Embedding Service Learning in South African Higher Education: The Catalytic Role of the CHESP Initiative

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Abstract

Service-learning (SL) was a relatively unknown term in South African (SA) Higher Education (HE) until the late 1990's. In response to the call of the White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education for "feasibility studies and pilot programmes which explore the potential of community service in higher education" the Joint Education Trust[1] (JET) launched the Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships (CHESP) initiative in 1999. The major focus of this initiative was to assist SA Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to conceptualise and implement SL as a means of giving expression to the mandate given in the White Paper. This paper tracks the development of the CHESP initiative and its contribution towards embedding SL in SA HE. The paper highlights some of the key outcomes at an institutional and national level and underpins these through the results of a comprehensive external review of CHESP undertaken in 2007, eight years after the initial launch.

Key words: Service Learning, Community Engagement, Institutionalisation

Introduction

The *White Paper* on the Transformation of Higher Education (DoE: 1997) laid the foundations for making community engagement (CE) an integral part of Higher Education (HE) in South Africa. It calls on HEI's to "demonstrate social responsibility … and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes". It stated that one of the goals of HE is "to promote and develop social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of HE in social and economic development through community service programmes". It shows 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 available to JET to conduct a survey of community service in SA HE. The results of the survey were published in two monographs (Perold, 1997; 1999). Key finding of the survey were: (i) most Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in S.A. included community service in their mission statements; (ii) few HEI's had an explicit policy or strategy to operationalise this component of their mission statement; (iii) most HEI's had a wide range of community service projects; and (iv) generally these projects were initiated by innovative academic staff and students and not as a deliberate institutional strategy and certainly not as a

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1 Now called JET Education Services

core function of the academy. Building on the results of this survey the Ford Foundation made a further grant to JET 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 which explore the potential of community service in higher education" CHESP has to date essentially been a pilot initiative designed to provide direction for taking the CE and SL to scale in SA HE. The specific operational objectives of CHESP have been:

- To support the development of pilot programmes that give expression to the CE mandate of the White Paper
- To monitor, evaluate and research these programmes and
- To use the data generated through this research to inform HE policy and practice at a national, institutional and programmatic level.

Operational Strategy

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

1. *Grant-making:* Supporting the development of specific HEI outcomes that would contribute towards the integration, institutionalisation and sustainability of CE and SL within HEIs.
2. *Capacity Building:* Building the capacity of HE policy makers, HEI administrators, academic staff, academic planners and quality managers to conceptualise and implement CE and SL as a core function of HE.
3. *Monitoring, evaluation and research programme (MERP):* All pilot initiatives were monitored, evaluated and researched so as to generate a body of knowledge on CE and SL in the SA context.
4. *Advocacy:* Data generated through the monitoring, evaluation and research programme was used to inform HE policy and practice.
5. *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 HE stakeholders including the Department of Education (DoE), the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The intention of this collaboration was to ensure that the pilot initiatives supported by CHESP were strategically positioned to inform national policies regarding CE and SL with the expectation that there would be a proliferation of CE and SL activities once such policies were put in place at which point the focus of CHESP would shift to building the capacity of HEIs to implement CE and SL as a core function. 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 diagramme of the "strategic positioning" of the CHESP project.
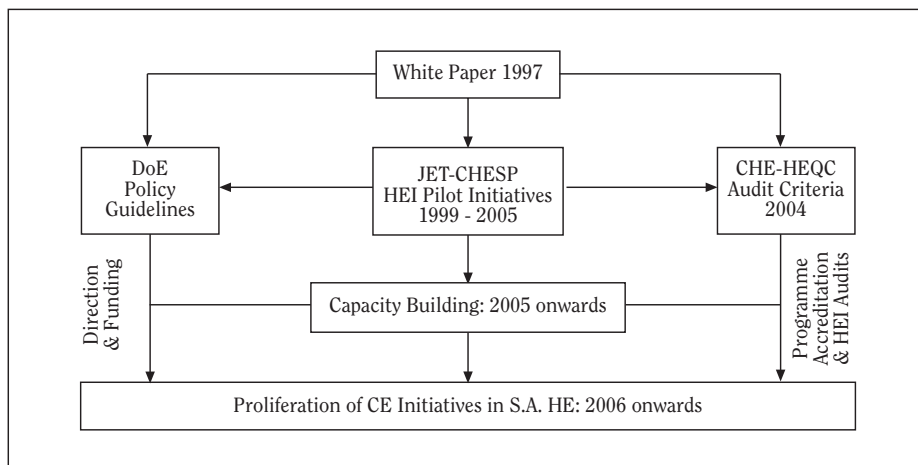
Figure 1: Strategic Positioning of the CHESP Project

HEI Outcomes

Grants to support the development of selected pilot initiatives have been a significant part of the CHESP Project. JET/CHESP Grants have always been tied to specific outcomes such as: (i) HEI audits of CE and SL; (ii) HEI policies & strategies for CE and SL; (iii) the development of enabling mechanisms; (iv) capacity building for CE and SL; (v) the development of accredited academic modules that include the principles and practice of SL; and (vi) generating data through monitoring, evaluation and research.

Institution-wide audits on CE and SL

Research published by JET in 1997 and 1998 showed that most SA HEIs had a wide range of community service projects, yet no institution at the time had conducted a systematic audit of these activities. Most of the universities funded by JET completed such an audit using or adapting an audit tool developed by CHESP. The purpose of the audit was to develop a typology of CE activities at the university and to use the data to inform the development of an institution-wide policy and strategy for CE and SL.

Institution-wide policies and strategies for CE and SL

Although most universities included the notion of community service in their Mission Statements at the time of JET's initial survey in 1997, no university had an institution-wide policy and strategy for operationalising this component of their

Summary of HEI Outcomes

- Institution-wide audits on CE & SL done at 9 HEIs

- Institution-wide policies & strategies for CE & SL developed at 10 HEIs

- Institution-wide organisational structures for the implementation of CE & SL established at 11 HEIs

- Developed and implemented an accredited two-year graduate course on Community, Higher Education, Service Partnerships

- Developed a semesterized SL capacity building programme at 10 HEIs

- Supported the conceptualisation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of 234 accredited academic programmes across 39 different academic disciplines involving more than 8 000 students.

Mission Statement. In the three year rolling plans submitted to the DoE in 1999, only one HEI, the then University of Natal, included CE as a core function. Development of an institution-wide policy and strategy for CE and SL was considered important to create the necessary "institutional space" to advance CE and SL. Reflecting on the progress made by universities over the past few years, those who have adopted an institution-wide policy and strategy have made significantly more progress in terms of CE and SL than institutions that have not done so. Since the start of the CHESP initiative most universities funded by JET developed institution-wide guidelines, policies and/or strategies for CE. Within a number of HEIs these have been approved by Council. In others they have been approved by the University Executive. In addition to an institution-wide policy and strategy for CE and SL 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 CE and SL activities.

Enabling Mechanisms

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

At most universities the DVC Academic is the designated executive person responsible for CE. The extent to which the designated executive is committed to operationalising CE has probably been the most critical factor determining success with the implementation of CE and SL.

Eight universities have established a dedicated office for CE and SL. Generally the office is staffed by the equivalent of one full time post with administrative support. At some universities the staffing has been more significant to the point of creating a dedicated CE and SL post in each faculty.

Most universities supported by JET established an institution-wide CE and SL 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 CE committee structures to faculty level with representation at the institutional level committee. A number of universities have included CE and SL in their academic staff promotion and reward criteria although the percentage of points allocated to CE remains relatively low in relation to teaching and research.

Capacity Building

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

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 CE and SL planning and implementation process at eight universities. Each university nominated at least one member of academic staff, one community leader and one service provider to participate in the programme. The development of

the programme was informed through an initial national workshop and a Board of Studies including Prof Ahmed Bawa (then DVC Academic, UKZN), Prof Leila Petal (then DVC Partnerships, WITS), Prof Ira Harkavy (Vice President, University of Pennsylvania), Prof Judith Ramaley (then President, University of Vermont), and Dr Tim Stanton (Director of Public Service, Stanford University). During 2005 the Leadership Centre of UKZN entered into discussions with Local Authorities in KwaZulu Natal to modify the programme as a vehicle for building reciprocal, mutually beneficial and development oriented partnerships between the university and Local Government.

National workshops: Since the start of the CHESP initiative JET convened an average of two national workshops per annum to assist HEIs with the planning and implementation of CE and SL initiatives. Generally the focus of these workshops was determined by the expressed need of HEIs as articulated by their academic delegates/representatives. During the past three years CHES used these workshops to train a minimum of two academics from twelve different HEIs to conceptualise and implement a semester long service-learning capacity building programme (SLCBP) for academic staff at their institution. In most instances the participants have been nominated by their DVC as the persons designated with the responsibility for SLCB on campus. In July 2006 CHESP hosted the first national SLCB workshop to which it invited all 23 public HEIs. Indicative of the growing support for SL in SA all HEIs sent at least two representatives to this workshop.

Semesterised SLCBPs: During 2005, 2006 and 2007 JET supported the implementation of semesterised SLCBPs at eight HEIs. These programmes are currently being used to build the capacity of academic staff from a variety of academic disciplines to include SL in new and existing curricula.

Graduate SL Modules: Currently two SA universities (i.e. UFS; UP) are offering an accredited SL module within 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 include SL as a teaching methodology.

Train the SL Trainer Programme: Given the proliferation of CE and SL programmes throughout SA CHESP is currently working with some universities on the development of an accredited graduate "train the SL trainer" programme. The intention of this programme is to provide accredited graduate training for persons responsible for SL capacity building within their university, faculty and/ or department.

Regional Workshops: During 2005 the HEQC and JET convened Regional Workshops in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, and Cape Town on SL. The purpose of these workshops was (i) to introduce HEIs to the HEQCs audit system and its relation to CE and SL, (ii) to provide participants with an overview of CE and SL in SA and (iii) to introduce participants to the HEQC/CHESP *Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service Learning* (HEQC/CHESP: 2006a).

Academic Courses

During the past six years CHESP supported the conceptualisation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and research of 256 accredited academic courses which include SL (Table 1) in 12 HEIs

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 following:

• 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 SL
• A minimum of 20% of the notional hours required to complete the course should be spent in a community-based setting.

A selection of courses is currently being written up as exemplar SL case studies to be published in an HEQC-JET publication entitled *Service Learning in the Disciplines: Lessons from the Field (HEQC/CHESP:2007)*

Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Programme (MERP)

The monitoring, evaluation and research programme (MERP) of CHESP was informed by a Research Advisory Group consisting of Prof Johan Mouton (Director, Evaluation Research Agency, SU); Prof George Subotski (Executive Director: Planning and Analysis, UNISA); Dr Nick Taylor (CEO, JET), Prof Sherril Gelman (Portland State Univ.) and Prof Bob Bringle (Indiana/Purdue Univ.) Most SL courses supported by CHESP were subject to an extensive monitoring and evaluation programme. The programme included pilot and standard evaluations of most modules. Pre and post implementation instruments were used for students, academic staff, community participants and service providers. Most modules 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 the draft DoE Policy Guidelines for CE and SL and the HEQC/CHESP *Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service-Learning (HEQC/CHESP: 2006a.)*

Table 1: Service-Learning courses supported by CHESP per HEI per year

HEI	YEAR							TOTAL
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	
CUT				7	7	5		19
CPUT				7			12	19
Mangosuthu Tech							4	4
UJ				5				5
UCT				6	6			12
UFS	12	18	4	8		7		49
WSU	4	7	6	5				22
UKZN	17	21	2	1			6	47
UP					8			8
US					9	5		14
UWC	2	6	9	7	5			29
WITS	5	15	6	2				28
TOTAL	40	67	27	48	35	17	22	256

Table 2: Service-Learning courses supported by CHESP per HEI and Faculty

HEI	FACULTY									TOTAL
	Agriculture	Architecture	Management Sciences	Education	Engineering	Health Sciences	Human Sciences	Law	Natural Sciences	
CUT			7		5	5	2			19
CPUT			8	2	1	4	2		2	19
Mangosuthu Tech	1		1		1				1	4
UJ				5						5
UCT	4					4	4			12
UFS	9	1	8	1		19	10	1		49
WSU			3	4		2	6	7		22
UKZN			6	8		3	27	3		47
UP			1	2		3	2			8
US				4		4	5	1		14
UWC				9		12	5		3	29
WITS		9	3	4	4	4	2	2		28
TOTAL	**14**	**10**	**37**	**39**	**11**	**60**	**67**	**14**	**6**	**256**

Table 3: Service-Learning courses supported by JET per HEI and student level

HEI	STUDENT LEVEL					TOTAL
	1st year	2st year	3st year	4st year	Masters	
CUT	25	83	199	10		317
CPUT	524	620	150	61		1355
Mangosuthu Tech		80	220			300
UJ				542		542
UCT			120	259	101	480
UFS	864	522	576	549	232	2743
WSU	241	144	322	151		858
UKZN	226	262	597	246	32	1363
UP		30		146	30	206
US		36	130	107		273
UWC			51	567	18	636
WITS	76	187	204	93	40	600
TOTAL	**1956**	**1964**	**2569**	**2731**	**453**	**9673**

National Outcomes

At a national level, CHESP worked with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the national Department of Education (DoE) and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE).

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)

In 2000 the SAQA formed a Task Group on what it then called community service in HE. The Task Group was chaired by Dr Mala Singh who subsequently became Executive Director of the HEQC and Interim CEO of the CHE. On request of the Task Group CHESP prepared a Discussion Document (Lazarus: 2000) on community service in HE for presentation to the SAQA Board.

Vice Chancellors Meeting

In 2000 CHESP convened a meeting of university Vice Chancellors including senior personnel from the DoE, CHE and the South African Universities Vice Chancellors Association (SAUVCA). The meeting was chaired by Minister Naledi Pandor the then Vice Chair of JET. The purpose of the meeting was to explore the direction of CE in SA HE. The following key issues emerging from this meeting (JET/CHESP: 2000)

Purpose of HE: 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 HEIs should revive the notion of civic responsibility through their teaching, research and service programmes.

Compliance or serious engagement: It was suggested that CE should not be optional in SA higher education. However, given the current constraints within HEIs, compliance could be counter-productive. Instead, HEIs 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 CE 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.

Summary of National Outcomes

- Supported the inclusion of CE in the HEQC's Founding Document
- Developed criteria for CE and SL for the HEQC's Programme Accreditation and HEI Audits
- Published *A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service Learning* (HEQC/JET 2006)
- Published a book and DVD entitled *Service-Learning in the Curriculum: a Resource for Higher Education Institutions (HEQC/JET 2006)*
- Published a chapter on *'Community Service in Higher Education'* in the CHE's 2001 Annual Report to Parliament on the State of Higher Education in SA (CHE 2001)
- Published a chapter on *Community Engagement in Higher Education* in the 2004 CHE report to Parliament on the *State of Higher Education under Ten Years of Democracy* (CHE 2004)
- Developed draft policy guidelines on CE for the National Department of Education (DoE 2001)
- Co-hosted the 1st National SA Conference on CE in HE. (HEQC/CHESP: 2007)

Faculty roles and rewards: The dominant paradigm of scholarship focuses on and rewards of 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 CE.

Opportune moment: Given the fact that HEIs 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 CE into teaching and research.

Resources: Given the current resource constraints experienced by HEIs, it was recommended that consideration be given to the allocation of national resources towards CE and SL. 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.

The role of national HE stakeholders: Although government should not necessarily drive the role of universities in CE, 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. For example, universities should reflect their CE 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 should be encouraged to do an audit of existing CE and SL activities linked to their institution. This audit would contribute towards a national audit on CE in SA higher education.

Council on Higher Education (CHE) Initiatives

HEQC Founding Document and Audit Criteria: The Founding Document (HEQC: 2001) of the HEQC identifies "knowledge based community service" as one of the three areas for the accreditation and quality assurance (QA) of HE along with teaching and research.

HEQC Programme Accreditation and Institutional Audit Criteria: In May 2001 the HEQC requested that the SL modules supported by CHESP be used to generate CE and SL criteria for Programme Accreditation and Institutional Audits. During 2002 and 2003 CHESP and the HEQC jointly convened several national workshops with HEI stakeholders and commissioned the drafting of standards for the Quality Management of SL based on the data generated through the CHESP monitoring, evaluation and research of SL modules. 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)

3.1.1 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)

Selected criteria for Institutional Audits (HEQC: 2004c, 2004d)

CRITERION 7

(iv) In the case of institutions with service learning[2] 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 monitor arrangements to gauge the impact and outcomes of service learning programmes on the institution, as well as on other participating constituencies. (HEQC, 2004a: 11)

CRITERION 18

Quality-related arrangements for community engagement are formalised 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:
(i)   Policies and procedures for the quality management of community engagement.
(ii) Integration of policies and procedures for community engagement with those for teaching and learning and research, where appropriate.
(iii) Adequate resources allocated to facilitate quality delivery in community engagement.
(iv) Regular review of the effectiveness of quality-related arrangements for community engagement. (HEQC, 2004a: 19)

Publications: The following publications were generated in collaboration with the HEQC and CHE:

• *Report to Parliament (CHE: 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.
• *CHE Consultative Forum (Lazarus: 2001).* In 2001 the CHE 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 (CHE: 2004).* In August 2004 the CHE 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".

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2 'Service-learning' appears without the hyphen in the HEQC documents.

- *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 SL at an institutional, faculty, programme and module/ course level and is based on the monitoring, evaluation and research of pilot SL 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 build the capacity of academic staff to include SL 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 compilation of SL case studies from different academic disciplines and is intended to illustrate how the principles of good practice of SL are implemented within these disciplines and to draw lessons from these case studies.

National Conference on CE: In September 2006 the HEQC and CHESP hosted the first national conference, in South Africa, on CE in higher education. Speakers included Ms Naledi Pandor, Minister of Education, Premier Ebrahim Rasool, Premier of the Western Cape, Major Helen Zille, Executive Major of Cape Town and Vice Chancellors and CE scholars from Ghana, India, Mexico, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The conference was attended by more than 200 delegates representing all 23 public and a number of private HEIs 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 conceptualisation, implementation and quality management of CE and SL in SA HE and to develop recommendations for advancing CE and SL. Papers presented at this conference and the reports and recommendations from working groups are available on the HEQC and CHESP websites.

Department of Education (DoE) Initiatives

Since the start of the CHESP initiative a close working relationship was developed with the HE Branch of the National Department of Education (DoE). Seminars on SL have been held within the DoE and a session on SL was organised as part of the DoE Curriculum Conference in April 2004. In December 2000 the DoE requested that CHESP draft policy guidelines for CE in HE. Based on CHESP research, interviews with key HE stakeholders, two national reference group workshops and reviews by two local and two international scholars, draft policy guidelines were submitted to the DoE in 2003. Unfortunately these have not yet been released for comment. During the September 2006 HEQC/CHESP Conference on CE in HE the Minister pledged her support for CE and indicated that the DoE are ready to consider earmarked funding for CE.

Review of the CHESP Initiative

In January 2007, eight years after starting the CHESP initiative, it was considered timely to commission an external review to gauge the impact of CHESP on SA HE at a programmatic (course), institutional and national level (Mouton & Wildschut, 2007). The aims of the impact assessment were:

- To assess whether the expected outcomes of a representative sample of the SL modules supported by CHESP have been realised.

- To assess the overall impact of the CHESP initiative both at the institutional level as well as the systemic level (HE sector level).
- To assess – in a more qualitative sense – which models of CE and SL have been supported and "institutionalised" through the CHESP initiative and what their status is in terms of the international scholarship in this area.

Key findings of the review included the following:

Impact at Programmatic (Course) Level

At a course level the major impact of SL is on academic staff, students, participating communities and service agencies. Given that the focus of the review was on the impact of CHESP on HE, discussion in this section will be limited to academic staff and students. Thirty-seven module convenors were interviewed who were sampled in a systematic manner to represent the full spectrum of module convenors supported through CHESP.

Impact on Academic Staff

The module convenors interviewed indicated that they had benefited in six key ways by being involved in CHESP:

Teaching and Learning: Twelve of the module convenors described how their teaching had improved as a result of their involvement with CHESP. They explained that these improvements occurred as their approach to teaching methodology had broadened – they now had a new mode of teaching and had become more learner-centred or were using problem-based learning. There were numerous responses where interviewees related how their knowledge of assessment had improved. In addition, some module convenors indicated that they had benefited by the quality assurance initiative of CHESP and had gained from using reflection in their modules in order to learn from students and improve their courses.

Personal: Ten module convenors indicated that being involved with CHESP resulted in personal development. They talked about an improvement in their knowledge on the issue of community service and SL. They also mentioned that being involved in the SL modules improved their project management abilities, planning and presentation skills. One of the convenors stated that involvement in SL improved her chance of being promoted to a senior position.

Research: Three module convenors claimed that because of their involvement with CHESP and SL they were embarking on PhDs in the area of SL. Two module convenors indicated that they were busy with articles or research on SL. One of the convenors stated that she had contributed to the HEQC/CHESP publication *Service Learning in the Disciplines: Lessons from the Field* (HEQC/CHESP: 2007). Another module convenor indicated that she had become interested in qualitative research since her CHESP involvement.

Networking: Networking was raised as a benefit by nine convenors. There were various kinds of networking that they found beneficial i.e. national and international networking, within institution networking (i.e. across disciplines which usually do not intersect) and also networks with community partners.

Access to resources/ Resource Centre: Convenors benefited from CHESP resources and by receiving funding which allowed them to access overseas expertise and resources as well. In particular, many positive comments were made about the CHESP capacity building resources developed in collaboration with the HEQC.

Monitoring and Evaluation Skills: Convenors raised the value of the CHESP monitoring, evaluation and research programme (MERP) and the structure of the narrative report which aided the reviewing and development of modules after the evaluation was complete.

Impact on Students

During the course of the CHESP monitoring, evaluation and research programme rigorous and systematic data were collected of representative samples of students involved in SL-courses. Table 4 shows student responses to their involvement in SL (Mouton & Wildschut, 2004). In general terms, the interviews conducted with students during the 2007 CHESP review re-affirmed findings generated through the CHESP monitoring, evaluation and research programme. Broadly speaking, benefits to students can be divided into two areas – academic and social/cultural.

Academic: The key areas of academic benefit to students were: putting theory into practice; greater understanding of the course content; improved writing skills; and improved thinking at a conceptual level.

Social/cultural: Students involved with SL benefitted in the following way: improved tolerance towards other races; developing relationships with people across racial and economic barriers; developing good communication skills; breaking down stereotypes of people; relying on people from other language groups; resolving conflict; time management; and managing fear and stress.

Table 4: Student experiences of and attitudes towards SL (N = 393)

Statement	% agree	% neutral	% disagree
1. All university courses should involve a community component	84	13	3
2. Community participation helped to improve my leadership skills	76	19	5
3. The course helped me to learn how to plan and complete a project	74	20	6
4. I benefited from interacting with community members from a different cultural background	74	22	4
5. Community work made me aware of some of my own stereotypes	71	22	7
6. Community participation showed me how I could become more involved in a community	90	82	
7. The community appreciated university's involvement	72	23	5
8. The community work benefited the community	74	18	8
9. I won't volunteer or participate in the community after the course	15	18	67

Factors Promoting and Constraining the Implementation of SL

The following factors were identified by participants as promoting and constraining the implementation of SL (Mouton & Wildschut: 2007; 2004).

Promoting Factors

- Good relationships and existing links with partners
- Financial support (e.g. from CHESP; Faculty; University
- Careful planning, strong and supportive coordination
- Highly motivated students
- Assistance with logistics
- Access to people with good knowledge of SL
- Support in terms of student/ community officer/ support unit
- Good relationships with other institutions, and
- International linkages

Constraining Factors

- Limited financial support
- Poor planning and hurried implementation
- Partnership difficulties
- Heavy workloads of students
- Political tensions in communities
- Logistical issues such as transport and timetabling
- Lack of participation in partnership activities
- Cultural and language differences amongst students
- Class sizes and
- Lack of departmental commitment to SL

Impact at an Institutional Level

Assessing CHESP's impact at the institutional level and the extent to which it has supported the institutionalisation of SL at South African universities constituted one of the main objectives of the CHESP review. At a national level, the acceptance by the HEQC of the CHESP *Good Practice Guide and Self Evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service Learning* (HEQC/ CHESP:2006a) created the required demand environment within which institutions have to "comply". On the "supply" side, JET supported institutions in various ways to assist them to build and sustain the necessary capacity to meet this demand.

Key findings:

- Institutions generally acknowledge the critical role that CHESP has played in putting SL on the HEI agenda in South Africa.
- Although some flexibility was given to HEIs with regard to how they used their grants, the restraints and funding criteria were not always considered to be appropriate.
- The CHESP model of engagement with HEIs was successful at some institutions but has not produced sustained expansion of SL at others.
- The CHESP triad "model" of SL has unfortunately resulted in a negative reaction at some institutions while at a few institutions SL modules are running according the CHESP model.
- The institutions manage SL either in a decentralised (majority) or centralised way. However, in both models a centralised unit is engaging with academics involved in SL.

- Those interviewed indicated that there were many benefits to being involved in CHESP but also raised some concerns.
- Institutions made strategic recommendations that clearly requested CHESP to work more closely with the Department of Education and lift research higher on to their agenda.

Impact at a National Level

"Our review has repeatedly affirmed the role and impact of CHESP at the national level. JET has managed, in various ways, to successfully advocate for SL as a legitimate domain of endeavour in teaching and learning. Through individual advocacy, exposure of local stakeholders to international experts in this field and regular workshops and conferences, JET has managed to keep SL on the national agenda and strengthened the resolve of individual champions of SL to promote its wider acceptance in the system" (Mouton & Wildschut: 2007).

Perhaps the single most concrete demonstration of CHESP's impact at the policy level, was the publication of the *Guide to Good Practice and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service Learning. (HEQC/CHESP: 2006a).* This Guide, which resulted from the extensive work done through the CHESP monitoring, evaluation and research programme was recognised by the HEQC as the official guide to quality assurance (QA) in this field. The criteria for QA in CE incorporated by the HEQC in its Criteria for QA and used in institutional audits are consistent with this guide. The responses of many institutional respondents confirmed that this Guide is used at universities both as a QA tool and in capacity-building workshops. (Mouton & Wildschut: 2007)

CHESP's impact at the national level is also illustrated by the fact that the Minister of National Education publicly reiterated her support for CE and SL in various recent speeches and it also seems as if there is an appreciation for the need to allocate specific and additional funds for CE and SL activities under the general funding formula (Mouton & Wildschut: 2007).

Impact on CE and SL Scholarship

There is no doubt that CHESP's impact on SL scholarship in South Africa has been positive, significant and timely. Before 1998 very little scholarship on the specific area of SL is found in academic journals in the country. Articles on experiential learning, co-operative education, action research, community service and so on abounded, but no specific reference to service learning was made. Soon after the initial formation of CHESP in 1999, conference papers, reports and eventually journal articles started to appear, which clearly had their roots in the CHESP monitoring, evaluation and research programme. More recently, a number of Masters (4) and Doctoral theses (2 under way) were added to this emerging field of scholarship. It is fair to say that had CHESP not supported scholars in various ways through financial support by organising conferences and bringing international experts to the country and facilitating capacity-building workshops, very little of this would have happened and certainly not in such a short period of time (Mouton & Wildschut: 2007).

Our analysis has highlighted the following strengths and weaknesses of this nascent body of scholarship (Mouton & Wildschut: 2007):

- It is still a very small body of scholarship that is produced by an even smaller core of scholars.
- It is largely a local scholarship, producing journal articles in predominantly local journals.

- More international collaboration and publications in overseas journals will most likely change this.
- SL scholarship tends to be a-theoretical, very descriptive and sometimes bordering on the anecdotal and impressionistic. This seems to be inherent to the domain as it is, at this stage, a practice-driven field of inquiry and populated by practitioners rather than theoreticians.
- The quality of local scholarship is regarded – by three prominent scholars – to be rather weak and thin.

Future Direction

Both the HEQC/CHESP Conference on CE in HE held in September 2006 and the CHESP review (Mouton & Wildschut: 2007) identified a number of areas for advancing CE and SL in SA HE. Of these the most critical and all encompassing areas appear to be continued capacity building, scholarship and research and networking.

Building Capacity for CE and SL

Since CHESP was essentially a pilot initiative, not all SA HEIs benefited directly from the initiative. As CE and SL expands in HEIs across the country more academic staff would need support with the conceptualisation and implementation of SL. Through the CHESP initiative a cadre of human resource expertise, exemplar case studies and resource materials have been developed that should be made available and accessible to all SA HEIs. Utilising these resources the stage is set to take CE and SL to scale in SA HEIs. In order to formalise and institutionalise capacity building programmes it is suggested that these programmes be linked to accredited Higher Education Studies programmes where possible.

Scholarship and research on CE and SL

In some respects the CHESP initiative has kick-started research on CE and SL. It is suggested that this research be expanded and deepened. The following targeted support for scholarship and research was identified during the CHESP review (Mouton & Wildschut: 2007).

- Assisting scholars with the publication of SL articles in local and especially international journals
- Facilitating collaboration with international scholars to encourage co-authorship
- Encouraging deeper theoretical and conceptual reflection on CE and SL as a domain
- More continuous documentation of case studies as learning materials for SL courses.

Networking

Continued networking at various levels was identified as important. This includes networking within and across academic departments, faculties, and HEIs. It was suggested that regional and national conferences on CE and SL be continued. At a national level, networking and collaboration have been primarily with the HEQC and the DoE to a lesser extent. It was suggested that networking and collaboration with the DoE should be increased and strengthened and that networking should be expanded to include organisations such as Higher Education South Africa (HESA), the South African Union of Students (SAUS), the National Research Foundation (NRF), the National Development Agency (NDA), and the South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO). In addition to forming closer working relationships with existing organisations it has been suggested that consideration be given to establishing a South African universities community engagement alliance.

Conclusion

Evidence suggests that the CHESP initiative has had a significant impact on CE and SL in South African Higher Education at a programmatic, institutional, national and scholarly level. It has contributed to the development of a cadre of human resource expertise in CE and SL, supported the development of exemplar case studies in terms of institutional audits, policies, strategies, organisational structures and programmatic activities in the form of SL courses. At a national level the CHESP initiative contributed towards the inclusion of CE and SL in the HEQC's programme accreditation and institutional audit criteria and generated several resource materials including *A Guide to Good Practice and Self-evaluation Instruments for Managing the Quality of Service Learning* (HEQC/CHESP:2006a) to assist HEIs with the conceptualisation, implementation and quality management of SL.

Although the impact of CHESP has been significant it must be emphasised that as a pilot initiative, working with a handful of HEIs, its achievements have only scratched the surface of the work that needs to be done. At best it has created an awareness of CE and SL as an integral part of the academy and laid the foundations for advancing CE and SL in all SA HEIs. Critical areas for advancing CE and SL in the immediate future will be building the capacity of HEIs and academics to institutionalise CE and SL, expanding and deepening the scholarship of CE and SL and increasing and expanding networking and collaboration within and between HEI and between appropriate national organisations.

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