ENHANCING COLLABORATION BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND LEARNING CITIES THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS IN ATTAINING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Bisini Naidoo is a PhD candidate at the University of South Africa. Her doctoral study focuses on: “Multidisciplinary Partnerships between Higher Education Institutions and Learning Cities through Service-Learning Programmes”.
- Bisini has widespread multi-sectoral networking and research experience in urban, rural and deep-rural contexts. Her academic experience includes community development and other methods of social work practice.
- Bisini has an interest in the integrated development of communities and believes that through Service-Learning, collaborative partnerships with learning cities can foster societal transformation.

Introduction

- Policy and legislation in South Africa together with its commitment to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) aim to ensure that all South Africans attain a decent standard of living through the elimination of poverty and the reduction of inequality.
- In responding to the social injustices and contextual issues, South Africa has adopted a social developmental approach, with policy promoting partnerships and an integrated service delivery model.
- Traditionally, university-learning in South Africa was classroom-based. Through the political transformation process of addressing the social injustices of the apartheid legacy came the introduction of mandated Service-Learning (SL) programmes, a pedagogical strategy that links students with communities through the academic curriculum. SL partnerships thus serves as a vehicle through which higher education institutions are committed to connecting with their surrounding communities, thereby responding to contextual challenges.
- Higher education through their SL programmes, and learning cities, share key features of the SDG’s. However, there is no framework for developing and strengthening collaborative partnerships between higher education institutions and cities in order to achieve these goals.

Methodology

- Inform policy and decision makers in higher education institutions and cities globally as to the strengthening of their partnerships through Service-Learning programs.
- Establish ways in which various disciplines can respond to contextual challenges through Service-Learning curricula by forming partnerships with different sectors of the municipalities.
- Form partnerships with service and community organisations to provide effective and efficient service delivery.
- Improve the quality of people’s lives through integrated holistic development of communities.

References


Conclusion

- The concept ENGAGEMENT emerged very strongly as a recommendation from the findings of the study.
- Learning city strategies, as well as SL objectives, address the most immediate issues of high unemployment, social deprivation and other socio-economic challenges.
- The building of social capital through collaboration is vital.
- A multi-stakeholder Service-Learning Forum (SLF) formed with development agents from university sites, service and community partners.
- Universities contribute to the creation of learning cities through commissioned research, participation in meaningful partnerships with various stakeholders; encourage students and staff to volunteer their skills, creativity and knowledge; and make university facilities and resources available for learning city initiatives.
- University-government partnerships improve community services and provide a stimulating and challenging learning environment for students.
- University curricula must be relevant to contribute to the transformation of society by producing graduates who can make a contribution beyond their respective academic disciplines, thereby playing a major role in the advancement of communities.
- In meeting the global challenge higher education institutions should offer support to all structures of society, in order to foster learning city initiatives, through the formation of multidisciplinary SL partnerships.