/or eliminating the existence of “paper tigers” (partnerships that exist in name only, with no educational or outcome-based substance) (Callahan and Martin, 2006). In terms of structure, this paper begins with a definition of university-community partnerships, then presents a summary of how to manage these partnerships. Finally, a set of key themes for implementation is presented to assist readers with the design of nascent, or the development of existing, university-community partnership programs. It should also be noted that throughout the paper we have included information from the literature on the often neglected, yet equally important, community partner perspective (Ferman and Hill, 2004).*



**Keywords:** Community engagement; University-community partnerships; Best practice review

## **DEFINING UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

A number of theoretical perspectives have been used to examine university partnership programs – these include linkage complexity (Barnett, Hall, Berg, and Camarena, 1999), learning theory (Callahan and Martin, 2007), goal setting (Clark, 1999), network embeddedness (Kisker, 2007), participatory action research (Flicker, et al., 2007; Williams, et al., 2008), evolutionary theory (Wohlstetter, Smith, and Malloy, 2005) and interpersonal relationships (Bingle and Hatcher, 2002). With each theoretical perspective comes another variation on the definition of a university-community partnership. Although there is a variety of definitions for these partnerships, the essential idea that runs across all of the definitions is that “sharing and joint responsibility” take place whereby “both parties, while coming from a different context, share an interest that allows them to work together for their mutual benefit and for the ‘larger good’” (Bernal, Shellman and Reid, 2004, p.33).

The definition above applies to university-community partnerships regardless of the catalyst for partnership formation. Reasons for creating a university-community partnership may include ideology (wanting to work with people with like-minded goals and values), generativity (wanting to work with people interested in producing new knowledge) and/or capacity building (wanting to work with people to stimulate change through positive interaction and outcomes) (Day, 1998). In terms of understanding interactions that lie at the core of these partnerships, one of key tenets of a partnership that involves a university partner is community involvement. Over time, universities have been engaged in numerous forms of community involvement including, but not restricted to, “cooperative extension and continuing education programs, clinical and pre-professional programs, top-down administrative initiatives, centralised administrative-academic units with outreach missions, faculty professional service, student volunteer initiatives, economic and political outreach, community access to facilities and cultural events and, most recently, service-learning classes” (Bingle and Hatcher, 2002, p.503). In terms of the Australian higher education research context, many of today’s most visible pedagogical activities, each falling under the classification of “work integrated learning” (WIL), are only possible if university-community partnerships exist. These teaching tools include: work based learning; work experience; practice/ practicum; clinical placement /practice; community based learning/project; co-operative education; professional skills program; work/job shadowing; work experience/vacation work; internship; apprenticeship; sandwich course; industry project, cadetship/traineeship and enterprise project (NAGCAS Carrick Scoping Study, 2008). For many of the most innovative and impactful teaching tools in use today, university faculty members and students are being pushed to move beyond classroom walls into the larger community for real-world, real-issue-based learning opportunities and experiences. University-community partnerships make this possible.

## **MANAGING UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

There are a number of papers that have been written with specific guidelines in place for managing university-community partnerships; most, if not all, of these papers focus on the importance of effective communication. For example, Lisbeth Hamer (2007) recommends the following steps for establishing university-community partnership projects:

- *do an educational needs assessment* to establish exactly what employers are looking for in your respective teaching domains,
- *establish contact with community organizations*, with a particular focus on the professional level of the industry partner contact person or team (i.e., do they have sufficient authority to make decisions and provide resources) as well as the needs of the organisation,
- *effectively market the students’ abilities*, she calls this “marketing incentives” which translates into carefully considering what new resources your students can provide to the organisation and how the students are potential employees, board members, and professional liaisons,
- *obtain commitment*, which may involve project contracts that come with issues of liability and confidentiality and
- *monitor the partnership dynamics* as there will invariably be challenges that arise – to create a successful and sustainable partnership requires adaptability and understanding.

In terms of her last point, she has a thorough list of issues that may negatively impact community partners’ abilities to carry through on project components; these are “sudden travel arrangements, unforeseen audits, termination of employment, relocation, company reorganisation, altered priorities caused by market forces, lack of resources, promotions, mergers and acquisitions and personal reasons” (p.26). In relation to this issue, it is important for partners, particularly those on the university

side of the partnership, to be able to “step into the shoes” (Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1991) of community partner members. Often, isolationism within the walls of the university leads faculty members to have unrealistically high expectations about timelines, priorities and outcomes. An academic partnership is usually only one of many collaborative relationships that local community organisation members are juggling to survive. With competing demands for resources, community partner representatives will often enter into the partnership with a “deep distrust” of the underlying goals of their academic partners (Ferman and Hill, 2004, p.252). If faculty members take the time to consider the community partners’ respective constraints and demands, and engage in open communication with the aim of collaboratively resolving issues as they arise (and they will arise), then the partnership is likely to grow stronger over time.

One tip for doing this well from the beginning is to openly discuss incentives for the partnership (i.e., what does each side hope to gain from the partnership?). There will invariably be differences across incentives and goals - some will fit nicely together (e.g., strategic plan development, grant writing) and some will demand concession-giving from one of the respective sides (e.g., research projects, generation of academic papers). If, however, incentive-based issues, wants and needs are addressed early in the partnership, then each of the partners will be clear as to each side’s respective goals. Thus, moving forward and resolving issues as they arise should be much easier for both sides than it would have been without an early discussion of each side’s short-term and long-term interests.

A second point related to effective communication is the need to engage in ongoing reflection throughout the duration of each partnership project (Saito, Imansyah, Kubok & Hendayana, 2007). Ideal partnership processes involve community partners in every aspect of the project(s) including survey development, interpretation of findings and communication of outcomes (Williams et al., 2008). To further highlight the need for continuous and effective communication, in an article on university-corporate partnerships, Michael Echols (2006) focuses on the value of communication and dialogue as critical components of successful partnerships. He states “if the university is not willing to engage in substantive dialogue around curriculum, there is a low potential for the educational partnership” (p.36).

In another example of how to manage these partnerships, Henrietta Bernal and her colleagues recommend the following “essential principles” as steps for success in developing and managing university-community partnerships:

- Develop partnerships based on a solid personal and professional relationship. Choose wisely.;
- Entry into new communities has to be guided by sound principles of fieldwork. See it, feel it, and think it.;
- There must be continuous opened communications and mutual planning. Keep no secrets.;
- The mission and goals of the partnership have to be clear and based on strong mutual commitment to the population served. Keep an eye on the ball.;
- Partners should be committed to assimilating changes while keeping the core values of the program intact. Don’t sell out.;
- There needs to be a commitment to evaluation. Don’t be afraid to look! and
- The continuation of the partnership requires persistence and perseverance by all parties involved. Don’t give up! (Bernal, Shellman and Reid, 2004).

Again, the focus on clarity and open communication throughout the partnering process is evident. With open communication and effective monitoring and evaluation, partnership programs should continue to move forward rather than stagnate or fail unnecessarily.

While effectively managing all types of university-community partnerships requires effective communication, it is important to note that not all partnerships are the same. One important aspect of managing a university-community partnership is to understand the type of collaboration in which each side is interested. Sandra Enos and Keith Morton (2003), identified a framework for categorizing campus-community partnership development over time. The continuum starts with what they have termed “transactional” one time events and projects and ends with “transformational” programs resulting in joint knowledge and work creation. Using this framework, Bushouse (2005) examined which type(s) of partnerships non-profit organizations were most interested in and found that, because of resource constraints (e.g., staff time), 64% of the organizations she sampled were only interested in transactional projects (the remaining 36% were open to longer term, more sustained engagements). A second way of conceptualizing a university-community partnership program is that of Dorado and Giles (2004). They discuss three ‘paths of engagement’ for university and community service partnerships: tentative, aligned, and committed. Tentative engagements are those where “learning behaviours are dominant” and “partners are not interested in building a sustainable relationship” (p.30). Engagements are aligned when partners “seek to create a better fit between their goals” (p.31); it is a path that most partners will

not remain on long, as they either transition to a committed partnership or dissolve their work together. Finally, the committed path of engagement represents those partnerships involving “actions and interactions that denote that partners value the partnership beyond the departing project” (p.31).

With a number of different paths and types of engagement, reflecting the various levels of interest, experience, and needs of community partners, an organization called “Campus Compact” ([www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)) published a list of “Benchmarks for Campus/Community Partnerships” – the stages and principles of this list are as follows (Torres, 2000, p.5-7):

Stage 1: Designing the Partnership.

Genuine democratic partnerships are:

- Founded on a shared vision and clearly articulated values
- Beneficial to partnering institutions
- Stage 2: Building Collaborative Relationships

Genuine democratic partnerships that build strong collaborative relationships are:

- Composed of interpersonal relationships based on trust and mutual respect
- Multidimensional: they involve the participation of multiple sectors that act in service of a complex problem
- Clearly organized and led with dynamism

Stage 3: Sustaining Partnerships Over Time

Genuine democratic partnerships that will be sustained over time are:

- Integrated into the mission and support systems of the partnering institutions
- Sustained by a “partnering process” for communication, decision making, and the initiation of change
- Evaluated regularly with a focus on both methods and outcomes

Once again, communication is present throughout this list. Additional components of this list that reflect concepts described in the other lists above include the need for activity and progression (as conveyed through the following concepts in this list – articulate, initiate, build, involve, integrate, led) and the focus on decision making and evaluation. With a series of lists written from different perspectives about how to manage university-community partnerships, each highlighting a similar set of points, the guidelines for success are relatively clear. That said, while the information summarized above on categorizing, managing and communicating as components of university-community partnerships is clear - it is only one piece of the puzzle. There are a number of key themes for implementation, drawn from the extant literature, that should be considered by both faculty members and community organization representatives involved in establishing or developing partnership programs.

## **KEY THEMES FOR IMPLEMENTATION: LESSONS LEARNED**

First and foremost, a key to effectively designing and developing university-community partnerships is to understand that each partner will, over time, contribute in different yet equally important ways. A true partnership does not exist with one partner leading the other; reciprocal contributions that are continually validated and celebrated are important components of these partnerships. This should be true in all aspects of partnership work – including research. Unfortunately, as stated above, the community partner side of the equation often has little or no voice (Ferman and Hill, 2004). There are a number of causes that have been attributed to this disparity.

One of the key lessons learned from the research in network embeddedness theory is that new partnerships typically default to highly structured interactions. This structure is often governed by the partner with the higher status, which in this case will invariably be the university partner. This fits with the criticism that many university-community partnerships are established on either charitable (i.e., one side “giving” to the other) or expert (i.e., where the university partner views his/her position as elitist and hierarchically dominant in the partnership) principles, rather than justice-based (i.e., where resources are viewed as mutual and issues are viewed as jointly owned) (Bringle and Hatcher, 2002). In terms of supporting the justice model, Carrie Kisker (2007) stated that for university-community partnerships to work they must be “jointly developed and managed... partnership participants must work to establish a high degree of trust among institutions and actors in them” (p.298).

The locus of decision making is one of the four factors identified in Callahan and Martin’s (2007) typology of organizational learning systems for university partnerships; they refer to this as joint versus independent decision making or “knowledge systems”. A suggestion for increasing the understanding required for joint decision making is to invite the academic partner representative to sit on the

community organisation's board for a specified period of time (Ferman and Hill, 2004). This step will not only increase the understanding on both sides of the partnership, but will also ensure that the partnership is visible to all board members and is on the organisation's strategic agenda.

Another lesson learned is around realistic goal-setting and timeline establishment. As Flicker et al. (2007) highlight in their summary of issues raised in university-community partnerships, when working to create significant and sustainable change in a community, university partner timelines are often unrealistically short. Change may take multiple semesters or years of continued work through the partnership. As such, setting realistic timeframes up front will alleviate disappointment, frustration and perceptions of failure on the part of engaged participants.

The creation of documents outlining clear expectations (e.g., terms of reference, contracts, partnership agreements, rules of engagement and decision-making processes, checklists) is another step toward establishing productive partnerships (Ferman and Hill, 2004; Minkler and Wallerstein, 2003). This can serve as a critical component of laying a foundation for open communication both in terms of front-end expectations and resource commitments as well as ongoing issues that arise as the partnership develops and matures.

Some seemingly insignificant, yet powerful in terms of sending a strong message about reciprocity in the partnership, actions that faculty members can perform to nurture and grow existing partnerships include:

- create inventories of university resources that community partner staff and clients can utilise (include contact details for relevant university members here);
- inform community members of activities and events that take place at the university when they are accessible to community members and not just students and staff;
- monitor the progress of any student projects – a simple phone call or email sends a message that you are thinking about the partnership and
- establish an end point for each aspect of the project – this will allow for small wins throughout the process and will give students and community members opportunities for reflection and feelings of success and productivity (Ferman and Hill, 2004).

On a final note about application, for university-community partnerships to be sustainable and sustained, they must be “integrated into the missions, policies and practices of higher education institutions” (Jacoby, 2003a, p.318). This is arguably the case for community partners as well – that the need for, and benefits of, partnering with other organisations (of which universities are one type of member) is deeply embedded into the community partner organisation mission and culture. For members of both sides of the university-community partnership, this type of embeddedness and organisational-level commitment should readily result from a carefully crafted partnership grounded in frequent and open communications.

## **Conclusion**

The increasing demand for, and prevalence of, university-community partnerships has changed the fabric of higher education. Students, faculty members, university administrators and staff are all having to reconceptualise the old “ivory tower” philosophy of university education into one that is based in community engagement and partnerships. Today's university-community partnerships are more than one-time visits or one-off interactions – they are increasingly focused on sustainability via long-term, positive and reciprocally-based relationships. Barbara Jacoby (2003b) calls this “the engaged campus” and notes that for a truly engaged campus/community relationship both parties must have common interests, responsibilities, privileges and power where “partnership synergies” are the result. The challenge put forth for readers of this paper is to utilise the above material to either collaboratively re-examine existing, or thoughtfully initiate new, university-community partnerships. In today's partnership-based environment, we have no choice but to move forward... together.

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## Universities and Their Regional Communities: A Theory of Engagement Based On Human Capital, Ethics and the Public Good

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### Abstract

*The popularisation of the engagement relations between universities and their local and regional communities over the past decade runs the risk of being a 'top-down' funding-conditional formulaic model of rules rather than a means for more acutely addressing the big issues of the world through principles framed around a relational ethic where context and the dynamic of entity-free 'enterprising' human capital are central.*

*In this paper we agree with arguments about the importance of 'place' in providing a context for building a relational ethic (Smith 2001). Elsewhere, we have termed this 'sp-ethics'. We also agree with arguments that a relational ethic is important in sustaining values for community cohesion in a globalising world where fragmentation appears to be the chief outcome (Bauman 1995, 2001, 2007).*

*In this paper, we suggest a relational ethic of 'place' offers a theoretical framework for university-based human capital, free of structural constraints, to address community concerns of global importance. In so doing this would provide two benefits. First, it offers a way beyond the transcendental for those seeking the practical implementation of moral principles in their communities in a world dominated by neo-liberal rules of institutionalism and individualism that do not offer solutions to global concerns. Second, it offers university-community engagement process and practice a theoretical underpinning to its current unguided and consequential ethical focus and a tighter connection between knowledge and the public good. In this regard we are keen to see a progression of the discipline beyond the interesting 'good practice' case study and a 'good faith' approach to addressing the public good by universities.*

*In implementing such an approach we suggest the vehicle is a stronger connection in the role of 'enterprising' human capital in university-community engagement with a focus on unambiguous pathways across education sectors and stronger connections to community priorities of global concern in the design and delivery of university programs. We suggest this role for universities and their communities because the ethics of 'enterprising' human capital is not yet constrained by the structural arrangements of corporate and institutional entities. An embedded relational ethic of this kind also calls for changes in university practice (management support, programs) and a re-balancing of funding arrangements at a policy level that support such practice.*

**Keywords:** University engagement, human capital, relational ethics, theory, community engagement

*"Do you know, I always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters, too? I never saw one alive before!"*

*"Well, now that we have seen each other," said the Unicorn, "if you believe in me, I'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?"*

*Alice's Adventures Through the Looking-glass – Lewis Carroll*

**Full paper available in the AUCEA e-journal Spring 2008 [www.aucea.org.au](http://www.aucea.org.au)**

## Driving Civic Engagement Within Higher Education In Ireland: A Contextual Picture Of Activities From The Local To The National Through The Evolution Of A Network

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### Abstract

*During the 1980's Ireland was an economically depressed nation with high levels of unemployment, emigration and low participation rates within higher education. However, since the 1990's Irish society has transformed and now boasts one of the developed world's fastest growing economies due to a variety of factors. These included incentivised tax schemes for industry and a well educated graduate force, culminating in what is now termed the 'Celtic tiger' and Europe's highest participation rates in higher education. This transformation is not without its cost however, as many lament the decrease of solidarity within communities and a perceived decline in levels of social capital. National statistics indicate a drop of 2% in participation rates of third level students in civic activity between 2002 and 2006. Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ireland, encouraged by new funding sources and a government 'Taskforce on Active Citizenship', have attempted to redress this decline by embedding both top-down and the bottom-up strategies to develop civic engagement.*

*This paper will address how this movement towards deepening civic engagement in higher education has evolved over the past seven years. We will examine the drivers and the context (local, European, national and international) within which this evolution has taken place. The first formal expression of this work was the establishment in 2001 of the Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI) at the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway) to underpin and realise the civic mission of the institution. The principle activities of the CKI are to embed service learning opportunities across all faculties and to facilitate student volunteering both on and off campus.*

*Following the success of the CKI, an informal network, entitled the 'Service Learning Academy' (SLA), was established through which several national seminars were organised and funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). The SLA was a bottom-up process aimed at harnessing the enthusiasm of academics, students and community interested in embedding service learning in academic programmes of study and supporting them in the process. This initiative highlighted the need to formalise and solidify activities nationally and in 2007 funding of 1.7 million euro was attained by five institutions, including University College Dublin (UCD), Dublin City University (DCU), National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUI Maynooth), University of Limerick (UL) and led by NUI Galway from the HEA for this purpose. This funding is being used to establish a formal and sustainable network with the objective of increasing the scale of student participation and volunteering opportunities in all partner institutions. This paper will offer an historical overview which points to some significant drivers in terms of evolving of local and national debate in Ireland, centering on the civic purpose of higher education and initial findings on the development of an inclusive civic engagement network.*

### Introduction

Within the context of Ireland a series of top-down and bottom-up drivers, rooted at local, national, European and international levels which enabled the development of 'Campus Engage', a network to promote civic engagement within higher education. The drivers can be categorised in terms of policies and legislation, availability of resources (governmental and philanthropic) and expressions of institutional activity and support. These drivers have competing and overlapping characteristics, sometimes static in nature and occasionally pushing or pulling levels of interest, discourse and practice. Some have compelled debate and practice, while others have been manoeuvred and applied to the situation by vested parties. This paper will explore some of the various drivers and the rise in national interest in civic engagement over the last seven years. At this early stage of development, we will attempt to assess the current situation, investigate civic engagement expressions at institutional levels, in particular the work of National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway) through the Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI) and the recently formed higher education network, 'Campus Engage'.

### NATIONAL CONTEXT AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

"I have a sense that many people are bothered about changes in social and cultural attitudes and behaviour....it is not just about the practical, day-to-day pressures which shape how we live. There is a

concern that we have become more materialist, maybe even more selfish. And if we have, I believe many people would conclude that, for all our new wealth, we are much the poorer.” (Ahern, 2006)

The former Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Ireland, Mr. Bertie Ahern outlined his concern related to the changing nature of Irish society, arising from what we ‘endearingly’ term the ‘Celtic Tiger’, Ireland’s economic boom. The drift from the collective to the individual, the civic to the material and, in his opinion, a decline in levels of social capital nationally, culminated in the creation of an innovative entity of national enquiry, the ‘Taskforce on Active Citizenship’. Established in 2006, the ‘Taskforce’ was charged with advising ‘the Government on the steps that can be taken to ensure that the wealth of civic spirit and active participation already present in Ireland continues to grow and develop’ (Taskforce on Active Citizenship Report, 2007). The following year, the Taskforce drove a series of recommendations forth with two offered to higher education; firstly, to establish a network of higher education institutions (HEIs) to be led by Higher Education Authority (HEA) to promote, support and link civic engagement activities, including volunteering and service learning; and secondly, to develop a national awards/certificate system to recognise students volunteering or community activity.

Alongside the publication of these significant Taskforce drivers was the creation of a national network, in direct response to a prevailing national need identified among stakeholders, including students, community, academics and senior managers. Resources were secured from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in 2007 to develop ‘Campus Engage’ by five universities within the Republic of Ireland. The National University of Ireland, Galway leads the initiative in partnership with University College Dublin (UCD), National University of Ireland Maynooth, University of Limerick (UL) and Dublin City University (DCU). As set out by its original proposal, ‘Campus Engage’ will develop a ‘National organisation/framework for the promotion and support of volunteering, service learning and active citizenship in higher education’ (NUI Galway HEA SIF Proposal, 2006). The foundations of Campus Engage are advisory and supportive in nature in terms of enabling practice within the HEI landscape.

## **CROSSROADS AND THE FUTURE**

In Ireland, do we currently live in an economy or a society? Or are these necessarily competing entities? We have all the traits associated with a vibrant modern economy and Healy (2005) contends we are at a ‘crossroads’ in terms of our national development. We leave periods associated with levels of high unemployment and the economic recession of the 1980’s, and now cope with a market stabilisation following a period of rapid economic growth throughout the 1990’s and 2000’s. Undoubtedly, the economic, social, civic, political and cultural landscape within Ireland has transformed within the last two decades. We can now boast of one the fastest growing economies within the world, highest participation rates in higher education in Europe, a recent influx of new communities in search of employability and with that a new sense of diversity, and significantly, peace within the context of Northern Ireland with the embedding of the democratic tripartite structures of the Belfast Agreement. Nevertheless, this air of positivity seems to be underpinned by a sense of unease with perceived declines in levels of social capital. Contrastingly, the statistics offered do not match the extent of public disquiet as they indicate that over the last fifteen years the scale of community involvement and volunteering has not extensively changed.

In fact, Ireland is on an average rank when compared to other OECD nations in terms of levels of social capital and group membership (OECD, 2005). Of concern for higher education is that those under the age of 29 are the least active, (after those over the age of 65), with this being the only grouping to experience a drop in volunteering activity, from 16.9% to 14.7%, between 2002 and 2006 (Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007). In addition over 55% of those under the age of 25 do not vote (Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007). These are worrying statistics as over 85% of new entrants to higher education in Ireland are between the ages of 17 to 25 with just over 10% of new entrants over the age of 25 (HEA, 2007). Thus the statistics do indicate that a large majority of the Irish public are inactive, this group representing the future of democratic life within Irish society. HEIs need to recognise these statistics and utilise them in the advancement of civic engagement activities, such a volunteering and service/community based learning. From the experience of the CKI at the NUI Galway, student enthusiasm for engagement through volunteering and service learning is vast and the numbers engaged exceeding initial expectations and targets. If the statistics continue to spiral downward, then there is an obligation on HEIs to play a lead role in terms of harnessing their client bases and seek ways to connect them to community. Who or what will mobilise this obligation is open to debate.

Historically within Ireland, the obligation has been placed on the potential role of primary and post primary education sectors (and to some degree within the informal youth sector) when advancing



citizenship education rather than HEIs. We only have to look at the precursors to and the current curriculum endeavour, 'Civic, Social and Political Education' (CSPE) at Junior Cycle and the introduction in 2008/09 of 'Social and Political Studies' at Senior Cycle (Tormey, 2006). However, over the last five to seven years there has been a growing recognition of the prospective role that HEIs can play through formal academic and informal volunteering activities, and the contribution that institutions can make within communities through knowledge generation and transfer prompted by a rise in global debate and practice.

## **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND NETWORKS**

The prospective part that HEIs can play in civic engagement has been gaining momentum globally, driving practice related to institutionalisation moving from the periphery to the mainstream, with the USA taking a current lead. Many in the USA have addressed this rise in debate and practice as a 'renewal' of vision or a 'reassertion' on the civic role of higher education. However, it is questionable, especially within the context of Ireland, whether there ever existed a truly civic university or if our historical perception has been romanticised. In the past, there have been international expressions of HEI's connecting with community through teaching, research and service driven by local need and national support, but have been contained to certain eras and contexts. One example is that of the evolution and scope of the Land Grant system during the 1850's in the USA.

The economic role that HEIs make has been well established (Feldman and Desrochers, 2003; Hall, 1997; Etkowitz et al, 2000) and there has been increasing attention paid to the contributions made to community (Al-Kodmany, 1999; Allen-Meares, 2005; Barnett, 1993; Percy et al, 2006), very often expressed through institutional missions. However, frequently gaps exist between rhetoric and reality. A recent study on HEIs missions or visions in Ireland indicates that there is widespread support of civic and community engagement contained within these statements. But very often practice has been informal, contained and on the periphery (Perez-Gonzalez et al, 2007). Furco stresses the significance of mission when institutionalising service learning and the need to tie the civic engagement agenda to localise itself within the wider institutional agendas, including research agendas and aspirations of academic departments (Furco, 2007). Without doubt, the potential that missions or visions of the varied institutions within Ireland could act as pivotal, top-down and bottom-up, drivers when localising civic engagement.

A number of national networks have emerged on the global stage to drive and support institutional visions related to civic and community engagement. Some of these networks have been buttressed by a series of carefully crafted declarations signed by committed university leaders. One example is the Council of Europe Declaration on 'Higher Education and Democratic Culture: Citizenship, Human Rights and Civic Responsibility'. Other have been informed by wider governmental policies as in the case of the South African model which responds to a wider HE governmental reform agenda. They include Campus Compact in the USA, established in 1985 through the dedication of just four higher education leaders, with membership now in excess of 1,100 HEIs. NUI Galway became the first non-US based member in 2004 using this coalition to drive practice at the institutional level. Campus Compact is fortified by the 'Wingspread Declaration on Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University' (Boyte and Hollander, 1999). The 'Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance' (AUCEA) was formed in 2004, and led by the University of Western Sydney. It is now supported by over twenty-five institutional members and guided by ten university representatives. In South Africa, the 'Community Higher Education Service Partnerships' (CHESP) evolution was stimulated by the 1997 government's White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education 1997 to respond to needs within disadvantaged communities. In 2006 leaders of HEIs from twenty-three countries globally were gathered by Tufts University and crafted the Talloires Declaration on the 'Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education' which endeavours to establish an international network of national networks. In addition, there are a myriad of other networks across South Africa, Canada and the UK.

Watson (2007) outlined the scale of national networks globally and institutional endeavours in a myriad of geographical locations. In addition, many partnership models and methods are presented in the literature centering on university-community collaborations, autonomy and competition within partnership models, national networks and collaboration between diverse HEIs (Jacoby, 2003; Baum, 2000; Temple et al, 2005; Williams et al, 2003) but in terms of networks there is little collective or comparative history that details characteristics, context, culture, evolution or methodology.

## THE SERVICE LEARNING ACADEMY AND CAMPUS ENGAGE

Undoubtedly, the creation of 'Campus Engage' has been pulled into position by the existence, successes and sustenance of these international exemplars, while leveraging national Irish governmental resources. The network has been supported in the main by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Strategic Innovation Fund 1 (SIF 1) which seeks to support innovation and creativity within the landscape of higher education in Ireland. Funds have been matched by five partner institutions and total 1.4m euro. In the SIF 1 original call for proposals, civic engagement was highlighted as a key area in terms of innovation within higher education; 'the development of individual students to attain their full capacity both in careers and as citizens in a democratic society facing profound change' (HEA, 2006).

Prior to the formation of Campus Engage there was a national precursor, the 'Service Learning Academy' (SLA) which ran for a period of two academic years (2005-2007). The SLA was both a top-down and bottom-up driver in terms of evolving the national network. It was supported by HEA and generated collaborative conversations on the implications for civic engagement within higher education between academics, policy makers, senior manager, students and community with guest inputs from the international community. The SLA was collaborative in nature, led by NUI Galway in partnership with Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), NUI Maynooth and DCU. Its purpose was to debate the ramifications of service learning and civic engagement within higher education in Ireland. To this end a number of events nationally were held with the vision of the development of a network of civic.

Participants' discussions throughout the SLA events stressed the importance of engagement with communities and realised the potential for the pedagogical tool service learning. However, they were mindful of the potential problems with the term which is highly contextualised in terms of the USA, and the need to craft an Irish based common understanding. Furco (2007) highlights that over two hundred definitions of service learning exist within the literature and it is essential that 'Campus Engage' enables institutions to seek clarity in terms of localising work. Concerns were raised about appropriate resourcing and staffing within the different institutions and the need to recognise prior work in the area, whether this practice is rooted within the formal, informal or higher education sectors. Issues raised for debate centred on the concepts of partnership, in particular between the university and the wider community, how to develop an institutionalised civic engagement strategy, 'community' and its meaning and service learning within the disciplines (Service Learning Academy Open Space Technology Report, 2006).

These issues have informed the work of 'Campus Engage', and the remit of the network is broad, so as to include rather than preclude practice on a terrain which is ripe, but also both fragile and vulnerable. It gives prominence to the promotion of work associated with civic engagement strategies, specifically in terms of student volunteering and service learning, and, generally through activities that underpin civic engagement values/methodologies, including research with community. In addition, as an entity it will seek to engage with all HEIs on the island of Ireland. As laid out in its original proposal, 'Campus Engage' enables to widen 'the scope of such activity to ensure that Ireland plays a leading role in the promotion of active citizenship in Europe through the development of social and civic "competencies" as a key element of the student experience' within higher education (NUI Galway HEA SIF 1 Proposal, 2006).

This entity will specifically;

Commission a comprehensive national review of volunteering, service learning and community research by an expert in the field, leading to recommendations for long term, sustainable development.

Increase the scale of student participation and volunteering opportunities in all partner institutions, through the development of appropriate models based on experience and evaluation.

Establish a formal National Network to support such activities across the sector, providing training materials and organising events (including a major conference on Civic Engagement & Active Citizenship).

The five institutions collaborating through 'Campus Engage' are at different stages and levels in terms of embedding civic engagement strategies. The process of localising pedagogies for civic engagement within Ireland has been documented by Boland and McIlrath (2007) whereby they stress the importance of culture and context in terms of manner and shape in which it becomes embedded. Therefore, when supporting and developing civic engagement activities within Ireland, 'Campus Engage' must be sensitive to local need, context and culture but in addition, manoeuvre itself through local, national, European and international drivers.

## NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL EXPRESSIONS – THE CAMPUS ENGAGE FIVE

The first formal and strategic civic engagement expression within higher education in Ireland came in the form of the CKI in 2001, when the NUI Galway received 1.6m euro, from a number of philanthropic donors including Atlantic Philanthropies, to realise a civic vision as part of its core activities. The CKI activities, as documented by its original proposal, were viewed as “integral to the University’s strategic mission and involved a fundamental examination of the role of the University in the social fabric” (CKI Strategic Plan, 2001). NUI Galway’s Academic and Strategic Plans (2003-2008) acted as top-down drivers as the CKI was afforded prominence in each, laying out its aims and objectives and inter-relationships with other organisations and structures, and the mainstreaming of pedagogical activities related to the CKI. These institutional plans have been instrumental drivers in terms of situating the work and propelling its importance locally. While the philanthropic funds allowed top-down drivers, it also enabled a bottom-up process including the appointment of the CKI team to manage and guide the work, under the direction of local and international boards. The CKI’s four strands seek to place communities at the centre of debate and educate students for civic engagement, and include:

Research: in, by and for the community, exploring issues in community and rural development, social participation, volunteering and the roles of higher education.

Student Volunteering: promoting both the personal and the civic dimensions of voluntary activity, serving the community and giving of time, effort and skills.

Service Learning: embedding community focused volunteering and work experience into academic programmes, giving recognition to the academic potential of such service and encouraging deeper engagement and understanding of the context of programmes of study.

Knowledge Sharing: wider dissemination of results of research and scholarly activity, events with community focus, outreach work, collaboration, etc.

While the availability of resources was a pivotal driver, in addition legislation related to NUI Galway also aided the CKI. NUI Galway maintains a ‘special relationship’ with the Gaeltacht communities of Ireland built into the University Act 1929 and expounded in the NUI Galway Mission. The Gaeltacht is the Irish speaking regions within Ireland and are in the main located on the west of Ireland. This proposal for the CKI was created and steered by the senior academics and managers enabling a top-down process that was multidisciplinary in nature. Research conducted by Boland (2005) indicates that there was a multifaceted rationale among leaders at NUI Galway in terms of its commitment, which mirrored governmental concerns over levels of social capital, but also makes references to drivers related to the institution itself, and the transformation of the student experience and community need. In terms of community, those behind the CKI saw the potential of resource building for the community as a realistic aspiration for the institution, for students it presented a maturing opportunity and could potentially counteract the drift from public to private domains, from physical interfaces to iPods and social networking sites. In addition, it was viewed as opportunity to differentiate the institution within a highly competitive national and international market, giving NUI Galway an entrepreneurial edge.

The CKI since its inception has connected NUI Galway to over 70 local and national community and voluntary organisations and to date 1700 students have attained NUI Galway Certificates through the ALIVE (A Learning Initiative and the Volunteer Experience) Programme for the volunteering contribution they make to communities on and off campus. In addition, over twenty undergraduate and postgraduate programmes now have an optional or mandatory service learning opportunity, connecting student academic learning to a community context, affecting the academic work of over 300 students annually, with additional pilot opportunities planned for the coming years.

Academics at NUI Galway, who have established innovative service learning opportunities, motivations have mirrored those analysed internationally (McIlrath, 2004). Stanton et al (1999) indicate that those involved in the development of service learning within the context of the US ‘were focused on educational questions; others on issues of social justice; and still others were most interested in preparing students for effective, democratic engagement’. In addition, some at NUI Galway have indicated that it could potentially be a means towards career advancement, hence the importance of central institutional vision and support acting as a driver towards practice.

The resources awarded by the HEA to enable the evolution of a national network have also acted as a key driver in terms of aiding practice at the local level. It has allowed for two of the partner institutions to appoint personnel to facilitate the growth of civic engagement activities. At UCD the ‘Centre for Service Learning, Civic Engagement and Volunteering’ was established in 2007 which offers a stand alone service learning module across the institution, through the Quinn School of Business (McGourty, 2008). The centre will also harness existing civic engagement activities, facilitate potential pedagogical

practice and due to pilot a volunteering programme in 2008-2009. DCU have been developing a thick approach to civic engagement through a 'Civic Engagement Strategy' (2007) under the umbrella of DCU strategic theme of 'Internationalisation, Interculturalism and Social Development' (IISD) and guided by a themed leader. DCU introduced in 2003 a stand alone module entitled the 'Uaneen' Module which awards credit to students for extracurricular work in communities on and off campus. In addition, personnel have been appointed through the leverage of HEA 'Campus Engage' funds, to audit existing civic engagement activities and craft a 'Guiding Framework for Community Based Learning at DCU' (Finn, 2008). NUI Maynooth and UL are at the outset of work in terms of developing a discourse and at this early stage there is interest in the progressing civic engagement.

While the availability of philanthropic resources acted as a top-down and bottom-up drivers at NUI Galway, similarly resources offered by the Government Department of Community, Rural, and Gaeltacht Affairs to DIT to become a national pilot site for service learning. In 2005, DIT received 330,000 Euro to initiate the 'Community Learning Programme' (CLP) at DIT with the aim of spread service learning 'throughout the DIT by encouraging and supporting key lecturing staff to incorporate it in aspects of their teaching' (DIT CLP, 2005).

### **READING OR RECEDING FROM THE DRIVERS**

While the civic engagement landscape within Ireland is evolving, we must ascertain if we are interpreting and drawing on drivers which could potentially secure future growth and activity. Coate and MacLabhrainn (2008) highlight that the dominant policy vision for HEI in Ireland, articulated by a range of internal and external actors including the HEA, tends to focus on the knowledge based economy and its role as a stimulant of economic activities. However, many policies are making reference to wider societal dimensions, such as the necessity to create 'an inclusive society' (HEA, 2004). Are we reading and interpreting or receding from potentially strong drivers in terms of legislation and policies rooted internally and externally?

Some examples of potential legislative and policy drivers include; The Universities Act of 1997, enshrined within Irish legislation, which goes into some detail as to the civic aspirations of higher education through the promotion of 'cultural and social life of society', 'learning in its student body and in society generally', highlighting economic as well as 'social development'. In addition, it welcomes collaboration with all types of organisations including 'communities' (Universities Act, 1997). In terms of policy are those concerned with civic engagement within HEIs looking to the Bologna Declaration and Process? To the fore of Bologna are aims associated with thickening levels of cooperation across the European sector towards the development of 'European Higher Education Area' by 2010, while concealed to a degree, it does stress the importance of a 'Europe of Knowledge....for social and human growth...to enrich European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competences to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural Space' (Bergan, 2007). Levin (1998) contends that sometimes it is 'the politics of the sign rather than the substance of the meaning that moves across national borders'. The contribution that Bologna can make in terms of advancement of democratic citizenship through HEI's is vast but it is uncertain if this dimension may become 'lost' within the 'politics' of implementation. While the signs posted by Skilbeck 'The University Challenged' for "an institution.....which aims to advance knowledge through inquiry and research, strengthen cultural values, foster responsible citizenship and provide service to the community" (Skillbeck, p 19, 2002) to a large degree have been completely ignored and it is rarely if ever mentioned just six years since publication.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has explored a myriad of top-down and bottom-up drivers which have led to a rise in national interest, discourse and practice associated with higher education and civic engagement from an Irish perspective. The drivers related to policies and legislation, availability of resources (governmental and philanthropic) and expressions of institutional activity and support have been assessed in terms of localising practice and in terms of sustaining this work through 'Campus Engage'. However, the drivers identified in this paper that by no means exhaustive. A further national and international analysis or case study should be conducted that could potentially identify a range of local, national, European and international drivers leading to civic engagement network collaborations. Nevertheless, we can conclude that fundamental to the process is the investigation, interpretation, manoeuvring, intersection and employment of potential, external and internal, drivers and the need for reflection to underpin the enactment this work. The process of being retrospective at this early stage of evolving 'Campus Engage' will allow us to cast long shadows.

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## Supporting A Primary Health Approach Through University Community Engagement In Rural Health Week

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### Abstract

*This paper analyses the multiple level partnerships that initiated and facilitated the inaugural Tasmanian Rural Health Week in 2007. Rural Health Week (RHW) involved groups in 28 different rural communities in a wide range of health and well-being activities including community debates about local health issues, fun runs, health expos and school based nutritional initiatives. The paper analyses the structures that established and supported RHW, born out of a long-term engagement between the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services. It looks at the leadership role of the University as an 'enabler' in the creation and nurturing of a series of multi-tiered partnerships with rural communities. Critical engagement factors that positively affected the outcomes of RHW included resourcing, governance, flexibility and boundary crossers were identified. A number of challenges to successful partnerships were identified. These included a shared commitment to the collaboration; regional leadership and devolved responsibility, and the development of the State Health Plan, underpinned by a primary health care approach as outlined by the World Health Organisation in the Alma Ata Declaration of 1978, the key principles of which are reflected in good university community engagement practice. RHW through its multi-level partnerships has the potential to contribute towards the implementation of the State Health Plan through community participation in the development of sustainably health based partnerships.*

*A number of points are made about how to foster multi-level partnerships that support sustainable primary health care activities through university community engagement. These may have application to University community engagement in other spheres.*

**Key words:** Rural Health, Partnerships, Enabling Leadership, Primary Health

### Introduction

The University of Tasmania, through the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH), works closely with the Tasmanian Government's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in addressing issues which impact on the health and wellbeing of rural Tasmanians. The UDRH is mandated to improve access to health care resources and contribute to improved health outcomes for people living in rural and remote areas of Tasmania. Its community engagement agenda acknowledges the democratic and ethical right of communities to participate in their own health care, and their capacity to play a key role in enhancing the health and wellness of their respective communities (Kilpatrick et al, 2007). Changes are currently occurring within the Tasmanian health system that present opportunities for new approaches to university community engagement within the health sector. These changes are being driven in part by acute workforce shortages, the rising cost of health care, and recognition of the fact that health care is increasingly being delivered within a community rather than an acute setting. Central tenets of this reform agenda are the promotion of community participation and community engagement in health care planning and delivery and an increasing emphasis on health promotion and illness prevention (Auckland and Whelan, 2007), both of which are recognised as key elements of a primary health care approach to health service planning and delivery. Partnerships play an integral role in facilitating both university community engagement and the transition towards a primary health care approach and Rural Health Week provide an opportunity to showcase the ways in which multi-level partnerships enable a regional university department to successfully engage with its communities.

### Tasmanian Rural Health Week – University Community Engagement in action

RHW was a whole of community health promotion initiative which took place in rural Tasmania in September 2007. Tasmania's relatively small geographical size, proportionally large rural population base, and well established rural health networks placed it in an ideal position to stage a major health promotion activity. RHW was implemented within a community development framework which involved a 'bottom up' or 'grassroots' approach in which community participation and ownership would be critical to the process. The theme of RHW was "Celebrating Rural Health" and there two elements to the project: locally staged activities through which communities showcased programs and services that addressed significant health priorities and increased awareness about rural health issues and the

importance of a preventative approach to health; and the Rural Health Awards which provided an avenue for health professionals, health workers and volunteers to be recognised for their contributions towards the health and wellbeing of rural Tasmanians. More than 5000 people attended a total of 64 RHW events and 46 nominations for Rural Health Awards were received.

Critical to the success of the project was the establishment of a governance structure based on a two tiered partnership model with each partnership layer having clearly defined functions and responsibilities. The first layer was the State Planning Committee which comprised of the two convening agencies, the UDRH and DHHS, and representatives of key stakeholder agencies in rural health. The Committee had responsibility for establishing project guidelines and parameters; coordinating the event at a State level; funding regional activities; promotion; and the Rural Health Awards. In addition a liaison position was jointly funded through the UDRH and DHHS to help support the development of regional planning committees.

The second layer comprised of 28 regional planning committees whose membership was drawn from a diverse range of community groups, health service providers, local government agencies, the education sector and community volunteers. Their role was to plan and implement health promotion activities which were relevant to their communities' specific health needs. This partnership structure reflected the premise that partnerships between rural communities of place and external agencies such as health services can affect community outcomes as they expand the resources and expertise available to the community (Kilpatrick et al, 2005, Berkowitz, 2000).

Community engagement within a health context is often regarded as communities engaging with health professionals on the health professionals' terms rather than those of the community (Taylor et al 2004). RHW challenged this notion in a number of ways. Firstly, while it was acknowledged that health professionals could bring to the project professional expertise and experience, there was no requirement for local health professionals to be represented on regional planning committees. There were in fact a number of committees with no representation from the health sector. Secondly, regional planning committees were actively encouraged to be inclusive of the non-health sector in order to engage more fully with their communities. Evidence of collaboration with multiple stakeholders was a criterion for seed funding grants. Thirdly, the State Planning Committee deliberately kept its relationship with the planning committees at 'arms length' and avoided being prescriptive about the type of activities which could be held. Once regional planning committees were established support and communication was delivered only through the liaison position. It was important for the committees to identify those health issues that were important to them and to develop a program of events which was relevant to their specific community. Local ownership was considered essential for the success of RHW and to help foster the inherent creativity that exists within many communities..

### **Critical Engagement Factors**

A number of engagement factors contributed to its success.

#### **Working in Partnership**

Kilpatrick et al (2005) define partnerships as interactive, collaborative processes for working together in order to identify goals and develop processes for realising them. Partnerships are more apt to be sustained when strong, dense and broad community connections have been forged so that activities are relevant and meaningful to the local ecology (Higgins et al, 2007). The ability of the RHW convening partner organisations, UDRH and DHHS to generate enthusiasm, credibility and resources to support the initiative and to engage multiple stakeholders to form a governance structure was an important starting point. The relative ease by which this was achieved can be attributed to an extensive history of working together towards a common goal: the enhancement of health and wellbeing in rural Tasmanian communities, and multiple working relationships between the two organisations.

Rural communities have fewer and a more limited range of resources available for delivering primary health care and wellbeing outcomes, and so have heightened incentives for working in partnership both within the community and with outside services. An understanding of the nature of partnerships helped to shape the nature of the engagement process between the State Planning Committee and the regional groups, and determined the type of support offered to regional planning committees. Billet et al (2005) make a distinction between Enacted Partnerships which are initiated externally by a university or government but whose goals are shared by a community, and Community Partnerships which are community initiated to address local needs. He found that enacted partnerships are likely to be more "global in their ambitions, more inclusive in their membership and subject to administrative and accountability measures." By comparison, community partnerships tended to grapple with different



issues and in some cases required guidance in articulating their goals and translating them into strategies for action. Regional planning committees were a mixture of enacted and community partnerships. A number of committees used pre-existing Regional Health Service or Health Promotion Committees as their starting point. Membership was drawn from a wide variety of groups and individuals. These committees had a high level of expertise and organisational ability as well as previous experience of working together. They were able to plan and implement activities independently with thorough financial accounting practices; they had well structured networks; and had minimal contact with the State Planning Committee. Committees formed specifically for RHW tended to be less inclusive in their membership with a less formal organisational structure. They were more likely to seek advice from the liaison position and to seek confirmation of the validity of their proposed activities.

### **Leadership**

Strong leadership has been identified as the key factor in enthusing, motivating, networking and energising toward a common vision; helping to clarify purpose; and to build trust (Florida, 2002). Leadership in RHW not only mobilised communities into action but engaged the creative energies of the community through shared responsibility to act toward mutually agreed objectives. Arnold (2002) argued that top down models of leadership generated externally often fail to develop effective strategies for the complex and dynamic, social and political-economic realities of a community. While the involvement of the wider community is important, the skills of the individuals within the leadership collective are fundamental to influencing effective community involvement (Davies, 2007).

An approach that meshed top-down leadership with bottom-up leadership and participation was critical to the success of RHW. Time and resources were the major factors in supporting grassroots leadership. Regional planning committees were informed about RHW at least 18 months in advance of the event. The liaison position acted as an “enabler” helping them identify significant health issues and creative ways to profile these issues to a broader RHW audience, building community capacity in the process. By helping committee members form a shared understanding of their health issues, this approach also fostered community cohesion, an important prerequisite for effective community engagement. This role of “nudging the regional committees along” and helping them develop the skills required to do things for themselves was identified by regional committees as an important and valuable contribution to the development process.

### **Health Policy Reform**

A major factor that contributed to the interest in RHW was the health policy reform agenda that was being introduced to the Tasmanian health sector during the development of RHW. This agenda was underpinned by a Primary Health Care (PHC) approach which was consistent with the principles laid down at the International Conference on Primary Health Care in Alma-Ata in 1978. The Declaration of Alma-Ata was the culmination of international concerns about the expansion of resource intensive, hospital-based services which appeared to have little impact on the overall health of populations (Newell, 1975). It was based on the premise that primary health care is the key to attaining a level of health sufficient to permit people to lead socially and economically productive lives and emphasised the importance of people individually, and collectively, participating in the planning and implementation of their health care.

There are five key elements which underpin a primary health care approach.  
It should be based on practical, scientifically sound, and socially acceptable methods and technology.

It is the first level of contact of individuals, the family and the community with the national health system.

It should bring health care as close as possible to where people live and work.

It requires and promotes community participation in the planning and decision making processes.

It is an integral part of both a country's health system and of its overall social and economic development (World Health Organisation, 1978).

These five elements bear a strong resemblance to some of the key principles underpinning university community engagement good practice and linked with the broader aims and objectives of RHW. For example, they acknowledge the importance of process, the importance of community participation, and

the impacts on the social and economic development of a community.

Community participation in decisions and social and economic development are important components of university community engagement practice. Importantly, primary health care services are predominately delivered in community settings and can be directed to individuals through active treatment or health promotion activities. Like university community engagement, primary health care has a strong focus on the quality of process from planning, to implementation, and to outcomes. The quality of relationships is central to the process (Cavaye et al, 2001). Wallis et al (2004) suggest that the link between successful engagement and productive partnerships is one that yields mutually beneficial outcomes to both the academic institution and to the region. Positive results for the community can include regional economic growth, research and innovation, and the development of human and social capital.

The shift towards a stronger preventative and community based health care approach was reflected in the type and nature of activities delivered by regional planning committees during RHW. Activities aimed to promote good health through a range of strategies including better diet and nutrition, increased physical activity, quit smoking campaigns, the safe consumption of alcohol, and increased social connectedness. The activities which reported the highest attendance rates were those which were held in non-clinical settings, for example in parks, at schools, and other community venues or settings, and this has important ramifications for planning future university community engagement activities. Peek and Kilpatrick (2008) found that RHW was especially valuable for its ability to address the social conditions under which people live and which determine their health by improving access to social support networks and enhancing the social environment. In addition, the provision of a wide range of health information from both bio-medical and complementary health practitioners assisted in raising the health literacy of many communities. High participation levels at many RHW activities support the argument that “bottom up” locally based approaches permit programs to be more socially inclusive and help ensure the social stability and cohesion without which economic growth would be obstructed (Simpson, 2003).

## **Resources**

One of the strategies used to generate interest and support community interest in RHW was the provision of seeding grants to the regional planning committees. Seed-funding grants are a popular means for governments to distribute monies and groom communities to embed the funded activities into the local ecology (Higgins, 2005). A total of \$60,000 was made available in funding packages of between \$1,500 and \$2,500 per group. This enabled many committees to use the funds as leverage for additional funding or divert existing funds to enhance or develop community health initiatives. The seeding funds also enabled regional committees to hire dedicated staff to coordinate activities and the “freedom to think beyond” what existed and to move the project forward (Higgins et al, 2007). The university community engagement literature acknowledges that creativity and initiative within a community are central aspects of engagement activities and thus need to be fostered and nurtured (Forde, 2001). The provision of sufficient resources can be viewed as an organisational commitment to the engagement process (Garlick et al, 2002). Simpson et al (2003) found that the provision of adequate resources to support capacity building activities greatly increases the likelihood of long-term benefits for rural communities. The RHW experience did not reveal any dissatisfaction with the relatively low level of regional funding, despite the reservations of Higgins et al (2005) that such a low amount could be offensive to the work of health professionals and the community.

## **Boundary crossers**

The relationship that local health service managers, who were in most cases employees of DHHS, had with their communities was pivotal in helping to communicate, mobilise and involve people in those RHW regional planning committees in which they were involved. Local health service managers support the development of effective partnerships between rural communities and health services. Local health service managers are well placed to empower the community from the inside because they understand both the community and external agency domains and speak the language of both, ie they cross the boundary between the two (Kilpatrick et al 2007). Similar observations were made by Johns et al (2007) in their study of rural health service partnerships – community partnerships in two rural towns in Tasmania. They found that both local health service providers and community place importance on transparency, accountability and professionalism of partnership processes and practices. Importantly, both parties valued the skills within the communities and the notion of building capacity. The RHW State Planning Committee was able to use the health service managers’ willingness and

capacity to boundary cross as a way of better engaging with rural communities. The health service managers used local health facilities as community hubs for planning purposes, bringing together physical, human and social capital resources.

### **Barriers to Engagement**

In most instances the professionalism of the partnership processes and procedures, underpinned by principles of good engagement practice resulted in the successful engagement of communities. There were, however, a number of barriers to engagement which were identified during the planning phase and reported through the evaluation process.

### **Devolved responsibility**

The regional planning committees represented either a geographical community or a community of interest and they were encouraged to be inclusive of the different groups in their community in canvassing representation in the planning process. In several instances the connections between a key contact and the community were not strong. This may be because the key contact did not live locally or was new to the area and therefore may not have had the knowledge, attachment or understanding of the community. These individuals struggled to get the community involved and to build community cohesion. Once a sense of cohesion was established some found it difficult to devolve responsibility. The outcome was a process driven by the contact person with minimal input or consultation from the community, a top down rather than bottom up approach to engagement (Taylor J, 2005).

### **Trust**

Trust is frequently cited as foundational to good engagement (Forde, 2001). The role of trust in community engagement cannot be overstated; it is trust that forms a core element of social capital which provides the medium of exchange for community engagement (Collins et al, 2007). Whilst the outcomes of RHW suggest that there was a high level of trust by communities in the process, there were signs, particularly in the early stages of the project, that there was a level of distrust by some communities in the motives of RHW. It must be remembered that RHW was being planned during a period of considerable change and upheaval in rural health with the introduction of the health reform agenda. A number of rural communities were to experience considerable change with the restructuring of a number of local health services. This had a negative impact on the relationship of some communities with DHHS and as a consequence the trust that these communities had in any initiative associated with the DHHS.

### **Policy Reform**

As indicated above there was evidence that the health policy reform agenda, at least in the early phases of the initiative, distracted from the key messages of RHW. Some individual regional planning committee members felt that there was little to celebrate in rural health and that RHW was a plan conceived by DHHS to divert attention away from the less palatable consequences of the reform agenda. These consequences included the remodelling of local health services. Communities generally supported the concept of a primary health care approach but had reservations about the impact it might have on some acute care services. It was in this situation that the role of the UDRH in the RHW partnership was critical. The UDRH was regarded by communities as an "honest broker", an organisation that that was perceived to have the interest of rural communities and their improved health and wellbeing at the forefront of its priorities. The role of the liaison officer in reinforcing the key messages of RHW, creating a shared vision, building capacity and espousing the broader socio-economic benefits of RHW kept communities focused on RHW rather than the potential distraction created by the health reform agenda.

### **Conclusion**

RHW is a good example of university community engagement, manifested through the nurturing of partnerships at multiple levels and developed within a community development framework. RHW provided an opportunity to consider new ways of thinking about health service delivery and the role of tertiary institutions as "enablers" and "honest brokers" in supporting communities to strengthen their ability to participate in their own health care. This is particularly pertinent in times of change or instability as experienced during the development phase of RHW. Events such as RHW challenge the notion that community engagement as applied within a health context, generally regarded as

communities engaging with health professionals, on their terms rather than those of the community. Through the application of good university community engagement practice communities were able to identify health issues which were important to them and address these issues through innovative health promotion activities tailored to suit their own particular needs. RHW provided an opportunity for the UDRH to demonstrate its relevance to the economic, social and cultural objectives of the communities it serves (Jobling, 2007) and provides important lessons for future health-based community engagement initiatives. Importantly, RHW highlighted the value of good university community engagement practice irrespective of the distinguishing features of the governance or partnership model employed.

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## Going To Scale: Regional Engagement And The Creative Economy

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### **Abstract**

*The changing nature of knowledge production and international competition and collaboration will affect the organization, working relationships, educational strategies and societal roles and expectations that we attribute to our universities as well as how our educational system prepares its students for the workplace, for citizenship and for postsecondary education. Our educational institutions will begin to work together and interact in different ways to create research and educational environments that are easy to traverse and responsive to the changing knowledge and skill needs of a global, multidisciplinary, collaborative and open business and community landscape and to address the daily challenges of life in the regions we serve. The core premise of this paper is that the key capacity needed to ensure that a region will be able to compete effectively in a global marketplace is the development of a readily accessible, high quality system of education from the primary grades through advanced education and the availability of a strong locally accessible community of excellent researchers. A number of states within the United States are moving to ensure that every region has access to a strong educational system and a research base. What follows is a discussion of this policy perspective as it is being advanced in the United States. No attempt is made to analyse or critique the emerging scholarly literature on this topic. It is too soon to tell how effective this strategy will be and what we might expect from this investment of public funds in research and access to advanced education attuned to the regional social and economic environment.*

**Full paper available in the AUCEA e-journal Spring 2008 [www.aucea.org.au](http://www.aucea.org.au)**