Institutional Research on Engagement 16

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Introduction

Historically, Institutional Research (IR) and Planning Offices have been charged with the responsibility of extracting, validating, and reporting institutional data for evaluating the performance of universities, and assisting with their strategic positioning in the future (Calderon & Webber 2015). There is a significant degree of homogeneity with respect to the indicators used internationally that inform the choice of data to be collected for reporting purposes at institutional and national levels, with some differences that reflect the distinctive characteristics of universities in different contexts. Standard indicators include headcounts, student profiles (e.g. undergraduate vs postgraduate, gender, race and/or socio-economic disadvantage, international vs national), full time equivalent students (FTEs), staff/student FTEs, research outputs per instructional staff member, graduate rates etc.

The use of a standard set of indicators for teaching and learning, and research, related to inputs and outputs is not surprising, as globally these are incontrovertibly recognised as the core functions of a university. In contrast to the high degree of homogeneity of teaching and research indicators, the field of public engagement is characterised by a lack of consensus on definitions. This has bedevilled efforts to compile and compare institutional profiles of public engagement within and across countries (Hart and Northmore 2011; Facer, Manners and Agusita 2012; Favish and Ngcelwane 2013).

Terms most commonly used in describing this kind of institutional activity are outreach, community service, regional development, community engagement, civic engagement, public engagement, knowledge exchange, knowledge transfer, and social innovation. The notion of 'engaged scholarship' is also frequently found in international literature (Goddard 1997; Duderstadt 1999; OECD 1999; Subotzky 1999; Duke 2000; Maurasse 2001; Bloomfield 2005; Holland 2005; Cooper 2010; Watson *et al.* 2011, Checkoway 2013). The use of the terms 'engagement' and 'scholarship' originates in the work of Ernest Boyer (1996, 1997), who distinguished among the scholarships of 'discovery', 'integration' and 'application' and later added the 'scholarship of engagement', focusing on contributions of universities to addressing societal problems and challenges (Checkoway 2013).

Engagement in South Africa

In South Africa, the *White Paper 3 on Higher Education Transformation* of 1997 laid the foundation for encouraging universities in the country to grapple with their role in relation to advancing reconstruction and development. It referred to a key mandate of higher education as being to address social and economic development through responsive educational and research programmes, and recognized community service as a key vehicle for promoting critical citizenship (Department of Education 1997). It did not, however, provide a clear conceptual framework or outline strategies for enhancing the developmental role of universities. The *White Paper for Post School Education and Training* of 2013 also did not address this vacuum, as it merely acknowledges that “Community Engagement (CE) in its various forms has become a part of the work of the universities” (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013:39). The reasons for the terminology shift from ‘community service’ and ‘responsiveness’ to ‘community engagement’ are not explained in the White Paper.

As a result of the policy vacuum, it has been left up to individual universities to develop their own conceptual frameworks to guide the development of strategies for engaging with development challenges facing South Africa.

In this chapter the term engaged scholarship (ES) will be used as it highlights the interconnectedness with research and teaching in universities and the importance of engagement with non-academic constituencies for the academic project. The majority of universities in South Africa, however, use the term ‘community engagement’.

Finally, I illustrate that engaged scholarship embraces multiple forms and types of activities as illustrated in the diagram below.

Adapted from Glass and Fitzgerald 2010:16

Contextualising engagement

The field of engaged scholarship has been characterized internationally by struggles to embed engagement in institutional cultures and management systems (Beere, Votruba and Wells 2011). Despite universal calls for universities to strengthen the role that they play in the re-imagining and renewal of society to address the global challenges of poverty, inequality, various forms of discrimination, climate change, food security etc. (UNESCO 1998; Beere et al. 2011; GUNI 2014), embedding engaged scholarship within the core business of universities has remained elusive in many contexts, South Africa notwithstanding.

The Diagnostic Overview of the National Planning Commission, released in June 2011, reported that poverty in South Africa was still pervasive and that insufficient progress had been made in reducing inequality. To date, millions of people remain unemployed, while spatial and structural patterns exclude the poor from the fruits of development, infrastructure is poorly located, under-maintained and insufficient to foster higher growth, there is a widespread disease burden, public services are uneven and often of poor quality, and South Africa remains a divided society (National Planning Commission 2011). The *National Development Plan* embodies an inclusive developmental model in which various stakeholders collaborate to develop appropriate strategies for addressing these challenges (National Planning Commission 2012).

Universities have a key role to play in promoting and enabling inclusive approaches to development through engaged research and teaching. Surprisingly, however, the *White Paper on Post School Education and Training*, produced after the *National Development Plan*, does not address this nor does it contain an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of ES similar to the way that the areas of teaching and learning and research were examined.

This omission can partly be attributed to the absence of information on the current nature of the scale of engaged scholarship at universities which would help clarify the nature of activities regarded as engaged scholarship. Whilst there has been a fair amount of research on the conceptual debates about community engagement (Bender 2008; Cooper 2010; Slamet 2010; Kruss 2012), we lack systematic data on the scale and forms of ES in South Africa. South Africa is not unique in this respect. Facer et al. (2012:5) state that

A review of the [international] literature indicates that the way in which knowledge is being built about the processes, benefits and risks of university-public relationships is highly fragmented and located in a wide range of sectors and disciplines... Much research in this field is conducted in the form of case study evaluation, often with a desire to prove benefit to funders. Alternatively, where larger studies are conducted, these are often characterised more as advocacy or tools for promoting engagement or its funding than critical and reflective research. An important challenge in this field, therefore, is to find ways of funding research and knowledge building activities that enable its authors to move beyond evaluation and advocacy towards the production of rigorous, robust studies that can withstand sustained scrutiny.

The need for rigorous, robust studies of engagement as a topic of enquiry has been endorsed by the UNESCO Chairs of Community engagement as a result of their international study

on university- community research partnerships (Hall *et al.* 2015). The Carnegie Foundation (2015) has also argued that the “existence of systematic, historic and ongoing efforts to assess community engagement within universities” is key to bringing ES into the institution, i.e. embedding it in the institutional fabric.

To date, the national research projects that have been undertaken in South Africa have focused on particular dimensions of ES and not on trying to develop an information base for compiling a national picture – thus highlighting the critical need for IR to build a sustained focus on this area of institutional activity. For example, the study undertaken by Community Higher Education Service Partnerships (CHESP) in 2008 focused only on the number of accredited academic service learning courses and the number of students reached by these courses (Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna and Slamat 2008). In 2010 Hall, undertook an analysis of the sections of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) audit reports dealing with Criteria 1 and 18 of the HEQC Audit criteria related to community engagement (Hall, 2010). The HEQC is the external quality assurance agency responsible for conducting audits of higher education institutions in South Africa. The audits were organized around a set of 18 criteria which related to various aspects of the Quality Management Systems of universities. Given that the focus of the institutional audits was on whether the universities had developed clear conceptual and policy frameworks for community engagement, the analysis did not yield a national picture of the scale, forms and outputs of ES.

The most extensive research on the scale and forms of interaction of universities with external partners was conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council in 2010. This study, however, covered only five universities – two research universities, one comprehensive university, one university of technology and one rurally-based university (Kruss *et al.* 2013). A total of 2159 academics responded to a telephonic survey, achieving an overall valid response rate of 62% (Kruss *et al.* 2013). The research covered, *inter alia*, interactions with external social partners, the nature of the outputs emanating from the activities, the kinds of organisations with which academics were engaging, and an assessment of the benefits for the universities and their partners (Kruss *et al.* 2013).

A further national research project was undertaken in 2014 by Favish and Ngcelwane in an attempt to glean a national picture of the current status of ES in the institutions. The survey response rate was 82.6% (19 of the 23 public universities responded), providing a good overview of the entire public higher education system (Favish and Ngcelwane 2014). The structure of the questionnaire was influenced by the framework developed by Beere *et al.* (2011) for institutionalising public engagement. The framework’s criteria include: references to ES in institutional plans and reports, executive accountability for ES, provision of awards for ES, hiring academic staff with ES experience, integration of criteria related to ES in performance review systems, provision of awards for staff and students to recognise outstanding contributions to ES, the establishment of initiatives aimed at building capacity of academic staff around ES practice, and the organisation of colloquia to promote awareness of ES within the institution. The responses to the questionnaire indicated that five universities appeared to have institutionalised ES to a greater extent than other universities, based on the fact that they had addressed more than 55% of the criteria. All universities had, however, addressed at least a third of the criteria.

Facer *et al.* (2012) argue that building a profile of ES in a manner that demonstrates the value and the scale of ES necessitates the use of both case studies and large-scale surveys – an approach to methodology that is not common in Institutional Research (IR) offices. This provides an interesting point of departure, and consideration, for IR practitioners.

Case studies are important tools for reflection on practice. Large-scale surveys of activity can provide an important snapshot of practice at a particular time. Neither of these approaches is likely on its own, however, to provide insight into the longer-term implications of engagement activities. Research and knowledge sharing in this area needs rather to take account of the dynamic, unfolding and longer-term chains of engagement. It needs, where possible, to connect together multiple studies and experiences. It needs to recognise that engagement chains may comprise both more fleeting and more sustained interactions over time. It needs to take into account and understand the effects of wider contextual factors in counterbalancing, frustrating or mediating activities (Facer *et al.* 2012:7).

Survey Methodology

Favish and Ngcelwane's 2014 survey confirmed that there is no consensus across public universities in South Africa on a single conceptual framework or definition. Drawing on the responses to the survey and discussions in several national workshops, did, however, allow the writers to extract common elements which appear to characterise the field. These included the following elements: interaction between universities and multiple social partners, excluding academic constituencies; an emphasis on the notions of reciprocity and mutual benefit for the universities and the external constituencies involved in the interaction; a conscious focus on promoting the value of external engagement for building civic consciousness amongst students; an explicit articulation of an intentional public purpose or benefit for the activities; a commitment to embracing multiple forms of engagement, for example, research oriented (such as participatory/action research and community-based research); teaching oriented (such as service learning, community-based education, clinical service, continuing education courses, and the collaborative production of popular educational materials); and a recognition that engagement can take place at multiple levels – local, regional, national, sectoral, organisational etc. (Favish and Ngcelwane 2013).

These elements, taken with criteria from the Beere framework that serve as a proxy for assessing institutional commitment to ES (summarised earlier), were used to help construct the survey instrument used in this 2015 study.

The 2015 survey accordingly included questions on the frequency and nature of reporting, methods of collecting data, and the foci and use of reports. It also included questions on whether universities collect data on the nature of relationships with external constituencies, and the purposes of the activities and impact assessments. Finally, in order to ascertain the extent of institutional commitment, questions were asked about the links with institutional plans, the locus of decision-making about the focus and format of the reports and the locus of accountability for monitoring delivery.

The survey (using SurveyMonkey) was sent to the institutional representatives serving on the South African Higher Education Community Engagement forum (SAHECEF), formed in 2009 to promote, support, monitor and strengthen Community Engagement [or Engaged Scholarship]. It was also sent to the Vice Chancellors of two universities which currently do not have representatives on SAHECEF. A total of 23 surveys were sent. The two newest public universities were excluded because of their size. Twelve responses were received constituting a 52% response rate. The sample of respondents is representative of the types of universities in South Africa, with three universities of technology, three comprehensive universities, and six traditional universities, including two rurally-based universities.

The survey consisted largely of multiple choice questions with the facility to provide additional information where deemed necessary. Universities were able to select more than one option from the options provided in drop-down menus.

Terenzini's framework of organisational intelligence was used to analyse and present the data. According to this framework, the first tier is the *technical and analytical intelligence*. This foundational level is where facts and figures about an institution are generated. These are important for developing the profile of an institution. The second tier, *Issues intelligence*, incorporates elements of process and methodology relating to challenges facing the institution. The third level is *contextual intelligence*. This is the highest level of intelligence and focuses on an institution's culture and history, and on understanding how its various internal and external contexts and challenges impact on it (Terenzini 1993 and 2013). The survey instrument did not include questions related to the third tier of organisational intelligence as the focus of the study was on tiers one and two.

Tier 1: Collection of data and reporting on ES

What reports are published on ES? Ten of the 12 respondents indicated that reports on ES are produced centrally, but with different time frames – three annually, three bi-annually, three quarterly and one per engagement. One institution indicated that reports on ES were integrated into other institutional and faculty reports, and that, therefore, no separate report was produced.

The format of the reports varied significantly. Examples included the production of pamphlets, newsletters, and substantial booklets (longer than 100 pages).

In four universities decisions about what to cover in the reports are determined by a Senate Committee, and in five universities by a combination of a Deputy Vice Chancellor/line manager of the ES unit and the head of the ES unit. In two universities the focus is determined solely by the heads of the ES units, which suggests a low level of institutionalisation, i.e. less involvement of institutional structures and members of the executive in decision-making.

Nine universities submit reports to Senate and seven of these also submit reports to Council. Only five universities send their reports to the DHET and other external organisations.

The lower number of institutions reporting to Council (seven) and the absence of executive and/or Senate steering of ES indicate a low degree of institutionalisation of ES in these

institutions, which is cause for concern in relation to institutional capacity to collect data on ES.

How are data collected? The main methods universities use for collecting data included extractions from various university databases or other reports (9); university-wide calls and requests to faculty deans to collect information from staff in their faculties (7); requesting information from academics who work directly with the CE units (5); and extracting data from web-based systems (4).

Other methods included extracting information from student societies, university newspapers, performance reviews, and requests to Heads of Department for information.

The data showed that research and teaching constituted the most common forms of engagement, followed by student voluntarism.

Table 1: *Forms of engagement contained in reports*

The high percentage of responses for both research and teaching forms of ES suggests that there is a strong degree of interconnectedness between ES and teaching and research.

Nine institutions reported that they attempt to capture information on all or most ES activities involving academics in the university, but only four capture information on activities involving the support staff. It is, however, not clear from the responses whether the respondents are equating activities of an ES unit with all ES activities in an institution. Hence, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about the comprehensiveness of the current information base of ES across the university sector.

Table 2: *Scope of ES activities covered in reports*

Tier 2: Reporting on pertinent issues

Given the importance attached to engagement and reciprocity, the survey instrument attempted to capture data on this.

Table 3: *Reporting on relationships*

It is encouraging to note that nine institutions capture information on the external constituencies involved in the activities. A smaller number, however, actually track the existence of formal partnerships, which suggests that this may require a greater focus in any future surveys.

Given the understanding as discussed earlier in the chapter that ES activities should involve mutual benefits for the university and the external constituency, it is important to assess whether information is collected on the purposes and outputs of activities and on their impact.

Table 4: *Reporting on purposes and outputs of activities*

Table 4 shows that 11 of the twelve universities include information on the purpose of activities in their reports, but only 8 institutions monitor the outputs of the activities.

Seven universities reported that they capture information on the impact of the activities on the university. To assess the possible impact of activities on the external organisations, respondents were requested to provide examples of outputs which yielded positive benefits for the partners. The following table shows the examples provided:

Table 5: ES activities reported

Significantly, only one university reported that academics are required to submit evidence and that impact is measured via the use of a log frame.

A key measure for determining the effectiveness of institutional research is whether evidence is available on the use of the information for planning or policy development. Eight universities reported that the data collected and the reports compiled on the basis of the data had helped to inform policy or planning, which suggests that the foundations exist for meeting the requirements for the first tier of organisational intelligence on ES. Universities provided the following examples of the use of information: the reports are analysed and used to inform inputs related to engagement for the institution's annual plan; the analysis of the reports indicated that most of the activities involved outreach and that students and the University realised that a new strategy needed to be developed to link engagement more with research and teaching if the sustainability and impact of the activities were to be sustained; analysis of the reports formed the basis of institutional policy and also led to subsequent policy reviews to address gaps or problems.

Analysis of the results revealed a significant limitation of the study, namely that the survey comprised mainly multiple choice questions and very few respondents amplified their responses. It would therefore be necessary to supplement this study with follow-up interviews to develop a deeper understanding of the quality of the information collected and the precise details of what is collected on each activity, particularly in the institutions that claim they report on all or almost all ES activities in their institutions. In follow up of this kind, it would also be necessary to ascertain the scope of activities covered to determine whether sufficient data is being collected to enable a high-level assessment of the state of the field of ES in the public higher education sector.

The survey instrument did not capture information on challenges experienced in relation to building relationships across the different boundary zones of the universities and the external constituencies with which universities work nor on the practices involved in building and

maintaining the relationships. These limitations would need to be addressed in any future survey in order to enable more critical reflection on the data collected to meet the criteria for Terenzini's tier two of organisational intelligence.

We now turn to interpreting the results of the survey. Despite the limitations discussed in the preceding section, some interesting observations can be made.

It is noteworthy that seven universities are already capturing information on impact and that one is doing so in a manner that would enable deeper reflection on each of the activities because of the use of log frames for planning and reporting. To meet the requirements for level two organisational intelligence, i.e. critical and robust reflection of issues, it would, however, be necessary to understand how impact is actually being measured, what processes have been used in the assessment, which players were involved in the processes, and what lessons have been learned.

Four universities indicated that their reports mainly covered selected profiles or case studies whilst four others reported that they attempt to collect more comprehensive information covering activities from across the institution. This suggests that universities are at varying stages with regard to the development of information bases for capturing details of ES. Whilst the nature and format of the reports varied across universities, the evidence suggests that, at the very least, all the universities in the sample are attempting to compile reports on ES. Nine universities provide reports to Senate and seven to Council demonstrating a measure of Executive and Council accountability in relation to ES. In addition, four universities reported that Senate Committees determine the format and focus of the reports and five others reported that a senior member of the university executive was involved in determining the focus and format of the reports. These elements serve as proxies for measuring institutionalisation according to the framework developed by Beere *et al.* (2011).

Only four universities reported that they used web-based systems to extract information, with two universities reporting that they had established comprehensive information management systems related to ES. Nine universities reported having ES databases, but the nature of the databases is not clear.

Four universities indicated that they have reported on activities involving support staff, suggesting that universities have not yet determined how such activities can be subsumed within institutional frameworks on external engagement.

Universities are doing more than simply collecting information for reporting purposes, which is encouraging. Eight universities stated that the reports had been used to assist with policy formulation or planning, which is encouraging from an institutional research perspective. Overall it seems that the foundations for institutional research on the scale and forms of ES have been laid in at least in 10 of the 12 institutions. This would need to be confirmed through the interviews. It would also be desirable to try to ascertain the state of data collection and institutional research in the universities which did not respond to the survey. Terenzini's framework emphasises the importance of identifying and reflecting on issues that surface through the data that is collected to meet the requirements of a second tier of organisational intelligence. If the limitations described above are addressed, it would

be possible to construct an appropriate national instrument that would enable a first tier description of the field and a second tier reflection. It would, however, be necessary to understand the impact of institutional contexts and generate more robust analyses of the field to meet the third tier requirement.

The next part of the chapter examines the potential use of case studies for this purpose.

Towards developing a knowledge base of ES at the University of Cape Town

A Working Group was established to advise on, and promote, engagement at the University of Cape Town (UCT). UCT launched its journey of collecting information on ES in 2004 with a survey sent to 148 heads of academic departments and research units, electronically and in hard copy. This yielded a 32% return rate (Favish 2010). The report that was compiled based on the responses was criticised on methodological and conceptual grounds in Senate. As a result, the Working Group decided to modify its approach from one of trying to capture the scale and forms of ES to a grounded approach: "The intention was to stimulate debate within the university community about different forms of responsiveness and their relationship with teaching and research, and to use the portraits of practice as the basis for developing a conceptual framework that would be appropriate for UCT's context" (Favish 2010:91).

The choice of cases to profile was made by the deans, and interviews were undertaken with the academics involved. In selecting the final cases for inclusion in a report, the Working Group used a multi-dimensional matrix covering different types of activities and involving a range of different types of organisations and outputs, and a representative spread of faculties (University of Cape Town 2005).

The cases were organised around a number of common questions which covered both descriptions of the activities, but also attempted to evaluate the activities and assess benefits for the university and the external partners. The questions covered the following (University of Cape Town 2005): the background to the project/work/unit; the reason why the work was initiated/nature of the need, and with whom; the aims of the activity and the values underpinning this work; the link to academic identity or job; the relationship between the activity and disciplinary expertise; the way the activity added value to UCT and to the constituency with whom the project was initiated; the ways in which the activity and its impact are evaluated; the amount of time spent on the activity; ideas on how UCT should recognise this form of scholarship; and the nature of outputs emanating from the activity.

Following a process of institutional discussions of the case studies which included Senate, the Senate Executive Committee and a symposium featuring key contributors to the report and the Institutional Forum's represented constituencies, a decision was made regarding the term describing ES. The university decided to adopt the term 'social responsiveness' (SR) to describe its engagement activities. This emphasises the need for the university to be more responsive to national priorities determined by the government of the new democracy since 1994. The university has a strong degree of devolution which characterises its institutional culture. Given this and the wide range of activities which seemed to be taking place within the university, it was decided to adopt a policy framework which would

nurture an enabling environment for SR to grow, rather than a centrally driven approach. The university rejected the term ‘community engagement’ because as a research university it was felt that responsiveness happens at multiple levels, namely local, regional, national and even international. It therefore involves multiple communities, and not just the university’s immediate local communities. These decisions illustrate how institutional cultures and contexts inform policy and processes, as well as understandings of what engagement means in a given context.

The practice of using case studies to build a knowledge base of SR at UCT has continued. Each of the SR annual reports has contained an analysis which brings issues to the surface for discussion about the value and practices of SR within the institution. The analyses have been presented at annual symposia with the aim of promoting SR, and have been used to inform a number of scholarly articles in national and international journals, thus contributing to the knowledge base of ES (Favish & Ngcelwane 2009; Favish & McMillan 2009; Leuscher *et al.* 2015)

Each year, the University’s Social Responsiveness Committee selects a theme or themes around which the cases are selected in order to stimulate discussion and critical reflection on different aspects of ES. Occasionally the reports included theoretical pieces about ES to stimulate rigorous debate. For example, the 2011 Report was used to reflect on the progress made in the strategic focus areas selected by the Vice Chancellor, namely poverty and inequality, safety and violence, school improvement, and climate change and development; and included other strategic activities directly linked to the University’s Strategic Plan, for example, the UCT Knowledge Co-op, which is charged with brokering partnerships between community organisations and the university, and the Global Citizenship Programme targeted at students.

The Annual Reports are used to reflect on the aims of the activities and the range of external organisations who are partners. Examples of objectives include identifying and unlocking barriers to accessing services and sustainable economic development; seeking to inform or analyse the impact of policy interventions or strategic projects; strengthening capacity for sustainable development; employment creation; and establishing multi-stakeholder initiatives to foster ongoing dialogue around identified problems. The activities involved engagement with a wide range of constituencies such as small fishing communities, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), various levels of government, student societies, museums, galleries, trade unions, schools, national and international development agencies, and community-based structures.

Institutional discussions of the reports revealed that there were still contestations within the institution about the conceptual framework underpinning the SR Policy. Hence, Cooper argued in the 2010 SR Report that the term “‘engaged scholarship’ should be adopted as it better describes academics’ ‘engagement’ with the ‘wider society’ and that Unless some of the ambiguities and absences in the existing Policy Framework are clarified – with the concept of Engaged Scholarship taking centre-stage ... we will continue to see [SR] being seriously undervalued” (Cooper 2010:36).

Cooper's contention was used to inform draft revisions of the policy framework, particularly revisions of the definition. The revised draft policy framework and definition were discussed extensively in the faculties and subsequently approved by Senate and Council in 2012.

Despite the obvious benefits of case studies for deepening understanding within the institution about the impact and practices of SR, there were continued requests for the University Social Responsiveness Committee to develop a more comprehensive picture of ES within the institution.

The process of preparing for the 2011 report yielded information on 168 activities related to four strategic focus areas in the institution. This is a considerably high number with many academics reporting on more than one activity in which they were involved. When the 2011 Report was presented in Senate, concerns were raised that the report did not cover all ES activities which academics were involved in. This was not surprising as the Deans of several faculties had reported that they had struggled to get information from the academic staff. They reported that the main reason was probably that "academics didn't perceive any benefits" from spending valuable time on bureaucratic reporting requirements which didn't yield significant benefits for them. We were also informed that many academics still did not see involvement in ES as potentially integral to their jobs as academics or that it could enhance their career progression, despite the fact that ES had been integrated into the institution's performance review system.

The University Social Responsiveness Committee decided to use 2014, the year in which full performance assessments were conducted, to request academic staff, via the deans, to provide the information used to support their performance reviews or promotion application to the Institutional Planning Department (IPD) as a basis for compiling a comprehensive picture of ES across the institution. Linking the data collection exercise to the performance review was viewed as a means to increase the response rates.

The approach adopted enabled the institution to report on activities involving 172 academics. Despite the large number of academics in the sample, the data is still not comprehensive as many academics complained after the publication of the report about not being included.

Nevertheless, the linking of the data gathering to the performance review process certainly helped increase the number of academics profiled, suggesting the need for some form of incentive to encourage academics to provide data on their engagement activities. The overview enabled the institution to identify trends, and possible gaps with respect to ES at a macro level to be addressed in future institutional plans. It also led to the decision to launch an Engaged Scholarship Staff Development Programme aimed at building a community of practice of academics involved in ES and improving the practices of ES with a view to enhancing its impact on the university and society more broadly. Several of the case studies that had been included in SR Reports over the years, and articles which had been written based on the reports, formed much of the reading material used in this staff development programme. As much of the ES at UCT is research oriented, the analysis of the report led to discussions with the Research Office on ways of streamlining and improving reporting within the University.

This case study reflects the evolution of understanding and of the development of a policy framework at UCT, the challenges experienced, and the gains made in improving institutional understanding, interactions and reporting mechanisms, leading to a relatively well-developed ES framework with an innovative staff development programme focused on ES.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to cover the very broad terrain of engaged scholarship within South African universities, drawing on a review of previous research and national policy, a survey conducted for the purposes of this chapter and a case study from UCT.

The study has also demonstrated the importance of clarifying the purposes of a database on ES.

If the purpose is merely to construct a national database that captures the scale of activities for the purposes of accountability and reflects on high level trends, this study has demonstrated that it should be possible to reach consensus on a national survey instrument for this purpose, despite conceptual differences. From the responses to the survey, it appears that there is a high degree of commonality regarding the nature of data currently being collected within South African universities for reporting purpose. This suggests that it may be relatively easy to reach consensus nationally about categories to use for collecting foundational level data that would constitute the basis of a national database on ES. It should be possible to develop an adapted form of the HSRC survey instrument and the current survey instrument which would take into account the acknowledged limitations, in particular the need for more nuanced data on the nature and form of relationships, the purposes of the activities and the outputs. The reasons for the uneven responses would, however, need to be investigated as they may reflect varying degrees of institutionalisation of ES, which would probably affect the nature of data that could be collected and provided by institutions where ES is more marginalised. Any attempt to conduct a large scale survey would, however, need to address the kinds of challenges exemplified in the UCT case study.

If, on the other hand, the purpose is to generate robust knowledge about the practices of engagement or to build a rationale based on evidence for a stronger emphasis on the expanding and enhancing of ES nationally, then it would be preferable to facilitate the sharing of case studies from all the universities structured around common development themes and questions. This would enable critical reflection on the current state of ES in the system. Such case studies could focus in particular on highlighting innovative approaches to addressing challenges through drawing on different disciplines, epistemologies, and local contextual knowledge in confronting and changing the unequal and unjust ways in which society distributes rights and opportunities. The case studies could also illustrate innovative approaches to the sharing of knowledge including the use of festivals, plays, exhibitions, web-sites, knowledge hubs, joint preparation of educational materials and booklets, and short films in order to stimulate thinking about ways of enhancing the societal impact of university-based research. Large scale surveys designed to capture comprehensive pictures of ES in universities would not be able to cover the complexities and contextual specificities

of every activity that all academics are involved in which would be essential for generating robust knowledge about ES.

In conclusion the chapter has demonstrated that surveys and case studies serve different purposes, both of which contribute to the knowledge base about ES and help to inform planning. The former enables the institution to monitor trends and high level strengths and weaknesses that could be addressed to enhance the impact of ES within and beyond the university. The latter potentially enables more robust discussion about practices and ways of evaluating the outputs and outcomes of engagement. The chapter has also demonstrated that the scope of what is currently understood as institutional research on higher education needs to be expanded to include a focus on ES. This may necessitate institutional collaboration in order to draw on appropriate expertise from across universities.

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