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COMMUNITY- UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT – GLOBAL TERMS AND TERRAIN

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Universities are both apart from and a part of society. They are apart in the sense that they provide a critically important space for grasping the world as it is and – importantly – for re-imagining the world as it ought to be. The academic freedom to pursue the truth and let the chips fall where they may isn't a luxury – in fact it is a vital necessity in any society that has the capability for self-renewal. But universities are also a part of our societies. What's the point unless the accumulated knowledge, insight and vision are put at the service of the community? With the privilege to pursue knowledge comes the civic responsibility to engage and put that knowledge to work in the service of humanity. (Higgins, 2012)

The current President of Ireland makes a compelling argument for community–university partnership that is pitched against a time of unprecedented global, economic, cultural, political, social crisis and change. His words highlight the need for universities to reject the taken for granted, to re-imagine a better future through an inherent duty to put scholarly knowledge towards the service of humanity.

The contemporary university faces many challenges, the greatest of which is both an ideological and a practical move from a narrow basis to one that is broad, meaningful and relevant to society and community. Hall (2009) highlights that 'community–university engagement is arguably the strongest theme cutting across all our university campuses', also noting the 'explosion' of recent writing on the theme. It is core that the sharing of knowledge across and through the boundaries of the community and the university plays a central role in the re-imagining and self-renewal of society. The purpose of this paper

is to briefly address community–university engagement from a definitional space in which the key terms and terrain will be briefly explored, and to touch on the emergence of institutional, national and regional policies that buttress engagement activities.

INTRODUCTION

The philosophy and practice of community–university engagement is historic and resonates with the foundations of many universities internationally, as many others elsewhere and within this volume note. But it is also evident that the attention of universities has swung like a pendulum over time from an economic to an engagement focus. However, community–university engagement has become increasingly overt and the terrain has expanded gradually since the 1970s, and more rapidly within the last ten years. Without doubt, the theory and practice of this work is as rich and diverse as the historical, political, social, civic and cultural roots that have given rise to regions, nations and continents, and the formation of universities and systems globally. One could say that community–university engagement is laced with *indigenous reference points* or *moments* emanating from local, regional, national and international priorities and contexts. No one institution, region or nation has travelled the same path towards this work, as other contributors within this volume explore and articulate. Consequently, the terrain and terms to describe and articulate community–university engagement are diverse and, at times, contested.

TERRAIN AND TERMS

Engagement as a concept implies activity, interaction, sharing, a dynamic that is in constant change and flux. It implies relationships between the university and the targeted communities, be this at local, regional, national, international or even virtual levels,

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for reciprocal benefits using knowledge-sharing and dimensions of co-creation that impact society and community, which are the central crux.

There is, however, no consensus on the ‘engagement’ terminology, and a plethora of terms abound in the terrain. In fact, there are great academic debates centring on the need and rationale for a common set of definitions, or otherwise. Wynne (2009) articulates the need for a common language for engagement thus: ‘Without a uniform understanding, or engagement literacy, it is more difficult to develop a forum for discussing activities, or to devise a mechanism for reporting on initiatives and practices’ so as to move it from the periphery to the centre (p. 180). Meanwhile, Salmat (2010) highlights definitional complexity within a highly complex and diverse higher educational landscape (drawing from the South African experience):

Our definitional gaze (if indeed we should invest in a definitional project at all) will need to look cross-sectionally across the (virtually endless) breath of activities, as well as longitudinally back in time for how traditional and fashions arise, and are sustained or not. (p. 58)

‘Definitional anarchy’ (Sandman, 2008, p. 101) is central, and it would be both a utopian and a futile exercise within any paper to derive a cohesive or common understanding. What I will present is an exploration of the most popular or frequent broad terms that then lead to a set of engagement practices. These practices will be explored elsewhere within this volume.

In a recent review of the literature, Cuthill (2011) uncovered 48 keywords relating to community–university engagement, which encompass a broad range of concepts and in turn practices. What unifies these contemporary keywords, in general, is a movement away from service functions towards engagement, a renewed vision of democracy to one that is participative, and a commitment to the creation and sharing of knowledge. There are without doubt epistemological roots underpinning community–university engagement in moving from ‘Mode 1’ to ‘Mode 2’ ways of knowing and knowledge production; from a disciplinary base to one that is transdisciplinary; from hierarchical principles to one that is more participatory in nature; from linear to reflexive approaches (Gibbons et al., 1994). Hall suggests that perhaps the terrain of community–university is at an ‘epistemological disjuncture’ (Hall, 2010, p. 7) as there tends within the majority of the literature to be an evasion of the unpacking of terms and the provision of definitions

due to contestation over ways of knowing. Those who define keywords and concepts are typically the large networking spaces – spaces that bring together cohorts of scholars and practitioners for networking and knowledge-sharing purposes.

In general, the definitions offered here tend to be all-encompassing and inclusive of all practices. For example, *community engagement*, the term adopted by the Carnegie Foundation (2013), is subsequently defined as:

the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity ... to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.

Again, the Association of Commonwealth Universities (2013), adopting the term *engagement*, define it as a ‘core value’ and as:

strenuous, thoughtful argumentative interaction with the non-university world in at least four spheres; steering universities’ aims, purposes and priorities; relating teaching and learning to the wider world; the back and forth dialogue between researchers and practitioners; and taking on wider responsibilities as neighbours and citizens.

Meanwhile, within the UK, the National Coordinating Council for Public Engagement (NCCPE, 2010) adopt *public engagement* as:

the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.

Within the global north, many conceive of this word broadly under the umbrella of the *scholarship of engagement* or *engaged scholarship*, a term that was coined by Ernst Boyer. In ‘Scholarship Rediscovered’, Boyer’s vision entailed ‘connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic and ethical problem’, and that campuses would be ‘staging grounds for action’ (Boyer, 1996, p. 20). Boyer’s

work has been influential, especially on the university landscape of the USA, where a *Boyerization* of higher education has been debated, commenced or taken root.

However, there are a wealth of additional philosophies and practices that have emanated from the global south but have very often not arrived on the northern literature radar. Ghandian philosophy has had a major bearing and influence on the creation and practice of university national service within India. In Mexico, the philosopher José Vasconcelos left an indelible mark on the education system through the adoption of a national service framework that buttressed his ideology on the connectivity between educational and social gains. In Argentina, the work of Frère is an exception, as not only have his philosophies on ‘other’, dialogue and problem-posing influenced the engagement agenda in South America, but his work has also had an impact globally, although these roots are rarely articulated within the community–university engagement literature.

In other contexts, the term *civic engagement* abounds in the literature on community–university engagement but is infrequently qualified with definitions. This could be due to the contested nature of civic and citizenship, which is very much bound up within national belonging and issues of national civil and human rights; this has a grand bearing on those displaced, historically moving from the individual to the collective and back again. The emphasis placed within the realm of civic engagement is typically on the goal to create a citizenry that have the skills, knowledge, political literacy and competencies to be active agents of social change as a result of engagement activities; these agents include students, faculty and members of the wider community.

To extend the concepts of civic, Mcfarlane has written on the concept of ‘academic citizens’ and ‘academic citizenship’ (2007). Although these terms are not widely used within community–university engagement literature, they are extremely useful. Macfarlane (2007, p. 271) describes ‘academic citizenship’ as:

central to the success of the university as a collective entity rather than as a collection of individuals set on achieving personal goals ... academic citizenship is central to sustaining the infrastructure that supports academic life and the ‘compact’ between the university and society.

This conception draws from notions of public intellectualism, but as a collective force rather than an individual academic duty or activity.

The *engaged university* or *engaged institution* is an increasingly popular term within the literature (Holland and Gelmon, 1998; Hollander and Saltmarsh, 2000; Watson et al., 2011), and while it has a plethora of definitions, the Kellogg Commission typifies engaged university activities as cutting across all dimensions of institutional mission. In *Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution* (1999), the Commission urges universities to reconfigure teaching, research, extension and service activities and become ‘more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities, however community may be defined’ (p. 9).

This could be at odds with another popular term within the literature – *third mission*. Mission debates ensue on the positionality of community–university engagement. Many describe community–university engagement as a *third mission* or a third pillar alongside the missions of research, and teaching and learning. Still others, fearful of conceptual and practical marginalization and peripherality, feel that the concept and practice of community–university engagement should transcend, align and influence the three domains of university life – namely, teaching and learning, research and service missions.

Perhaps another helpful lens to conceive of this work and enable the evolution of purposeful terms and definitions is through Wynne’s (2010) conception of citizenship, contained in Table II.1.1.1. This resides in one lens or moves from and between ‘civic’, ‘communitarian’ and ‘commonwealth’ approaches that denote the underbelly or purpose and practice. In general, it

TABLE II.1.1.1

Conceptions of citizenship (adapted from Wynne, 2010)

Purpose	Civic	Communitarian	Commonwealth
Citizen	Personally responsible; civic slug	Community; community as the locus of associational life	Justice-oriented; civic spark plug; civic responsibility
Education	Upholds the status quo; conformist; upholds cultural values	Maintains/rebuilds civic life	Renewal; system critique and reform
Educational approach	Traditional; citizenship content, legal aspect of citizenship	Progressive; service-learning; doing and action dimensions; civic engagement and common good	Advanced; critical dimension and pedagogies; system and root reform
Pedagogical approach	Didactic	Participatory	Critical pedagogies

can be said that the ‘civic’ domain is more conservative and concerned with the given status quo and with delivering of knowledge that is factual. Meanwhile, at the opposite end, in ‘commonwealth’, citizenship is underpinned by a sense of renewal through the values associated with social justice and a critical perspective, in which action and change are central. In the centre, ‘communitarian’, as denoted by its label, is community-oriented, seeks to effect change and rebuilds through participation and active doing.

POLICIES FOR COMMUNITY–UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT AT INSTITUTIONAL, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

Despite definitional anarchy, conceptual confusion, positionality and debates over epistemological disjuncture, many institutions, nations and regions have created and, at times, enacted a series of policies and rewards to support individuals, institutions and systems to enable the development of a range of practices related to community–university engagement. Some note the pivotal nature of policies in supporting engagement, as a commitment to engagement very often arises on a ‘labour of love’ basis and there is a danger of stagnation unless there is a policy-enabling environment (Lyons and McIlrath, 2011).

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Macfarlane (2007) notes that the work of the ‘academic citizen’ is poorly rewarded and that while:

many universities have redesigned their promotion and tenure policies in recent years to reward individual performance in research and teaching, few have addressed the more complex question of evaluating contributions for the collective good via academic citizenship. (p. 271)

There is evidence of some internal reward system alterations, but they tend to be both rare and few. One compelling example is the Albukhary International University in Malaysia, whose currently vice-chancellor articulates the institution as the *humaniversity*, which seeks to ‘reclaim the ethos of education that upholds human beings as valued members of the community rooted in virtues that nourish humanity globally’. All academic staff must ascribe to the vision, mission and core values of the institution. These are in turn applied to work with the most economically disadvantaged, offering a free education while contributing

positively to community and society. In the words of the vice-chancellor, ‘the policy and practice adopted by the institution becomes crucial ... to enable transformative change ... issues of governance, rewards and recognition ... must be addressed by the policy and practice set for the institutions’ (Razak, 2013, p. 61).

NATIONAL POLICIES

In many nations, the community–university partnerships movement has evolved at a grassroots level and very often within a policy vacuum; there is some recent evidence of explicit policy and other policy at nascent stages of development. In some contexts, engagement features as an aspect of other existing policies that relate to other ‘sides’ of higher education (such as policy aimed at the research agenda but pointing towards the importance of knowledge-sharing and exchange or acting through national frameworks for the recognition of education qualifications).

Within the context of Ireland, the 2011 government policy entitled the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* seeks to rationalize and consolidate the higher education landscape in recessionary times and places a strong emphasis on engagement as one of three core and interconnected pillars of higher education (Department of Education and Skills, 2011). Pointers to manifestations of this work include engaged research, community/service-learning and outward-facing institutions to mention just a few. Meanwhile, the 1997 South African White Paper for the transformation of higher education frontloads the importance of community–university engagement:

South Africa’s transition from apartheid and minority rule to democracy requires that all existing practices, institutions and values are viewed anew and rethought in terms of their fitness for the new era. Higher education plays a central role in the social, cultural and economic development of modern societies. In South Africa today, the challenge is to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities. It must lay the foundations for the development of a learning society which can stimulate, direct and mobilise the creative and intellectual energies of all the people towards meeting the challenge of reconstruction and development. (Department of Education, 1997, p. 3)

REGIONAL POLICIES

At a regional level, there is recent evidence of an evolving commitment to community–university part-

nerships. Of particular note is one that has emanated from Europe. The EU, through the Bologna Process and Declaration, which commenced in 1999 under the Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe, references through the preamble that a:

Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognized as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competences to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space. The importance of education and educational cooperation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount, the more so in view of the situation in South East Europe.

While not a direct mandate, this does indirectly encourage the embedding of vision and practice related to community–university partnerships.

REWARDS

At a local level, some universities have sought to both showcase and affirm the work of community–university engagement through an annual competitive awards programme that has enabled further development of the work (see Southern Cross University in Australia’s Excellence in Community Engagement Awards and Dublin City University’s President’s Award for Civic Engagement). At the global and national levels, a number of awards recognize the efforts of students, university staff and the community. Some of these include the MacJannet Award for Global Citizenship facilitated by the Talloires Network (2012), Campus Compact’s annual student competitions entitled the Newman Civic Fellows Award, and the Thomas Ehrlich Civically Engaged Faculty Award aimed at academic staff or faculty.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND CONCLUSION

To conclude, we recognize that there is global diversity in the terms associated with and the evolutionary terrain of community–university engagement; and although it is at times contested, is it clear that an enabling policy environment must meet grassroots practice for this work to survive. In addition, however we decide to term or describe the terrain, the underbelly or purpose

is central to community–university engagement. Is this work about the maintenance of the status quo? Or is it about renewal and rebuilding? Higgins (2012) calls us to image spaces ‘for grasping the world as it is and – importantly – for re-imagining the world as it ought to be’. At the heart of the rebuild and renewal underbelly of engagement is the push towards tackling societal problems or ‘knowledge-intensive challenges’. Bawa and Munck (2012, p. xi) stress:

the effective interconnectedness of the societies, geographical spaces, economies, political systems and so on around a set of powerful global challenges such as climate change, the scourge of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, the growing socioeconomic alienation of youth populations, and so on. These are all knowledge-intensive challenges.

Definitional richness is possible if we understand the possibilities for the underbelly of community–university engagement and strive with others towards attacking ‘knowledge-intensive challenges’, while creating policy-enabling environments to buttress, scaffold and value community–university engagement.

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II.1.2 ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS WITH SOCIETY: EXPERIENCES, LEARNING AND WORRIES

Carlos Cortez Ruiz

ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO ACCOMPLISH THEIR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The accelerated changes that characterize our society provide tremendous challenges for higher education institutions (HEIs), obligating them to address and redefine their traditional roles, to review their perspectives on social responsibility and to consider its implications. A fundamental issue is related to ways of establishing engagement and partnership, which have different meanings, purposes and implications for HEIs in different societies and are expressed through different political and ethical perspectives, behaviours, values, recognitions of responsibilities, uses of knowledge and ways of establishing relationships with different stakeholders.

The challenge for HEIs is to engage with society in an integral manner as a way of improving teaching and research, collaborating in social transformation. This engagement is expressed by HEIs around the world in ways that are based in diverse perspectives and epistemologies of knowledge, as well as in different ways of obtaining feedback for learning and education purposes. Partnership, one of the most important forms of developing community engagement that deals with people's issues, is a way of being and a way of working with others that implies mutual understanding, a common good, reciprocity, collaboration in decision-making and transparency regarding outcomes. In our unequal society, engagement and partnership mean assuming a shared responsibility with stakeholders through a democratic process.

In this paper, we present some reflections on the best way to construct partnerships. Most of the reflections were analysed in a dialogue with participants at the GUNi Conference in 2013, involving people from different HEIs around the world. It is not possible to identify each of the participants and the ideas they expressed in that open dialogue, but it is clear that this paper could not have been written without their participation and interest.