Universities, Society and Development

African Perspectives of University Community Engagement in Secondary Cities

Editors:

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UNIVERSITIES, SOCIETY AND DEVELOPMENT:

African Perspectives of University Community Engagement in Secondary Cities

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FOREWORD

Universities cannot solve all the challenges of the 21st century alone, but without them lasting solutions are unlikely to be found. The global crises facing humanity – of climate change, degradation of ecosystems, continuing poverty and inequalities – are characterised by complexity, and resist straightforward linear solutions and technical fixes. The generative capacity of higher education institutions in relation to ideas, human capacity development and innovation make them indispensable in this task, and vibrant institutions and sectors are needed in every context, in all parts of the globe.

Nevertheless, it is a well-known fact that universities have had an uneasy relationship with their host towns and communities throughout history. Often, they have looked towards their universalist and international remit and ignored the reality immediately surrounding them, resisting entry and exit of ideas and actors. The rise of the developmental university from the late 19th century has challenged this attitude, and the pressing social and environmental demands of the contemporary age have made it even more essential.

This book provides a crucial companion to these pressing contemporary debates. Taking an original focus on secondary cities, it interrogates the role of universities in relation to place, providing theoretical and empirical contributions. While flagship universities and major cities have been widely discussed, the role of universities in smaller urban areas has had far too little attention. Covering a range of contexts in South Africa and other parts of the African content (Cameroon, Kenya), it provides rich practical examples of the inter-actions between higher education institutions and their communities, as well as new resources for understanding the relationship. The editors are leading commentators on the role of universities in society in the contemporary age, combining expertise on higher education policy, student politics, cultural heritage and community engagement. They have assembled a rich array of cases and cutting-edge commentaries from an array of researchers in the field.

Africa has made a crucial contribution to the emergence of the model of the developmental university through the 20th century, and the struggle for social justice, relevance and impact of the university continues, against the stifling forces of marketisation, resource constraints and unhealthy competition through rankings and elitist research-based evaluations. This book provides a critical resource for those people seeking to understand this struggle, and importantly for those at the sharp end, working on a day-to-day basis within universities and communities to forge this new relationship.

Tristan McCowan (5th February 2022)
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PREFACE

This book is one of the outcomes of a strategic partnership between Sol Plaatje University (SPU) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) that was established in 2017 and that sought to advance research capabilities as well as set a research agenda aligned to the vision and social justice ideals of the university. As part of HSRC's research mandate to conduct social science research that makes a difference, the partnership brought together experienced and early career researchers who raise and respond to pertinent questions on the role and contribution of universities in economic and social renewal in a secondary city with a newly established institution of higher learning. For a new institution with limited human capital, such a partnership not only offered a career development platform for early career academics but also became an important vehicle to advance the research and community engagement trajectory of the institution.

The book is about intentionality, starting with the deliberate decision by South Africa's new democratic government in 1994 to establish two new (and post-apartheid) higher education institutions – one in the Northern Cape and one in Mpumalanga. Premised on social justice ideals, such a decision responded to access and inclusion imperatives, with a focus on rural, poor and economically marginalized communities. It was pregnant with promise and the potential to not only create opportunities for transformation and redress but also offer possibilities for social renewal and economic growth and development. Such a promise materialized when in 2013, Sol Plaatje University, situated in Kimberley, Northern Cape, was promulgated and in 2014, opened its doors to receive its first cohort of 124 students. In 2022, the institution has grown to host over three thousand.

The researchers, to varying degrees, pose and address pertinent questions on the purpose, role and place of universities in society as transformative spaces or as catalysts for reconstituting the trajectory of communities and cities by their very presence, their identities and ideological positions as well as their institutional cultures, practices and projects. Some chapters trouble notions of community engagement through a critical analysis of contemporary literature and practices on the subject while others provide case studies of what is possible when a university is intentional about its vision to be and become an engaged institution; one that places community at its centre. There is no settlement on

what constitutes community engagement, its multifarious manifestations in institutions, or its contribution towards systemic and systematic social change and transformation and economic renewal. While this might be the case, this is a book of promise in that it offers a glimpse into how the presence of the university has potential, on the one hand, to contribute to renewal and economic rejuvenation and on the other hand, offer hope and generate opportunities for critical engagement with communities given its ideological position and associated activities especially within secondary cities. Importantly, this book animates the critical role that partnerships play in realizing community engagement imperatives that have potential to be sustainable, with shared values at the heart of such partnerships.

Sol Plaatje University is in its second five-year strategic plan, which commenced in 2019, making this a timely publication. This phase focuses on, inter alia, deepening and expanding its academic offerings, becoming more financially sustainable, and sedimenting its footprint through forging more research and community-focused partnerships. It is a reflexive yet prospective project that makes a major contribution towards advancing the discourse on community engagement and offers exemplars that can shape approaches to partnership building for mutual beneficiation. A timely book in higher education and for SPU in particular!

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Prof Mary Jean Baxen
Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academics
Sol Plaatje University, South Africa

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ABBREVIATIONS

#FMF – #FeesMustFall

#RMF – #RhodesMustFall

ANC – African National Congress

ARUA – African Research Universities Alliance

ASGISA – Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa

AU – African Union

AUC – African Union Commission

CBD – Central Business District

CESA – Continental Education Strategy for Africa

CHE – Council on Higher Education

CID – City Improvement District

COSATU – Congress of South African Trade Unions

CSC – Community Service Centre

CUE – Community-University Engagement

DBSA – Development Bank of Southern Africa

DHET – Department of Higher Education and Training

DOE – Department of Education

DSAC – Department of Sport, Arts and Culture

DSAT – Department of Science and Technology

DSI – Department of Science and Innovation

EMS – Economic and Management Sciences

ES – Engaged Scholarship

FAK – Federation for Afrikaans Cultural Societies

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GEAR – Growth, Employment and Redistribution

HCID – Hatfield City Improvement District

HE – Higher Education

HEI – Higher Education Institution

HEIAAF – Higher Education Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom

HEQC – Higher Education Quality Committee

HEQF – Higher Education Qualifications Framework

HERANA – Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa

HESA – Higher Education South Africa

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

IKS – Indigenous Knowledge Systems

ITMUA – Implementing the Third Mission of Universities in Africa

JSE – Johannesburg Stock Exchange

KPIs – Key Performance Indicators

MDG – Millenium Development Goal

MOA – Memorandum of Agreement

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

NCHE – National Commission on Higher Education

NCWF – Northern Cape Writers Festival

NDP – National Development Plan

NEDLAC – National Economic Development and Labour Council

NGO – Non-government Organisation

NGP – New Growth Path

NPO – Non-profit Organisation

NRF – National Research Foundation

NSFAS – National Student Financial Aid Scheme

OAU – Organisation of African Unity

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

R&D – Research and Development

RBM – Retail Business Management

SACP – South African Communist Party

SAPs – Structural Adjustment Programmes

SBL – Service Based Learning

SDG – Sustainable Development Goal

SETAs – Sector Education and Training Authorities

SMMEs – Small to Medium-sized Enterprises

SoE – Scholarship of Engagement

SPU – Sol Plaatje University

SST – State and Social Transformation

SSW – Summer School of Writing

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

STI – Science, Technology and Innovation

TOC – Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in the South African Public Universities

TVET – Technical Vocational Education and Training

UCEPS – University-Community Engagement Partnerships

UCT – University of Cape Town

UIL – University-Industry Linkage

UK – United Kingdom

UMP – University of Mpumalanga

UN – United Nations

Univen – University of Venda

UP – University of Pretoria

USA – United States of America

WIL – Work Integrated Learning

Wits – University of the Witwatersrand

CHAPTER EIGHT

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Service-based learning as a form of community engagement in achieving student outcomes:
The experience of an East African university

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Strathmore University, Kenya

Introduction

The modern university is expected to be many conflicting things at the same time: conservative and radical; critical and supportive; competitive and collegial; autonomous and accountable; traditional and innovative; local and international (Watson, 2007). These expectations arise from different stakeholders within the community (with different needs) and from these expectations arise different forms of engagement. Community engagement, whether in the form of service-learning, public scholarship, or community-based research, is a wonderfully complex and situated practice that forces students to rethink their normal patterns of working. Community engagement has the goal of providing faculty, students, and education managers with an additional set of tools to achieve their ends (Butin, 2010). This chapter will explore some of the key concepts around community engagement, particularly service learning as one aspect of this. The background for understanding service-learning as part of a higher education landscape in Africa is also explored to contextualise the research. Using data gathered from 400 students who complete compulsory service-learning work as part of their undergraduate programme at Strathmore University in Kenya, it seeks to

answer the following questions: What is the effect of communities' issues in realising student service-based learning outcomes? What are the dominant community activities students engage in to realize student service-based learning outcomes? What are some of the service-based learning outcomes? Which students' skills are relevant in achieving service-based learning outcomes?

Few studies have presented the effect of service-learning on educational outcomes, including organizational arrangements that facilitate partnerships (Preece & Manicom, 2014). This study examines the effect community service-learning had on this cohort of 400 students who are about to complete their university studies. The outcomes will give insights into effectiveness of service-learning activities and aspects which universities may consider in improving student experiences.

Key concepts and contexts

Definitions of community engagement

Many researchers identify the need for community engagement in universities, and specifically research universities, yet lack a strong emphasis to promote it (Williams, Soria & Erickson, 2016). Jacob et al. (2015) define community engagement as sustainable networks, partnerships, and activities between Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and communities at local, national, state, regional and international levels. The engagement may be formal (structured) or informal. Carnegie (2015) defines community engagement as the collaboration between institutions of higher education and larger communities (local, regional, state, national, and global) for mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of reciprocity and partnership. Association of Commonwealth Universities defined engagement as both a core value, and as a thoughtful interaction, with the non-university world in four spheres: aims, purposes and priorities of the university; connecting teaching and learning to the wider world; continual dialogue between researchers; and practitioners; assuming wider responsibilities towards neighbours and citizens (Gibbons, 2001).

Community engagement enables HEIs to enrich scholarship, research, creative activity, and curricula. It helps to enhance teaching and learning, prepare educated citizens, strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility, and address societal issues that contribute to the common good (Carnegie, 2015). Community engagement can have a wide range of pedagogical and philosophical strategies. It has different perspectives such as service-learning, community-based research, and civic engagement (Butin, 2014). Some authors limit community engagement to political and social activism (Poterfield, 2016). Civic engagement entails working to make a difference in the civic life of communities (Burke, Smith & Hirschberg, 2012). Engaged partnerships with communities are exemplified through a schedule of on-going evaluations, an inventoried academic community project, and training provided

for students. Students play a key role in the community projects. The intensity of community engagement depends on the type of HEI, its mission, functions, and the priorities of its main stakeholders. The historicity of a university may determine the level of community engagement.

There are four narratives on community engagement – the technical, cultural, political, and antifoundational. The technical narrative focuses on instrumental effectiveness in teaching, learning and research. It provides an avenue for real-world linkages though the existential challenges may not match the content focus. The cultural perspective examines the meanings of practice for the institutions and individuals involved in the teaching, learning and research practices (accepting diversity and engaged citizenship). It is relevant in the understanding of self in the community. A political approach focuses on the promotion and empowerment of voices and practices of historically disempowered and non-dominant groups of societies. It exists in a social justice worldview. A political approach aims to question the ontological and epistemological foundations, and it may therefore disenfranchise some members. The anti-foundational narrative is a pre-requisite for thoughtful deliberation. It is a scholarship of engagement that questions natural norms, behaviours, and assumptions (Butin, 2010).

The historical background of community–university engagement in Africa

There are several community–university engagement projects in Africa, though some remain undocumented. Some examples include the National University of Rwanda, Centre for Conflict Management developing policies and potential strategies for peace in communities; the University of Western Cape, School of Public Health community-based field training that empowers communities to participate in debates around ethical issues; the Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique that has engagement programmes with farming communities (Walters & Openjuru, 2014). Community engagement initiatives do not operate in silos but emerge from unique historical, social forces and cross-cultural dynamics. Historical dynamics can be classified into pre-colonial, colonial, post-independence and post-structural adjustment programmes.

At the pre-colonial era, few regions had universities. The notable institutions were the famous University of Alexandria, the Al-Azhar University, the epitome of Islamic scholarship at the time, and Timbuktu, Mali. During the pre-colonial era, indigenous knowledge and transmission in traditional African societies was embedded into day-to-day activities. Indigenous knowledge was mainly oral, gained through observations and individuals participated in real-life experiences. Knowledge was integrative and holistic in nature. It emphasised intuition, emotional involvement, and subjectivity in perception (Esiobu-Ezeanya, 2019).

During the colonial era, the colonial powers had varied political-economic structures. In Kenya, education policy was elitist and segregationist. The British particularly encouraged newly created chiefs and headmen to educate their children to succeed their fathers in ruling posts. The colonial officials intended to have such literate children assist their uneducated fathers in the government business to make colonial administration more efficient. Their efforts to support government were rewarded with parcels of land through evictions of poor peasants in their neighbourhoods. This forced some peasants to work for chiefs and headmen. The Phelps-Stokes commission (1920–1924) made recommendations applicable in East Africa (Vischer, 1925). Its aim was to assess the nature and quality of Negros' education both in Africa and in the USA. The commission's report stressed character training, rural improvement, secondary education, and cooperation among Africans. The aim of education was to conserve whatever was sound in the African life and transmit the best that civilisation and Christianity had to offer. It condemned government technical schools for training Africans with employment in white-settler regions. It urged the need for basic agricultural training for the majority. Missionaries protected people who attended mission schools from forced labour.

Education policy practice after World War II focussed on the 'civilising mission' that provided legitimacy for colonial rule in Africa (Sifuna & Oanda, 2014). The Second World War situation led to the growth of local industries because goods could not be imported from Europe due to disruptions. This led to rural-urban migration. Urban areas presented better employment prospects. Many African countries experienced an increase of basic education institutions. In East Africa, Makerere College was the apex of university education for Africans. At independence, the Africans educated in universities like Makerere and abroad (mainly in the USA, France, and Russia) were instrumental in forging the Pan-Africanism agenda. In Kenya, it led to the restructuring of the education system. The reports which formed a foundation were the Beecher Report (provided framework for education planning in 1950s); Binns Report (focused on school governance); Castle Report (argued for an abolition of the A-Levels); the Ominde Report and Sessional Paper no. 10 (aligned education to national needs and removed school segregation and led to the formation of the University College, Nairobi – later renamed as the University of Nairobi); the Gachathi commission of 1975 (brought out the need of the curricula to provide entrepreneurial and practical skills); the Mackay Commission (created the 8-4-4 system of education) (Mackay, 1981).

 The restructuring efforts were affected by the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) which reduced funding for many public universities (Ngethe et al., 2003). Universities were pushed towards a mercantile finance model to survive and had to seek funding for themselves. This was mainly through tuition fees and increasing student numbers. Education became a product that could be bought and sold,

with the highest bidder having access to a better education. This marketisation and commodification of universities led to the emergence of entrepreneurial and corporate universities which meant the forms of engagement with communities became more mercantile in nature. Many universities have insisted on a need for universities to return to the original mission of serving community needs and being the foci for new directions of knowledge. This represents a shift from mode 1 forms, where universities focussed mainly on teaching and knowledge was for knowledge's sake, to mode 2- knowledge creation embedded in communities (Gibbons, 2006).

These examples demonstrate how needs emerge from the different histories and cultures, and how education objectives are grounded on different histories. During the colonial era it was towards the colonialism project, and at post-independence the focus changed towards a Pan-Africanism agenda. This drive towards the Pan-Africanism agenda is reflected in the comments of the first president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, who stressed education for self-reliance. He emphasised that a university must be in and of the community. It must not only be intramural but extramural. Reiterating Yesufu (1973:40): "The truly African university must be one that draws its inspiration from its environment: not a transplanted tree, but one growing from a seed that is planted and nurtured in the African soil". Nyerere insisted that a condition of university graduation was the completion of a placement in a rural village, whereby village leaders would contribute to the student's final assessment (Preece, 2017). Therefore, the education system in some countries was readjusted to the African traditional lifestyle while other countries continued the colonial western lifestyle.

During the 1962 conference in Tananarive and upon the establishment of the Association of African Universities, an appeal was made to Africanise the curriculum and management by serving national and developmental needs. More recently, the 'Implementing the Third Mission of Universities in Africa' (ITMUA) initiative, a Pan African Action Research study funded by the Association of African Union (2010 to 2011), and lead by Professor. Julia Preece of the National University of Lesotho explored how the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can lead to poverty reduction addressed through community and university engagement efforts (Walters & Openjuru, 2014). It was emphasised that students need to be engaged in community activities.

Service learning

Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs, together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes (Jacoby, 2015). As Mtawa (2019:9) states: "It is a pedagogical approach and a sub-set of the public mission of universities through which staff and students and external

communities establish sustainable partnerships and participate in activities that empower them, develop their capabilities and functioning". The learning outcomes can be intellectual, social, ethical, civic, spiritual, or moral in nature. The needs are defined by the community but there is mutuality in terms of engagement and sharing of resources. There exists some overlap between service-learning and community engagement. Community engagement relies on collaboration and partnership between different actors in activities, knowledge exchange and sharing of resources. Service-learning occurs in communities and arises because of reflections in engaged activities with community actors. Reciprocity exists in service-learning, therefore service-learning and community engagement have many common elements. This explains why some define service-learning as community engaged learning to show the inseparable connection between the two concepts (Jacoby, 2015).

Thomson et al. (2010) trace the emergence of service-learning to Kolb's, Lewin's, Dewey's, and Piaget's experiential learning models. The term itself emerged in the work of Sigmon and William Ramsey at the Southern Regional Education Board and Volunteers Service in America. Thomson et al. (2010) elaborate that other scholar date the service-learning movement to the work of the National Society for Experiential Education in 1978, and the International Partnership for Service Learning in 1982. In the 2000s service-learning was hinged on the establishment of campus service-learning centres and integration into curriculum. At the same time, civic engagement gained prominence to assist students to participate in democracy and make more democratic choices, and service learning was recognised as positively affecting lives of students. Service-learning has also evolved from voluntary service to embedding it as part of core curriculum (examples include USKOR at Stellenbosch University and SHAWCO at the University of Cape Town).

Service-learning can occur through volunteer activities, internships and field-based activities, also called academic service learning. In this book chapter, we focus on field-based activities. The aim of service-learning is to instil in students values of democratic participation, concern for the underprivileged and a sense of commonality of shared experiences across social divides.

Service-learning aspects

Universities have provided different aspects of service-learning based on their contextual needs. Bringle and Hatcher (1995) articulated service-learning within the United States in relation to how students were learning in communities, mutual benefits, and the explanation of learning experiences. And credits were given based on student programmes. Stellenbosch University identified service-learning aspects to be curriculum-based credit learning experiences, participation in contextualised, well-structured activities aimed at addressing community needs; reflection of service

experiences to gain a deeper understanding of the linkage between curriculum content and community dynamics; as well as to achieve personal growth and sense of social responsibility (Hlalele, Manicom & Preece, 2015). In situations where service-learning is civic engagement, it identifies the aspects as developing civic skills for democratic processes in addition to academic outcomes. The domains of education in such a case are responsible citizen, participatory citizen, and justice-oriented citizen. The reasons students are involved in civic activities can be altruistic humanitarian motives or provision of new learning experiences (Thomson et al., 2010). Service-learning can lead to increased student sensitivity, increased student knowledge, ability to get along with people of different backgrounds, increased tolerance and an increase in the ability to work with diverse groups.

Student engagement: the experience of Strathmore University

Student engagement in universities, which is an aspect of student success, retention and progression depends on staff capacity, institutional management, coordination, and student capacity building. Student retention is linked to building a sense of belonging, which implies that students choose to remain and complete education when they feel accepted, included, and valued. These affective aspects are depicted in various activities from active learning, prompt feedback, social networking among students, embedding graduate employability into a university's structure, cooperation among students, respect for diverse learning styles, communicating high expectations, prompt feedback, and frequent staff-student contacts (Liz et al., 2017). Student engagement occurs at the intersection of active learning and motivation and is depicted through expectancy (students know they can succeed) and value (valuing the task itself which is an intrinsic form of motivation). One way in which universities have engaged students is through service learning as an organised way to participate in activities that meet specific community needs (Butin, 2010).

Several studies have covered the issue of student engagement. Plaut and Campbell (2008) explain that community engagement activities can improve academic preparation and aspirations as well as foster inclusivity and diversity. Others, like Astin et al. (2006), Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006), and Prentice and Robinson (2010) linked community engagement with greater learning and increased graduation rates (Lockeman & Pelco, 2013). Students who participate in civic engagement learn more academic content (Gallini & Barbara, 2003), develop higher-order skills (Cress et al., 2010) and emotional intelligence (Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008). Other studies have brought out the fundamental need of student engagement in enhancing participation among minorities (Kinzie et al., 2008; Larrimore & McClellan, 2005). It assists students to develop capacities of understanding their role in complex

social and political systems (Cress, 2012). Ndege and Kimengi (2010) state that student engagement practices provide an important and cost-effective alternative for improving access and efficiency outcomes of higher education. Student engagement can lead to improved institutional commitment to curricula, retention, and enhanced relations with community actors. Faculty can be enabled to develop research that resolves community issues and discover new avenues for research and providing networking opportunities.

Student engagement refers to the level at which students participate in activities that represent effective educational practices both in and out of classroom. Institutions should spend time to understand how to engage and activate students (Tight, 2019). Engagement has two important elements: the amount of time and effort students put into their studies; and other activities that lead to student success. However, despite these evident benefits, multiple challenges to universities in Kenya hinder the inclusion of student engagement through field-based structures embedded into degree programmes (service-learning), and these are rare within the Kenyan context. One institution that does incorporate these practices is Strathmore University, a young university situated in Nairobi, Kenya. It was awarded a university charter in 2008. Before 2008, it operated as a middle-level college. It was started in 1961 as the first multi-racial college, and now has an enrolment of approximately 6,300 students. Its mission is to provide an all-round education in an atmosphere of freedom and responsibility, excellence in teaching, research, and scholarship. The main internal stakeholders involved in community engagement efforts are management, administrators, faculties, schools, students, faculty and support staff. The external stakeholders involved in community engagement are alumni, other educational institutions at different levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary), private partners (companies and entrepreneurs), public partners (government and civil society groups) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The structure of many community engagement initiatives is technical in nature, since the community engagement efforts are focused on instrumental effectiveness in teaching, learning and research. Under the technical narrative, there are five forms of community engagement: economic, legal, cultural, technological, and social. Within Strathmore University, the economic form is focused on improving the standards of living of communities within and outside the university. The main emphasis of the legal form is to focus on transparency, ethical governance, public administration and enforcement of law and order. The cultural form is on preservation of positive/ formative local cultures, civic responsibility and cross-cultural (glocal) activities. These were assisting the disabled in society, work-camps, prisoners' rehabilitation exercises, and environmental and natural disaster management activities. Health activities are through construction of health clinics, provision of medical care together with students studying medical sciences, and blood donation exercises.

The technological forms of engagement are innovation and diffusion activities through information technology hubs and business incubators. The social forms of engagement are varied and include visiting prisons and supporting prisoners to join professional certificate programmes offered by the university, visits to homes of the elderly and sick, mentoring and peer counselling of undergraduate and high school students (SPU, 2019).

This chapter focuses on service-learning experiences of approximately 400 under-graduate students which represents 80,000 student hours of community service. Service-learning is embedded as part of the undergraduate learning experience. Each student is expected to engage in community service after completing their first year of undergraduate studies and engage in critical reflection through daily logs. Service learning is coordinated through the Community Service Centre (CSC), which also operates a student and staff community service club. It has projects that offer and facilitate volunteer opportunities for students and members of staff. The CSC has partnerships with various communities, health facilities, governmental (for example prisons department, and the public prosecutor's office), NGOs, and education institutions (primary, secondary schools and technical institutions).

The purpose of the service-learning is to instil in learners a sense of service in society, to fulfil the goal of the university to produce socially responsible citizens (Leushcer-Mamashela, 2015) and provide students an opportunity for reflection designed to achieve improvements in society. The expected learning outcomes are to recognise and explain the need for service in society; develop a sense of concern for others; demonstrate a sense of responsibility in the work environment; and apply knowledge and skills to address societal problems.

Methodology

This study does not focus on students' reports which are mainly qualitative in nature but on a survey of 400 student respondents who had completed their service-based learning (SBL). The 400 student responses represent approximately 50% of the graduating student population. The survey evaluated how much service learning has made students aware of societal concerns, participation in resolving activities and consequent learning outcomes. There were six sections in the survey. Sections examined: their interests in service learning; evaluated their awareness of societal challenges (community issues) (Jacoby, 2015); the types of community service-learning activities students were engaged in (Butin, 2010); the outcomes of service learning; the kinds of skills they considered relevant in providing solutions to prob-lems (Farber, 2011); and any other pertinent information on service learning. The survey was administered during the months of July 2020 to October 2020 and was filled-in by students expected to graduate in 2021. The focus on 4th year

students was deemed important since they had passed through the service-learning experiences and adequate time had passed for them to reflect on the impact of service-learning experiences on their student life through campus. A pilot survey was done in June to ascertain issues of validity and reliability. The CSC provided information on whether constructs in the survey were valid and were representative of what they had to measure. The constructs used were based on aspects provided by Butin (2010), Farber (2011) and Jacoby (2015). Internal consistency was assured by asking similar questions, and the answers provided were consistent.

Findings from the study

What follows is an overview of the key findings from the study.
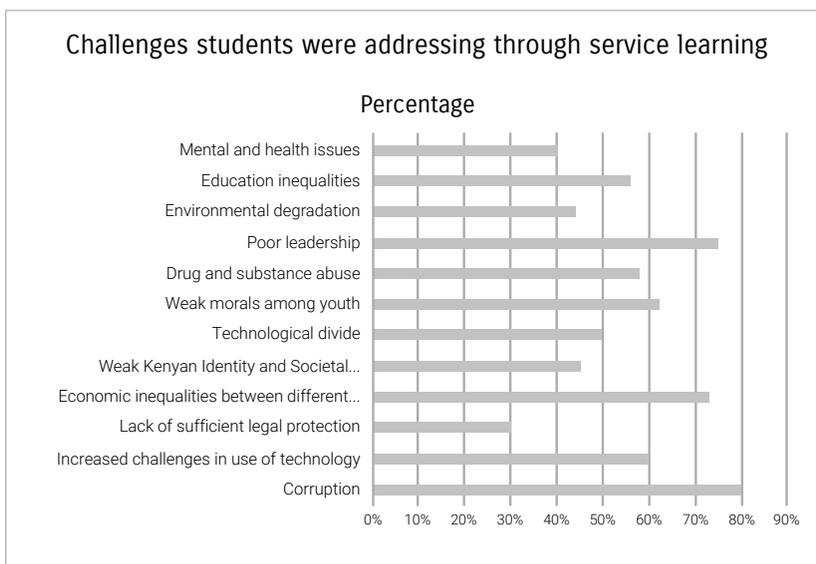
Figure 8.1   Challenges students were addressing
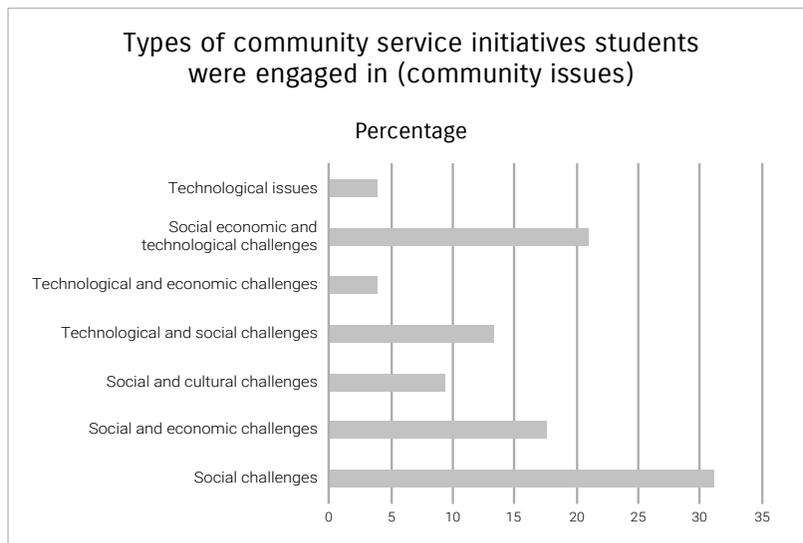
Figure 8.2   Types of community service initiatives students were engaged in

There were several challenging social and community issues students thought needed to be addressed through service learning. Students had the desire to address corruption (80%), the increased challenges in the use of technology (60%), lack of sufficient legal protection (30%), economic inequalities between different groups and regions (73%), weak Kenyan identity and societal consciousness (45%), technological divide (50%), weak morals especially among the youth (62%), drug and substance abuse including alcoholism (58%), poor leadership (75%), environmental degradation (44%), education inequalities (lack of education facilities) (56%), and mental health issues (40%).

Many students addressed social challenges (31.2%), both social and economic challenges (17.5%), social and cultural challenges (9.4%), technological and social challenges (13.3%), technological and economic challenges (3.8%), social, economic and technological issues (20.9%) and technological issues only (3.8%). The rest addressed technological and economic challenges. Examples of social issues addressed were: construction of school infrastructure; mentoring and counselling students experiencing different social challenges; working in orphanages, homes of the sick, elderly, and disabled; and blood donation exercises. The economic activities were assisting small businesses in book-keeping; assisting in creating business documents; and involvement in drought-relief activities. Cultural challenges were addressed through counselling and health clinics (SPU, 2016).

Outcomes of service learning

There were seven different types of outcomes of service learning. These outcomes were classified into education outcomes, cultural outcomes, environmental outcomes, work-place outcomes, intellectual outcomes, leadership outcomes, psychological outcomes, civic outcomes, and technological outcomes. The highest type of education outcome was an increase in academic performance in the students they were helping and that was linked to improved motivation to pursue other qualifications (29.2%). The cultural outcomes were a reduction in judgmental attitudes towards other students, awareness of societal challenges, and developing an ability to empathise with individuals in societies experiencing challenges. The highest cultural outcomes were an increased sense of giving (30.2%). The environmental outcomes included awareness of environmental issues communities were experiencing and understanding the complex issues communities face in managing environments. The highest environmental outcome was their perceived role in being change agents in conserving their own environments (21.8%). In terms of work, the highest outcome was developing a greater sense of the meaning of work (32.5%), followed by developing professional interests and a need to work hard. Students were more aware of critical challenges facing their communities, the source of these challenges, and their role in creating effective solutions which was the highest of the intellectual outcomes (50.6%). Leadership outcomes elicited from students the responses of taking charge of solutions, the need for working together to resolve challenges and the most important was knowledge transfer for effective leadership (52.2%). In relation to psychological outcomes, students felt more fulfilled and more aware of mental issues affecting communities. A sense of fulfilment had the highest psychological score (24.4%). Civic outcomes generated were creation of a sense of belonging within their respective societies (the highest at 39.3%) and their role in resolving civic issues. The highest technological outcome was equipping others with information communication technology (ICT) skills (24.7%) and developing other ICT solutions.

Kinds of skills considered relevant in providing solutions to problems

The skills that students found necessary for service learning were communication skills (20%), problem solving skills (15%), critical thinking skills (15%), technological skills (8%), interpersonal skills (3%), teamwork (2%) and other skills. This implies that service-learning can contribute to the development and promotion of critical 21st century skills.

Other information they considered important that was not captured on the survey included the importance of good communication skills, being open to experiences, and to show love and care. SBL also helped students to appreciate their personal gifts. For others it has also assisted in improving personal aspects like time management, empathy, as well as developing an awareness of societal issues.

Significant outcomes

The following outcomes had a significant relation when a chi-square test was done: a relation between SBL activities focussed on education and better outcomes; a link between SBL activities focussed on technological instruction with better outcomes (0.000); and an association of SBL activities focussed on economic challenges and better outcomes (0.000). There was a relationship between environmental outcomes and economic challenges which meant that the more students were involved in economic issues affecting communities the more they were aware of the environment (0.000). There was also a similar relation between health challenges and environmental outcomes as above (0.000), and between technology and environmental outcomes (0.000). Community engagement in education was related to intellectual outcomes (0.002). Students engaged in cultural SBL activities reported improved psychological awareness (0.000). There was also a correlation between improved intellectual outcomes and health and technological SBL activities (0.000). Lastly, students who were involved in activities which addressed economic inequities (0.000) and technological issues (0.000) reported gaining better leadership qualities (0.000).

Discussion

Some students were able to improve as leaders intellectually. They became more aware of what others were experiencing and helped them to think through issues more deeply which helped many students acquire vital 21st century skills like critical thinking, creative ability, collaborative working, and leadership skills. Students felt more fulfilled as people, which meant they were happy to be able to solve the issues they encountered and therefore felt more effective overall in carrying out their tasks. Involvement with communities can provide avenues for students to be self-aware of their personal talents and make it possible to make appropriate career choices.

The findings also show that it is important for students to engage with varied organisations in order for them to acquire, as well as to apply various skills in a variety of contexts. Students need to be given a list of possible places where SBL can be done since this makes it easier to engage with communities. If students have had prior contact with an organisation, engaging with it later makes it easier, based on previous institutional interactions. In addition, the same organisations can host many students

in a day if students perform service-learning based strictly on specific hours/sessions during the day. It is important to prepare students for SBL and continuously provide supervisees and students with up-to-date and clear information. If higher institutions of learning want to improve the performance of students as better workers, there is a need to involve them in service-learning which makes students aware of inequities. From this study, it was noted that students became more aware of their critical role as change agents in society. Increased engagement in cultural, legal, and economic SBL activities may therefore lead to better civic engagement. Finally, SBL assists students to be self-aware, grow in all forms and effectively work with others.

Conclusion

Service-based learning can lead to improved student outcomes, and integration of SBL into the core university curricula provides many opportunities for students, institutions, and communities for various forms of development and growth. At the level of the student, an individual can develop cognitively, psycho-socially, and emotionally. In terms of cognitive growth, it leads to student retention, success, and improved attitudes towards learning, and students who participated in service-learning reported improved learning outcomes (Prentice & Robinson, 2010), development of higher-order skills (Cress et al., 2010) and emotional intelligence. Psycho-socially, students feel like an important part of the society because of the first-hand exposure they get to the world and the fact that a small part of the world relies on their skills and competencies to solve everyday problems. Students are made more aware of societal needs and challenges and realise that their contribution is critical in resolving some challenges facing communities (Kitawi, 2019). At the emotional level, the student develops a stronger sense of connection (Kuh et al., 2005), mutuality, and sense of community (Stayhorn, 2012). Studies have found that emotional connection is tied to academic achievement and consequently, improved student outcomes (Creasey, Jarvis & Gadke, 2009). Individual engagement in this case had emotional investment, social investment, and cognitive investment (Carini, 2012; McMillan & Chavis, 1986), and students become more conscientious and responsible citizens (Leushcer-Mamashela, 2015). At an institutional level, service-learning enables universities to create connections with communities and community actors which can promote the university's profile and help achieve the third mission of universities. It provides faculty with more information on issues facing communities and can further enrich learning experiences by bringing the real-world issues facing societies into the classroom. Communities also benefit since reciprocity is created and some community challenges are resolved (Mtawa, 2019). Service-learning contributes to creation of sustainable and connected communities. Service-learning is a way for universities to contribute to local, regional, and national needs.

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APPENDIX 1

Agenda 2063:
The Seven Aspirations

Aspiration 1

A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development

We are determined to eradicate poverty in one generation and build shared prosperity through social and economic transformation of the continent.

Goals

1. A high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all: ending poverty, inequalities of income and opportunity; job creation, especially addressing youth unemployment; facing up to the challenges of rapid population growth and urbanization, improvement of habitats and access to basic necessities of life – water, sanitation, electricity; providing social security and protection;

2. Well educated citizens and skills revolutions underpinned by science, technology and innovation: developing Africa's human and social capital (through an education and skills revolution emphasizing science and technology);

3. Healthy and well-nourished citizens: expanding access to quality health care services, particularly for women and girls;

4. Transformed economies and jobs: transforming Africa's economies through beneficiation from Africa's natural resources, manufacturing, industrialization and value addition, as well as raising productivity and competitiveness;

5. Modern agriculture for increased proactivity and production: radically transforming African agriculture to enable the continent to feed itself and be a major player as a net food exporter;

6. Blue/Ocean Economy for accelerated economic growth: exploiting the vast potential of Africa's blue/ocean economy;

7. Environmentally sustainable climate and resilient economies and communities: putting in place measures to sustainably manage the continent's rich biodiversity, forests, land and waters and using mainly adaptive measures to address climate change risks.

Aspiration 2

An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance

Since 1963, the quest for African Unity has been inspired by the spirit of Pan-Africanism, focusing on liberation, and political and economic independence. It is motivated by development based on self-reliance and self-determination of African people, with democratic and people-centred governance.

Goals

1. United Africa (Federal/Confederate): accelerating progress towards continental unity and integration for sustained growth, trade, exchanges of goods, services, free movement of people and capital through establishing a United Africa and fast-tracking economic integration through the CFTA.

2. World-class infrastructure criss-crosses Africa: improving connectivity through newer and bolder initiatives to link the continent by rail, road, sea and air; and developing regional and continental power pools, as well as ICT.

3. Decolonisation: All remnants of colonialism will have ended and all African territories under occupation fully liberated. We shall take measures to expeditiously end the unlawful occupation of the Chagos Archipelago, the Comorian Island of Mayotte and affirming the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Aspiration 3

An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

Africa shall have a universal culture of good governance, democratic values, gender equality, and respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

Goals

1. Democratic values, practices, universal principles for human rights, justice and rule of law entrenched: consolidating democratic gains and improving the quality of governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law;

2. Capable institutions and transformed leadership in place at all levels: building strong institutions for a development state; and facilitating the emergence of development-oriented and visionary leadership in all spheres and at all levels.

Aspiration 4

A peaceful and secure Africa.

Mechanisms for peaceful prevention and resolution of conflicts will be functional at all levels. As a first step, dialogue-centred conflict prevention and resolution will be actively promoted in such a way that by 2020 all guns will be silent. A culture of peace and tolerance shall be nurtured in Africa's children and youth through peace education.

Goals

1. Peace security and stability is preserved: strengthening governance, accountability and transparency as a foundation for a peaceful Africa;

2. A stable and peaceful Africa: strengthening mechanisms for securing peace and reconciliation at all levels, as well as addressing emerging threats to Africa's peace and security;

3. A fully functional and operational APSA: putting in place strategies for the continent to finance her security needs.

Aspiration 5

An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics.

Pan-Africanism and the common history, destiny, identity, heritage, respect for religious diversity and consciousness of African peoples and her diaspora's will be entrenched.

Goal

1. Africa cultural renaissance is pre-eminent: inculcating the spirit of Pan Africanism; tapping Africa's rich heritage and culture to ensure that the creative arts are major contributors to Africa's growth and transformation; and restoring and preserving Africa's cultural heritage, including its languages.

Aspiration 6

An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.

All the citizens of Africa will be actively involved in decision making in all aspects. Africa shall be an inclusive continent where no child, woman or man will be left behind or excluded, on the basis of gender, political affiliation, religion, ethnic affiliation, locality, age or other factors.

Goals

1. Full gender equality in all spheres of life: strengthening the role of Africa's women through ensuring gender equality and parity in all spheres of life (political, economic and social); eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls;

2. Engaged and empowered youth and children: creating opportunities for Africa's youth for self-realization, access to health, education and jobs; ensuring safety and security for Africa's children, and providing for early childhood development.

Aspiration 7

Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner

Africa shall be a strong, united, resilient, peaceful and influential global player and partner with a significant role in world affairs. We affirm the importance of African unity and solidarity in the face of continued external interference including, attempts to divide the continent and undue pressures and sanctions on some countries.

Goals

1. Africa as a major partner in global affairs and peaceful co-existence: improving Africa's place in the global governance system (UN Security Council, financial institutions, global commons such as outer space);

2. Africa takes full responsibility for financing her development;

3. Improving Africa's partnerships and refocusing them more strategically to respond to African priorities for growth and transformation; and ensuring that the continent has the right strategies to finance its own development and reducing aid dependency. (African Union, 2021).

Details see: AUC (2015).

INDEX

Symbols

A