

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

**HIGHER EDUCATION'S RESPONSIVENESS TO  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: A case of one higher  
education institution in Kwazulu Natal**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Education (Higher Education) at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

This dissertation has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university, nor has it been prepared under the aid or with assistance of any other body, or organization, or person outside the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The post-apartheid education transformation agenda set a platform for higher education in South Africa to demonstrate and contribute more meaningfully towards the holistic development of communities. The White Paper on Higher Education (1997) identified three critical pillars central to the role of Higher Education in this country. These were: teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

It demands of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to demonstrate social responsibility by availing expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes. This legislation laid foundations for making community engagement an integral component of higher education in South Africa. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) stipulated in its Institutional Audit criteria (2004) quality issues on community engagement that HEIs should be measured against. The purpose of this study is to explore the responsiveness of higher education's to community engagement, using a case study of one institution in the province of Kwazulu Natal. This qualitative research draws on interviews from 12 respondents (selected from all sectors of the university) and on documents analysis. The intention is to help analyze how community engagement is implemented using the experiences of this particular institution.

**Keywords:** Community Engagement, Engagement

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore higher education's responsiveness to community engagement, using the experience of one particular higher education institution in Kwazulu-Natal as a case study. My interest in this study has been informed by the challenge posed to higher education institutions by the Higher Education Act to pay attention to community engagement as a third pillar of service to society. In this introductory chapter I will provide my background understanding of the institutionalisation discourse of community engagement in the South African context. I will also describe the type of university where the study was conducted, shedding more light on its location, who makes up its student demographics and what its staff composition and levels of authority looks like. I will reflect on the rationale of the study while also introducing my research question. I will then conclude the chapter with a broad overview of the whole report.

## Background

According to the South African Higher Education Act of 1997 (Preamble), universities in this country have a primary role of providing optimal opportunities for learning and the creation and distribution of knowledge. The act further identifies three critical pillars central to the role of these institutions as namely: Teaching and Learning; Research and Community engagement.

The White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education (1997) defines community engagement as:

Initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community. Community engagement typically finds expression in a variety of forms, ranging from informal and relatively unstructured activities to formal and structured academic programmes addressed at particular community needs.

The White Paper therefore requires that higher education institutions must demonstrate meaningful social responsibility by availing expertise and infrastructure for the benefit of community development. Indeed, higher education institutions have taken diligently to the mission of Teaching, Learning and Research but the same cannot be said for the third pillar of community engagement. Maistry and Thakrar (2012) noted that despite the policy mandate on community engagement, this equally important work remains neglected. They argue that while universities get involved with a wide range of communities, the activities remain largely uncoordinated and are resultant from individual initiatives rather than reflecting strategic and systematic endeavours.

The founding document of the Higher Education Quality Committee (CHE, 2001) identified knowledge-based community service as one of the three integral pillars together with teaching and learning, and research as critical in the considerations for the accreditation and quality assurance of higher education institutions in South Africa. Coetzee (2012) concurs with this mandate of the HEQC which states that where community engagement is discharged through various activities, quality considerations for institutional engagement should be formalised within an institution's quality management policies and procures.

According to the institutional audit process undertaken by the Higher Education Quality Commission (HEQC) over the period of 2004 and 2008, while most audited institutions integrated community engagement in the practical life of the universities, they have not translated these activities into their three year rolling plans (Lazarus, 2007).

In the 1997 and 1998 survey conducted by the Joint Education Trust on community service in South African higher education institutions, Perold (1998) made the following 4 key findings: 1) most higher education institutions in South Africa included community service in their mission statements; 2) few had an explicit policy or strategy to operationalize this part of the mission; 3) most had a wide range of community service projects, and lastly 4) these projects were initiated by innovative academic staff and students but not necessarily as a deliberate institutional strategy nor as a core function of the academy.

Lazarus (2007) also observed that in 1999 most institutions included the concept of community engagement in their mission statements but only one out of the (then) 36 higher education institutions translated the activities into the plans submitted to the Department of Education. Addressing the conference on Higher Education Engagement organised by the

Council on Higher Education held in September 2006, the then Minister of Education, Honourable Naledi Pandor made a plea to higher education institutions to pay more attention to this equally important pillar of higher education. She urged higher education to be at the centre of society's development debates and solutions. She pleaded that:

As South Africans, what we are really asking for is to see whether, as higher education, it is possible for our engagement to make a contribution to this increasing notion of a developmental state and to see what form of support we could give to its emergence, to its ability to address the challenges that our society faces.

The Minister went further to assure the higher education fraternity that the call on community engagement was not a political imposition and therefore posed no threat to institutional autonomy, but rather a partnership geared towards addressing the challenges faced by our country.

## **Context**

This study explores in a practical sense, how responsive to community engagement is this particular university. Based on my continued involvement with the identified university, my observation is that the footprint of community engagement cuts across the broader university community although the type of engagement varies from one sector to another.

I am no stranger to the university, having studied and worked for the institution in various capacities. My most prominent professional role has been in student development and stakeholder relations management on behalf of the university. Throughout my employment at the university I have always taken a keen interest in how the university engages with its various stakeholders. But more importantly, I have noted with concern how community engagement was being perceived by the university. It has been my observation that attention to this equally important brief for the university has not been consistent over the years, thereby undermining the impact it could have on society in general.

It is also my impression that there seems to be no coherent and shared definition of what community engagement means to the university community. However, I am aware that individual staff members, student groups and executive management and other university structures had embarked on various community engagement initiatives, to the credit of the

university and its profile. The initiatives varied from service learning programs, student volunteerism, co-operative education and student placement, community-based research and community outreach.

The university is a multi-campus institution with a capacity student population of 26 000 and 1 500 staff members (inclusive of academic and non-academic staff). It is located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, the fourth largest of the nine South African provinces. The university draws most of its students from the 11 districts of the province i.e. eThekweni, Ugu, Umgungudlovu, Uthekela, Umzinyathi, Amajuba, Zululand, Umkhanyakude, Uthungulu, iLembe and Sisonke. This is in spite of the university's location being at eThekweni and Umgungudlovu only. It offers academic programmes in health, engineering, arts and commerce disciplines. The university structure is divided into three main staffing components, namely **Executive Management** (the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors and Senior Directors), **Academic Staff** (Deans, Academic Directors, Heads of Departments, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers, and Specialist Instructors) and **Support Staff** (Dean of Students, Directors, Heads of Departments, Senior Officers, Officers, Administration Staff and General Workers).

The university statute affords the students a right to association and organisation based on common interest. Pursuant to this, the university student population elects a Student Representative Council (SRC) comprising 15 members to represent them where student rights and interest are concerned. Besides the SRC, the students have the right to establish and affiliate to different clubs and societies. These formations may be organised based on political persuasion, religious affinity, academic or social interests.

The university in its current form, owes its existence to the higher education reconfiguration process that led to mergers and incorporation of higher education institutions across the country. This process unfolded between 2002 and 2005 reducing the number of South African higher education institutions from 36 to 23, in the 'new' categories of Traditional Universities, Comprehensive Universities and Universities of Technology. Based on the aforementioned transformational phase, the new universities may be said to have only existed for a period of not more than 12 years. However, the history of the individually merged entities may be traced to as far back as hundred years ago, as the case applies to this university. Like most public higher education institutions, this university is also heavily

reliant on government subsidies for funding. The university does however receive alternative funding from sources other than government.

## **Rationale**

The purpose of the study is to explore the responsiveness to community engagement by a higher education in South Africa using a case study of an institution in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The study is not necessarily concerned with evaluating the impact of the university's community engagement program. Its main focus is on gaining a better understanding of the university ways of responding or not to community engagement as an education pillar. I intend to establish how the university responds in terms of policies, funding, structural setting and general attitude where community engagement is concerned. I am also keen to learn how the university communicates its community engagement program internally and externally.

I will consider views from selected academic staff members, identified leaders of student groupings, directors and executive managers, whose portfolios enlist activities on community engagement. The intention of the study is to draw from the experiences of the engagements on a broader scale as opposed to 'drilling' deeper in any particular sector of the university setting.

The interest in the subject matter is also brought about by the HEQC inclusion of community engagement as one criterion in the national institutional audit processes. According to the audit criteria, the HEQC "will focus on an institution's policies, systems, strategies and resources for quality management of the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement, including the relevant academic support services" (2004: 01). The identified university is amongst the groups of higher education institutions that went through the mandatory audit process in the year 2008. At the end of each university audit process, the audit panel published findings about the universities based on the audit criteria. The findings also entail recommendations, *intra alia*, that the university must consider in its future planning.

The 2008 audit noted that this university did not have a "coherent conceptualisation of community engagement of a policy that informs the quality assurance of such activities" (HEQC, 2008: 20). However, the panel conducting the audit noted with appreciation the fact that this university's Promotions Policy made mention of community engagement. The panel

also encouraged the university to finalise its policy and further urged the university to assign community engagement responsibility to one of the senior executives together with appropriate resources, conceptual framework and coordinating structure.

In its final recommendation to the university the HEQC submitted that the university must “develop the necessary mechanism to ensure the alignment of planning, resource allocation and management of the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement taking into account the need to both monitor and improve quality of provision across the institution”(HEQC, 2008: 8).

In the instance of this case study, the university may want to use this study to reflect on whether the university is attending to the recommendations made by the audit panel in 2008. The study may also help this university and others to take stock of engagement activities in order to co-ordinate its efforts for a maximum impact with its intended communities and other recipients. The findings may also be used to help define a community engagement agenda as a shared vision where it does not exist.

## **Key Research Question**

The critical question that the research sought to respond to was:

How does the university demonstrate responsiveness to community engagement?

The following sub questions assisted in addressing the study’s primary interest:

1. What are the institutions’ policies about community engagement?
2. What institutional structures exist to promote community engagement?
3. How are the university stakeholders being involved in the community engagement initiatives?
4. How is community engagement communicated by the university?

## Overview of the Report

Community engagement as a scholarly concept is not peculiar only to the South African higher education setting. The discourse on the concepts therefore should also be viewed within the wider context. This report will however focus largely on the exploration of community engagement in a South African context. Although reference may be made to definitions and activities as they may have been penned outside of this context, the interest of the study will always reflect a South African context.

The study however, is not aimed at a reflection and comparison of various South African institutions in as far as community engagement is concerned. It will be a reflection on community engagement practice in one particular institution that has been selected for case study purposes. It will also be noted that I relied on community engagement activities and initiatives at this institution in order to explore how community engagement manifests itself, rather than to provide an academic discourse on how this university defines community engagement.

The report will also engage with the qualitative data that was collected across various sectors of the university. I reflect on the experiences of various university community members who participated in the study. The reflection will share light on the general attitudes and opinions harboured by the ordinary staff members, students and views from members of the university's executive team.

All the data was collected from the university as the research site. The data was mainly collected through document analysis and in-depth one-on-one interviews. The interviews were recorded. After I conducted the interviews, I thematically analysed the recordings looking for evidence and experiences of participants on community engagement. The document analysis also assisted the study with identifying other university role players in community engagement. In this analysis I will be drawing on the Holland Matrix (Holland, 2006) as my adopted theoretical and conceptual framework. This matrix was originally designed to ascertain the university's commitment to community engagement. Although adapted from US higher education case study, it proved to be very relevant in the case of this study too. This research is a qualitative study, based on an interpretive approach. The Matrix theoretical framework has been used to structure the research questions. The framework was

also to be used to assist in organizing the data collected from a variety of identified participants.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to reflect on the literature on how the debate on community engagement has evolved within the context of the broader transformation agenda of this country. I will attempt to establish various definitions offered for community engagement in a South African context. I will also reflect on a typology of community engagement, as it is evident that engagement may take different forms and shapes in the context of higher education. I will engage with some topics relating to institutional responsiveness to community engagement as conceptualised by various scholars in this field. I will then conclude the chapter with an introduction of the Holland Matrix, which has informed the theoretical framework for my study. In particular I will reflect on the factors identified by the Matrix as key towards analysing institutionalisation of community engagement.

## Definitions

Accompanying a general ideological commitment by the South African higher education sector to pay more attention to community engagement, there has been a fair amount of scholarly debate on how the concept is defined. The Council on Higher Education (CHE), on behalf of government, has played quite a pivotal role in providing platforms for this much needed dialogue. The CHE has convened a number of conferences and other stakeholder engagement platforms with practitioners involved with community engagement work, with the view of shaping the agenda for higher education in South Africa.

The other forum outside of government, but also stakeholder driven that is continuing to help the country shape its community engagement agenda, is the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF). This association draws its membership from higher education practitioners involved with community engagement and students doing research in this field. I also sought membership of this structure in order to keep myself abreast of the ongoing debates.

The CHE conference on Community engagement held in September 2006 spent some time deliberating on possible definitions for Community engagement. The records of this conference reflect an account by one of the sessions tasked with identifying definitions, and

outlining some general understanding on the meaning of Community engagement which emerged as:

a process of creating a shared vision amongst the community (especially disadvantaged) and partners (local, provincial, national government, NGO's, higher education institutions, business, donors) in a society as equal partners, that results in the long term collaborative programme of action with outcomes that benefit the community equitably.

Fourie (2006: 42) endorsed this line of thought submitting that community engagement refers:

to the collaborations and partnerships between the university and the appropriately constituted communities that it serves, aimed at building and exchanging – in a two way engagement – the knowledge, skills, expertise and resources required to develop and sustain a developing society.

The other approach at attempting to define community engagement is to look at defining the two words separately i.e. community and then engagement. According to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) and the Joint Education Trust (2006) “communities” refers to those specific local and collective interest groups that participate or may potentially participate in the community service activities of a particular higher education institution. These groups have to be accorded full partnership status with the higher education institution. Such communities should be accorded a full say in the identification of service needs and development challenges. They should have a role in defining the service learning and development outcomes; identify the relevant assets they have in place; evaluate the engagement impact; and must have a substantial input to the search for sustainable solutions to challenges (HEQC/JET, 2006).

However Coetzee (2012) brings in an interesting dimension to the definition of community. She looked at it from a socio-political context. She for instance, posits that in the traditional South African political context the community concept is often understood to be equivalent to the local township or black community with its members being generally disadvantaged, materially poor residents of under-serviced urban, peri-urban or rural areas.

In other discourses, scholars have engaged in debates on where to locate universities when defining communities. Similarly questions that were pondered with were: “who is the

university's community?" or "does the community include those living on the doorstep of the institution or those further afield?" Accordingly, I found Hall's (2010: 23) definition of communities to resonate well with me. He submits that communities:

can be taken as a cluster of households or an entire region, as an organisation ranging from a provincial government to and NGO, as a school, clinic, hospital, church or mosque or as part of the university itself. This suggests a double meaning. But community also functions as an adjective, as a qualifier that indicates work that is socially beneficial. Understood in this way and in the South African context, community work contributes to social or economic justice.

"Engagement" on the other hand, according to Bender (2008: 86), at least suggests a relationship between the "governance" or "university" system and a community system. She defines Engagement as:

..the partnership between a university's knowledge and resources with those of the public, service and private sector so as to enrich scholarship, research and innovation; enhance the curriculum and be curriculum responsive, enhance learning and teaching; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic (social) responsibility; addressing critical societal issues; and contributing to the public good.

She further argues that this form of engagement calls upon the university to make an effort to understand the community dynamics that it seeks to work with.

Coetzee (2012) takes this engagement discourse further arguing that for institutions to establish a collaborative relationship with complex community activities "the university systems has to understand fully the dynamics of the communities with which it seeks to work, and be prepared to adapt and develop structures and processes to make them accessible and relevant to these communities" (2012: 504).

In another definition Hall (2010: 26) defines community engagement as:

a cluster of activities that includes service learning and research that addresses specific needs and wants, the pursuit of alternative forms of knowledge and challenges to established authorities that control and direct systems and the allocation of qualification.

HEQC (2004) endorses this line of thought by defining Community engagement as initiatives and processes through which university expertise (teaching and research) is used to address relevant community issues. The engagement ranges from informal and relatively unstructured activities to structured academic programmes addressing particular community needs. But what is salient about the activities is that they should be manifested out of a relationship that is reciprocal and inclusive between a Community and a Higher Education Institution (CHE, 2004).

The above definitions are by no means an exhaustive effort on how community engagement may be defined, particularly in the South African context. The definitions have however helped to focus this study in the exploration quest of community engagement at this identified institution. My study was concerned particularly with how responsive is the university in question to Community engagement, as opposed to what is the institution's definition of community engagement. For the purposes of this study though, I relied primarily on the 1997 White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education as quoted in the first page of this report for a working definition of community engagement.

Having established some ground for definition, the next task in this chapter is to identify activities that constitute community engagement initiatives. Some literature refers to this as typology of community engagement. I found it prudent to explore the concepts in the typologies because I needed to understand as to where exactly is community engagement manifesting itself in the university.

## **Concepts of Community Engagement**

A literature search on community engagement introduces many concepts and terminology in use across the higher education landscape. These concepts have been enlisted from writings by a range of scholars on topics of education in general, and community engagement, in particular. The exercise has also presented some level of confusion in the characterisation of engagement activities. Foremost was the effort to distinguish between community engagement and community service. Coetzee (2012) observed that whilst community service and community engagement are well known concepts, the terms seems to be confusing to some role players with some using them interchangeably. Bender (2008) also makes an observation that the discourse and practice regarding community service in higher education has shifted since the mid – 1980s from the notion of “outreach” to “community engagement”.

Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna & Slammat (2008) present an interesting timeline in the trajectory of community engagement discourse over the years. They submit that along with the change in perceptions, the terminology used in community engagement has shifted from ‘community service’ to ‘knowledge based community service’ and to a ‘scholarship of engagement’.

Whichever way the trajectory plays out, the then Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, in her keynote address at Higher Education Community Engagement Conference in 2006, challenged higher education institutions to move away from community service to a level of community engagement as part of interactive efforts towards community development. She also lamented what she referred to as a tendency by higher education institutions to move towards the use of the community service notion rather than community engagement. She spoke of the “needy” definition associated with the community and the “giving” or “able” notion attached to the university in the concept of community service.

Bender & Carvalho-Malekane (2011), through the SAHECEF research working group compiled a glossary listing the conceptualisation and clarification of concepts related to community engagement as they applied at various South African Universities. The data was drawn from a document analysis of participating institutions and looks at the various concepts from the individual institutional perspective. The table below illustrates how five comparative institutions across the country documented the concept of community engagement in their respective organisations:

Table: 1

Application of the concept of community engagement at Institutional level	
Institution A	Negotiated, mutually beneficial collaborations between the University and the communities it serves for the purposes of enhancing and exchanging knowledge, skills and expertise thus ultimately contributing to the improved development of society.
Institution B	Continuously negotiated collaborations and partnerships between the University and the interest groups it interacts with, aimed at building and exchanging the knowledge, skills, expertise and resources required to develop and sustain society.
Institution C	Initiatives and processes that employ the knowledge capital and resources of higher education institutions in the creation of partnerships (academically structured or not) between the institution and the communities that address the development needs of such interest groups. The initiative and processes are availed by the institution for no financial consideration.
Institution D	Planned purposeful application of resources and expertise in teaching, learning and research in the University's interaction with the external community to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes that are consistent with the Institutional mission and vision.
Institution E	Initiatives and processes through which the University's expertise

	<p>in areas of teaching and research is applied to address issues relevant to its community, essentially requiring relevant partnership and responsive and reciprocating the exchange of knowledge and skills deposition required to develop a sustained society.</p>
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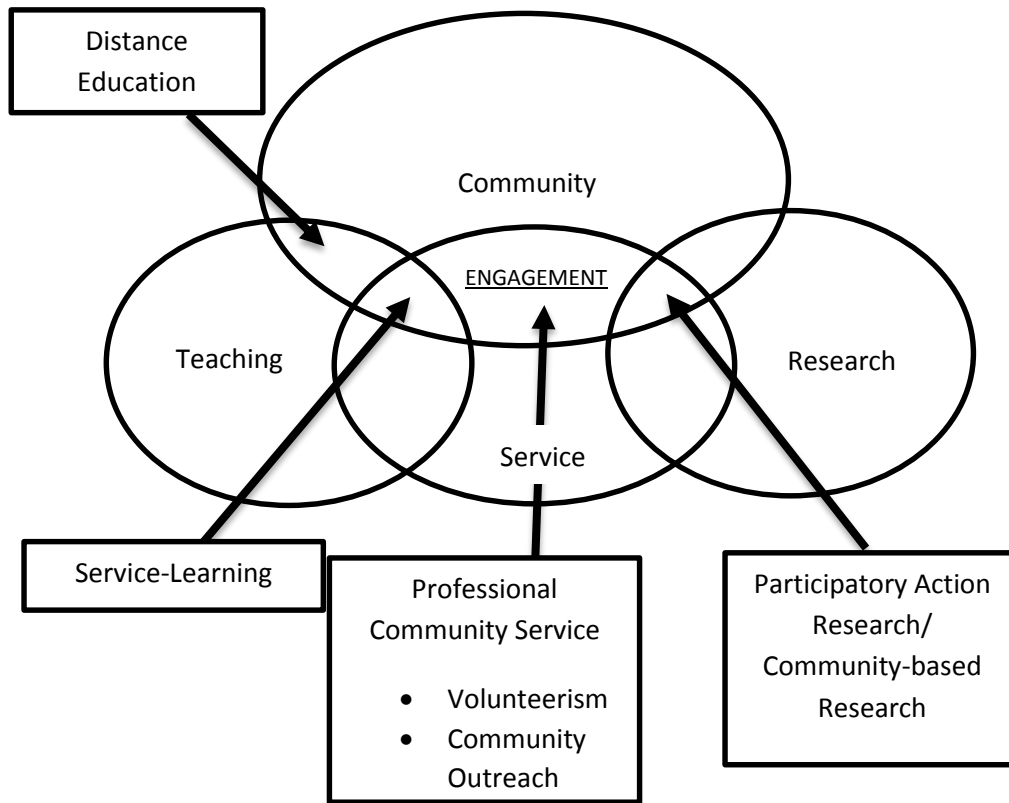
Based on the above analysis, it appears the universities reflect on community engagement based largely on how the Higher Education Act defines the phenomenon. It was also interesting to note that thought is been given to the notion of knowledge sharing in the interest of a sustainable society, with at least one institution committing financial resources to project.

## **Typology of Community Engagement**

The discourse in the section above necessitated a focus on the typology of community engagement in order to understand activities in a better context. As pointed out in various literature, I noted that community engagement can take several different forms and shapes in the context of South African higher education systems, with its activities benefiting stakeholders in a varied manner. The students participating in a community engagement initiative may derive benefit out of the learning exercise while the Community receives a service rendered depending on the nature of engagement activity. The Community on the other hand may derive benefit from the resources and facilities that the university system opens up access to.

The diagram below as adapted from Bringle, Games and Malloy (1999) helps to share light on various types of Engagement activities and how they manifest in various in our communities within the context of higher education.

**Figure 1: Typology Model of Community Engagement** (Source: Adaptation from Bringle, Games and Malloy, 1999)



As illustrated in Figure 1, engagement may take the form of distance education; service learning; professional community service (in the form of volunteerism or community outreach); and Participatory Action Research which is referred to in other literature as Community-based Research. The point of intersection manifests in activities of Service Learning and some form of Community-based research (see figure 2 above). And where there is no intersection there are activities of Community Outreach and student/staff volunteerism that happens separately from each other. However Lazarus et.al (2008) argue that in an ideal higher education situation the circles indicating teaching and research should overlap. “In this way the overlapping nexus between teaching/learning, service and research will be informed; this nexus will then be indicative of the field where there is a full integration of the three core functions of higher educations” (Lazarus et.al. 2008:61).

Bringle et al (1999) referred to the above as an Intersecting Model of Community engagement. He recognised that community engagement activities in higher education must be part of the other two integral pillars of Teaching/Learning and Research.

Bender (2008) in support of the approach of Bringle et al (1999) propounds that the model assumes that the core functions of research activities and teaching involve engagement with communities. She also posits that the activities in the model promote programmes like: Alumni Engagement, Student Services programmes with the community, Scholarly publications, Public Lectures with media coverage and other teaching and research work of the university.

The Higher Education Quality Committee document titled: A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instrument for Managing the Quality of Service-learning (HEQC, 2006) offers the following light in an attempt to distinguish amongst various forms of community engagement, from South African higher education policy debate perspective. The activities include:

**Volunteerism** which refers to engagement of students in activities where the primary beneficiary is the recipient community and the goal is to provide a service to this particular community. While students may learn from the program, it is generally not related to, or integrated into the student's field of study. Hence volunteer programmes are essentially viewed as extracurricular development initiatives happening at leisure and outside the formal classroom curriculum. Students do not accrue academic credits from participating in the program. Also the funding is usually offered by donors or derived from student fundraising initiatives. HEQC/CHESP (2006).

**Community Outreach** (also referred to in some literature as Extension Service) which refers to activities where the primary beneficiary is the community with the main goal also being to provide a service. However, as compared to volunteerism, the program here is more structured and involves commitment from students and/ or staff. The results of this engagement form part of the students' service learning experience or service in general, in the case of staff members. These programmes in most instances are initiated by faculties or departments with recognition given towards the student's academic record in some instances or forms part of the research publication. HEQC/CHESP (2006).

**Service Learning** which is defined by HEQC in the glossary of the document titled: Criteria for Institutional Audits (HEQC 2004: 26) as: "applied learning which is directed at specific community needs and is integrated into an academic programme and curriculum. It could be credit bearing and assessed, and may or may not take place in a work environment". In this approach both the student and the community derive benefit out of the engagement. The

community's benefit is in the form of the service rendered by the students who in turn benefit out of the rich learning exercise of tackling real community challenges or issues. Reciprocity and mutual enrichment with scholarly activities are central characteristics of service learning.

The other form of engagement not conspicuous in the figure 2 is **Internship**, referring to student activities where benefit in the main is enjoyed by the student. Internships are generally fully integrated with the curriculum. They are aimed at providing students with hands-on practical experience that should enhance their understanding of the area of study. The intention is also to help student to develop the necessary skills required by the workplace. Similar to internship as a form of engagement, is **co-operative** education programmes which also benefit the student learning process. The primary purpose here is to enhance the students' understanding of their area of study. Co-operative education is used extensively in the universities of technology (traditional Technikons) throughout South Africa. Second or third year students are placed in industries that relate to their specific areas of study. This program is often compulsory and earns the student a direct academic credit towards his/her records. HEQC/CHESP (2006).

**Community-based Research:** one South African university defines this research approach as community engaged. It is argued that it is a research methodology which the external community and social partners collaborate with academic researchers to produce knowledge which is intended for use to the benefit of the community. It contrasts with traditional research practices in which community members are viewed as "human subjects" and passive recipients of information. It places value on the community perspective and on the active engagement integrating the function of scholarship in the research project's outcome and outputs. (Bender & Carvlho-Malekane, 2011).

The above mentioned concepts are by far not exhaustive, given the rapid change in the dialogue on community engagement in higher education. The discourse on community engagement has been a subject of much debate in the South African higher education landscape particular in the post-apartheid period. The White Paper on Education (1997) had flagged community engagement as key to the strategy to transform higher education with the view of having this section of our community demonstrating commitment to social responsibility. With this clear mandate from law makers, the higher education sector had to define for itself how it intended to meet the challenge as presented.

Bender (2008) made an observation that our higher education lacked a structural framework and model for the conceptualisation of functional community engagement. She further argued that the country needed clarity on the core purposes, roles and responsibilities of universities. For her part in contribution to this body of knowledge, Bender conceptualised three models for community engagement namely *Silo* (engagement activities seen as mutually exclusive), *Intersecting* (engagement activities seen as an integrated program) and *Infusion* (cross cutting approaches with engagement activities embedded in the core functions of teaching/learning and research) approaches to engagement activities. She developed these based on the qualitative data she collected from the proceedings of a conference on community engagement in Higher Education. The conference which was held in September 1996 drew delegations from public and private Higher Education Institutions, local councillors, local government and representative of business together with non-governmental organisations. The objective of the conference as organised by the CHE was to discuss the conceptualisation and implementation of community engagement in South African Higher Education Institutions.

## **Institutional Responsiveness to Community Engagement**

After establishing a case for the existence of different types of community engagement where literature is concerned, the next task in my study was to develop an understanding of how higher education institutions in general demonstrate *responsiveness* to community engagement in their normal operational setting. This was important for me because the White Paper on Higher Education (1997) calls on institutions to demonstrate their commitment to the common good of our society. The paper sees one of the purposes of higher education in the new dispensation being:

To address the development needs of society and provide the labour market, in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society, with the ever-changing high level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern society.

## Scholarship of Engagement

I started by exploring how engagement has evolved as a scholarly activity. Boyer (1996) through the work of the US based Carnegie Foundation introduced the concept of ‘scholarship of engagement’ in the report titled *Scholarship Reconsidered*. As a former President of the Foundation, he believed that higher education must be central to social challenges. He avers that higher education must seek ‘a more vigorous partnership in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems’ (1996:13). The Foundation proposed four paradigms to scholarship where engagement is concerned, namely: Scholarship of discovery; scholarship of integration; scholarship of sharing knowledge; and scholarship of application.

With *scholarship of discovery* they posit that universities must contribute to human knowledge development through research. *Scholarship of integration* argues for an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge production. That discovery must be put into context and must be interpreted in relation with other discoveries. *Scholarship of sharing knowledge (or teaching as other writers would have)*: knowledge produced must be shared, academics must teach others of what they learned in their course of discovery. And lastly the *scholarship of knowledge application*: that knowledge does not only get to be in a linear pattern, theory leads to practice and the other way too, practice leads to theory.

Brown-Luthango (2013) understands Boyer (1996) to be calling universities to play a more meaningful role in addressing the current societal challenges, citing poverty and inequality as examples. Accordingly the appeal is for a broader conception of scholarship “beyond the scholarship of discovery to include a scholarship of integration and teaching” (2013: 312).

She however laments the dominance of scholarship of discovery in most research universities. She argues that the academic system is more geared towards “recognition and advancement of the scholarship of discovery, while other forms of scholarship receive very little attention and are often devalued. This results in the “ivory tower” syndrome and the production of knowledge which does not respond to contemporary societal problems” (2013: 312).

## **Social Responsibility**

Beyond the academic discourse, institutional responsiveness particularly in the developing countries, also means universities must play a role in the economic development space of society by pursuing better relations with industry. However, Kruss (2012 :8) cautions that ‘the pursuit of these relations poses challenges for universities in developing countries in terms of changes to their traditional missions; the balance between research and teaching; and their response to social and economic needs’. She acknowledges though that it is prudent for universities to take into cognisance issues of human social development including poverty reduction amongst other developmental needs.

Brown-Luthongo (2013: 310) concurs with Kruss (2012) adding that South African Higher Education Institutions are faced with a dual challenge of “becoming more internationally competitive in terms of research outputs whilst at the same time working collaboratively with industry, government and community partners in order to develop effective responses to growing inequality and poverty in post-Apartheid South Africa”.

The discourse on finding a balancing act in the role of higher education institutions in relation to social responsiveness has helped shape policy in South Africa’s research universities (Favish, 2010). At her university, Judith Favish (2010: 91) argues that the development of a policy framework for social responsiveness was paved with opposing views amongst senior leadership with some agreeing to the university’s ‘commitment to playing an active developmental role in South Africa’s cultural, economic, political, scientific and social environment’, whilst other leaders argued against the very use of the term responsiveness. Their view was that the use of the term ‘could result in a narrow instrumentalist view of the role of the university in society rather than thinking about how the university promotes the wider public good through public debate and producing critical and analytical thinkers required for building a solid democracy’.

The debate at this institution resulted in a preference for the notion of ‘public benefit’ as opposed to ‘community engagement’. The institution also acknowledged the interconnectedness between social engagement and other core traditional university activities of research and teaching (Favish, 2010).

However, the debate may pan out elsewhere, it is apparent to me that responsiveness should also mean a contribution to a national system that places universities at the centre of social and economic development contribution. The universities must interact with a broad array of social partners. From industry to farmers, communities to civil society, alumni linkages to governments at all levels (Kruss, 2012). The White Paper on Science and Technology (DACST, 1996) also urges universities to forge collaborations between themselves and other industry strategic alliances and networks in order to reposition themselves at the core of economic development.

Some universities seem to have embraced this call. In the case of the universities of technology, it is through the creation of departmental operations such as contracts offices, technology stations (or technology transfer offices, as they are called in other institutions), innovation centres or enterprise development units whose mandate was to give impetus to the national imperatives as set out by the White Paper on Science and Technology (DACST, 1996). But there were those who felt the emphasis on the 'innovative' agenda in the interest of industry and labour market needs were ignoring the wider role developing a critical citizenry (CHE, 2003).

What I also found to be interesting in the debate on responsiveness of institutions to community engagement is the proposition to link community engagement to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), conceptually. Pienaar-Steyn (2012) in her quest to develop a conceptual framework for enabling and evaluating community engagement argues for the use of the United Nations' MDGs as adopted by representative countries in the year of 2000.

She advocates for the community engagement agenda that recognises 'the socio-political project of universities specifically, and all other sectors in general, as global sustainable development' (Pienaar-Steyn 2012:51). She further argues that a MDG based framework for community engagement will also help to 'integrate activities of research, training and community engagement by directing them towards the common objectives of globally sustainable development' (2012: 53).

## Students and Community Engagement

Students in higher education institutions play a pivotal role in the community engagement agenda of their institution. Jones & Hill (2003) in their quest to understand student patterns of commitment to community service found that various factors influence student to participate in service activities. They explored this influence from the students' high school days. Some of the factors influenced pupils at high school listed included family role models, religious foundations and socializing with peers. In case of college students, their study identified program support, visible engagement activities and the influence by peers as factors positively influencing student participation in engagement activities.

Literature on student community engagement as explored earlier in this chapter (typology of community engagement) locates students as both beneficiaries and agents of community engagement. Student community engagement may take various forms ranging from service learning, student volunteerism or internship amongst other forms. The experience in these forms of engagement provide students with a valuable learning opportunity.

Millican & Bourner (2011) list the following three reasons arguing the importance of student community engagement: a) that it contributes to service as part of the third pillar of higher education institutions; b) that it provides an opportunity for students to develop capacity for social responsibility; and lastly c) that it adds value to campus-centred studies. They endorse the student-community relationship as reciprocal with students giving off their time and talent in exchange for valuable learning.

However, students should not be left to their own devices where community engagement is concerned. The relationship between the university and its community needs to be carefully managed. Maistry & Thakrar (2012) while questioning the preparedness of students to act in a responsive manner to the task at hand, concur that students should be developed holistically beyond the current economic educational approach that is geared towards individualistic development. Millican & Bourner (2011) explains this educational approach as geared towards developing the students' sense of social concern. They call on higher education not only to be subject-centred, but also to be society-centred.

In their study aimed at contributing towards a curriculum perspective to educating student for effective community engagement, Maistry & Thakrar (2012) drew interesting insights into how students understand the purpose of Higher Education and that of community

engagement, amongst other findings. The majority of the students in their sample are said to view the role of education in an economic light. Higher Education is seen as a platform to prepare students for the labour market. They also understood community engagement in a narrow sense of relationships and partnership building (Maistry &Thakrar, 2012).

In this study conducted from a South African perspective, the students are reported to have equally lamented the lack of holistic development as advocated for by Maistry &Thakrar (2012). The students are said to have indicated that:

“educating students as a whole being entailed not only academic education, but should include seeing them as ‘spiritual beings’ who have to be educated to be socially responsive; to contribute to the community; to reduce individualism (such as striving for success at the expense of others and promote being part of the collective); to involve students’ growth in cognitive social, emotional, physical and moral areas of their lives and encourage the ability to be dynamic, flexible and adaptive in changing situations, so that they may become functioning, engaged and responsible global citizens” (Maistry &Thakrar, 2012: 71).

An observation that I made is that literature is very thin on community engagement from a students’ perspective. Save for Jones & Hill (2003) who looked at students’ patterns to commitment to community service and Maistry &Thakrar (2012) who looked at the general preparedness and attitude of students participating in community engagement, I struggled to find literature exploring student community engagement outside the formal academic approach. Most of the literature I found looked at community engagement through academic lenses.

## **Faculty and Community Engagement**

The other equally important stakeholder community influencing the institutional responsiveness to the engagement agenda are the academics in the faculties. In their practice, academics are seen as central to the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. In fact in Bender’s (2008) Infusion Model of community engagement, she challenges academics to embed community engagement into their professional practice of teaching and research.

Moore & Ward (2010) in their study analysing the institutionalisation of community engagement in faculty work pointed towards several factors that impact on the role of faculty members. The factors included the university's attitude towards community engagement. They talk of the 'rhetoric of engagement and the reality of faculty work'. They point out the 'disconnect' between institutional mission and actions associated with engagement work expected to be performed at faculty level. They also lament the misalignment between rhetoric and action that is brought about by leadership that does not cultivate an enabling environment that supports engagement.

Institutional leadership is expected to provide comfort and stability to faculty members in their pursuit of community engagement. More and Ward (2010) argue that rapid change of leadership brings about uncertainty amongst faculty and may frustrate long term plans for community engagement activities. Their 'participants' narratives emphasize[d] the key role organisational structure and campus leaders play in creating conditions to foster the "good work" of campus-community engagement' (2010: 55).

They also concur with Bender's (2008) model of Infusion in that they advocate for the adoption of a more holistic view to faculty work. By way of recommendation, the study encouraged broader institutional dialogue on engagement activities. More and Ward (2010: 55) posit that: "conversations about community-university engagement need to be broadened beyond individual faculty and key senior administrators. The administrative staff who support faculty work can play a key role in facilitating or hindering all aspects of faculty work including community engagement".

More and Ward (2010) also place value on established and well documented policies and guidelines that regulate promotions and tenure guidelines. They argue that this policy framework goes a long way in assuring faculty members, particularly in times of leadership transition. Faculty members should not be made to rely on underlying rhetoric in terms of decision making processes where matters of incentivising community engagement are concerned.

The last recommendation they make deals with the encouragement of mentorship amongst faculty members involved in community engagement. They place value in mentorship particularly for junior academics who may struggle to balance their workload. "Mentors can [also] play a role in providing insight about how to integrate different aspects of the faculty

job as well as how to connect the work of campus with the larger community” (More & Ward, 2010:56)

## **Community-University Engagement**

It appears at least from a literature perspective that meaningful and mutually beneficial outcomes (between the University and the community) of community engagement is more likely to be achieved if both the key stakeholders have an equal and substantive contribution and determination of the project outcomes. Brown-Luthango (2013) notes however, that the stakeholders should not be naïve about the effort in terms of time and investment that these kind of engagements require. She also alludes to the difficulty in establishing, maintaining and sustaining genuine, mutually beneficial University-Community collaborations.

Brown-Luthango (2013) helps to explore the dynamic relationship between the community and the University in engagement activities, using her analysis of a collaboration between a University and a small community, both based in Cape Town, South Africa. In her research she investigated the pre-requisite [if any] for meaningful university-community collaboration in the South African context. She also explored the readiness of South African universities for socially responsive research requiring closer collaboration with communities.

The conclusion she makes in her study were based on the reflections of the Project Coordinator who was involved with the said project for more than three years. They (the conclusions) were also informed by opinions of regular community participants which were solicited through questionnaires. The idea behind the research project was to ascertain how participants felt about their involvement with the project.

Important lessons drawn from her study include the absolute need to invest in building a relationship between the University and the Community in order to bridge institutional barriers. She also reaffirmed the need for stakeholder buy-in in terms of goals, anticipated outcomes and benefits of the planned collaboration. This she says, will eliminate unrealistic expectations resulting in mistrust if such expectations aren't met. Equal partnership with the Community means the Community being involved in every stage of the process rather than just being 'research subjects'. Brown-Luthango concludes that: “the aims, mode of operation and anticipated outcomes and benefits of planned collaborations [must be] carefully negotiated upfront and crucially, the research projects are jointly conceived and driven by both partners and not only by the needs of the university partner” (2013: 311).

Coetzee (2012) recommends that the first step to be undertaken in the community engagement planning phase is that engagement facilitators must be aware of the communities areas of knowledge. This notion may well be an approach addressing the concerns raised by the then Minister of Education, Minister Naledi Pando (2006: 71), on the perceived attitude of higher education institutions towards communities. She lamented the “needy” way the university looks at the community, with the university in a “giving” position. It may well be that this attitude is informed by lack of proper knowledge of the communities the universities seek to engage with. Coetzee advocates for an effort on the part of the university (in instances where they are facilitators of community engagement projects) to learn about the communities they are about to engage with. She submits that there are at least seven areas the community engagement facilitator must manage with a level of sensitivity. The areas are:

- Knowledge of the environment in which community engagement will take place;
- Knowledge of the social relationships in the community;
- Knowledge of community tradition and culture;
- Knowledge of social structure in the community;
- Knowledge of safety and security systems in the community;
- Knowledge of health systems of the community; and
- Knowledge of economic values and systems of the community (Coetzee, 2012: 509).

## **Analysis of Institutional Commitment to Community Engagement**

After establishing various definitions of community engagement, the types of engagement activities and the context within which they manifest themselves in the higher education setting, the next step was to understand how to analyse the university’s choices and commitment towards community engagement. I identified the Holland Matrix originally conceptualised in 1997 (and adapted in 2006) as a conceptual framework for my study. The Matrix (as the framework became known) was conceptualised using data collected from 23 case studies conducted between 1994 and 1997. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the levels of commitment to community service in identified institutions.

In that study the researcher needed to understand the framework that shaped the thoughts, feeling and actions of the university where community service (as it were) is concerned. Holland (1997) submits the study was aimed at assessing “rhetoric vs reality” of the institutional claims with regards to mission statements as characterized by the university’s

academic environment. The study had the researcher interviewing up to 40 academic and administration staff members (including senior executives) together with students. They also examined various policies and institutional documentation.

The major advantage of the Matrix (Figure 4 below), besides its relevance to my study, is the fact that its intended use is said not to judge the “correctness” or “goodness” of the institutions’ choices in relations to its commitment towards community engagement. Rather, Holland argues that “the intent is solely to provide a framework that can be useful to an institution in comparing where it ideally seeks to be positioned on the Matrix and its assessment of the current location, all in the service of coherent institutional planning and decision making” (1997: 36)

The framework explores commitment to engagement on four levels. Level one is regarded as: *Low Relevance*; level two as: *Medium Relevance*; level three as: *High Relevance* and level four as: *Fully Integrated*. These levels of institutional commitment represent the expressions of the organisational factors cited as components that frame an institution’s community engagement related activities. The Matrix further identifies eight key institutional factors that are likely to impact on the institutions’ commitment to service or community engagement. The factors are: the University Mission; Leadership; Promotion, Tenure and Hiring; Organisational Structure; Student Involvement; Faculty Involvement; Community Involvement and Campus Publications. Holland (1997) explains the levels of Commitment with the following summative statements. The statements in quotes are supposedly an expression by the universities themselves:

**Level One: Low Relevance** “We [the university] would provide service to the community, if we had additional time and resources, but it [service] is not specifically encouraged or rewarded”. In this level, engagement is not integrated and it is not a priority to the institution. Students’ participation is limited to extra-curricular club-based activities that are not linked to the university’s goals.

**Level Two: Medium Relevance** “We encourage the faculties, students and staff to be volunteers in their communities because to do so is good for society at large and is consistent with actions of educated people”. In this level community engagement is used only to serve the Public Relations purpose. The university has evidence of activities by staff and students. The campus also invites community to participate on various advisory groupings.

Figure 2: The Matrix

### Levels of Commitment to Community Engagement<sup>1</sup>

	<b>Level One: Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two: Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three: High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four: Full Integration</b>
<b>Mission</b>	No mention or undefined rhetorical reference	Engagement is part of what we do as educated citizens	Engagement is an aspect of our academic agenda	Engagement is a central and defining characteristic
<b>Leadership (Presidents, Vice Presidents, Deans, Chairs)</b>	Engagement not mentioned as a priority; general rhetorical references to community or society	Expressions that describe institution as asset to community through economic impact	Interest in and support for specific, short-term community projects; engagement discussed as a part of learning and research	Broad leadership commitment to a sustained engagement agenda with ongoing funding support and community input
<b>Promotion, Tenure, Hiring</b>	Idea of engagement is confused with traditional view of service	Community engagement mentioned; volunteerism or consulting may be included in portfolio	Formal guidelines for defining, documenting & rewarding engaged teaching/research	Community-based research and teaching are valid criteria for hiring and reward
<b>Organization Structure and Funding</b>	No units focus on engagement or volunteerism	Units may exist to foster volunteerism/community service	Various separate centres and institutes are organized to support engagement; soft funding	Infrastructure exists (with base funding) to support partnerships and widespread faculty/student participation
<b>Student Involvement &amp; Curriculum</b>	Part of extracurricular student life activities	Organized institutional support for volunteer activity and community leadership development	Opportunity for internships, practica, some service-learning courses	Service-learning and community-based learning integrated across curriculum; linked to learning goals
<b>Faculty Involvement</b>	Traditional service defined as campus duties; committees; little support for interdisciplinary work	Pro bono consulting; community volunteerism acknowledged	Tenured/senior faculty may pursue community-based research; some teach service-learning courses	Community-based research and learning intentionally integrated across disciplines; interdisciplinary work is supported
<b>Community Involvement</b>	Random, occasional, symbolic or limited individual or group involvement	Community representation on advisory boards for departments or schools	Community influences campus through active partnerships, participation in service-learning programs or specific grants	Community involved in defining, conducting and evaluating community-based research and teaching; sustained partnerships

<sup>1</sup> Barbara A. Holland, 2006. Adapted from Holland, *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Vol.4, Fall 1997, pp. 30-41. Retrieved from <http://www.henceonline.org/resources/institutional>

	<b>Level One: Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two: Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three: High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four: Full Integration</b>
<b>External Communications and Fundraising</b>	Community engagement not an emphasis	Stories of students or alumni as good citizens; partnerships are grant dependent	Emphasis on economic impact of institution; public role of centres, institutes, extension	Engagement is integral to fundraising goals; joint grants/gifts with community; base funding

**Level Three: High Relevance** “Our mission sees the community as a laboratory for research and teaching purposes. We have expertise that can solve community issues, and we can help study community problems. Our students spend time in community-based learning experiences and, in some cases, require service projects”. The approach may be referred to as outreach. The institution is characterized by engagement activities that are organised from separate units. The student involvement is limited to volunteerism activities of internship programmes. There may be Service Learning activities offered by some academic programmes.

**Level Four: Full Integration** “We ask the community to be our partner in setting and conducting our scholarly service agenda. We invest in service learning within the curricular experience of students, and have support and reward structures for our faculties and students who engage in community-university partnerships”. In this level, community engagement is fully integrated into teaching and learning. Its activities are recognized and appropriately rewarded through the university systems. There is a deliberate strategy to support Service Learning as an integral component of the curriculum for most students. The community also has a clear influence in guiding the partnership it has with the university.

The organisational factors are explained as follows:

**Mission:** the factor analyses the link between the mission statement of an institution and the extent at which campus activities reflect the ascension made in the purpose statement. The study assesses the ‘rhetoric vs. the reality’ claim by the institution. Holland makes the point that most institution make mention of Service in their mission statement but rarely explain it to their stakeholders. Lazarus (2007) makes the same point with regards to South African institutions following the 1999 institutional audit process. Holland further makes an observation that most of the challenges experienced by universities with regards to

institutionalization of Service has been due to the mis-alignment of the campus mission and the institutional actions regarding service. “Such mis-alignment were shown to result in institutional confusion and anxiety regarding the role of service... and the most common cause of mis-alignment was the absence of any discussion, much less agreement, on the meaning of service as a component of the overall mission” (1997: 38).

Holland’s views on the Mission are also supported by the CHE’s institutional audit criterion. This statutory body on higher education stipulates that institutions must have a clearly stated mission and purpose statement with goals and priorities which are responsive to the university’s local, national and international context. There should be “effective strategies in place for the realisation and monitoring of these goals and priorities” (HEQC, 2004). The criteria also requires adequate attention be given to transformational issues in the mission and goal setting activities of the institution, including issues of community engagement.

## **Leadership**

This factor was not in the originally conceptualised model of 1995, it came about in the adapted version of 2006. It analyses the behaviour and attitude of the Senior Leadership of the institution towards community engagement. Holland posits that the level of commitment with this factor can be observed ranging from the rhetoric of leadership, to their commitment to engagement through supporting the agenda and committing funding on an ongoing basis.

## **Promotion, Tenure and Hiring**

This factor refers to the reward system built into the commitment towards service or community engagement. It also explores whether the institution has a deliberate strategy to promote and incentivise community engagement initiatives across the wider campus. This factor focussed on how service is defined, promotion is acquired and evaluation managed, based on an official university system.

## **Organizational Structure and Funding**

Does the institution commit its resources towards community engagement? Is there a unit entrusted with running with this agenda on a fulltime basis with adequate resources to attain a more co-ordinated approach towards community engagement? Holland argues that the university’s response to the logistical and policy demands of service may reflect the level of commitment and capacity to sustain that commitment. Based on the finding from her study

she advocates for campus units serving as centres for community engagement activities. She posits that creation of a support unit must involve the dedication of real resources towards engagement activities.

She also makes an observation based on her study that “ the presence of campus-wide units supporting service learning was cited as a facilitating factor in that it not only provided practical assistance, but also raised visibility, offered the legitimacy conferred by a formal unit, and offered a venue for building interdisciplinary Partnerships across department” (Holland, 1997: 40).

In the South African higher education context the HEQC requires that institutions should commit human, financial and infrastructural resources to ensure support for community engagement. The responsibility for engagement should be allocated at the level of Senior Management for implementation, monitoring and responsive action.

### **Student Involvement**

This factor analyses the degree to which institutional commitment to community engagement as a component of the university mission is connected and reflected in the student experience both in and outside the classroom. Holland’s concern was also to reflect the institution understanding of service learning practices. She lamented engagement that was only meant for public relations purposes “without actually adopting the practices of Service-learning as a valued component of the student academic program” (1997:36).

### **Faculty Involvement**

The factor looks at the individual behaviour of faculty members towards community engagement. It also reflects on the extent at which community engagement is reflected on the professional work of academic staff in a particular institution and poses the question “To what extent do individual faculty [members] engage in certain types of service-related activities and how do they explain their choices and priorities?” (Holland, 1997:37).

### **Community Involvement**

The framework moves from a premise that community engagement should be of a mutual benefit to both the university and the community (whoever the university refers to as their community). The factor also explores the role the community plays in the engagement

relationship. It also analyses the level of influence that the community has on the behaviour of the institution.

## **Campus Publications**

The factor analyses how the institution communicates community engagement. The presence or absence in coverage of engagement activities in the university media i.e publications, websites and information packages to external stakeholders.

## **CONCLUSION**

Community engagement remains very topical in South African Higher Education landscape. The literature explored in this section is by no means exhaustive of the scholarship on the subject matter. It is however meant to assist to give context to my study. It was crucial for me to create a frame of definition for community engagement in a South African context, since there is no prescribed approach to community engagement for our country's institutions

It was also evident based on literature that analysing *responsiveness* brings a number of concepts and role player to the body of knowledge. For the purpose of my study it was important to focus *responsiveness* discourse with the university as the locus of control. At the end the chapter I introduced the Holland Matrix which presented a useful diagnostic tool for describing and interpreting the dimensions, approaches and levels of institutional commitment to community engagement together with its related activities. In the following chapter I will be looking at the broader methodological approach to the research.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology approach used in this study. I shed light on the research approach and the deliberate choices I made. I will reflect on the data sources and collection plan. I will also introduce and explain the data collection instrument and the subsequent analysis of the data collected. I will explore how I organised my data using the theoretical frame work as deliberated upon in the Literature Review (Chapter 2). I will conclude the chapter with a reflection on the study limitations together with the ethical consideration that impacted on the study.

## Research Approach

My research was a qualitative study, based on an interpretive approach. This paradigm concerns itself more with the social construction of meaning (Neumann, 2000). I also chose a case study methodological approach because it is best placed to develop an understanding of a phenomenon with its particular context (Rule & John, 2011). They define case study as a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular phenomenon in its context in order to generate a greater understanding.

Baxter & Jack (2008) had a similar definition for a case study. They define it as a qualitative research approach that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. They argue that this approach ensures that an issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be understood.

The above definition gave me the comfort that a case study approach would best assist to explore community engagement in its proper context in the case of this university. The decision also resonated well with Yin (2003) on when a case study approach should be used. He argues that Case Studies must be considered when ‘the focus of the study is to answer “HOW” and “WHY” questions amongst other considerations’. In this study, a broad question that seeks to be answered was: “How does the university demonstrate responsiveness towards community engagement?”. It may also be worth mentioning that in this study I used the university as a unit of analysis.

Once the decision was made on the case study as a methodological approach, I had to also make a selection of the specific type of a case study design that was to guide the overall study purpose. Yin (2003) categorizes Case Studies as explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive. This study was based on an exploratory category, explained by Yin as an approach used to explore situations in which the intervention being analysed has no clear, single set of outcomes. Having established an understanding of Case Studies, I will now explain how the data was collected and share the justification I held for my data collection methods.

## **Sources of Data**

I sourced my data through face to face interview and document analysis. I started off with document analysis because I believed the approach would help me understand the university's official position on Community engagement. My main interest in terms of the timeline for documents commenced from the year 2007 onwards. The reason for this was that the university went through a mandatory audit process conducted by the Council on Higher Education's Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) in that year (with the finding published in 2008). This for me made for an interesting starting point given that the university would have been assessed on its broad mandate as a public higher education institution. Even more important was the fact that the Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2004) list community engagement as one other area that must be considered when auditing institutions.

The study began with my contacting the relevant university departments which serve as a policy repositories for this institution. The following policy documents were found to be most relevant for my study:

- the CHE Audit Report on the university;
- the Academic Staff Promotions Policy;
- the Draft Policy on Community engagement;
- the University's Strategic Goals and Operational Plan;
- Annual Reports for the period in question;
- the University's official newsletters.

The policies were sourced in order to determine how the University commits itself to community engagement as inferred by the Higher Education Act. I also used the policies to

identify role players in the community engagement agenda of the university. This led me to the next data sourcing method which was interviews. Figure 1 below provides a more detailed plan employed for data collection together with the necessary justification for sources and collection.

**Figure 3: The Data Collection Plan**

CRITERIA	Critical Question: How does the university demonstrate responsiveness to CE?			
	Question 1:	Question 2:	Question 3:	Question 4:
	What institutional policies allude to community engagement?	What institutional structures exist to promote community engagement?	How are the university stakeholders being involved in the community engagement initiatives?	How does the university communicate community engagement?
Why was data collected?	To determine whether the university has policies that commit itself to community engagement as inferred by the Higher Education Act.	To determine whether the university commits any resources towards the community engagement agenda.	To determine how the university engages its stakeholders on its community engagement initiatives.	To determine whether community engagement is reflected on any of the university's official communications.
What was the research strategy?	Collection of documents and records of the university that deals with community engagement.	2 Individual interviews with senior management.	9 Individual interviews with senior academics, administrators and with student leaders.	Collection of various official university publications (both internal and external) and the electronic communication tools.
Who/What were the sources?	The university's Quality Assurance Director together with the Registrar.	The University's Executive Management Team. (2 Executive Managers)	5 Senior Academics (levels of Professor Senior Lecturers who are also HoDs' of Program Coordinators) involved in engagement activities;  2 Student leaders from selected from relevant student formations.  2 Non Academic Directors drawn from the university's Co-operative Education unit and one from Student Affairs.	The university's Corporate Affairs Division.

How many of the data sources were accessed?	The following documents were collected from relevant university departments:  Audit Report;  Report on Student Engagement;  Strategic Goal and Objectives of the university	Interviews were conducted with the following persons in the offices of:  The DVC: Technology Innovation and Partnerships;  The DVC: Academic;  The DVC: Institutional Support	Three academic departments involved in engagement activities;  Three student leaders selected from organized student formations and the university's Co-operative Education unit.	The following documents were collected from relevant university departments:  Annual Reports;  Internal Newsletters;  The website
Where the data was to be collected from?	The university's policies repository	The interviews with relevant divisions	The interviews with identified respondents	The department and parties charged with the communications responsibility
How often was data collected?	At the beginning of the study followed up with support documentation requests after interviews.	Once following the document analysis	Once following the document analysis	Annual Reports 2005 - 2011  Three copies of each publication.
Justification of the collection method?	Analysing the documents and records of the university assisted me to trace the commitment to community engagement at a policy level.	Interviews provided an opportunity for university management to share their thinking on community engagement. Carefully crafted question assisted in assessing the leadership's commitment to this agenda.	Interviews with the staff close to the 'shop floor' helped to solicit the reaction of the middle strata of the university including the students of different ideological persuasions.	The university uses its publications to communicate information that it regards as important. A trace of community engagement messaging in these publications helped to ascertain the value the university places on community engagement in the list of its priorities.

As illustrated in the plan, I conducted twelve (12) interviews with respondents drawn from all major sectors of the university. The sample included:

- five (5) respondents selected from the academic sector;
- two (2) senior executives from Executive Management;
- two (2) Non-Academic Directors;

- The last two (2) interviews were conducted with student representatives selected from student organisations who are involved with community engagement activities.

The interviewees were drawn from university stakeholders who are known to be involved with a variety of community engagement activities. The activities range from volunteerism, graduate placements, work integrated learning to service learning.

I grouped my interviews into three clusters i.e the academic staff, the executive management and the students interviews. I started my interviews with the academic staff members. I got the information on the academic members through referrals by other staff members within the university. I then compiled a list of all names and contact details of members who were forwarded to me and who are said to be involved with community engagement activities. From there I sent email requests for interviews. I settled for the first five who acceded to my request. These interviews assisted me to solicit feedback from the “shop floor” of the university. This stratum also helped to determine how the University engages its stakeholders on its community engagement initiatives.

The second cluster that I interviewed was the students. I approached the Student Affairs sector in order to help identify student formations that have community engagement activities as part of their program of action. I also spoke to lecturers who were involved with students on community engagement activities. I was then led to the three student formations that proved to be relevant for my study. I then scheduled appointments for the interviews with the leader or designated person from the group. Only two of the three interviews in this cluster materialised. The other respondents did not honour the appointments made, despite prior arrangements and several attempts.

The last set of interviews was conducted with management. The cluster included the senior executives and non-academic directors who by virtue of their portfolios have an oversight on divisions (in the case of senior executives) and operations (in the case of non-academic directors) that involve community engagement activities. The senior executives are part of a team of five Executives in the higher echelons of the university. This team is entrusted with the fiduciary responsibility of managing the day to day operation of the university in line with the Council approved strategic direction. The interview with the two presented an opportunity for University management to share their thinking on community engagement; whilst the conversations with the Directors help to determine whether the University commits any resources towards the community engagement agenda.

The other question that the study had to respond to had to do with how the university communicates community engagement. The university uses its publications to communicate information that it regards as important or newsworthy. I collected the following publications for analysis purposes: the Annual Reports and; copies of the University Newspaper. The main purpose of this collection was to observe whether these publications had any coverage of the community engagement activities of the university. In my search I then discovered that the university has compiled a publication highlighting snap shots of community engagement activities which were taking place in the university. This was a once off publication produced in 2008.

## **Data Collection Method – Interviews**

Interviews are proving to be a common and popular instrument of collecting data particularly in qualitative research studies, especially where the research approach is largely concerned with the depth rather than the breadth of the study conducted (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997). There are three main research approaches to conducting interviews. These are focus group, personal interviews and telephone interviews. In this section of the chapter I will first establish a working definition of interviews as a data collection method.

Boyce and Neale (2006) defines the in-depth interview as a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspective on a particular idea, program, or situation. Frey and Oishi (1995) define interview as a purposeful conversation in which one person asks prepared questions (interview) and another answers them (respondent).

Conversation in the interview can take a structured form (closed interview style) or an unstructured (open interview style) approach. Nichols (1991) defines unstructured interview as informal interview and not structured by a standard list of prepared questions. Fieldworkers or interviewers are at liberty to approach the topic of interest in any order and to phrase their questions as they think best.

Structured interviews, on the other hand are defined as a social survey where possible answers to each question may be known beforehand. As such possible answers are listed on the form so that the interviewer may mark the appropriate reply where applicable (Nichols, 1991). This approach is said to be more standardised using a prearranged list of answers for the respondents to choose from with little freedom or flexibility.

Having established a base definition for interviews and possible formats, I chose to use semi-structured *personal interviews* also referred to as face to face interview to collect my data. This decision may be largely informed by my Communications background, Journalism in particular. In my previous practice I have found face to face interview to be more reliable when seeking to solicit people's views on particular subject matters. The approach also affords the interviewer an opportunity to have an 'honest' conversation with my interviewee.

The experience of conducting these personal interviews reinforced Boyce and Neale's (2006) argument that this type of interview is appropriate when you want to acquire detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviour or when to explore new issues in depth. The primary advantage of personal interviews they further posit, is that they provide much more detail than other interview approaches. The interviewer has got the luxury of a relaxed atmosphere to collect the data needed. The interviewee feels more comfortable to have a conversation. In their guide to conducting in-depth interviews they also identified several limitations and pitfalls to be considered when using interviews as an approach. These include:

a) Prone to bias: respondents tend to want to play advocacy role to the work that they are doing. So it is likely for the interview to produce data that put the respondents or their work in best possible light;

b) Can be time-intensive: the fact that the atmosphere in a personal interview is warm and relaxed might lead the respondent to over-elaborate the conversation. Interviewers must always take control of the situation. Always keep in mind that after the interview, there is still need for transcribing and analysing the data;

c) Interviewer must be appropriately trained in interview techniques: In order to produce as rich a data as possible, the interview needs to be able to make the respondent comfortable and interested in partaking in the conversation. Care should be taken to avoiding dead end answers like Yes/No, instead try to use open questions. The interviewer needs to also keep his or her opinions in check, and lastly;

d) Not generalizable: it is often not possible to draw a generalization out personal interviews because of diverse nature of the samples involved. In-depth interviews provide valuable information particularly when used as a supplement to other data collection methods. (Boyce & Neale 2006: 3).

Then the interviewer must assure the interviewee of the confidentiality of the conversation. He/she must also explain how the interview is going to unfold including the estimated time of the interview. The interviewee must be given an assurance that participation is voluntary and may be called off by the interviewee at any point. A consent form stipulating the interviewee's right to participate must be presented in writing. Lastly the interviewee must be guaranteed an opportunity to ask any question of concern.

In order to ensure a good interview, the researcher must develop a carefully constructed interview schedule. The schedule must at least have not more than 15 open-ended questions. The order of the questions should be factual questions before opinion questions (Boyce & Neale 2006). The open-ended questions will help to generate rich data because they give the respondent a long route to answering questions. Skilled interviewers then catalyse this exchange by asking probing questions like: 'Would you explain that further?' or 'Is there anything else?' or 'Can you elaborate on that idea?' This probe affords the conversation a good ebb and flow.

## **Data Instrument – Interview Schedule**

Once I was comfortable with the participants whom I had identified for my interviews and informed myself of interview approaches, I develop the interview schedules that were to be used for each cluster. Each of the three clusters (Management, Academic Staff and Students) had their separate schedule of questions (**Appendix A**). The questions were crafted as informed by the theoretical framework – Holland Matrix. I kept my approach to the interviews semi-structured. By semi-structured I mean I allowed conversation to flow without necessarily being forced to ask the questions in the chronological order they appeared on my schedule. I allowed the dialogue to be more conversational. I also used a combination of open ended and close ended questions.

The conversations were initiated through a standard letter that I sent via email to all the identified respondents. The letters also served as requests for appointments to conduct the interviews and further explained the purpose of the interview. It informed the respondent of the permission that has already been granted by the relevant university authority. Enclosed with the letters were my contact details and those of my Research Supervisor. As responses were coming in, I created a timetable for interviews allocating each session a maximum time of one hour.

The interviews took place at various places mostly in offices around the university. Only the interviews with students were conducted in my office at the university. I preceded all interviews with the broad explanation on the purpose of the study. This explanation was a mere emphasis on the overview of the study because I had already alluded to it in the letter that requested for an interview. I would then take the interviewee through a list of prepared question before the actual interview started, meaning the actual recording. Upon explaining the process the interviewees were then requested to sign a Consent Form detailing the interviewee's rights and other relevant ethical issues. None of my participants refused to sign the Consent Form nor expressed any misgiving about the content or purpose of the letter. Following the signing of the Consent Form, I asked for permission to use a digital recorder to record the interview. It was crucial to establish a good rapport with the interviewees because if the relationship was to start on a bad note, the interview environment may not be conducive for good data collection process (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

The total time spent per interview ranged between 45 and 50 minutes. None of the interviews exceeded the one hour time initially negotiated. After all the interviews were conducted I downloaded the digital recording from digital device and saved each interview as a separate file in one CD. The CD's were kept safe at my home.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Organising of Data**

After all the interviews were completed I listened to the digital recordings and transcribed the recorded interviews to a word document. I then grouped the question from the Interview Schedules in alignment to the key research questions. The next step was to match the questions with the theoretical framework (the Matrix). I grouped the questions around the 8 factors (affecting community engagement as per Holland (2006). For instance all the questions that probed issues of resources were grouped in the category of Organization Structure and Funding (as per the Matrix) and the same happened to the other factors.

In the case of evidence from document analysis, I took evidence from the documents and placed it under the appropriate theme too. For instance, the evidence found on the document analysis that related to the mission position of university was placed under the theme of Mission (as per the Matrix).

Once all the transcribing was done, I labelled the transcripts according to their clusters. I started with the transcripts for interviews with the five (5) Academic Staff which I labelled **AS** (for Academic Staff) and number 1,2,3,4 and 5 for each individual transcript. And then I moved to the Management cluster and labelled the transcripts **SE** (Senior Executive) 1 and 2. The other transcripts for Directors adding to the Management cluster were labelled **NAD** (Non Academic Director) 1 and 2. The last sets of transcripts from interviews with Students were labelled **St** (Student) 1 and 2. This labelling was done in order to distinguish transcripts and allow easy reading without disclosing the possible identity of the respondents. It was important for me to get used to referring to my respondents in this labelled manner so that I keep to the promise I made on confidentiality.

## **Limitations of the Study**

Community engagement in higher education is topical amongst scholars in the education enterprise across the world. South African higher education is no exception to this phenomenon. Needless to say, there has been continuous publication of articles on the subject matter. As recent as September 2012, the Council on Higher Education held another conference on community engagement following the last that was held in 2010. The aim of these conferences was to help to shape the dialogue and agenda on community engagement in a South African context. To this end, I was challenged to keep up with the ‘newest’ scholarly information coming out such platforms and the subsequent discourse.

I have however, kept myself relevant to these debates by participating in organisations such as South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF), of which I am a member. This society is a community of practice made up of higher education practitioners who have a keen interest in community engagement activities in their specific areas of operation. Given the dynamic nature of the subject matter at hand, it is highly likely that there could be new information that my study may have not considered by the time of completion.

The other limitation that my study may have encountered is in relation to the decision that I had to make in the interest of keeping the study manageable without compromising its validity. A quest to understand how an institution as big as the one I used as case study (24 000 students, six faculties spread over multiple sites of delivery and more than 1 500 staff members), required of me to make strategic decisions about who to add and who to leave out.

But I had to at least ensure that I balance my data collection by accommodating every sector of the university.

The decision to conduct interviews with a select few could mean that I did not consider some data that could have come from other stakeholders since I did not speak to every single staff member or student involved with community engagement. However, I mitigated this challenge by ensuring that I interviewed participants across the sectors of the university. I also ensured that I collected data from the relevant policy documents of the university in order to accommodate the 'shared view'. The added advantage of this document analysis is that the policies make up the official position of the university where community engagement is concerned.

The other consideration I had to make in the course of my study was my possible bias given that I am a staff member in the university. I have tried to remain objective particularly because my brief within the university is not directly responsible for the community engagement programme of the university. None of the participants that I interviewed report to me. So the interviews conducted and documents collected for analysis were offered without prejudice. Even in the case the of students who were interviewed, I wield no direct power over them because I do not teach them.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Before I could embark on this study I had to fulfil the Ethical Clearance requirement as provided for by the University of Kwazulu-Natal where I am enrolled. According to this university's rule, all student researchers must submit an Ethical Clearance Application to the Ethics Committee which oversees compliance with the university's rules and guidelines as they may pertain to research conduct by its students. An application for this clearance was submitted in September 2010 (**Appendix B**). After due consideration by the university, I was granted clearance to go ahead with my study through an official letter from the concerned university authority (**Appendix C**).

In the case of this study, I did not need to involve participants who may be said to be vulnerable and as such require some level of sensitivity. The category may include children, people with disability, HIV positive person nor people who experienced traumatic or stressful life circumstances. The major consideration for me was relating to interviews as a data collection method. I guaranteed the anonymity of participant by committing in a Consent

Form that I would protect the identity of all respondents. The signed Consent Form also assured the participants that because they were granting the interview out of a free will, they (the participants) could opt out of the interview if they so wished.

None of my participants refused to sign the form and neither did any of them terminate the interview prematurely for whatever reasons (See **Appendix C** for the Consent Forms).

## **Research Rigor**

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of my finding, I applied various strategies applicable to qualitative research methods. I applied the triangulation strategy to ensure the *credibility and confirmability* of my findings. In particular I applied what Krefting (1990) refers to as triangulation of data method - a comparison of data collected from various sources. The comparison in this case was done against data collected from document analysis and individual interviews. I assessed data sources against one another to cross check interpretation.

To ensure *transferability* of the findings I made a concerted effort to ensure that I draw my data from a cross section of the university community. For instance with interview, I ensured that my sample had respondents from academic, non-academic and student perspectives. The policy review as part of the document analysis undertaken, I ensured that I considered policies governing both the academic and non-academic sectors.

For *dependability* purposes, I ensured that all interviews were recorded, using a dictaphone. I also made notes during the conversation. After each interview I downloaded the recording to my computer. I then listened to the recording to generate the transcripts. The recording are still kept for verification purposes.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Introduction

Following the in-depth interviews that were conducted mainly in the university as the site of research, I relied on the Holland Matrix (Holland, 2006) as adapted (and not the original version) as presented in chapter two of this report, to organise and interpret the data collected for this qualitative study. There is a distinct difference between the originally conceptualised Matrix (Holland, 1997) and the later adapted version of 2006. Holland originally conceptualised the framework after her study between 1994 and 1997. She had initially identified seven (7) factors impacting on institutional commitment to service. She later added one more factor in the adapted version when she looked at the broader concept of community engagement, as opposed to the earlier focus on Service Learning.

The new element she submits for consideration is the role that the **University Leadership** (refer to the Table 2. below) plays in the broader reflection on the institutions' commitment to community engagement. For this study in particular, the added factor enriched the original framework thereby assisting my quest to analyse all identified factors affecting engagement.

**Table 2. University Leadership (new element)**

	<b>Level One: Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two: Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three: High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four: Full Integration</b>
<b>Leadership (Presidents, Vice Presidents, Deans, Chairs)</b>	Engagement not mentioned as a priority; general rhetorical references to community or society	Expressions that describe institution as asset to community through economic impact	Interest in and support for specific, short-term community projects; engagement discussed as a part of learning and research	Broad leadership commitment to a sustained engagement agenda with ongoing funding support and community input

Based on an interpretive approach, I utilized the eight (8) factors identified above as themes for organizing the collected data. In this chapter I will present the data that has been collected through in-depth interviews and the analysis of university records since the year 2005. The study found evidence of a wide spectra of activities and initiative on community engagement as also observed by the HEQC's Institutional Audit Report of October 2008. The initiatives are driven from all sectors of the university namely Academic, Non-Academic and student

communities. These initiatives take both the formal and non-formal approach to community engagement with others geared towards credits for Work Integrated Learning. I will conclude the chapter by introducing the study findings. I will also demonstrate how I used the strength of the evidence in the data to allocate the different levels of commitment as identified by the Holland Matrix in order to ascertain or develop possible patterns towards the level of institutional commitment.

## Discussion

### The University Mission Statement on Community Engagement

Higher education institutions in a quest to define their purpose and strategic objectives, distinguish themselves by the mission path they adopt in order to realise their ultimate long term vision. The document analysis in the case of this study reveals this university's inclination towards community engagement. In 2005, the university had the following as its Mission Position: "To serve the needs of developing societies within a dynamic global context and to enable quality teaching, learning, research and **community engagement**" (Annual Report, 2005).

In its operational strategy document for the period 2009 to 2018, the university committed to the following with regards to what in this case is referred to as External Engagements, amongst others: a mission to excel through "External Engagement that promotes innovation and entrepreneurship through collaboration and partnership" (Strategic Goals and Objectives 2009 – 2018).

In order to support the *mission* position, the university further set itself a *goal* to "promote knowledge transfer through partnerships and external engagement". It further enlists the external partners to be engaged with viz: industry; finance houses and multi-nationals; all levels of Government and further committed to the involvement with societal communities. To give impetus to the goal, the university set an *objective* to "promote responsive community engagement". Based on this objective, the university committed to avail itself to the community in order to enable the development of effective partnerships with Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises.

The document further outlines that the university commits to identifying opportunities for engagement that will "enable faculties and departments to provide a collaborative and integrated response to the needs of local and regional communities". The commitment that

this university is making regarding “responsive community engagement” resonates well with the definition of community engagement as offered by the Council on Higher Education. The Council alludes to “initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community” (CHE, 2004)

It however, seems apparent that this university falls in the bracket of the institutions that are still grappling with operationalizing community engagement beyond rhetoric, as observed by Lazarus (2007). This is evidenced in an acknowledgement by a Senior Executive that no specific person/s or unit has been entrusted with a sole responsibility of driving the university’s engagement agenda. She however, pointed out that this brief has been added onto a portfolio of a Director responsible for Curriculum Development (SE-1). It is also worth pointing out that none of the other interviews, especially with Staff members and Senior Directors, could provide evidence to the university’s claim to External Engagement (in this case) as asserted in adopted and declared *Mission* of the university.

### The University Leadership on Community Engagement

In the case of this study I had to first acknowledge that the institution had changed its leadership collective a number of times since 2005 owing to various institutional challenges, particularly in relation to broader governance matters of the university. This university changed its top Management no less than five (5) times in the period under “review”. To this end, monitoring of the leadership sentiment on community engagement has therefore had to be considered within context.

As alluded to in the analysis of the Mission Statement above, evidence of rhetoric on community engagement could be traced in the articulation of the leadership as early as 2005. However the voice of leadership on community engagement became louder in the period 2006 - 2007. During this period, the university was transforming itself into a University of Technology and making commitments towards community engagement. The Vice Chancellor of that time, in his input to the Annual Report submitted that the university was recognising the need to engage with communities (Annual Report, 2007). The report further charged that the university would start consolidating the number of community projects that were underway under a new envisaged Department of External Engagement. The leadership also

committed the university to greater community involvement largely through the concept of co-operative education, specifically the work integrated learning programme.

More recently, in 2010, under a different leadership collective, the message has been on building a university that is embedded in its local context. The view of this leadership is that the university “should gear itself to being an institution that is solidly grounded in its local context in terms of its core activities of research and teaching/learning and to be responsive in that context” (Annual Report 2010: 08).

There seems to be a general census amongst those interviewed that the attitude of leadership of this university has evolved in favour of meaningful engagement over the recent years or at least the period under “review”. A Non-Academic Director (NAD-1) who is partly responsible for external engagement argued in support of Senior Executives. He mentioned that Senior Executives including the Vice Chancellor are committed towards a principle of a university connected to its local context. He also pointed out that these Executive often accept invitation to serve on various boards involving communities, when called upon to do so.

The assertion was corroborated by an academic staff member who was interviewed separately from the mentioned Non Academic Director above. One such academic staff member was a Head of an Academic Department also responsible for Doctoral and Master’s students who have community engagement as part of their credit bearing module. She submits that she has been with the university since 2007 and has noticed community engagement agenda taking off over the past couple of years. She expressed gratitude at an opportunity presented to her to attend the community engagement conference on behalf of the university.

In the same breath though, some academics lamented that the gestures as expressed by Senior Executives (up-take of community engagement) is seldom translated to the lower strata of the university hierarchy. The Director involved in External Engagement argues that the levels below Senior Executives are not as involved as should be expected. “If the Executives are not available, we don’t have someone next in charge to participate in the engagement” added the Director (NAD-1). The sentiment was echoed by an Academic Staff member also involved in community engagement at Faculty level (AS-3). She also lamented the lack of support by Deans (second layer of leadership entrusted with academic management at faculty level) whenever they mobilise for engagement activities.

This Academic Staff member is in charge of the second year students' community engagement project (specific to her discipline). This initiative sees students engaging with Orphanages or Community Crèches by volunteering to revamp their buildings and facilities. Once the project is completed and the building is overhauled, the students organise a handing-over ceremony where the facility is to be given back to its inhabitants. A member of the university senior team would then be expected to preside over the event. But unfortunately, the department gets shunned by the continuous lack of availability of such Executives (the Dean in particular) at these functions.

### Promotion and Hiring (Tenure)

I firstly want to point out that this factor as submitted in the Matrix (Holland, 2006) presented a challenge when analysing institutional commitment to community engagement from a South African perspective. The concept of *Tenure* was found to be more American and relatively unused in this country's higher education setup. However, the general philosophy behind the factor, especially where aspects of Promotions together with Hiring are concerned, remained relevant for my discourse. This factor then was approached more on these relevant aspects as they obtain in a South African context.

I found that the university has an approved Promotions Policy that serves as a guideline for regulating academic staff's trajectory from Junior Lectureship (entry point) to the most senior title of Professor. This policy is premised with an underpinning that the duty of a University of Technology is to engage in teaching, learning, research, community engagement, and leadership in administration and management.

The policy (2012) posits the following principle as a guide:

...although individuals may be promoted on the basis of excellence in one of the four key areas of responsibilities of an academic at [this university], i.e Teaching and Learning, Research, external engagement (including professional standing) and leadership, Administration and Management, it is required that all academics must demonstrate commitment and competence in at least two other key areas of responsibility (teaching, research, external engagement and leadership and administration)

In terms of application, the policy requires that over and above the minimum required level of academic qualification (for the position), promotion to the next level will require the candidate to select any two from the remaining three areas of activity for assessment. However, the policy explains that “irrespective of the chosen area of excellence, more than average performance in teaching is a requirement for promotion”. (Academic Staff Promotions Policy, 2012).

The policy goes further, articulating the type of evidence required to be produced for a candidate to be promoted on the basis of ‘excellence’ in external engagement. The strength of this evidence increases with seniority of the rank. In an interview with an Academic Staff member (AS-5) who is involved with community engagement at the university, the rating attached to community engagement came under stern criticism. According to the Policy, of the total hundred (100) points at the candidates’ disposal, community engagement as a category weighs only a maximum score of five (5) points. The other categories of assessment are Research Output (35), Academic Leadership (10), Professional (12), Grants and Awards (10) and Qualifications at a three (3) points.

The view from this academic staff member, also shared by other colleagues in academia is that, since the university does not offer, in most instances monetary compensation for the “additional work” brought about by the community engagement activities, the institution should consider increasing the maximum score attached to community engagement. “I am not receiving any incentives. It is seen as part of the lecturer’s job. It is however, not reflected accurately on my work load” said the member (AS-5). “I don’t believe in monetary compensation though” she added.

However, an interview with a Senior Executive (SE-1) concerned with the academic enterprise of the university, presented a diametrically opposed view to the one held by the staff member (AS-5). The Senior Executive posits that the most important consideration a university should make when considering promotion is publications. She further argues that ‘as the ranks go higher up then the publications and researches weigh more’. She argues this as a major distinction between a University and a Teachers’ College.

She maintains that engagement activities must be presented in a scholarly manner, for it be considered for promotions:

*“...however, in terms of our own policy, we require that people demonstrate it , even if you are saying your strength is community engagement, if you are saying, I am applying on the basis of community engagement, you must demonstrate scholarship, you must have published something about your community involvement, bring it to a scholarly level and scholarly debate, it can't be “ I serve mass food at church every Sunday”, maybe you should be measuring the nutritional impact and reporting on that.”*

In as far as hiring is concerned the university does not seem to be attaching any weighting to community engagement as criteria for scrutiny, certainly not as matter of policy. According to a member of the Senior Executives (SE-2) at the university, the recruitment drive is driven mainly by the requisite Job Profile which seldom reflected community engagement as a responsibility. This applies to the general recruitment of staff including the non-academic sector.

### Organizational Structure and Funding - Policy

In 2007, this university underwent an audit process conducted by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in accordance with the statutory responsibility as enshrined in the Higher Education Act of 1997. The audit found that “the institution does not have a coherent conceptualisation of community engagement or a policy that informs the quality assurance of these activities”. The audit report also noted the Panel’s appreciation of the fact that the university reflected community engagement in its Promotions Policy. It (the Panel) further appreciated that the university had a Policy on Community engagement, albeit in a Draft state (HEQC, 2008).

To this end, the Panel encouraged the university to; a) finalise the policy and; b) ensure that a member of the Senior Executive be given this responsibility as part of their portfolio (HEQC, 2008). My study has discovered that the university has made some strides towards closing the gaps as identified by the Audit Report. The university has taken a decision to allocate Community engagement to an Executive Manager responsible for academic matters of the university. This brings to a close the long protracted debate in the University around which Manager is ultimately responsible for this project. The office was further charged with seeing to it that the draft policy on community engagement is sent through the necessary channels for its finalisation. It was envisaged that this policy would be finalised by the end of the year

2012. However, this milestone seems yet to be accomplished as this policy is still awaits Senate's final approval.

In the course of my study I observed that this delay in adopting a university wide policy on community engagement contributed to the lack of clear direction on the institutionalisation of community engagement. For instance the role-players in external engagement and co-operative education welcome the assignment of community engagement to the academic ambit, but express concern about the implications for the non-academic sectors of the university. Their expressed preference would have been for the role to be given to a more central unit located in the Vice Chancellor's office. The argument, also supported by the Student Services sector, stands to prove that unless this university engages itself in a dialogue on its preferred model of community engagement, there will always be 'units' which will have uncertainties about the agenda.

In his envisaged 'model' the Non Academic Director (NAD-1) proposes that the university develop a structure with community engagement and Public Relations persons deployed at each academic department. "We need people who will be department based and have the university's vested interest" he said. He further added that unless you have these dedicated co-ordinators at the 'shop floor', engagement will continue to operate on an informal and uncoordinated fashion.

I also discovered that not everybody who is involved with university engagement activities, directly or indirectly is aware of the existence of policy framework that is said to be in the pipeline. In one interview with a Non-Academic Director (NAD-2), he admitted that he is not aware of any official policy document. He however, appreciated the 'general spirit' in the institution that people (sectors) must get involved in activities of community engagement. He also said he recalled some years back, being asked (in his sector) to indicate in their operational plans as to what engagement activities were they involved in. But nothing in direction of policy came out of that exercise.

This lack of adopted policy on community engagement seems also to have left the university stakeholder with no shared definition and approach on the subject matter. In the interview conducted with the Senior Executives and Non Academic Directors, the lack of common understanding on the concept was quite apparent. The respondents preferred that we (I as the Interviewer and them as Interviewees) first establish a general view or an understanding of what the phenomenon in the context of this university was in order for the dialogue to

generate 'useful' data. For the purposes of the interview, we would then agree to 'define' community engagement based on 'traditional' activities comprising community engagement. This dilemma would not have obtained if there was a well-structured, defined and coherent adopted policy on community engagement shared by the university.

The frustration brought about by this policy gap was also echoed by academic staff members. They argued that the policy gap led to lack of institutional support particularly in terms of infrastructure, human and financial resources. For instance, all the respondents in the academic sector lamented that they did not have designated personnel to assist with their activities. They relied on the goodwill of colleagues to help share the work load. In some instances they found themselves committing personal resources in order to keep projects afloat. This was happening mostly with volunteerism activities, they argued. They faced challenges with providing funds for transport, purchase of work materials and refreshments for student at various sites of campus. Of the five co-ordinators (who have been on projects for more than three years, minimum) interviewed; only one received monetary compensation, which was a once off, as refund for petrol used during a project.

The fortunes however, seem to have been better on the part of students. In an interview with a Student Leader (St-2) in charge of a faculty based formation with ties to the private sector, it came to light that the organisation boasts two computers, a laptop, a furnished boardroom and a telephone line whose bill is paid for by their relevant academic department. The student added that they are given a budget by the university though student society's budget and the funds are managed through their academic department. The sentiment was also echoed by the other student group involved with outreach projects on career guidance and related activities. They are being provided with resource material and subsistence allowances (funding) for travelling and related needs.

In the bigger scheme of things however, funding of community engagement has been identified as a challenge faced by this university. In all the interviews with the divisions involved in community engagement, academic staff members included, it transpired that none of the activities were budgeted for by the university, in fact no budget plan provides for engagement activities as a line item. Most of these activities were funded from the operational budget, meaning from the funds that the university allocates to each department annually based on basic operational needs. This budget provides only for departmental line

items such as stationery, telephone expenses, instructional material, repairs and maintenance, travel, functions and conferences.

The expenditure from this budget is tightly monitored through financial policies that leave little or no room for deviation. For instance, the policy spells out what funding each line item must or must not cater for with any deviation amounting to possible audit query. The tight control aside, there is also a shared view that the very fund allocations are far from adequate for what is regarded as the 'core' of the departments' expenditure. This view was even acknowledged by the Senior Executives. I asked the question: "what resources (human, financial or infrastructural) is the Management committing towards community engagement initiatives in this university?" The response was prefaced with the statement saying that universities are funded on the basis of their Teaching input and output as well as their Research output and not community engagement. The argument further advanced was that: for the university to allocate resource to this equally important pillar (community engagement) of higher education, it must take away funds from the other 2 pillars (Teaching/Learning and Research) which happen to be bringing income to the University.

The view on resource allocation, at least according to Executive Management is that, funding for community engagement is a challenge that is being presented by the Higher Education funding formula for universities by the national government in this country. The Senior Executive elaborated that:

*..Even in terms of the information we submit, the units for funding are teaching and research, not community engagement. At the moment and because of the nature of the Institution that we are, which believes heavily on Work Integrated Learning (WIL), the bulk of our community engagement activities is really in the form of WIL, in that in some academic departments, instead of going to factories and so on, the students are placed in communities.... now that is funded by the subject fees. The students pay for these kinds of subjects (WIL) as they would pay for the classroom subjects ... it's the subject fees which are WIL, because for instance, the government subsidises the Institution for those courses. So what [this university] does, it that it allows the academic departments to actually use those kinds of fees [for engagement activities]. Those fees do not normally go to the big University pot, they go to individual*

*programmes, so that the departments are able to run those kinds of programmes - that's the one source of funding.*

The study however, found that the university proved to be more supportive of service learning oriented activities in terms of resource allocation. For instance, Doctoral and Masters students doing their research in communities are allowed funding through department research funds. The university also assigns them a supervisor with no teaching/lecturing load. In another case, the students who work at the university's public clinic, run by the faculty of health are supported by 6 full time and 12 part-time staff members. The university also takes care of the operating expenses of the clinic.

### Student Involvement in Community Engagement

True to the findings of the institutional audit report of 2008, this study found many interesting initiatives and projects on community engagement across the university's sectors. This section will however, focus mainly on those initiatives that involved students. The analysis will consider the initiatives that were geared towards academic credits (service learning), those which were undertaken solely out of student volunteerism and the activities that were intended for the attainment of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) credits for qualification purposes.

The activities happen both on and off campus with evidence of community partnership as the case obtains with a student manned Community Clinic managed in the university's Health Faculty. The facility which is based in the university renders low cost medical services to the wider public. The faculty 'employs' its senior students to work between 08h00 and 18h00 to run the clinic with minimal supervision from designated lecturers. The same faculty also runs a similar Clinic operation with a community in Port Shepstone (120 km south of Durban). In this project the university sends students on a weekly basis to attend to patients in this community.

It was also evident that student engagement happens across Faculties and Student Affairs departments, with service learning undertaken mostly by the post graduate students. I found that Service Learning activities were mostly in the Faculties of Health and Applied Sciences. These Faculties had students rendering professional services for communities. The service involved community based research, professional administration of health care at clinics and refurbishment of welfare facilities in line with professional norms and standards. The

initiatives were geared towards credits for degree, Master's and Doctoral programme qualifications. In these programmes students are assigned to particular surrounding communities with a view to design appropriate interventions that will assist the community in their nutritional plight. The project benefits both the students and the community in that, the community receives a professionalised service, whilst the students earn not only the experience of working with living communities, but also credits towards their qualifications.

The Faculty of Applied Science presented quite a unique case for research as a community engagement initiative. In the interview with a programme coordinator in that Faculty (AS-04), I found out that each Master's programme is a community project. The coordinator concerned says: "Every student, because of the nature of our qualification, must do a community study." She elaborated that the students may choose an Elderly Home, a Children's Home or any community to investigate their living style with a view to provide appropriate intervention as per the practices of the profession they are studying towards. The research is submitted as part of their formal learning towards their qualification.

The other form of engagement involving the university's students is volunteerism. In this instance, students organise themselves either as faculty groups, residence communities or individuals like-minded in the belief of giving back to the communities they come from. A typical example of such giving back initiative is a Community Outreach project coordinated by the Student Housing department at one of the university's satellite campuses. In this initiative residence student are mobilised to do door-to-door campaigns in the neighbouring communities informing young people about how they can access tertiary education and financial assistance for their studies.

It was also interesting to discover the community engagement activities that were initiated solely by students, with minimal support from the university structures. There were groups of students who organised themselves into student formations whose sole purpose was to implement student community engagement projects. One such formation went as far as establishing trade agreements with corporate sector players such as the First National Bank, the NEDBANK, UNILEVER and the Development Bank of South Africa amongst other industry players. This partnership sees the corporate sector committing some of their Corporate Social Investment resources to the students' initiatives for the benefit of identified communities in both rural and urban areas.

Other engagement initiatives, also student driven, were largely out of benevolence with students assisting rural community pupils with career guidance knowledge. They would also take opportunity to share information on student funding, registration processes and any other information that may not otherwise be readily accessible to such communities. Some students participated in regional and provincial sports programs. One such program was a Provincial Cycling Race where students from the Health Faculty would assist with professional massages for cyclists.

In another project third year students organise themselves to host dialogue with the community to address topics of societal challenges. The topics addressed range from issues of Drug and Substance Abuse to tips on how to live positively with HIV/Aids. The students would use the university expertise and resources to help share light with affected and interested community members. In other initiative students would volunteer their time and partner with non-profit organisation such as Child-line, SANCA, The Edith Benson Home, The Sunflower Fund, and Martin's Children Home to help render a service to communities.

The study found that the university administration was affording students room to originate their own engagement initiatives (mostly outreach) as informed by their personal experiences. For instance there is now an annual student project that involves residence students visiting communities on outreach basis to offer particular interventions. I discovered that this project was initiated by a university alumnus who conceptualised the idea in an effort to address the challenges he was faced with in his plight to access higher education.

He (St-02) narrated how difficult it was for him to access the university after his matriculation in rural Zululand area, northern KwaZulu Natal. "Where I came from, it is still believed that only certain class of society can send their children to Universities and Technikons" he said. The belief he argued, was entrenched by lack of factual information on access to Higher Education. Upon completion of his studies he took it upon himself to help his community to turn the tide. He started off with a handful of friends who committed to collect relevant information and shared it with the feeder schools they came from. Currently the Student Affairs division is seeing a proliferation of such outreach activities beyond career guidance initiatives by residence students.

The initiatives organised by student formations are guided and supported by structures of Student Affairs. This was affirmed in the interview with the Non Academic Director (NAD-02). He also alluded to an initiative by residence students who periodically visit a local prison

in an effort to heed the call by the national governments' Correctional Services Department to help prepare inmates for reintegration into society upon their imminent release. The sector provides the students with logistical support when they visit inmates. The students in collaboration with prison authorities also help to impart the requisite life skill to identified inmates.

In other community engagement initiatives elsewhere in the university students who are registered in the Health Faculty volunteer to visit schools in the neighbouring communities in order to share information with younger school pupils surrounding various topics on health issues. This Faculty is also involved in a project called "Strengthen-up SA" where they visit schools and train pupils on how to keep their spinal cords healthy. The academic staff member (AS-02) explains that: "Much like the Dentists would do on how to keep your teeth healthy, we do the same but dealing with the spine in this case". She also told of the standing partnership the Faculty has with several sporting federations (national and local) owing to collaborations with certain departments. She particularly alluded to the relationship they have with the SA Comrades Marathon, where they send their student to help assist watering stations and other professional services to athletes on the race day.

On another level the study found student formations that organised themselves solely on community engagement in partnership with the Corporate Sector. Such case of an engagement sees students assisting community members who have started small business but lack the necessary administration skills. The students would visit such businesses and share ideas with them drawing on what they are studying at the university. These students would give freely of their time. "We have motivated students that feel that, with the leadership skills or whatever other skills they have, they can make a difference in communities" said one of the Student Leaders.

The other big area of community engagement activity for this university is student placement or Work Integrated Learning (initiatives to be explored in the section below Faculty Involvement). More than 50% of the formal academic program requires student to undergo experiential learning in a formal workplace environment as a prerequisite to their various qualifications. The university has a dedicated directorate entrusted with a responsibility of forging links with industries, with a view to enhancing chances of placing as many students as possible. The university's strategy in this regard, at least according to Co-operative Education Policy, is to establish Departmental/Program Advisory Boards comprising of key

industry players, Senior Academic staff members and student representatives. The rule with these boards is that the majority of members must come from industry based members.

Owing to the nature of the university, the academic programmes require that students undergo experiential training in a formal workplace environment in order to acquire full credits towards a qualification. This program demands of students to take interest in their actual placement at a workplace in the final year of their study. They are normally assisted by co-operative education practitioners placed at departmental level (academic). However, the onus is upon the students themselves to take the initiative, meaning they must learn how to write a CV and lodge the same with possible employers.

The outlay of student involvement in community engagement is however not without challenges and hindrances. The study for instance, observed that the initiatives by students, either on their own or as supported by Student Affairs are not underpinned by any form of policy. In fact, none of the respondents in the interviews conducted with the students and including Non Academic Directors were aware of the existence of the Draft Policy on community engagement (as reflected elsewhere in this report). Oblivious to this policy, most initiatives go unnoticed and unrecorded by this and other studies seeking to analyse the community engagement efforts of the university. The other challenge that was identified by the group that went on a 'school liaison' outreach project was the ever growing demand by rural schools that wanted their pupils to benefit from this engagement.

## Faculty Involvement

As observed in the section above (Student Involvement) and also correctly pointed out by the HEQC Institutional Audit Report (2008), faculties are involved in numerous initiatives and activities of community engagement. The activities mainly include community based research commissioned by Institutes within the university, professional services rendered by academic staff members and faculty driven work integrated learning initiatives. In order to explore the findings in a proper perspective, I will first list a few of the initiatives in the categories mentioned.

The university has commissioned an Institute to do research on waste water technology to the benefit of the Durban South community. The research project assists the community with monitoring of the remediation of chromium contaminated groundwater. The Institute boasts

three post-doctoral fellows and one Research Associate. The research includes 13 Doctoral and 7 Master students (Annual Report, 2012).

On the professional services front I identified the staff in the Faculty of Health Science who are providing an early childhood development program for 25 children (between the ages of 2 and 6 years) in the Warwick Junction. The children are born of parents who are street vendors in the Durban central business district. The main aim of the project is to try and create a “safe” place to help meet the young children’s developmental needs while their parents are at work. To this end an Educare Centre was established.

The other professional service offered by the university at Faculty level is the nutrition initiative by the Applied Sciences Faculty. In one project the Faculty offers welfare services to the Durban Child Welfare Society. The children are weighed and measured on an ongoing basis in order for the society to have updated information. The information is used to gauge the nutritional education program needed as well as assessing menus and advising on procurement practices. The Faculty is also providing pre-school nutrition workbooks and games to crèches with needy children.

As alluded to in the section above, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) accounts for the bigger part of forms of community engagement at this university across faculties with 50% of programs having a WIL component at different levels of the students’ study programme.

One such WIL engagement project is an initiative undertaken by a programme in the Faculty of Arts aimed at renovating and restoring six Durban rickshaws together with their respective driver’s outfit. The responsible department assigns Degree students the role of redesigning the outlook of the Rickshaws. “The idea is to invigorate new interest in the Rickshaw service among Durbanites [people of Durban] and the hospitality, tourism and corporate industries in Durban. This project also aims to inspire a new consciousness around patterns found in beadwork that is particular to the province and its role in Durban and in South Africa” (Corporate Affairs, 2011:14).

These identified projects and possibly many others that this study could not cover are operating mutually exclusively across the university. The projects did not seem to be driven by a common university agenda aimed at deliberately enhancing the profile with regards to community engagement. As Kruss (2012) observed, this university has a spread of community engagement that it promotes but it is still grappling with conceptual confusion

and internal contestation with regards interpretation of engagement practices. I suspect the debates even in this case will rage on for the foreseeable future.

Conceptualisation debate aside, I took interest in the characteristics of faculty staff members who were doing community engagement work on behalf of the university. One of the interesting observations that I made during the course of the study was the similarities in character of the faculty members involved in community engagement. Their involvement in community engagement was mostly motivated by the value they personally attached to the concept of service. When asked how they became involved with community engagement, the following was the pattern of responses offered by Academic coordinators:

“I am involved with community work at a personal level. My husband is a Church Minister. I get to be invited by church communities for motivational talk to the Youth” (AS-01).

“I was influenced by my family values. My mother had a great influence in my work. I was previously involved with charity work involving a community of blind children” (AS-02).

“I took over the work from a former lecturer who was involved with the sporting activities. I was a part-time staff member who was assisting then. I grew into the role because I had an interest in the work that was being done. I am motivated to do this more as a student learning vehicle to afford students as much exposure as possible” (AS-03).

“I was influenced by my spiritual background outside of my work in this university. My spiritual philosophical believes have had a great impact on views on community service. This passion has translated into my work in here” (AS-04).

“I got involved with this work out of my Master’s and Doctoral Studies when I was still with my previous employer. I did my study in this field and got involved with various communities. When I came to this province I realised that there was very little nutrition research in the Durban area. My passion has also played a role in this” (AS-05).

The value system seems to have ignited passion to infuse service in their practice as individual academic staff members. However, the interest as shown or expressed by the individual staff members did not seem to necessarily influence the Faculties at large. The practice of community engagement seems to be a ‘responsibility’ of only a few. The sense I also got was that even the few who are involved with engagement work did not deliberately collaborate as a community of practice within the university. There were few cases of interdisciplinary collaborations particularly in the faculty of health which had students from different programs working together on joint project.

Therefore the general observation is that community engagement seems to fit the Silo Model as argued by Bender (2008). There is no interconnectivity between the Teaching/Learning, Research and Community service. She further argues that in this form, engagement is seen as separate and predominated by academics’ voluntary activities. These activities are viewed more in the light of “service” in the traditional context of community oriented activities as opposed engagement.

It was also interesting to note that the Silo mentality was also entrenched by the lack of communication between academic departments in particular. Some departments were just as comfortable to have their projects driven only by themselves and would therefore not make an effort to invite others for support. This was noted in an interview with one academic staff member, (AS-3) who said: “Besides the occasional support from the Co-operative Education Unit, we don’t receive support. Maybe because we have not gone out to ask for help from other departments”.

## Community Involvement

In the absence of a university approved policy on engagement, the broader university is left to their own devices where collaborations and engagements are concerned. The university does not seem have a formal protocol guiding its faculties and departments on how to relate or engage with communities. Neither did I find a platform where the community could negotiate their role in the engagement exercise. The relationship seems largely left to the mercy of people concerned on either side of the project.

I also found that the environment within the university allows for engagement to be initiated by any of the partners concerned, meaning students, staff or departments (on behalf of the university) or the external community can initiate the process depending on ‘need’. For

instance in the case of the service learning engagement program for the Faculty of Applied Science, the program co-ordinator concerned has to initiate the process by making a formal approach to the relevant community authority (AS-01). She explained that if the project involved schools, the Department of Education will have to be approached and the Health Department if it has to do with health issues.

On the other hand, involving the Health Science Faculty engagement services, they are being approached by various sporting federations asking them to partner with them during their events. This according to the co-ordinator concerned, is due to the long relations they have enjoyed with some federations (AS-02). She added that she gets requests from organisations or through students while working at some of these events.

The other type of engagement exchange prevalent in the university is the hiring out of facilities to community-based groups. The activities may be in the form meetings and conferences for government, NGO's, political parties, church groups and other sporting communities. These activities would happen independent of the university. In other instances the university would host public lectures on topical issues in its quest to share and distribute knowledge.

There are also Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) that are housed by the university but run 'independently' from the formal university setting. One such project is an NGO with ties to the Arts Faculty. The main aim of the organisation is to promote human rights through Art. Some of their activities include sending their teams around Durban schools to educate learners through workshops on topics of human rights and Social Justice. This University-NGO partnership extends to other external partners like the municipalities and other stakeholders depending on the nature of project at hand.

Another similar partnership that the university has is with an international NGO with a focus on peace and non-violence. However, the partnership with this organisation is not attached to any specific department within the university as explained with the earlier group. The university Executive explains the relationship as a partnership with an independent structure. "We are partners with that organisation, we have provided [physical] space and we have provided funding to a certain extent to them...and that it what keeps [them] going" explained SE-02.

This explanation is in synchronicity with the particular NGO's understanding of their relationship with the university. In their website they define themselves as: “[Organisation Name] is based in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on the [Campus and University Name]. It has a close relationship with [University Name], as there is a Memorandum of Understanding that commits both [parties] to collaborative work to mainstream non-violence into the curricula of [University Name]” (Website 2013, November 16:37).

I also found that the community does reciprocate in lending expertise to the university. According to the university's Co-operative Education Policy, each academic department needs to establish Departmental Boards whose task is to ensure that the programmes that the university is offering are in line with the needs to the industries. It is then incumbent upon these departments to identify external members of the broader community with relevant expertise to serve on the boards. The Alumni Relations unit is also instrumental in facilitating these relationships.

## Communicating Community Engagement

The university has several platforms on which community engagement is communicated to both internal and external stakeholders. In this study I reviewed the university's communication media from 2005, the 'review' period for this study. The reviewed communication tools include publications like the Annual Report, the University newspaper, the academic sectors snap shot on community engagement and various news articles published in the university websites. In this section I will present my finding on how community engagement has been communicated per medium.

I found that the Annual report was the single most consistent publication through which the university always reported on its community engagement efforts and activities. The publication is produced for both internal and external consumption, with government (Department of Higher Education) guiding as to what the publication should report on. The publication reports on institutional operations for the given year covering reports by the Chair of Council, the Vice Chancellor and Principal, Senate and Institutional Forum reports to Council, Governance report and Faculty reports (individually).

According to the reviewed Annual Reports, community engagement seems to be reported consistently as part of the Faculty reports. I noted though that, out of the four Faculties that the university had at the time 2005, only one Faculty reported on community engagement

activities that the university embarked on (Annual Report, 2005). The interest in community engagement reporting drastically improved the following year with all Faculties giving accounts of what they were doing with regards to community engagement. This ‘sudden’ interest was heightened by the fact that the university was engaged in preparatory processes for the external institutional audit which was to take place in 2008. A Dean explains in his report: “Not all departments are active in this field but there is increasing attention to this issue, partly because of the emphasis placed upon it in the audit exercise” (Annual Report 2006: 48).

In 2008 the university increased its Faculties from 4 to 6 by splitting the Commerce and Engineering to create 2 additional Faculties. In that year community engagement activities of the university were communicated in 5 of the 6 Faculty reports through respective deans. It (community engagement) also got reported on by the Chair of Council and the Executive Management in their respective reports. This pattern of communication carried through until the 2011 Annual Report. Of interest to note though was that in each report, community engagement is communicated in different terms. It was captured under the themes of external engagement, community service, community service and/or engagement, community service and partnerships, work integrated learning or simply service.

The next medium of communication that I analysed for the purposes of this study was the official university newspaper. This university launched its official newspaper in 2006, produced (writing and editing) by its Communications Department. The main purpose of the publication is to report on the newsworthy stories happening in the university. The department employs Journalism students for WIL purposes to cover campus stories as they unfold. The students are supported by a core of professional staff members employed for this and other university communication needs.

According to the Manager in charge, the department strives to produce a minimum of 4 units per annum. But she however, explained that in some instances they end up with 3 units owing to the number of stories at their disposal. The newspaper is a full colour, A3 publication with average pages numbering 8 per issue. Each publication carries an average of 15 articles/stories depending on the length of each piece. The newspaper is circulated mainly within the university. However, copies are shared with external stakeholders during conferences and events. For instance the Alumni Relations department would distribute the latest copies at its various events with the Alumni.

When analysing the newspaper, I found that the publication reported on university's events that also covered community engagement activities. The reporting however did not necessarily identify the stories with a "community engagement" tag or caption. But when reading through the articles one would notice that community engagement is being communicated. A classical case was the reporting of the Service (as community engagement) that was rendered by a department in Health Faculty on behalf of the university. The article shares a story of a 78 year old woman who was fitted with a pair of prosthetic eyes. She lost her eyes following an attack by her ex-husband. The university helped her following an approach by a local community hospital (Newspaper, August 2006).

The other Outreach story carried in the same issue was of an initiative by students who embarked on a crime prevention program also aimed at helping the local prison inmates with rehabilitation. The students organised a concert that was to be held inside the prison facility. The story tells of the appreciation the Prison authorities had of the initiative. It also shares how the inmates were encouraged by the visit from the students. The story was written by the university officials employed at the Communications Department. I observed that each newspaper produced in 2006 carried at least 3 'feel good' stories that shared on different Service or Outreach oriented community engagement activities.

The newspaper also shared stories on Research activities of community engagement. For instance there was a story in the 2007 issue that bragged about the university's radio telescope project, designed and constructed in Engineering Faculty. This telescope was said to be aimed at detecting signals from radio sources in the galaxy that was not otherwise seen with the naked eye. The story further elaborated how the invention would benefit the research capacity of the university and the general community (Newspaper, May 2007).

The other angle of community engagement activities that was communicated was the knowledge brought by external partners of the university. I read a story of the engagement the university student had with an external partners sharing knowledge through a Seminar. Microsoft Computer Company sent its Senior Executives to share industry knowledge with current students (Newspaper, April 2007). In the same issue I read of an Art Exhibition organised by the university's NGO partner that saw professional artists sharing their knowledge and experience with aspirant university students.

I also discovered that some of the community engagement activities of the university were getting external media coverage. The media was catching wind of the news through relations

established with individual lecturers (AS-02). For instance the Garden and Home magazine would publish Service oriented activities performed by the university students. These stories would receive follow up reporting from the university newspaper. This was the case with an issue published in 2010. It carried a story whose original source was the Garden and Home Magazine. The story was about second year students who wove furniture pieces for the KwaZulu Natal Society for the Blind in return for credits for their course work (Newspaper, August 2010).

Notwithstanding the evidence presented above, there was however a mixed bag of reaction by academics on the question of adequate reporting on community engagement initiatives in the university. Some felt that the department responsible for communication did not adequately report on their projects. “We have zero publicity and zero support from the university” said one lecturer (AS-2). Others resorted to partnerships with external magazines that are publishing in their respective fields, like the case referred to in the paragraph above.

The stories which get publicity in the university newspaper and the website are mainly reported on by the university’s Communication Department. The stories according to the department are reported on the basis of newsworthiness and currency.

## **Study Findings**

In an overarching analysis of community engagement in this case study, I submit the following varied levels of commitment as informed by Holland Matrix, the shaded blocks indicate the level of commitment displayed by the university based on the evidence presented by the data collection. It is worth noting that in some of the factors analysing institutionalisation as submitted by Holland, the evidence I found from the study suggests multiple levels of relevance. In such cases I demonstrate the finding by shading a multiple blocks aligned to the same factor. I will however use a darker shade to demonstrate strong relevance to a particular level, where applicable. The different shade scheme will be elaborated upon in the paragraphs explaining the evidence below each table.

For the convenience of the reader, I will preface each factor below with a brief explanation on what the factor analyses for ease of reference, noting that much discussion on the subject has been elaborated upon in Chapter Two (Literature Review).

**Table 3: Mission**

	<b>Level One: Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two: Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three: High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four: Full Integration</b>
<b>Mission</b>	No mention or undefined rhetorical reference	Engagement is part of what we do as educated citizens	Engagement is an aspect of our academic agenda	Engagement is a central and defining characteristic

The general significance of a **Mission** Statement in any organisation is to attempt to tell a story of the building block the institution has in its journey towards the long term vision. The mission also serves to differentiate one institution from another, elucidating strategic positioning of the organisation. The Matrix assesses the link between the mission statement of an institution and the extent at which campus activities reflects the ascension on the purpose statement.

The document analysis of the University concerned, in relation to the Mission, surpasses level one of the Holland Matrix (Holland, 2006) in that community engagement is mentioned in the Mission Statement as per the 2005 Annual Report. I would therefore argue that this institution seems to be straddling between levels two and three. In that community engagement is very much part of the University’s agenda despite not having a dedicated person, solely responsible for community engagement.

**Table 4: Leadership**

	<b>Level One: Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two: Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three: High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four: Full Integration</b>
<b>Leadership (Presidents, Vice Presidents, Deans, Chairs)</b>	Engagement not mentioned as a priority; general rhetorical references to community or society	Expressions that describe institution as asset to community through economic impact	Interest in and support for specific, short-term community projects; engagement discussed as a part of learning and research	Broad leadership commitment to a sustained engagement agenda with ongoing funding support and community input

**Leadership** factor analyses the behaviour and attitude of the Senior Leadership of the institution towards community engagement. The factor seeks to balance out the reality in the Mission statement vs the rhetoric of the Leadership of the University.

Where Leadership is concerned, it could be argued that the university leadership over the period 2005 to 2011 displayed a Medium Relevance level to community engagement with expression that describe the institution as an asset to the community. This is evidenced by the sentiments attributed to the leadership collective of post 2010. I will however argue that the commitment of the University to Work Integrated Learning, particularly after transformation to a University of Technology warrants a lighter grey shade on level three (as indicated in the table above).

**Table 5: Promotion, Tenure, Hiring**

	<b>Level One: Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two: Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three: High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four: Full Integration</b>
<b>Promotion, Tenure, Hiring</b>	Idea of engagement is confused with traditional view of service	Community engagement mentioned; volunteerism or consulting may be included in portfolio	<b>Formal guidelines for defining, documenting &amp; rewarding engaged teaching/research</b>	Community-based research and teaching are valid criteria for hiring and reward

This factor refers to the reward system built unto the commitment towards service or community engagement. It also explores whether the institution has a deliberate strategy to promote and incentivise community engagement initiatives across the wider campus.

Although a subject of much contestation, this University’s Promotions policy spells out the institutional commitment to academic promotions. This fact was also acknowledged by the Institutional Audit report of 2007. This policy locates the University on level three: high relevance (formal guidelines for documenting and rewarding engaged teaching and research). I would however, argue for a lighter shade on level largely informed by the ‘disgruntlement’ by Academic staff members on credits affixed to community engagement. The situation may largely be brought about by lack clarity in terms of roles.

**Table 6: Organization Structure and Funding**

	<b>Level One: Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two: Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three: High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four: Full Integration</b>
<b>Organization Structure and Funding</b>	No units focus on engagement or volunteerism	Units may exist to foster volunteerism/community service	Various separate centers and institutes are organized to support engagement; soft funding	Infrastructure exists (with base funding) to support partnerships and widespread faculty/student participation

The factor preoccupies the institution with its commitment, resources wise towards community engagement. The big question here is: Is there a unit entrusted with running with this agenda on a fulltime basis with adequate resources to attain a more coordinated approach towards community engagement?

While there is a case made for the existence of community engagement activities on the university campuses, the executive management acknowledges that there is no formal **Organizational Structure** entrusted with the sole responsibility of community engagement. The role however is taken care through the special project undertaken by the one of the university’s senior executives.

There is also evidence of soft funding for some activities albeit in a creative manner as opposed to a deliberate institutional budgeting process. Students initiatives seem to be enjoying considerable resource support.

**Table 7: Student Involvement & Curriculum**

	<b>Level One: Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two: Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three: High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four: Full Integration</b>
<b>Student Involvement &amp; Curriculum</b>	Part of extracurricular student life activities	Organized institutional support for volunteer activity and community leadership development	Opportunity for internships, practical, some service-learning courses	Service-learning and community-based learning integrated across curriculum; linked to learning goals

The factor assesses the extent of involvement of the community engagement agenda in student life.

In this study, I found that most of the student led engagement initiatives are as part of the extracurricular student life activities. There is also a strong emphasis on internship with WIL set to be rolled out in more than 50% of the academic programs. However, engagement is not fully integrated across the curriculum. Only a few programs have some Service Learning course

**Table 8: Faculty Involvement**

	<b>Level One: Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two: Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three: High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four: Full Integration</b>
<b>Faculty Involvement</b>	Traditional service defined as campus duties; committees; little support for interdisciplinary work	<b>Pro bono consulting; community volunteerism acknowledged</b>	Tenured/senior faculty may pursue community-based research; some teach service-learning courses	Community-based research and learning intentionally integrated across disciplines; interdisciplinary work is supported

The factor looks at the individual behaviour of faculty members towards community engagement. It also reflects on the extent at which community engagement is reflected on the professional work of academic staff in a particular institution.

In this study, I found that the absence of an adopted policy has left community engagement to the devices of those interested in the work. There seem to be no conscious effort on the part of academic leadership to encourage staff to focus on engagement work. As a result there is little interdisciplinary collaboration on engagement activities. Most of the engagement work will fit the category of Pro bono consulting and general community volunteerism. There is however some form of community based research through the Institute and service learning in the Applied Science faculty.

**Table 9: Community Involvement**

	<b>Level One: Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two: Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three: High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four: Full Integration</b>
<b>Community Involvement</b>	Random, occasional, symbolic or limited individual or group involvement	<b>Community representation on advisory boards for departments or schools</b>	Community influences campus through active partnerships, participation in service-learning programs or specific grants	Community involved in defining, conducting and evaluating community-based research and teaching; sustained partnerships

The Matrix moves from a premise that community engagement should be of mutual benefit to both the university and the community (whoever the university refers to as their community). The factor also explores the role the community plays in the engagement relationship.

According to this university’s Co-operative Education Policy, every academic programme is supposed to have an Advisory Board. The board should comprise at least 60% of external members. The external community includes Alumni, Corporate, Setas, Government and any other participants that are outside of the university. This policy position affords the university a platform for **Community** representation.

The absence of formal policy, as reflected elsewhere leaves the University open to random relations with the Community. The relations are managed by various individuals.

**Table 10: External Communications and Fundraising**

	<b>Level One: Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two: Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three: High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four: Full Integration</b>
<b>External Communications and Fundraising</b>	Community engagement not an emphasis	<b>Stories of students or alumni as good citizens; partnerships are grant dependent</b>	Emphasis on economic impact of institution; public role of centers, institutes, extension	Engagement is integral to fundraising goals; joint grants/gifts with community; base funding

Lastly, **External Communication and Fundraising** as a factor seeks to understand the communication patterns on community engagement. Holland (2006) looked at the commitment as reflected on university material i.e Annual Reports, Alumni correspondence, recruitment material etc.

This university used most of its Communications media to document the good stories on community engagement by its students and staff. The publications include the official university newspaper, the Annual Reports and the university websites. However, the coverage of stories in various University media seem to be general stories about activities and seldom a deliberate plan to highlight community engagement as one of the critical pillars for a higher education institution.

## **Conclusion**

The Holland Matrix (Holland, 2006) has lived up to expectation in providing a useful diagnostic tool to describe and interpret the dimensions, approaches and levels of institutional commitment to community engagement for analysis purposes in my study. It has helped in the management of a plethora of data that was collected. I presented the data that has been collected through in-depth interviews and the analysis of university records since the year 2005. I also shared the findings the study.

In the next chapter, informed largely by the findings discussed above, I am going provide a more focussed answer to my broad research question together with the three sub-questions that underpinned my research as elaborated upon in the first chapter.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Introduction

This study was aimed at exploring *how higher education demonstrates responsiveness to its community engagement mandate*. The quest to answer this question was explored through an analysis of a particular institution's experience where the phenomenon is concerned. In this concluding chapter, I am going to present an overview of the entire project guided by the key research question (as reflected above) together with the subsequent sub-questions, namely:

- a) What are the institutions policy regarding community engagement? ;
- b) What institutional structures exist to promote community engagement? ;
- c) How are the University Stakeholders being involved in the community engagement Initiatives? ; and lastly
- d) How is community engagement communicated by the university?

I will also reflect on my views on the study and make some recommendation to the University based on to the findings I made.

Exploring the responsiveness to community engagement by South African higher education institutions was always going to be hindered by the question of lack of uniformity in approach and definition by various Universities in this country. Despite the legislative framework as set out in the White Paper on Higher Education Transformation, the efforts of organizations such as SAHECEF, CHE, HEQC and CHESP (JET), community engagement remains 'Joseph's multi-coloured' coat to various institutions. A list of concepts and typology explored in the literature review attests to this fact.

It is commendable though that most of the higher education institutions have embraced the mandate set out in the Higher Education Act of 1997 to avail expertise and resources to communities, notably by reflecting the concept of service in their mission statements as a

start. It however, remains questionable as to whether this mandate is fully integrated into the enterprise of the education project. The CHE sanctioned institutional audit process produces reports that suggest that community engagement is not fully operationalized in the daily life of most universities.

In this study, I observed that there seems to be mixed emotion regarding community engagement with some (both students and staff) feeling despondent about the university's commitment towards community engagement. Some members acknowledge that the university has "its heart in the right place" but lacks the necessary focus to back its commitment. There is also a general agreement that the finalisation of the policy would go a long way in assisting the university to better co-ordinate its effort.

### **What are the institution's policy regarding community engagement?**

Whilst the Higher Education Act as preceded by the White Paper on the Higher Education Transformation, advocates for indulgence by Universities on community engagement as a third critical pillar of higher education, the practice of community engagement has unfortunately slipped to the periphery of most universities. This has been evidenced by a lack of clear cut policy directives guiding engagement activities in Universities, as is the case with my case study.

There has, however, been a rich scholarly debate, particularly post 1994 in South Africa contributing towards the shaping of the community engagement agenda. Universities have been confronted with challenges to make choices about how they see community engagement manifesting itself in their various settings. Several models have been proposed on various approaches. The most prominent debate seems to be the approach that suggests weaving community engagement into the core business of Teaching & Learning together with Research as opposed to locating it as an isolated 'pillar'.

The debate on policy also presents Universities with an opportunity to define their typology and concepts relating to community engagement. Literature has pointed out that there has been a fair amount of confusion on what community engagement means to different institutions. In some instances unrelated concepts are sometimes used interchangeably, the most conspicuous being community outreach or service and community engagement. Bringle (1999) has however helped to elucidate some of the confusion to a certain extent with a diagram showing how various activities manifest themselves in the course of engagement.

In my study, a document analysis has pointed out the absence of a University adopted policy on community engagement, a fact that was also observed by the CHE Audit Panel (2008), despite this University's constant commitment to 'external engagement' as mentioned in its Mission Statement over the years. Although the University has other crucial policies that support and promote CE such as the Academic Staff Promotions Policy, the absence of a particular community engagement policy seems to have made the University vulnerable to possible unintended consequences in the external engagement practice. Both staff and students seem to have different expectations from the University in supporting what they perceive as own version of community engagement.

There is also a view that the sporadic change of leadership that characterised the university since 2005 has done more damage than good to the university's profile where community engagement is concerned. However, in the same breath there is a sense of optimism about the current leadership because of a perceived belief that this leadership is indeed supportive of community engagement activities in the university. An academic staff member remarked that she has been with the university since 2007 but has only seen some movement on community engagement from last year. "It has taken off since last year or so with the new Vice Chancellor. I was invited to a conference in Port Elizabeth on community engagement with other role players" added AS-4.

Another member commented that the new Vice Chancellor speaks often on community engagement in his speeches and that he supports such initiatives. "He has given support to a lot of our initiatives in terms of us working with communities" remarked the member (NA-2).

### **What institutional structures exist to promote community engagement?**

The Holland Matrix as explored at length in the literature review provided a very useful framework as a tool to analyse the claim to commitment institutions make in operationalization of community engagement. The Matrix identified as one of the factors for analysis 'Organization, Structure and Funding' as critical in the commitment to community engagement. Holland (1997) posits that in order to attain full integration of community engagement, institutions must establish dedicated 'infrastructure (with base funding) to support partnerships and widespread faculty/student participation' (Holland Matrix, 1997).

In my study I noted the recommendation made by the Audit Report of 2008 that the University needs to allocate the role and responsibility of community engagement to a Senior

Executive in order to give this agenda more prominence in the University. In deed the University seems to have responded positively to the recommendation, as it transpired in the conversation with the Senior Executive responsible for Academic matters. She confirmed that the brief is being taken care of from her office through a Senior Officer reporting directly to her.

I noted though another view from a Non-Academic Director who felt that this responsibility should not be housed only in the Senior Academic office but should have representation across all sectors of the university if the community engagement agenda is to yield the desired outcome on behalf of the University. The trend though in other higher education institutions in the country seems to be to centralise community engagement by appointing a Senior Officer - at Deputy Vice Chancellor or Senior Director level, to be responsible for community engagement.

However, it must be noted that the mere appointment of a senior practitioner for community engagement does not by itself mean the job will be done. Universities need to make a conscious effort to allocate financial resources to support and operationalise engagement activities. It was pointed out by Academics involved and confirmed by the Senior Executive in my interviews that this University did not have any specific funds that it allocates to community engagement. The students had greater access to funds for CE from the institution though even in this regard the budget allocated was for their operational purpose and they chose to use it mainly for community engagement activities.

Currently this University relies on student levies and Corporative Education funds earmarked for Work Integrated Learning to help support what can be afforded in relation to community engagement. It is still unclear as to where community engagement funding will come from, especially if the view by Executive Management is anything to go by. The Senior Executive lamented the fact that funding of higher education in South Africa is based only on teaching & learning and research outputs, at least according to National policy.

### **How are the University stakeholders being involved in the community engagement initiatives?**

The Holland Matrix played a pivotal role in helping me focus my response to this research question, particularly in identifying the key University stakeholders. Foremost in answering this question, I first had to establish who the University stakeholders were. Inward looking,

the University has its students and staff as the main stakeholders. But these two groups have several categories. Students have societies and formations together with the SRC as legal governance structures. Staff have Academic and Non-academic staff together with Executive Management as leadership with vicarious responsibility in the management and administration of the University.

Outwardly, we have external stakeholders such as University council, alumni, donors, government and the community. Earlier in the report, when dealing with definitions in Chapter two, I was also confronted by the interesting debate of who Higher Education institutions regard as the community. Some quarters of Higher Education viewed the community as neighbouring 'groupings' that the University serves while other argued that the University itself is a community in its own right. I have not found any telling evidence of who this University regards as its community nor did I get a sense of which approach it takes in defining the phenomenon.

The internal analysis has also pointed out that there is little collaboration by stakeholders within the University on community engagement activities. There was not much effort for inter-disciplinary initiatives on activities. Each department did its 'own thing' with the outcomes only focused on the project as conceptualised by the specific department. It also emerged that the isolated approach could purely be attributed to lack of communication between departments. The same seems to have been the case with students too. I did not find any evidence of an effort by formations and societies to collaborate between or across groupings.

### **How is community engagement communicated by the University?**

The University is using several of its communication platforms to share mostly the 'feel good' stories on community engagement activities. The stories were found to be covered from a cross spectra of the University establishment. The communication tools analysed reflected on most of these activities. I however, noted that the stories were not only written with the sole purpose of profiling the phenomena of community engagement but also to share and celebrate the human element of the University through engagement activities, particularly in the Newsletters and the Website.

The Annual Reports on the other hand had a more focussed approach to community engagement reporting. It seems as if deliberate questions were asked on community

engagement to the Deans as the people who were compiling the various report inserts. The only other publication that had a deliberate bias to community engagement was the once-off publication compiled by the University's Corporate Affairs division. This publication carried a bouquet of projects on community engagement.

It also transpired in the interviews that some of the stories were carried in the mainstream media. A classical case is the report on the refurbishments done to foster homes that enjoyed coverage in the Home magazine. There seems to be concern though that the internal publication could do more to cover broader institutional stories on community engagement as reflected in the findings.

## **Recommendations**

There is no doubt that this institution has made great strides in the right direction since the last Audit of 2008. The University is abuzz with community engagement activities as the Audit correctly picked up. These programmes, though lack coherence and co-ordination. Everybody interested in community engagement is implementing projects at will in the name of the University. An adopted well-crafted policy document on community engagement will go a long way in captivating the energy prevalent in the university campuses from both staff and students. The policy should also shed light on an engagement model practical for the University. It should encapsulate the authority and location of community engagement in the University.

The biggest risk I identified owing to the lack of defined policy, was in the interface with the external community. Each sector had its own arrangement with the community it sought to engage with. For instance, students will organise themselves to engage with a particular community without any prior sanction by any of the University authority. The nature of that relationship will be left much to their own design. I found this to be risky because the approach could amongst other undesirables create an expectation on the part of the community that was never properly communicated to the University in the initial stages. The danger of this is that if such expectations are not fulfilled, the situation could be quite dire for this and other future engagement possibilities with such communities.

The next big issue for the University was with regards to resource allocation and funding in particular. Unless the national policy position on funding Higher Education institutions changes, this Universities and others will have to find other creative ways of funding this

equally important agenda of community engagement. They will have to, amongst other strategies, entice the private sector into mutually beneficial partnership. The approach seemed to be working with the student formations involved with community engagement at this University. These students have managed to establish relations with corporates who fund most of their activities through their corporate social investment funding. There is a good ground to establish more of these partnerships because of the inherent mutual benefit. The corporate sector receives tax rebates from government for investing financially in the society demonstrating social responsibility and the Universities on the other hand are called up by the Act (1997) to avail their expertise to foster meaningful engagement.

Also hinging on funding and resource allocation, this University must re-consider how it incentivises the staff and students involved in community engagement. It is salutary that staff and students working on various engagement activities are doing so out of their compassion and not only for compliance with what the Department of Higher Education and Training requires, however compensation goes a long way in motivating people. The review of the Staff Promotions policy will be a good point to start, where staff is concerned. The University may want to consider concessions with regards to teaching loads for academic staff members who work on big community engagement projects that are particularly sanctioned by the Faculty.

Where students are concerned, the recommended unit of community engagement should first empower the student with tool kits on how to manage the various engagement projects. The tool kit should outline the parameters and scope of their engagement. To afford recognition, students participating in sanctioned volunteerism activities in the name of the University should be awarded with a Certificate of Recognition signed by the Dean of Student Services. This certificate should present the holder with added advantaged when the University is recruiting student helpers in projects like Orientation and the Registration programme at the beginning of the semesters.

Lastly, the University needs to consider a more deliberate approach to communicating community engagement. The once-off publication produced by Corporate Affairs division has proven to quite useful at informing the University and the general public about what is going on in the University, in relation to community engagement. I think if more of these could be produced periodically, it will go a long way even in broadening the pool of this community of practice. A clarion call should be made to the University community to submit

inserts on the different project happening in the University. This will afford most projects opportunity for coverage thus addressing the perception of bias reporting on projects. Otherwise the University must continue to report the ‘feel good’ stories in the official Newspaper, these contribute to showcasing a University with a ‘soul’.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Interview Schedules**

#### The Management Team - DVC: Technology, Innovation and Partnerships, DVC Academic and DVC Institutional Planning

##### Questions:

1. Are there any policies in the Durban University of Technology that make mention of community engagement and which of those do you believe impact on your portfolio?
2. What resources (human, financial and infrastructural) is DUT leadership or management committing towards community engagement initiatives?
3. In its Mission Statement, the university adopted a position calling for excellence though: “external engagement that promotes innovation and entrepreneurship through collaboration and partnership”. How does this mission position translate into operation activities of the university?
4. How effective would you say, are the university’s community engagement initiatives for the intended communities?
5. When recruiting staff, particularly at strategic positions like Executives and Senior Managers, does the university consider the applicants’ portfolio indicating involvement in or attitudes toward community engagement?
6. Does the university consider community engagement ethos when considering promotions or incentives to staff members who actively engage in community engagement activities on behalf of the university?
7. Is there an incentives scheme or related practice to reward staff members or students who are committed to community engagement initiatives and activities?
8. What impediments have you or management identified that affect the universities commitment to community engagement?
9. What do you propose that the university should do to overcome these impediments?
10. Does the community you serve have any role in determining the relationship you are seeking to build with them? Please elaborate.

### Five Heads of Academic Departments or Programme Coordinators involved in Community Engagement Activities

#### Questions:

1. What community engagement activities is your department or programme involved in?
2. How many staff members are involved in such activities?
3. How did you (as a person) become involved with community engagement activities?
4. Do you publicise your community engagement activities, and if so, by what means?
5. Does the university allocate any resources to you for your department's activities?
6. Are you (people involved) receiving any incentives from the University for the community engagement work you are doing?
7. Please suggest what you think will be a good incentives scheme.
8. Do you think this university displays commitment towards community engagement as it is expected of any higher education institution in this country?
9. How do you involve the community, students and other DUT staff members in your community engagement initiatives?

### The Director of Co-operative Education Unit

#### Questions:

1. What community engagement activities is your department involved in?
2. Are these Engagement activities underpinned by any University policies? Please elaborate
3. Are there any other University departments that you collaborate with on your activities? Please describe the relationships.
4. What resources does the university allocate to the department to assist you to do your engagement activities?
5. If you were to be called upon to come up with an incentive system for staff that takes up community engagement, what would be your suggestion?
6. Do you think this university displays commitment towards community engagement as it is expected of any higher education institution in this country?

7. Would you please identify the stakeholders that are involved in your typical engagement activities? Please explain also how are they involved?
8. What recommendations do you have for management that you think may help improve the university's commitment towards community engagement?

### The Dean of Students

#### Questions:

1. What community engagement activities is your department involved in on behalf of the university?
2. Are these engagement activities underpinned by any University policies? Please elaborate
3. Are there any other University departments that you collaborate with on your activities? Please describe the relationships?
4. What resources does the university allocate to the department to assist you to do your engagement activities?
5. If you were to be called upon to come up with an incentive system for staff who takes up community engagement, what would be your suggestion?
6. Do you think this university displays commitment towards community engagement as it is expected of any higher education institution in this country?
7. Who benefits most from your engagement activities?
8. What recommendations do you have for management that you think may help improve the university's commitment towards community engagement?
9. Based on your own observation and experience, what is the attitude of DUT students, particularly the student leadership towards community engagement initiatives?

The SRC and identified Student Leaders from student formations that are involved in Community Engagement activities

Questions:

1. What community engagement activities is your organisation or committee involved in?
2. How many of your members are involved in such activities?
3. How did you become involved with community engagement activities?
4. Are there any resources that the university allocates to your organisation for the activities you are involved with?
5. What benefit do you derive from the community engagement work you are doing? Please elaborate.
6. If you were to be called upon to suggest an incentive system for any student formation that participates in the University's community engagement initiatives, what would be your suggestion?
7. Do you think this university displays commitment towards community engagement as it is expected of any higher education institution in this country?
8. Who benefits most from your engagement activities?

## Appendix B



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Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

18 October 2011

Mr D Sedumedi (203519842)  
School of Education

Dear Mr Sedumedi

**PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/1032/011M**

**PROJECT TITLE: Institutional responsiveness to Community Engagement: A case study of a Higher Education Institution in KwaZulu- Natal**

### EXPEDITED APPROVAL

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process:

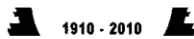
Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)**  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

cc Supervisor – Dr F O'Brien  
cc Mr N Memela



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## Informed Consent Document (Appendix C)

Dear Participant

My name is David Sedumedi, a research student with the University of Kwazulu Natal (UKZN). I am doing my research in pursuance of a Masters qualification in Higher Education. The title of my project is: Institutional responsiveness to Community engagement. I am being supervised by Dr Frances O'Brien from UKZN's Centre for Higher Education Studies.

The purpose of this study is to explore the implementation of Community engagement within Higher Education in South Africa using a case study of one institution in the province of Kwazulu Natal. The intention is to help analyze how Community engagement is implemented using the experiences of this particular institution.

You have been identified because of the relevant role you are playing within Higher Education in relation to the Community engagement agenda. The interview should not take us more than an hour and will be held at your convenience. With your permission, I will be taping the session in order to ensure accuracy of the data collected from yourself.

All responses of the interview will be treated in a confidential manner. This means that your interview responses will only be shared with my supervisor and that any information I include in my report does not identify you as a respondent.

Whilst this interview is important towards the realisation of my study, I respect that your participation is out of your own free will and as such, you may terminate this arrangement at any point if you deem it necessary to do so. Your withdrawal from participation will not have any negative or undesirable consequence on yourself or the department you are in. I will also afford you an opportunity to ask any questions for clarity at any point of the interview.

May I also point out that there will be no personal benefit or incentive offered to you for participating in this study. My contact details and those of my Supervisor are as follows:

### The Researcher

**Name** : David Sedumedi

**Institution** : University of KwaZulu-Natal

**Email** : [Sedumedd@dut.ac.za](mailto:Sedumedd@dut.ac.za)

**Office No.** : (031) 373 3020

**Mobile** : 082 900 1990

### The Supervisor

Dr Frances O'Brien

University of KwaZulu-Natal

[Obrien@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Obrien@ukzn.ac.za)

(031) 031 2602291

072 947 2899

If you agree to the interview and the content of this letter, would please sign below:

.....

Interviewee

.....

Date