

Chapter 6

Towards Advancing Human–Centered Intellectual Scholarship Through University– Community Partnership

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the potential benefits and opportunities for institutions of higher learning (HEIs) to advance human-centered intellectual scholarship through institutionalizing university-community partnerships. The chapter argues that the success of these partnerships are not only depended on respect and mutual understanding but also on collective envisioning by all partners in forging both the strategic and plan of action. Paying lip-service to community-civil engagement or service-learning-deprived students, universities' and respective learning communities generate transformative knowledge and use knowledge as a strategy to deal with their problems. The chapter uses service learning or community engagement-related programs and projects from different universities as case studies in South Africa. Informed opinions from experts from academic institutions and students will be engaged to extract primary data.

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INTRODUCTION

Community-university partnerships have emerged as vital arrangements for teaching, research and practice (Butterfield & Soska, 2004). These partnerships emanate from increasing pressure for HEIs to assist in addressing challenges faced by communities through linkages. Institutions of higher learning have ceased to operate as ivory towers detached from reality. Through university-community partnerships, universities assume new public purposes with direct links to societal improvement and its transformation (Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004). Within institutions of higher learning, partnerships take different forms, names and shapes. Depending on the institutions, the environment and the challenges at hand, phrases such as civic engagement, service learning, community engagement, HEIs social responsibility are fundamental. Apart from teaching and learning, and research, community engagement or service learning forms one of the core business of the university. Service learning is defined as a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development (Jacoby, 1996; 5). Thus, service learning by its design involves partners within and across the institutions such as schools, government departments, CBOs and NGOs, private service providers and community members. Community-university-partnerships describe relationships that exist between universities and communities and such partnerships involve collaborative processes that enable engaged stakeholders to combine their knowledge, skills and resources for them to accomplish more together than they can individually (Jacoby, 2003).

This chapter argues that the successes of these partnerships are not only dependent on respect and mutual understanding, but also on collective envisioning by all partners in forging both the strategic and plan of action. Paying lip-service to community-civil engagement or service learning deprived students, universities and respective communities from learning from each other, generate transformative knowledge and use knowledge as strategy to deal with their problems. The chapter uses service learning or community engagement related programmes and projects from different universities in South Africa as case studies. Informed opinions from experts from academic institutions and students were engaged to extract primary data.

COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

Community-university partnership interface the grounding concepts of community, university and the notion of partnership itself. The partnership arrangement consists of community and university as essential and integral concepts that warrant both

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