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Knowledge as Enablement – NPO Focus
NRF Grant No. 77412
Reference: CEP201010140000018098
Grant holder: Prof. Mabel Erasmus

Annual Progress Report
Community Engagement Programme 2011

Research Aims and Objectives

Explain how the aims/objectives of the funded project are being achieved and if there were any deviations made. Provide an interpretation of the results obtained and link this to the aims/objectives of the project.

Title of Project: "Knowledge as Enablement – NPO Focus"

The overarching **aim** of this three-year project is to search for ways in which Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) sector can establish long-term, research-based, collaborative engagements that will be mutually empowering and enabling through joint, reciprocal knowledge-based activities and capacity-building.

In the application the broad **purpose** of this collaborative knowledge-building endeavour is stated as "reciprocal building, sharing and utilisation of knowledge for mutual enablement and capacity-building".

A number of **objectives** for participatory research (in the spirit of collaborative meaning-making for mutual empowerment) have been identified during a number of workshops in which NPO representatives, HE staff members (mostly from the UFS) and one representative of the Free State government participated. The following have been identified as objectives for Year One (2011):

Baseline study of the selected NPOs

1. Study the nature, scope, and functioning of selected NPOs, including the specific challenges that they face.
2. Undertake an 'audit' of the strengths, social capital and knowledge that the various NPOs have at their disposal.
3. Map the relationships of these NPOs with other sectors of society (government, business, civil society and other NPOs), as well as the various community-oriented programmes that they are involved in.

Progress, results and interpretation

In order to find synergy and rapport among research team members a **first workshop** was held on 11 February 2011. Researchers were from various universities, but mainly from the UFS. It is noteworthy that the number of NPO staff members that attended was smaller than in the case of workshops of the preceding NPO research and development project (funded by a Charitable Trust during 2010) where the focus was specifically on capacity-building for and by the NPO sector.

A data-gathering instrument for the baseline study had to be designed and developed. The team members

had a brainstorming session about this and suggestions were collected by means of individual and group feedback (on flip charts).

The matters of ethics of and ground rules for the NPO research project were also discusses.

An attempt was made to get participants to form smaller research sets, but since these had not yet been formed out of the larger group it was not quite successful.

In order for those researchers who intended to enroll for post-graduate studies to understand the application and registration process of the School of Higher Education Studies Dr Victor Teise of the School was invited to explain and answer questions.

The **second workshop** of the year was held on 15 June 2011. Several new persons were invited who were considered to add new perspectives. The workshop was lively and somewhat chaotic. A draft of the data-gathering instrument was presented for verification by participants. When the matter of budgeting was presented, I realised that I could not give much guidance on this since too little was known about who will be doing what where and when at that stage. The project leader (still me) presented an outline of Community-Based Research that would form the broad paradigm for the research. On the afternoon before, a session was supposed to take place during which researchers would present their research ideas, but only three persons could attend. The project was off to a slow start. Early days.

For the **third meeting of the team** it was decided that the Community Engagement conference that was held in East London from 8 to 10 November 2011 would serve as an opportunity to gather, learn and share. Two of the team members who attended were NPO managers. Three (other) team members presented papers at the conference.

I hoped to be able to present on progress of the project at the conference, but not enough research within the baseline study phase had been conducted at that stage to justify it.

Towards the end of the first year it was evident to me that academic staff members involved in the project were under severe workload pressure and could not achieve the goals that they have set for themselves by then. A sense of quiet desperation gripped me and I considered ending the project there and then. Fortunately, with the new year (2012), help arrived in the form of a new research assistant, and there was hope again. In the beginning of 2012 several baseline interviews were conducted, transcribed and verified with participants. This phase of the project, which was envisaged for 2012, are now underway and are already integrated with the second phase, i.e. where specific research projects are being negotiated between researchers and NPO staff.

Milestones and achievements

List all the specific milestones as in the original application.

Stipulate if they have been achieved. If not, please provide a brief explanation.

Please refer to the above outline of the two workshops and the Community Engagement Conference, which are considered to be milestones.

In addition, the collaborative development of instruments for data-gathering for purposes of the baseline study can be regarded as an achievement; without these the project could not get started and would not have a means of establishing itself as a unifying, collaborative endeavour. The survey instrument for the

NPO sector participants include items that allow for gathering data about objectives 1. to 3. That has been stated in the project outline (see section above).

In the end three separate documents were produced: (1) a **Project Information Document** that explains what the project is about and outline ethical issues; (2) a survey instrument referred to as **Profile: Non-Profit Organisation**; and (3) a questionnaire referred to as **Profile: Researcher**. It was considered appropriate to also allow the NPO staff member to ask questions to the researcher about his/her track record, research interests, priorities, and expected NRF project-related opportunities. This serves the purposes of trust-building and achieving mutual understanding.

A document outlining ethical ground rules to be established and upheld between organisations was developed by the attorney firm that is contracted by the UFS to handle its legal matters. Team members contributed to this document by giving input in groups during one of the workshops. An acceptance form was also developed. The level of formality of these documents, however, has prohibited them from being used at this stage of the research process. This might change in future when the need for such formalisation of research collaboration might become appropriate.

Research highlights

Briefly explain any research highlights that arose during the knowledge production process and the significance thereof.

The project leader and two team members presented papers at the **Service-Learning Research Colloquium: Service-Learning Innovations for the Next Decade** which were held in Stellenbosch on 20 - 21 April 2011.

Prof. Mabel Erasmus: *Strengthening service-learning collaboration through community-based research.* (The paper specifically outlined the NRF project and how the intention is to create a collaborative research platform between universities and the NPO sector, with service learning as one of the key linkages.)

Dr John Boughey: *Prepare to engage: The student voice.*

Mrs Iese Seale and Ms Annamarie Welman: *Nominal Group Technique: A vigorous data-gathering method for service-learning research.*

Four articles have been prepared for publication:

Cloete, E. and M.A. Erasmus. Service learning as part of tertiary music programmes in South Africa: a framework for implementation. (Accepted for publication.)

Cloete, E. and M. Viljoen. Service learning, social capital and music: Orchestrating social interaction through learning. (Submitted for publication.)

Boughey, J.D. Local Very Small and Micro Enterprises and Higher Education: Possibilities for Partnership? (Submitted for publication.)

Boughey, J.D. ProAct: an integrated model for Action Research and Project Management for capacitating universities and their communities in the co-production of useful knowledge.

One Master's thesis had been completed (with distinction), i.e. that of Elene Cloete, with the title "The Implementation and Coordination of Service Learning within a Higher Education Music Programme: A Qualitative Approach." The study is based on collaboration between the UFS and the local NPO the Mangaung String Programme.

The following papers were read by team members at the **Community Engagement Conference: The changing role of South African universities in development** (8 – 10 November 2011, East London):

Mr Grey Magaiza: Deconstructing the Ivory Tower: Community-based research as community empowering in resource poor communities.

Dr John Boughey: Theories and Structures.

Mr Craig Rowe: The sustainability of service learning and community engagement in the post-CHESP era.

The following **PhD proposals** have either been accepted, submitted or are ready for submission:

Boughey, J.D. A comprehensive university at the heart of its community: Establishing a framework for engagement. (Accepted.)

Magaiza, G. Youth inclusion in development: Social entrepreneurship and its implication for youth development in Qwaqwa, Eastern Free State. (Submitted.)

Muzambi, T. An education and training framework for non-profit organizations in the Northern Cape. (In preparation.)

Pitso, P.L. Batho Pele: Service learning as a tool for preparing students for the public sector in the Free State. (In preparation.)

The following is a summary report on the baseline data-gathering thus far that was prepared by new research (student) assistant who was appointed in January 2012:

1. Project Description

The overarching research question that will be dealt with is how Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and the NPO sector can establish long-term, research-based collaborative engagements that will be mutually empowering and enabling through joint, reciprocal knowledge-based activities and capacity building.

This proposal is based on the contention that HEIs have limited knowledge of the NPO sector and are therefore unable to be fully responsive to the challenges that NPOs face. It is also very likely that staff and students from HEIs do not have an adequate grasp of the experiential understanding, contextual community knowledge and practical know-how that NPO practitioners have, and hence do not appreciate the crucial contributions that they can make with regard to meaning-making processes aimed at improving some of the harsh South African realities.

The information generated by the research should be beneficial to both HEIs and the NPOs. Knowledge regarding NPOs, specifically their challenges and information about what they are doing, will be invaluable to HEIs. At the same time, the research must benefit the NPOs with knowledge to improve their practice and strengthen their functioning.

The research takes place in close collaboration with the NPOs, as their inputs are crucial. The research will thus not be '*about'* them but '*with'* them. The research project is currently in its second year. From the beginning of 2012 the main focus of the research project has been the base line studies, where the researchers interview representatives from different NPOs and vice versa. For these purposes the researchers make use of three different documents to lead them in the interview. These research instruments include an Information Document, a NPO Profile Survey and a Researcher Profile Questionnaire.

2. Completed Base Line Studies (2012)

Researcher	NPO	Information about NPO	Progress
Elanie Myburgh	Reach (Patrick Kaars)	Reach is a voluntary organisation assisting youth and communities to discover their strengths and capabilities to empower themselves and become strong and respected role models in thriving communities.	Completed interview, transcribing, in the process of proofreading.
Researcher	**NPO**	**Information about NPO**	**Progress**
Moodi Matsoso	Nova Institute (Hendrik Snyman)	Nova strives to engage in a participatory research and development processes with low-income households in order to gain deeper insight into the real-life nature of poverty.	Completed interview, transcribing, in the process of proofreading.
Pulani Pitso	DEDI (Thokozile Dube)	DEDI empowers communities through promoting and enhancing the survival, development, care and protection of vulnerable children. eDumela Article – 22 February (https://intranet.ufs.ac.za/_layouts/NewsletterTeaser/Newsletter.aspx?nid=2#)	Completed interview, transcribing, proofreading, participant verification.
Elize Janse van Rensburg Suzette Nel	Neo Day Care (Paulus Pheku Christian Lebaka)	Neo Day-Care focuses mainly on orphans, vulnerable children and the elderly. Their core services include an aftercare programme, parental guidance and support programme, the soup kitchen and support for early childhood development.	Completed interview, in the process of transcribing.

3. Baseline Studies in Progress

Researcher	NPO	Information about NPO
Pulani Pitso	MUCPP (Benedict Mokoena)	MUCPP caters for its community in an astounding variety of areas including, rural community health and social care; sustainable agriculture, development support; economic development policy assistance; health systems research and much more.
Ielse Seale Karen Venter	New Horizons (Palesa Mareka Marlon Gathree)	New Horizons focus on caring for the sick and frail people in their community.

Synthesis of research findings (final year of funding)

Synthesis of the research findings for entire duration of the project (for projects in their final year of the NRF funding only).

Provide a synthesis of the results focusing on the realization of the aims/objectives and specific milestones.

n/a at this stage.

Research impacts

Describe the impact that your research has made in terms of societal benefits.

How have you ensured that your data have been stored, used and disseminated?

Provide any recommendations for policy/management practices/further research endeavours, etc. based on your research findings.

The highly complex set of outcomes of the NRF-related activities of 2011 is not easily assessed at this stage. The various collaborative engagements that we rely on are deeply embedded in the existing service learning partnerships between various staff members and NPOs. An "impact" study in terms of the

outcomes envisaged will only be feasible towards the end of the project. Data are stored safely and will only be used and disseminated when research outcomes become available.

Participating members

All team members excluding students should be listed in this section.

The NRF-team consists of the following people:

1. Barnard, Jacoba (Student research assistant from January 2012)
2. Boughey, Dr. John (University of Zululand)
3. Cloete, Elene (Music, UFS, currently studying in Belgium)
4. Du Plessis, Dora (web master)
5. Dube, Thoko (the NPO DEDI)
6. Magaiza, Grey (Sociology, UFS, Qwaqwa campus)
7. Jacobs, Mandie (from 2012) (Nursing, UFS)
8. Janse Van Rensburg, Elize (Occupational Therapy, UFS)
9. Williamson, Julie
10. Kaars, Patrick (the NPO REACH)
11. Makheta, Dikgapane (Service Learning, UFS)
12. Matsoso, Moodi (Community Engagement, UFS, Qwaqwa campus)
13. Meyer-Adams, Ernestine (Community Engagement, University of Johannesburg)
14. Mokoena, Benedict (MUCPP)
15. Muzambi, Talent (PhD student)
16. Myburgh, Elanie (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, UFS)
17. Nel, Suzette (Occupational Therapy, UFS)
18. Netshandama, Vhonani (Community Engagement, University of Venda)
19. Pitso, Pulane (PhD student, Office of the Premier, Free State)
20. Prinsloo, Mari (from 2012) (Nursing, UFS)
21. Rowe, Craig (Community Engagement, Monash SA)
22. Seale, Ielse (Nursing, UFS)
23. Van der Westhuizen, Pieter (from 2012) (Hospitality Management, University of Johannesburg)
24. Van Schalkwyk, Dr. Frances (Central University of Technology)

Note: Prof. Doreen Atkinson and Ms Nadine Lake are no longer available to participate due to time constraints.

Benefits of collaboration

At this stage the main benefit of collaboration between researchers and NPO members that results from participation in the NRF projects is relationship- and specifically trust-building. Project-related activities encourage team members to interact and communicate more regularly than would be the case without this additional incentive.

Impact of funding on the project

- Without the NRF funding very few of the above-mentioned activities would be possible.
- Collaborative work would be much more limited and thus relationship-building would not be a vigorous as it is now.
- The fact that a number of team members were able to participate in the Community Engagement conference in East London was particularly meaningful in the sense that we were all able to experience a "sense of community" with the broader South African community engagement movement.
- Researchers find the funding made available for staff development and student bursaries useful and encouraging.

Contact Details

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