# Education, Citizenship and Social Justice

**Embedding community engagement in South African higher education**

Josef Lazarus, Mabel Erasmus, Denver Hendricks, Joyce Nduna and Jerome Slamat

The online version of this article can be found at:

Published by:

**$SAGE**

Additional services and information for *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* can be found at:

**Email Alerts:** http://esj.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

**Subscriptions:** http://esj.sagepub.com/subscriptions

**Reprints:** http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

**Permissions:** http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

**Citations:** http://esj.sagepub.com/content/3/1/57.refs.html

# Embedding community engagement in South African higher education

## Josef Lazarus
*Community Higher Education Service Partnerships*

## Mabel Erasmus
*University of the Free State, South Africa*

## Denver Hendricks
*University of Port Elizabeth, South Africa*

## Joyce Nduna
*Cape Peninsula University of Tech, South Africa*

## Jerome Slamat
*University of Stellenbosch, South Africa*

A B S T R A C T

Community engagement was a relatively unknown concept in South African higher education until the late 1990s. In response to the call of the White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education (1997) for 'feasibility studies and pilot programmes which explore the potential of community service in higher education' the Joint Education Trust launched the Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships (CHESP) initiative in 1999. The purpose of this initiative was to assist South African Higher Education Institutions to conceptualization and implementation community engagement as a core function of the academy. This article tracks the development of community engagement in South African higher education through the CHESP initiative and identifies some of the processes and outcomes at a programmatic, institutional and national level. The article includes four South African universities as case studies to illustrate the processes and outcomes of embedding community engagement in South African higher education.

## introduction

The White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education (Department of Education, 1997) laid the foundations for making community engagement an integral part of South African higher education. It calls on higher education institutions to 'demonstrate social responsibility … and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes'. It states that one of the goals of higher education is 'to promote and develop social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes'. It showed receptiveness to 'the growing interest in community service programmes for students' and gives in-principle support to 'feasibility studies and pilot programmes which explore the potential of community service in higher education'.

During 1997 and 1998 the Ford Foundation made a grant to the Joint Education Trust to conduct a survey of community service in South African higher education (Perold, 1998; Perold et al., 1997). Key findings of the survey were that: (1) most higher education institutions in South Africa included community service in their mission statement; (2) few higher education institutions had an explicit policy or strategy to operationalize this component of their mission statement; (3) most higher education institutions had a wide range of community service projects; and (4) generally these projects were initiated by innovative academic staff and students and not as a deliberate institutional strategy and certainly not as a core function of the academy. Building on the results of this survey the Ford Foundation made a further grant to the Joint Education Trust in 1998 to establish this Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships (CHESP) initiative.

## objectives of the CHESP initiative

Taking its cue from the White Paper, which calls for 'feasibility studies and pilot programmes that explore the potential of community service in higher education', CHESP has been a pilot initiative designed to provide direction and support for embedding community engagement in South African higher education. The specific operational objectives of CHESP are:

- To support the development of pilot programmes that give expression to the community engagement mandate of the Education White Paper.

58

- To monitor, evaluate and research these programmes.
- To use the data generated through this research to inform higher education policy and practice at a national, institutional and programmatic level.

## operational strategy

In order to achieve the above objectives CHESP launched five complementary operational programmes simultaniously. These programmes are:

- *Grant-making:* Supporting the development of specific higher education institution outcomes that would contribute towards the integration, institutionalization and sustainability of community engagement as a core academic function.
- *Capacity Building:* Building the capacity of higher education policy makers, administrators, academic staff, academic planners and quality managers to conceptualize and implement community engagement as a core function of the academy.
- *Monitoring, evaluation and research programme:* All pilot initiatives were monitored, evaluated and researched so as to generate a body of knowledge on community engagement in South African higher education.
- *Advocacy:* Data generated through the monitoring, evaluation and research programme was used to inform higher education policy and practice at a national, institutional and programmatic level.
- *Resource and information service:* All of the above programmes were supported through an extensive resource and information service.

## strategic positioning

From the outset CHESP worked in close collaboration with national higher education stakeholders including the national Department of Education, the Higher Education Quality Committee of the South African Council on Higher Education and the South African Qualifications Authority. The intention of this collaboration was to ensure that the pilot initiatives supported by CHESP were strategically positioned to inform national policies regarding community engagement with the expectation that community engagement activities would proliferate once such policies were put in place. Once the required policies were in place the role of CHESP would change from a pilot research and development initiative to one of building capacity within higher education institutions to implement these policies. This would be achieved through the showcasing of exemplar pilot initiatives and the use of human and material resources developed through the pilot initiatives. Figure 1 provides a diagram of the 'strategic positioning' of the CHESP project.

59

**figure 1** strategic positioning of the CHESP project
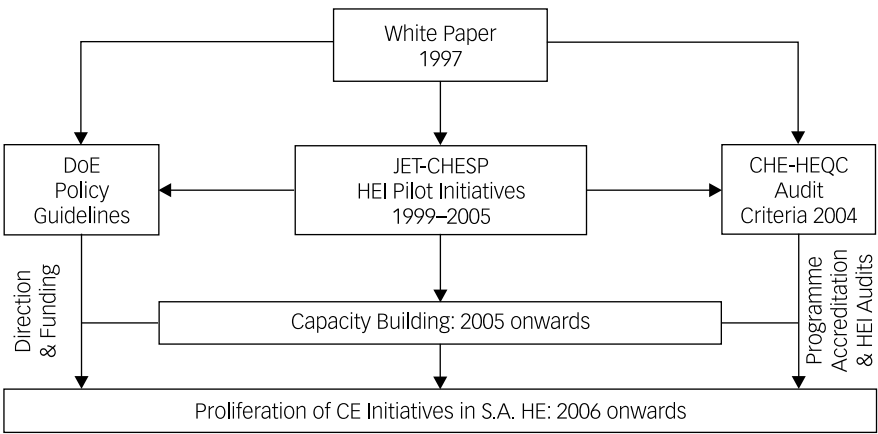


## about community engagement

Since the release of the White Paper (1997), the debate on community engage-ment in South African higher education has sharpened its focus, defining community engagement not as one of the three silos of higher education along with teaching and research, but as an integral part of teaching and research – as a mechanism to infuse and enrich teaching and research with a deeper sense of context, locality and application. Along with this change in perception, the terminology used for community engagement has shifted from 'community service' (Department of Education, 1997) to 'knowledge based community service' (Higher Education Quality Committee, 2001), to 'community engagement' (Higher Education Quality Committee, 2004) and to a 'scholarship of engagement' (HEQC/CHESP, 2006).

## the scholarship of engagement

In his renowned book, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Ernest Boyer (1990) proposes four necessary and interrelated forms of scholarship that, together, amount to what is increasingly referred to as a 'scholarship of engagement' (Boyer, 1996). The first and most familiar element in Boyer's model is termed 'scholarship of discovery'. It closely resembles the notion of research and contributes to the total stock of human knowledge. The second element is referred to as 'scholar-ship of integration' and underscores the need for scholars to give meaning to their discovery by putting it in perspective and interpreting it in relation to other discoveries and forms of knowledge. This means making connections across disciplines and interpreting data in a larger intellectual and social

60

context. The third element is labelled 'scholarship of application'. It makes us aware of the fact that knowledge is not produced in a linear fashion. The arrow of causality can, and frequently does, point in both directions; that is, theory leads to practice and practice leads to theory. Community engagement, viewed and practised as a scholarly activity, provides the context for a dialogue between theory and practice through reflection. The final element in Boyer's model is referred to as 'scholarship of teaching'. Within the framework of a scholarship of engagement, the traditional roles of teacher and learner become somewhat blurred. What emerges is a learning community including community members, students, academic staff and service providers.

## typology of community engagement in higher education

Community engagement can take on many different forms and shapes within the context of higher education, as is illustrated in Figure 2. These forms include distance education, community-based research, participatory action research, professional community service and service-learning. In its fullest sense, community engagement is the combination and integration of service with teaching and research related and applied to identified community development priorities.

Ideally, the circles indicating teaching and research should overlap. In this way an overlapping nexus between teaching/learning, service and research will be formed; this nexus will then be indicative of the field where there is full integration of the three core functions of higher education.

**figure 2**  types of community engagement
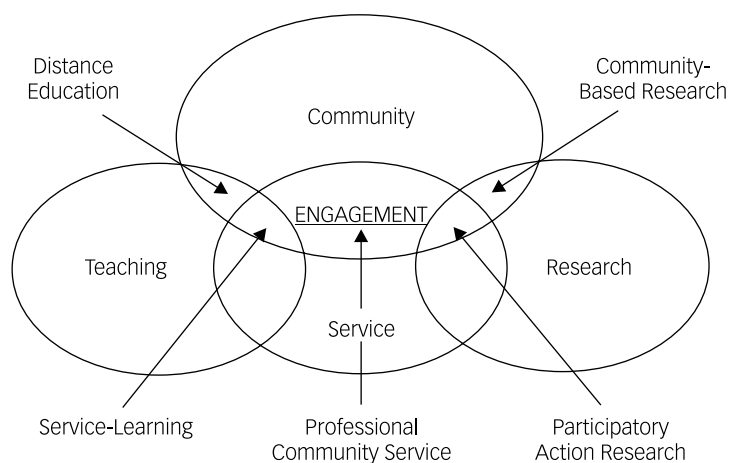


Source: Adapted from Bringle (1999)

## service-learning: an entry point for community engagement

Given the diverse nature of community engagement in higher education, choosing a strategic focus and entry point for embedding community engagement is South African higher education was critical. Given the central role of teaching and learning in all South African higher education institutions, it was decided to focus, initially, on service learning as the entry point for community engagement. The *Good Practice Guide and Self Evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service-Learning* (Higher Education Quality Committee, 2006a) provides an extensive description of service learning. There are numerous definitions of service learning in the literature. One of the most commonly cited (Bringle et al., 2004: 127) defines the activity of service learning as:

> a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students:
>
> - Participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community goals.
> - Reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

Service learning has its roots in experiential education. To ensure that service promotes substantive learning, service-learning connects students' experience to reflection and analysis in the curriculum (Duley, 1981). Service-learning points to the importance of contact with complex, contemporary social problems and efforts to solve them as an important element of a complete education. It invokes the theories of Bandura (1977), Coleman (1977), Dewey, (1963), Freire (1970, 1973), Kolb (1984), Argyris and Schön (1978), Resnick (1987), Schön (1983, 1987) and others to explain its pedagogical foundations and practice. As Dewey states, this process at least results in a 'reconstruction' of experience (as in the formulation of the Newtonian laws of motion or in Einstein's reformulation), a recodifying of habits (as in overcoming racial bias), and an ongoing questioning of old ideas (a habit of learning experientially). Thus experiential learning so pursued transforms students, helps them revise and enlarge knowledge, and alters their practice. It affects the aesthetic and ethical commitments of individuals and alters their perceptions and their interpretations of the world (Keeton, 1983). With this pedagogy, community engagement and academic excellence are 'not competitive demands to be balanced through discipline and personal sacrifice [by students], but rather … interdependent dimensions of good intellectual work' (Wagner, 1986: 17). The pedagogical challenge is 'devising ways to connect study and service so that the disciplines illuminate and inform experience and experience lends meaning and energy to the disciplines' (Eskow, 1979: 21).

Using service learning as an entry point for community engagement, CHESP supported the conceptualization, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and

62

research of 256 accredited academic courses which include Service Learning (Table 1) in 39 different academic disciplines (Table 2) in 12 higher education institutions including a total of almost 10,000 students ranging from 1st year to Masters level (Table 3). These courses served as a basis for generating data that

**table 1**  service-learning courses supported by CHESP per university per year

| HEI | Year | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | |
| Cape Peninsula Univ. of Technology | | | | 7 | | | 12 | 19 |
| Central University of Technology | | | | 7 | 7 | 5 | | 19 |
| Mangosuthu Technikon | | | | | | | 4 | 4 |
| Stellenbosch University | | | | | 9 | 5 | | 14 |
| University of Cape Town | | | | 6 | 6 | | | 12 |
| University of Johannesburg | | | | 5 | | | | 5 |
| University of KwaZulu Natal | 17 | 21 | 2 | 1 | | | 6 | 47 |
| University of Pretoria | | | | | 8 | | | 8 |
| University of the Free State | 12 | 18 | 4 | 8 | | 7 | | 49 |
| University of the Western Cape | 2 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 5 | | | 29 |
| University of the Witwatersrand | 5 | 15 | 6 | 2 | | | | 28 |
| Walter Sisulu University | 4 | 7 | 6 | 5 | | | | 22 |
| Total | 40 | 67 | 27 | 48 | 35 | 17 | 22 | 256 |

**table 2**  service-learning courses supported by CHESP per university and faculty

| University | Faculty | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agriculture | Architecture | Management Sci | Education | Engineering | Health Sciences | Human Sciences | Law | Natural Sciences | |
| Cape Peninsula Univ. of Technology | | | 8 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | | 2 | 19 |
| Central University of Technology | | | 7 | | 5 | 5 | 2 | | | 19 |
| Mangosuthu University of Technology | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 1 | 4 |
| Stellenbosch University | | | | 4 | | 4 | 5 | 1 | | 14 |
| University of Cape Town | 4 | | | | | 4 | 4 | | | 12 |
| University of Johannesburg | | | | 5 | | | | | | 5 |
| University of KwaZulu Natal | | | 6 | 8 | | 3 | 27 | 3 | | 47 |
| University of Pretoria | | | 1 | 2 | | 3 | 2 | | | 8 |
| University of the Free State | 9 | 1 | 8 | 1 | | 19 | 10 | 1 | | 49 |
| University of the Western Cape | | | | 9 | | 12 | 5 | | 3 | 29 |
| University of the Witwatersrand | | 9 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | | 28 |
| Walter Sisulu University | | | 3 | 4 | | 2 | 6 | 7 | | 22 |
| TOTAL | 14 | 10 | 37 | 39 | 11 | 60 | 67 | 14 | 6 | 256 |

63

**table 3** service-learning courses supported by JET per university and student level

| University | Student level | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1st year | 2nd year | 3rd year | 4th year | Masters | Total |
| Cape Peninsula Univ. of Technology | 524 | 620 | 150 | 61 |  | 1355 |
| Central University of Technology | 25 | 83 | 199 | 10 |  | 317 |
| Mangosuthu University of Technology |  | 80 | 220 |  |  | 300 |
| Stellenbosch University |  | 36 | 130 | 107 |  | 273 |
| University of Cape Town |  |  | 120 | 259 | 101 | 480 |
| University of Johannesburg |  |  |  | 542 |  | 542 |
| University of KwaZulu Natal | 226 | 262 | 597 | 246 | 32 | 1363 |
| University of Pretoria |  | 30 |  | 146 | 30 | 206 |
| University of the Free State | 864 | 522 | 576 | 549 | 232 | 2743 |
| University of the Western Cape |  |  | 51 | 567 | 18 | 636 |
| University of the Witwatersrand | 76 | 187 | 204 | 93 | 40 | 600 |
| Walter Sisulu University | 241 | 144 | 322 | 151 |  | 858 |
| Total | 1956 | 1964 | 2569 | 2731 | 453 | 9673 |

would inform higher education policy and practice at a national, institutional and programmatic level in terms of community engagement. The outcomes of this initiative are described in the following section.

## higher education institution outcomes

Grants to support the development of selected pilot initiatives has been a significant part of the CHESP Project. Grants were linked to specific outcomes such as: (1) conducting institution-wide audits of community engagement; (2) the development and adoption of institution-wide policies and strategies for community engagement; (3) the development of enabling mechanisms for the institutionalization of community engagement; (4) building institutional capacity for community engagement; (5) the development of accredited academic modules that include community engagement (i.e. service learning); and (6) generating data on community engagement through monitoring, evaluation and research. Each of the above outcomes are discussed below in general terms and with specific reference to a number of universities that have participated in the CHESP project.

## institution-wide audits on community engagement

Research published by the Joint Education Trust (Perald et al., 1997; Perald, 1998) showed that most South African universities had a wide range of community service projects yet no institution at the time had conducted a systematic audit

64

of these activities. Most of the universities participating in CHESP completed such an audit using or adapting an audit tool developed by CHESP. The purpose of the audit was to develop a typology of community engagement activities at the university and to use the data to inform the development of an institution-wide policy and strategy for community engagement. The following case studies illustrate institution-wide audits conducted by a number of South African universities.

## Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

An institutional audit on community engagement was conducted in 2006. Key findings were that community engagement initiatives included service learning; professional community service rendered by academic staff; cooperative or work based education; non-curricular community engagement activities; and community-based research.

## Stellenbosch University (SU)

Faculties and departments were invited to register their community engagement projects on an institutional database for community engagement. One hundred and forty-four community engagement projects were registered (Stellenbosch University, 2007). Key findings of the audit were:

- Most community engagement initiatives were located within the Arts, Social Sciences and Agricultural Sciences;
- Most community engagement activities take place in the education sector;
- The overwhelming type of development that is fostered by community engagement initiatives is human resource development;
- Most community engagement initiatives have to do with training and the rendering of direct service;
- Most community engagement initiatives target both children and adults;
- Donations, allocations and contracts for community engagement totalled approximately USD1,552,446 in 2006;
- Fifty academic departments indicated that they cooperate in a multi-disciplinary way with other departments, while 30 departments indicated that they coordinate their activities with other departments who undertake similar activities.

## University of Pretoria (UP)

Two institutional audits were done on community engagement and service learning during 2003 and 2006, respectively. The audits identified that approximately 45 per cent of staff were involved in one or the other form of community

65

engagement. A total of approximately 1500 community engagement projects were identified covering a full spectrum of activities from volunteerism to service learning. Some faculties were more advanced than others in formalizing community engagement as part of their curricula. The audits provided cues for an approach toward community engagement at the university and established the foundation for the Department of community engagement that was established toward the end of 2006.

## institution-wide policies and strategies for CE and SL

Although most South African universities included the notion of community service in their Mission Statements at the time of JET's initial survey in 1997 (Perold et al., 1997), no institution had a policy or strategy for operationalizing this component of their mission statement. In the three year rolling plans submitted to the national Department of Education in 1999, only one university included community engagement as a core function. Within the CHESP initiative, developing and adopting an institution-wide policy and strategy for community engagement was considered important to create the necessary 'institutional space' and direction for community engagement. Reflecting on the progress made by universities in South Africa, those who have adopted an institution-wide policy and strategy have made considerably more progress than universities that have not done so. Most universities participating in CHESP developed institution-wide guidelines, policies and/or strategies for community engagement. Within a number of universities these have been approved by Council. In addition to an institution-wide policy and strategy for community engagement some institutions have developed additional policies in critical areas such as 'risk management' for student placements in the community and criteria for 'staff promotion and rewards' related to community engagement. The following case studies illustrate institution-wide policies and strategies developed at a number of South African universities.

### Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

Community engagement is integrated into the academic planning documents of the university as one of the university's six strategic directions. The university recently completed a draft community engagement policy. The five operational areas for community engagement included in the policy are: service learning; work integrated learning; non-curricular community engagement; and learnerships. Other issues covered in the policy are: the formation of a community engagement Advisory Committee; definition of community and community engagement; alignment of the five operational areas identified above with the university's vision, mission and strategic goals;

66

the benefits of community engagement; institutional planning, resources and enabling mechanisms; community engagement and national higher education imperatives; and tracking, monitoring and quality assurance of community engagement activities. Development of the policy was coordinated through the university's Quality Management Office during 2007. Two workshops were held to develop the policy after which it was posted on the university website for comments. The policy will be submitted to Senate for approval in 2008.

## Stellenbosch University (SU)

The SU community engagement policy was approved by the University Council on 28 June 2004. The policy is intended to provide guidance for community engagement initiatives and management of the core function of community engagement at the university. Key issues covered in the policy include: the legal and institutional framework within which it is situated; the community interaction model that the university employs; policy objectives; terms and definitions; basic policy principles; management and functions; monitoring and evaluation; and funding. The policy was developed by a Task Group chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Operations). Provision was made in a consultative, iterative process for the involvement and contribution of all interested parties, both internal and external, as well as the formal decision-making structures of the university.

## University of Pretoria (UP)

The UP community engagement policy was approved by the University Council in 2006 (University of Pretoria, 2006). The policy was developed by the Department of Research Development. The policy was informed by an institution-wide audit on community engagement. A university-wide strategic plan for community engagement is in the process of being developed and is expected to be released in October 2007. Community engagement is thoroughly entrenched in the University's new strategic plan.

## University of the Free State (UFS)

The focus on community engagement as a core function of the university manifested itself in the adoption of the first community engagement policy in 2002 (University of the Free State, 2002). The policy was reviewed through an inclusive, participatory process over 18 months and the second version was adopted by the University Council in September 2006 (University of the Free State, 2006). Both policies underscore the ever growing realization of the importance of integrating community engagement with teaching, learning

67

and research, and that only such integration would unequivocally establish community engagement as an indispensable component of the university's work and scholarly activities. The policy includes the definitions of key terms such as 'community service', 'community engagement', 'community' and 'community service learning'. The policy spells out 10 'strategies for the implementation of integrated community service', including: the integration of community engagement as a core component of the vision, mission, objectives and organizational structure of the University; the integration of community engagement into academic programmes; support for and recognition of staff involved in community engagement; the development of co-operative partnerships; sustainable allocation of resources; communication, marketing and fundraising; the promotion of community-oriented research; inclusion of community engagement in the University's quality management systems; the formation of international, national and regional relationships; and promoting student community engagement.

## enabling mechanisms

Enabling mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of community engagement policies and strategies have significantly influenced the level of progress at each university. The most critical enabling mechanisms include: (1) the appointment of an executive person responsible for community engagement; (2) establishing a campus presence through an office for community engagement; (3) appointing a senior academic and support staff responsible for operationalizing community engagement; (4) establishing institution-wide and faculty based committees for community engagement; and (v) including community engagement in staff promotion and reward systems.

At most universities the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic is the designated executive person responsible for community engagement. The extent to which the designated executive is committed to operationalizing community engagement has been the most critical factor determining success with the implementation of community engagement.

Eight universities have established a dedicated office for community engagement. At some universities staffing is limited to one full time post with administrative support. At other universities the staffing has been more significant to the point of creating a dedicated community engagement and Service Learning post in each faculty.

Most universities established an institution-wide community engagement committee. The status of these committees range from being an informal Discussion Group to being a Sub-Committee of Senate. Some universities have cascaded their community engagement committee structures to faculty level with representation at the institutional level committee. A number of universities have included community engagement in their academic staff

68

promotion and reward criteria although the percentage of points allocated to community engagement remains relatively low in relation to teaching and research. The following case studies illustrate some of the enabling mechanisms implemented at various universities.

## Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

At the CPUT the community engagement function falls under the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Technology Innovation, Industry Linkages and Partnerships, community engagement and Academic Planning. The community engagement and Service Learning office, formerly known as the CHESP Office, was created in July 2003.This office has grown into a CE/SL Strategic Support Unit with the following six positions: Head: CE/SL (permanent); Senior Projects Officer, at senior lecturer level (permanent); Projects Officer at lecturer level (permanent); Administrative Assistant (two-year contract); Service Learning Assistant (two-year contract); and a CE/SL Research Assistant (two-year contract). A proposal for a SL Promoter in each faculty is currently under consideration. The CE/SL Unit serves as a matchmaker between the University and the community as it accepts requests from the community and channels them to the relevant academic departments. It also facilitates the establishment of partnerships between the University, communities and government.

## Stellenbosch University (SU)

At SU the Division for Community Interaction, a central coordinating unit, functions directly under the Deputy Vice Chancellor Operations. The division itself does not implement community projects, but has a supporting, co-ordinating, facilitating and empowering role, and functions as the primary centre of the University's community engagement function. A Community Interaction Committee of Senate, that is similar to the Committee for Academic Planning and the Research Committee, is constituted of faculty representatives, students and other experts. The committee is a forum where all sectors of the University can participate and it also serves as a sanctioning and co-ordinating body for community engagement strategies and policies. The responsibilities of the committee include policy implementation, quality control and resource allocation, where applicable. The Division for Community Interaction provides the administrative support and expertise for the functioning of the committee. Faculties and support service divisions make provision within their own frameworks for managing community engagement alongside teaching and research. In this task they are guided by the Community Interaction Policy of the University. New community engagement projects are approved by the relevant faculty/division before being submitted to the Community Inter-action Committee for registration.

69

## University of Pretoria (UP)

The department of community engagement was established towards the end of 2006 and is in the process of appointing its compliment of staff. The Department reports directly to the Deputy Vice Chancellor responsible for community engagement. A Senate Committee for community engagement has been established. This committee will have the same status as the Senate Academic and Senate Research Committees. The Department of community engagement comprises two legs, one responsible for Curricular and Research-related community engagement that focuses inwards, working closely with the Faculties and Departments, assisting them with integrating community engagement activities into the curriculum and developing research in the domain. The second leg is focussed outwardly, working closely with the community and community structures, and identifying partners and sites for community engagement. The two legs operate synergistically to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. In the Faculties, the Deans are responsible for the community engagement activities. It is expected that Faculties appoint community engagement coordinators. Currently these are not dedicated positions. Departments are similarly expected to appoint community engagement coordinators.

## University of the Free State (UFS)

In 2001, the Chief Directorate: Community Service was established with its Chief Director representing this core function of the University at Executive Management level. The subsequent creation of dedicated organizational structures within faculties and appointments within the Chief Directorate provided an enabling environment within which the community engagement thrust could develop. Each faculty has a Community Service Portfolio Committee which manages its community engagement activities. Since 2004, a Community Service Management Committee has been operational. Further embedding of Service Learning was effected by repositioning Service Learning, which initially resorted under the Chief Directorate Community Service, to become the Service Learning Division of the Centre for Higher Education Studies and Development. Subsequently the Service Learning Committee was established as part of the official portfolio committee structure of the University.

## capacity building

Capacity building has been a central part of the CHESP initiative and has included the following programmatic activities.

70

## graduate programme on community, higher education, service partnerships

The CHESP initiative started by developing a national accredited two-year graduate programme in collaboration with the Leadership Centre of the then University of Natal. The programme consists of 13 modules and served as the driving force facilitating the planning and implementation of community engagement at 8 universities which served as initial pilot universities for he development of community engagement in South African Higher Education.

## national workshops

Since the start of the CHESP initiative an average of two national workshops were held per annum to assist universities with the planning and imple-mentation of community engagement and Service Learning. Generally the focus of these workshops was determined by the expressed needs of participating universities. During the past three years CHESP used these workshops to train at least two academics from 12 universities to conceptualize and implement a semester long service learning capacity building programme (SLCBP) for academic staff at their institution. Participants were nominated by their Deputy Vice Chancellor as the persons designated with the responsibility for service learning capacity building on campus. In July 2006, CHESP hosted the first national workshop to which all 23 public higher education institutions were invited. Indicative of the growing support for service learning in South African universities all institutions sent at least two representatives to this workshop.

## semesterized SLCBPs

During 2005, 2006 and 2007 CHESP supported the implementation of semesterized Service Learning Capacity Building Programmes (SLCBPs) at 8 universities. These programmes are currently being used to build the capacity of academic staff from a variety of academic disciplines to include Service Learning in new and existing curricula.

## graduate service learning modules

Currently two South African universities offer an accredited Service Learning module as part of their graduate Higher Education Studies programmes. Although these modules are part of a Graduate Programme they are also being used to build the capacity of academic staff to use service learning as a teaching methodology.

## train the service learning trainer programme

Given the proliferation of community engagement and Service Learning activities in South African universities CHESP is currently working with some universities on the development of an accredited graduate 'Train the Service Learning Trainer' programme. The intention of this programme will be to provide accredited graduate training for persons responsible for Service Learning capacity building within their university, faculty and/or department.

The following institutional case studies illustrate some of the capacity building initiatives of universities participating in CHESP.

## Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

The CPUT has implemented a semesterized Service Learning capacity building programme (SLCBP) for academic staff. The programme is designed to assist lecturers who are interested in planning, implementing, assessing and reviewing Service Learning. The CPUT capacity building programme centres on developing a graduate Service Learning qualification for lecturers as part of the University's Higher Diploma in Higher Education and Training (HDHET). The HDHET (Service Learning) caries 120 credits and started in February 2007 with 10 candidates. Once the candidates satisfy the requirements of the diploma in November 2007, they will graduate through the Faculty of Education in April 2008.

## Stellenbosch University (SU)

A Service Learning Capacity Building Programme (SLCBP) has been in operation for the past three years. Future plans include a short course (orientation) for new faculty members and student leaders involved in community engagement and the development of a Service Learning module as part of the existing Masters in Higher Education.

## University of Pretoria (UP)

The Curricular and Research-related leg of the Department of community engagement will have, as one of its functions, capacity building of staff for community engagement and Service Learning. Presently, support is provided through short courses offered by the department responsible for continuing education at the University or through the independent efforts of Departments and Faculties to empower their staff in this regard. Often, support is sought from individual experts in community engagement, usually from the Faculty of Education to achieve these outcomes. The Department of community

72

engagement has established a 'community engagement Forum' that will, as one of its projects, host a series of seminars aimed at empowering staff in their community engagement endeavours.

## University of the Free State (UFS)

The UFS recognizes the importance of staff development and capacity-building for staff engaged in Service Learning. A dedicated Service Learning module forms part of the Masters Programme in Higher Education Studies offered by Centre for Higher Education Studies and Development. During 2006 the UFS participated in the Service Learning Capacity Building Programme (SLCBP) initiated by CHESP. Additional professional enrichment workshops and seminars are offered in collaboration with the Staff Development Division to further equip staff members who are mainly responsible for the orientation of both students and external partners regarding Service Learning initiatives.

# academic courses and other programmatic activities

During the past six years CHESP supported the conceptualization, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and research of 256 accredited academic courses which include service learning (Table 1) in 12 universities across 39 different academic disciplines (Table 2) including a total of almost 10,000 students ranging from 1st year to Masters level (Table 3). Criteria for selecting courses included:

- The course must address an identified community development priority.
- The course should include both learning and service objectives.
- The course should carry a minimum of eight credits.
- The course should be planned and implemented in partnership with recipient community representatives and a designated service agency.
- The course must embrace the principles and practice of service learning.
- A minimum of 20 per cent of the notional hours required to complete the course should be spent in a community-based setting.

A selection of courses are currently being written up as exemplar service learning case studies to be published in an HEQC-CHESP publication entitled *Service Learning in the Disciplines: Lessons from the Field* (HEQC/CHESP, 2007). The following institutional case studies illustrate some of the programmatic activities at universities participating in CHESP.

## Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

Currently there are 21 courses at CPUT spread over 7 Faculties that include Service Learning. A graduate student from the University of Queensland is

73

researching the impact of these courses on participating communities. Student orientation programmes include an orientation of Service Learning. In addition to the above curricular activities there is a wide range of non-curricular activities.

## Stellenbosch University (SU)

At present SU have 19 courses that include service learning. These are spread over 7 faculties and are the results of an institutional Service Learning Capacity Building Programme (SLCBP) that has been running for the past three years. The Engineering Faculty will be the eighth faculty in a total of 10 who will implement a service learning course in 2008. Taking into account the national needs and priorities, as well as the expertise available at SU, the following research focus areas are among others that are currently being developed with substantial financial support from the University: Building a New Society; the production and provision of food; the struggle against disease and the promotion of health; and Language and Culture in a multilingual and multicultural society. There is an increasing focus in the institution on the Millennium Development Goals, which might have a substantial influence on any new SU Research policy. Part of the orientation of new students at SU is involvement in community projects. A Residence Education Programme, with Community Interaction as one of its pillars, was recently approved by Management and will be implemented in 2008.

## University of the Free State (UFS)

The UFS has resolved to engage all its students in at least one service learning course during their period of study. Currently UFS has approximately 50 courses that include service learning. Institutional support and capacity building for participatory, collaborative, community-oriented research are undertaken in close collaboration with other divisions of the UFS. Special attention has been given to capacity building in appropriate research designs such as Participatory Action Research (PAR), inter alia through workshops by international specialists in this field. The 2003 Community Service Conference of the UFS was dedicated to the integration of research and service learning. From this conference, a special volume of the academic journal *Acta Academica Supplementum,* entitled *Research and (Community) Service Learning in South African Higher Education* (2003) was published.

## University of Pretoria (UP)

As mentioned earlier, the audit of community engagement activities at the University revealed that there were some 1500 projects covering the full spectrum

74

of the community engagement taxonomy. It is envisaged that there will always be a place for the full spectrum of activities at the UP even though the thrust will be toward curricular and research related community engagement. Certain Faculties are more involved and committed to community engagement than others. The approach adopted with regard to the development of community engagement will be one of pull rather than push with the successes of those already involved serving to motivate those who have not already made the shift. The research projects of individual staff members rather than departmental or faculty projects tend to dominate this aspect of community engagement and usually provides the impetus for community engaged activities in the academic programmes that they are involved with. Volunteer activities are a feature of the involvement of student organizations, the residences and faculty houses, but not solely so. Certain faculties that are actively involved in community engagement have a strong volunteer or outreach orientation, rather than one of academic service learning. As has been mentioned, the approach toward these would be to nudge them in the direction of academic service learning for which the University would be more sympathetic in terms of investing resources. A database of community engagement activities at the University will be available on the community engagement website.

## monitoring, evaluation and research programme (MERP)

The CHESP monitoring, evaluation and research programme was informed by an international Research Advisory Group. Most service learning courses supported by CHESP were subject to an extensive monitoring and evaluation programme. The programme included pilot and standard evaluations of most courses. Pre- and post-implementation instruments were used for students, academic staff, community participants and service providers. Most course conveners submitted a comprehensive narrative research report guided by a template provided by CHESP. Numerous research reports were generated through the monitoring and evaluation process. The data generated through this research was used to develop draft national Department of Education Policy Guidelines for community engagement and Service Learning and *A Good Practice Guide and Self* evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service-Learning (HEQC/CHESP, 2006a.)

## national outcomes

Embedding community engagement in South African higher education required extensive work at a national level. At a national level CHESP worked with the South African Qualifications Authority, the national Department of Education and the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education.

75

## South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)

In 2000, the SAQA formed a Task Group on what it then called 'community service' in higher education. On request of the Task Group CHESP prepared a Discussion Document (Lazarus, 2000) on community service in higher education for the SAQA Board.

## vice chancellors meeting

In 2000, CHESP convened a meeting of university vice chancellors including senior personnel from the national Department of Education, the Council on Higher education and the South African Universities Vice Chancellors Association. The meeting was chaired by Minister Naledi Pandor the then Vice Chair of the Joint Education Trust. The purpose of the meeting was to explore the direction of community engagement in South African higher education. The following key issues emerging from this meeting (JET/CHESP, 2000).

### purpose of higher education

Concern was expressed about the overemphasis on 'education for the market place' and the need for this to be balanced with 'education for good citizenship'. It was suggested that universities should revive the notion of civic responsibility through their teaching, research and service programmes.

### compliance or serious engagement

It was suggested that community engagement should not be optional in South African higher education. However, given the current constraints within universities, compliance could be counter productive. Instead, universities should be encouraged and supported to take seriously their responsibility to inculcate the notion of citizenship in students through integrating community service into mainstream academic programmes.

### add-on or integrated approach

It was agreed that community engagement should not be an 'add on' or purely philanthropic exercise. It should be an integral part of the mainstream teaching and research business of every university.

### faculty roles and rewards

The dominant paradigm of scholarship focuses on and rewards teaching and research. It was agreed that if higher education takes its reconstruction and development role seriously, its leaders will need to promote, support and reward a scholarship of community engagement.

76

### opportune moment

Given the fact that universities are currently facing significant challenges in terms of their own transformation, it was suggested that this might be an opportune moment for institutions to reflect on their own mission and purpose and integrate community engagement into teaching and research.

### resources

Given the current resource constraints experienced by universities, it was recommended that consideration be given to the allocation of national resources towards community engagement and Service Learning. These resources should encourage and support the development of academic programmes that engage in the reconstruction and development of poor communities through teaching, research and service.

### role of national higher education stakeholders

Although government should not necessarily drive the role of universities in community engagement, it should provide the necessary encouragement, support and direction. The role of universities in reconstruction and development should be reflected in the agenda, plans and policies of government. Universities should reflect their community engagement agenda in their three-year rolling plans.

### leadership support

For the reconstruction and development agenda to take effect in universities it would need the vocal, visible and tangible support of the top leadership within these institutions.

### institutional audits

All universities are encouraged to do an audit of existing community engagement and Service Learning activities. This audit would contribute towards a national audit on community engagement in South African higher education.

## Council on Higher Education (CHE) initiatives

### Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) Founding Document

The Founding Document (Higher Education Quality Committee, 2001) of the Higher Education Quality Committee identifies 'knowledge based community service' as one of the three areas for the accreditation and quality assurance of higher education along with teaching and research.

77

## higher Education Quality Committee Programme Accreditation and Institutional Audit Criteria

In May 2001, the Higher Education Quality Committee requested that the service learning courses supported by CHESP be used to generate community engagement and service learning criteria for Accreditation of Academic Programmes and for the Audits of Higher Education Institutions. During 2002 and 2003 CHESP and the Higher Education Quality Committee jointly convened several national workshops with higher education stakeholders and subsequently commissioned the drafting of standards for managing the quality of Service Learning based on the data generated through the CHESP monitoring, evaluation and research of service learning courses. Although an extensive set of criteria were produced through this process it was decided to limit the final criteria to the following broad all encompassing criteria and to include the more detailed criteria in *A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service Learning* (HEQC/CHESP, 2006a):

### Criteria for Programme Accreditation (HEQC, 2004a, 2004b)

### programme design

**CRITERION 1:** The programme is consonant with the institution's mission, forms part of institutional planning and resource allocation, meets national requirements, the needs of students and other stakeholders, and is intellectually credible. It is designed coherently and articulates well with other relevant programmes, where possible. In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum: [...]

(x)  In the case of institutions with service learning as part of their mission:

- Service learning programmes are integrated into institutional and academic planning, as part of the institution's mission and strategic goals.
- Enabling mechanisms (which may include incentives) are in place to support the implementation of service learning, including staff and student capacity development. (HEQC, 2004b: 7–8)

### Criteria for Institutional Audits (HEQC, 2004c, 2004d)

### CRITERION 7

(iv)  In the case of institutions with service learning as part of their mission:
- Service learning programmes which are integrated into institutional and academic planning, as part of the institution's mission and strategic goals;
- Adequate resources and enabling mechanisms (including incentives) to support the implementation of service learning, including staff and student capacity development; and
- Review and monitoring arrangements to gauge the impact and outcomes of service learning programmes on the institution, as well as on other participating constituencies. (HEQC, 2004a: 11)

78

CRITERION 18

Quality-related arrangements for community engagement are formalized and integrated with those for teaching and learning, where appropriate, and are adequately resourced and monitored. In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(1) Policies and procedures for the quality management of community engagement.
(2) Integration of policies and procedures for community engagement with those for teaching and learning and research, where appropriate.
(3) Adequate resources allocated to facilitate quality delivery in community engagement.
(4) Regular review of the effectiveness of quality-related arrangements for community engagement. (HEQC, 2004a: 19)

## publications

One of the objectives of CHESP was to generate publications based on the monitoring, evaluation and research of pilot community engagement initiatives an to use this data to influence higher education policy and practice at a national, institutional and programmatic level. For strategic reasons must publications were produced in collaboration with the Council on Higher Education and the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education which is a statutory body appointed by the Minister of Education. The following publications were produced.

- *Report to Parliament* (Council on Higher Education, 2001). In 2001 the CHE published a chapter entitled 'Community Service in Higher Education' in its Annual Report to Parliament on the State of Higher Education in South Africa.
- *Council on Higher Education Consultative Forum* (Lazarus, 2001). In 2001 the Council on Higher Education invited CHESP to present a paper at its 3rd Consultative Forum on 'Building Higher Education Contribution to South Africa's Economic, Social and Intellectual need'.
- *Report to Parliament* (Council on Higher Education, 2004). In August 2004 the Council on Higher Education published a chapter on 'community engagement in Higher Education' in its report to Parliament entitled 'South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy'.
- *A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service Learning* (HEQC/CHESP: 2006a). This publication is intended to assist universities to manage the quality of service learning at an institutional, faculty, programme and module/course level and is based on the monitoring, evaluation and research of pilot service learning initiatives supported by CHESP.
- *Service Learning in the Curriculum: a Resource for Higher Education Institutions* (HEQC/CHESP, 2006b).This publication is intended to assist universities to

79

build the capacity of academic staff to include service learning into new and existing curricula. The publication is accompanied by a DVD containing a PowerPoint presentation of each chapter which can be used for staff and student development.

• *Service Learning in the Curriculum: Lessons from the Field* (HEQC/CHESP, 2007 in press). This publication is due to be released in November 2007. It is a collection of service learning case studies from different academic disciplines and is intended to illustrate how the principles of good practice of service learning is implemented within these disciplines.

## National Conference on community engagement in Higher Education

In September 2006 the Higher Education Quality Committee and CHESP hosted the first national conference, in South Africa, on community engagement in higher education. Speakers included the Minister of Education, Premier of the Western Cape, the Executive Major of Cape Town and Vice Chancellors and community engagement scholars from Ghana, India, Mexico, South Africa, the UK and the USA. The conference was attended by more than 200 delegates representing all 23 public and a number of private higher education institutions in South Africa, community and business leaders and local authority officials. The overarching goal of the conference was to promote an enabling environment for the conceptualization, implementation and quality management of community engagement and service learning in South African higher education and to develop recommendations for advancing community engagement and service learning (Higher Education Quality Committee/ CHESP, 2007).

# Department of Education (DoE) initiatives

Since the start of the CHESP initiative a close working relationship was developed with the Higher Education Branch of the national DoE. Seminars on service learning have been held within the Department and a session on service learning was organized as part of a Curriculum Conference hosted by the Department in April 2004. In December 2000, the Department requested that CHESP draft policy guidelines for community engagement in South African higher education based on the monitoring, evaluation and research undertaken by CHESP. Draft guidelines were submitted to the Department in 2003. Unfortunately these have not yet been released. During the September 2006 Conference on community engagement in higher education hosted by the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education and CHESP the Minister of Education pledged her support for community engagement in South African higher education and indicated that the DoE was ready to consider earmarked funding for community engagement. Discussions have been initiated with the Department in this regard.

80

## conclusion

During 2007, JET Education Services commissioned an external review of the impact of the CHESP project on higher education at a programmatic, institutional and national level (Mouton et al., 2007). Results of the review indicate that CHESP has made a significant contribution towards embedding community engagement and service learning in South African higher education at each of these levels. At a programmatic level it facilitated the implementation of 256 academic Service Learning courses across 39 different academic disciplines in 12 universities involving almost 10,000 students ranging from first year to masters' level. At an institutional level it facilitated the development, adoption and implementation of institution-wide policies, strategies, organizational structures and quality management systems that support community engagement as a core function of the academy. At a national level it contributed to the development of policies, standards and guidelines for the implementation of community engagement and service learning in South African higher education. It has contributed to the development of exemplar community engagement and service learning case studies, publications that illuminate the lessons learnt from these case studies and a cadre of human resource expertise within numerous universities who can assist with the role out of community engagement in South African Higher Education.

Although the impact of CHESP has been significant it must be emphasized that, as a pilot initiative working with a hand full of universities, its achievements have only scratched the surface of embedding community engagement in South African higher education. At best it has created an awareness of community engagement and service learning as an integral part of the academy and laid the foundations for their advancement in all South African universities. Critical areas for advancing community engagement and service learning in the immediate future will be increased capacity building within universities, expanding and deepening the scholarship of community engagement and service learning and increased and expanded networking and collaboration within and between universities and between appropriate national and international organizations.

## references

Acta Academica Supplementum (2003) Online: http://www.uovs.ac.za/ servicelearning.

Argyris, C. and Schon, D. A. (1978) *Organisational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.

Bandura, A. (1997) *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Boyer, E. L. (1996) The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*, 1, 11–20.

Boyer, E. L (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bringle, R. (1999) *Colleges and Universities as Citizens*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

81

Bringle, R. G. and Hatcher J. A. (2004) Advancing civic engagement through service-learning. In M. Langseth and W. M. Plater (eds) *Public Work and the Academy: An Academic Administrator's Guide to Civic Engagement and Service-Learnin*g. Boston, MA: Anker Press.

Coleman, J. (1997) Differences between classroom and experiential learning. In M. T. Keeton (ed.) *Experiential Learning: Rationale, Characteristics, and Assessment.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Council on Higher Education (2001) *The State of Higher Education in South Africa.* Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Council on Higher Education (2004) *South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Department of Education (1997) Education white paper 3: A programme for higher education transformation. *Government Gazette No. 18207*, 15 August 1997. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Dewey, J. (1963) *Experiential Education*. New York: Collier.

Duley, J. (1981) Field experience education. In A. W. Chickering (ed.) *The Modern American College*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Eskow, S. (1979) A pedagogy of experience. In *Synergist,* 9, 20–1. (Spring, 1980).

Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Freire, P. (1973) *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Seabury Press.

Higher Education Quality Committee/Community Higher Education Service Partnerships (2006a) *A Good Practice Guide and Self-Evaluation Instruments to Manage the Quality of Service Learning*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Higher Education Quality Committee/Community Higher Education Service Partnerships (2006b) *Service Learning in the Curriculum: A Resource for Higher Education Institutions.* Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Higher Education Quality Committee/Community Higher Education Service Partnerships (2007 in press) *Service Learning in the Curriculum: Lessons from the Field.* Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Higher Education Quality Committee/Community Higher Education Service Partnerships (2007) Proceedings of the Conference on community engagement in Higher Education.

Higher Education Quality Committee (2001) *Founding Document*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Higher Education Quality Committee (2004a) *Criteria for Programme Accreditation*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Higher Education Quality Committee (2004b) *Framework for Programme Accreditation.* Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Higher Education Quality Committee (2004c) *Criteria for Institutional Audits*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Higher Education Quality Committee (2004d) *Framework for Institutional Audits*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

JET Education Services/CHESP (2000) Report on the meeting of vice chancellors on the Direction of Community Service in Higher Education held at Oliver Thambo International Airport on 25 July 2000. Johannesburg: JET Education Services.

Keeton, M. (1983) Experiential learning. In *Innovation Abstracts*. Austin, TX: University of Texas.

Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Lazarus, J. (2000) Community service in higher education. Discussion Document prepared for the SAQA Board, June 2000. Johannesburg: JET Education Services.

Lazarus, J. (2001) A new contract between higher education and society: responsiveness through a scholarship of engagement. Paper presented at the third Consultative Conference of the Council on Higher Education, held on 29 and 30 November 2001.

Mouton, J. and Wildschut, L. (2007) *An Impact Assessment of the CHESP Initiative: High-Level Findings*. Johannesburg: JET Education Services.

Perold, H. (1998) *Community Service in Higher Education: Final Report*. Johannesburg: JET Education Services.

Perold, H. and Omar, R. (1997) *Community Service in Higher Education: A Concept Paper*. Johannesburg: JET Education Services.

Resnick, L. (1987) Learning in school and out. In *The Educational Researcher*, 16(9), 13–20.

Schön, D. A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.

Schön, D. A. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Stellenbosch University Online: http://www.admin.sun.ac.za/ci.

University of Pretoria (2006)

University of the Free State (2002) Online: http://www.uovs.ac.za/communityservice.

University of the Free State (2006)

Wagner, J. (1986) Academic excellence and community service through experiential learning: encouraging students to teach. In the proceedings of the Ninth Annual University of California Conference on Experiential Learning, Santa Barbara, CA.

## correspondence

Jo Lazarus, Director, Community Higher Education Service Partnerships, JET Education Services, PO Box 355, Muizenberg 7900, South Africa.
[email: lazarus@chesp.org.za]