

A Review of 10 years of Engagement at the NMMU

George de Lange

Engagement Colloquium

4 November 2015

Presentation Contents

- 10 Years of Institutionalising Engagement –Important Milestones
- Setting the context for NMMU Engagement practices
- Institutional Characteristics and Enabling factors that have contributed to the successful institutionalisation of engagement
- Unpacking NMMU Engagement
 - How is the NMMU and its staff and students engaging?
 - How successful have we been in positioning the NMMU as an engaged institution?
 - What are our current engagement strengths that have emerged over the past 10 years?

10 Years of Institutionalising NMMU Engagement - Milestones

- Position Paper on Engagement at the NMMU
- The Underlying Philosophy of Engagement at the NMMU
- The NMMU Engagement Conceptual Framework
- Establishment of NMMU Engagement Committee
- Policy and Guidelines for Engagement at NMMU
- NMMU Engagement Excellence Awards policy
- Positioning of engagement under the DVC:R&E
- Vision 2020 – Strategic Priority 4- Engagement Strategic Plan – To Position NMMU as an Engaged Institution that contributes to a sustainable future through critical scholarship
- Inclusion of engagement into the recognition and rewards systems of the NMMU

Milestones (Contd.)

- HEQC Audit – Engagement Improvement Plan
- Development of policies linked to engaged teaching ,research and professional/discipline based service provision
- Policy on the Establishment of Engagement entities
- Development of the NMMU Engagement management information system
- Establishment of Unit for Engagement Information and Development
- HSRC and CHET Engagement research projects at NMMU
- Establishment of Engagement Advancement Fund- project funding

Milestones (Contd.)

- 5 year review of engagement entities
- First NMMU Engagement Colloquium
- Seminar on Socially Engaged Scholarship
- NMMU 10 Year Anniversary Celebration- Sharing of Engagement Story in 10 lines
- Engaged scholarship – Engagement publication -conceptualisation workshop
- Engagement publication writing retreat
- Second engagement colloquium on engagement

Setting the context for Engagement within in a
Comprehensive University

The Shift in the Nature of knowledge production

Shift in the nature of knowledge production

- Universities are no longer society's primary generator and transmitter of knowledge . They form part of a highly complex learning society that involves many sources of knowledge that is generated in diverse settings by a variety of contributors.
- Trend towards knowledge being produced in the context of utility and application – in addition to the traditional more controlled context of an academic discipline and its paradigms.
- Technology has made access to knowledge, data, expertise and information widely available - academics and students can now draw on dynamic and interactive and collaborative knowledge networks from a range of communities external to the university.

Gibbons notion of the 'agora'

- This Agora is comprised of a dynamic problem generating – problem solving environment *situated on the periphery* of the mainstream academic paradigm/silos.
- Populated by academics, students and publics - practitioners and stakeholders from specific communities – each of whom may inhabit different worlds – who interact effectively into transforming a problem into a set of potential research questions and activities.
- A space designed to generate socially robust knowledge - knowledge that is demonstrably reliable in a broad range of contexts and not just in laboratory conditions.

Agora (continued)

- The problem around which they engage is referred to as the **boundary object** - and the space where engagement happens – the **transactional space** – which is characterised by reciprocity and two-way interaction.
- Within context of the NMMU - The Research and Engagement Entities (e.g. Cipset, Aeon, CDU, CCS, CCT, UFED, CSS/AMTC/INNOVENTON/Entsa etc.) are **enablers of transactional spaces around boundary objects**.
- They initiate, facilitate and coordinate opportunities for the co-creation of new knowledge involving external knowledge sources and networks in the various communities the NMMU engages with.
- Entities are drivers of opportunities for multi-disciplinary campus-community partnerships and for engaged scholarship and the co-creation of knowledge.

Enabling factors that have contributed to the successful institutionalisation of engagement at NMMU

- Engagement recognised as an important core function that is integrated into the other two core functions of the university ie.it is not a stand alone “bolt on activity”
- Inclusion of engagement in the mission statement and strategic plan of the NMMU
- A Comprehensive University and Anchor Institution within the Metro
- The ability of the institution to combine discipline based knowledge, technology and innovation to respond to external problems
- Its Campuses being located at multiple sites and being user friendly
- Embedded in Curriculum- A PQM that espouses curricular multiplicity and the use of multiple modes of teaching and learning, research and service provision
- Policies that recognise the existence and value of multiple types and forms of knowledge as well as policies that acknowledge the value of multiple modes/sites of knowledge production
- Individuals/Engagement Champions throughout the university playing leadership roles in engagement

Enablers/Drivers

- Faculty Entities and Chairs which facilitate this type of work
- Engagement Reward and Recognition system
- Engagement work being valued celebrated , communicated and profiled internally and externally
- Provision of Project Seed Funding
- Executive and Senior leadership support of Engagement
- The belief that engagement enriches and adds value to the teaching and learning, research, innovation and the service functions of the university as well as to the development of graduate attributes.
- An understanding of the importance institutional responsiveness, accountability and of developing and maintaining partnerships with external stakeholders.
- Centralised Institutional Engagement support and coordination structures
- Student requests for more volunteering, community service and experiential learning opportunities

“Unpacking” NMMU Engagement

1. How is the NMMU and its staff and students engaging?
2. How successful have we been in positioning the NMMU as an Engaged Institution?
3. What are our current Engagement Strengths that have emerged over the past 10 years.

1. How are the NMMU and its staff and students engaging?

NMMU Engagement activities fall within 4 broad categories

1. Engagement through Community Interaction, Service and Outreach-

programmes and services identified by the university designed to inform local communities or to improve the lives of marginalised sectors of the community. In most cases the initiatives are characterised by a one-way flow of information/expertise to the community who are the recipients.

2. Engagement through professional/discipline-based service provision –

service that relates to the academic discipline/profession which includes partnering and sharing expertise and services to support economic and social development. Involves a two-way flow of information and partnerships for mutual benefit

Engagement Categories (Contd.)

3.Engagement through Teaching and Learning –

the contextualisation of learning in community contexts as well as being part of a community from which learning is gained collaboratively. These activities are characterised by a two-way flow of information , partnerships and mutual benefit.

4.Engagement through research and Scholarship –

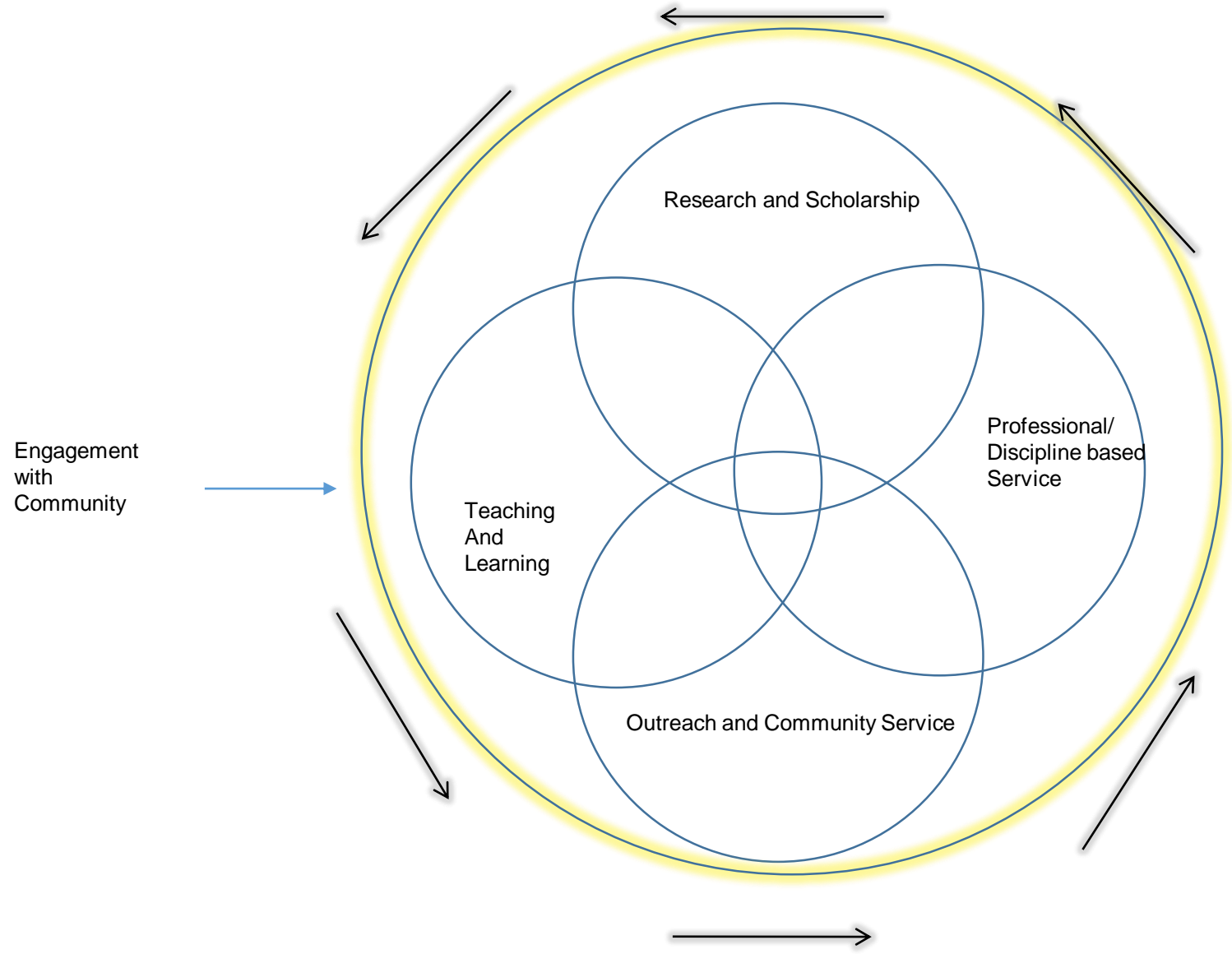
it involves research partnerships leading to direct benefit of external partners, the outcomes of the research often leads to improved evidence-based practice. Involves partnerships and collaboration, two-way sharing of information and decision making.

The NMMU Engagement Conceptual Framework and Typology

Outreach & Community Service	Professional/Discipline Based Service Provision	Teaching and Learning	Research and Scholarship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate Placement • Networking and Partnership Development • Open Days/Careers Fairs • Clinical Service • Non-disciplined based volunteerism • Media Consultation • Outreach programmes to under serviced communities • Winter Schools • Counselling Services • Socio-cultural activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting and professional services • Partner in socio-economic projects • Contribute to public debate/Conferences • Partnerships with local and national agencies • Research based policy recommendations • Expert testimony • Public scholarship • Technology Commercialisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Learning • Work-integrated/Based learning/Clinical Practice • Discipline related Volunteerism • CPD/Customised Programmes/SLP's • Part-time off-campus programmes • Project based learning • Internships • Clinical Practical • Conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory • Action Research • Applied Research • Collaborative Research • Professional Services • Technology Transfer • Contract Research • Evaluation and Impact studies • Problem analysis and solving.

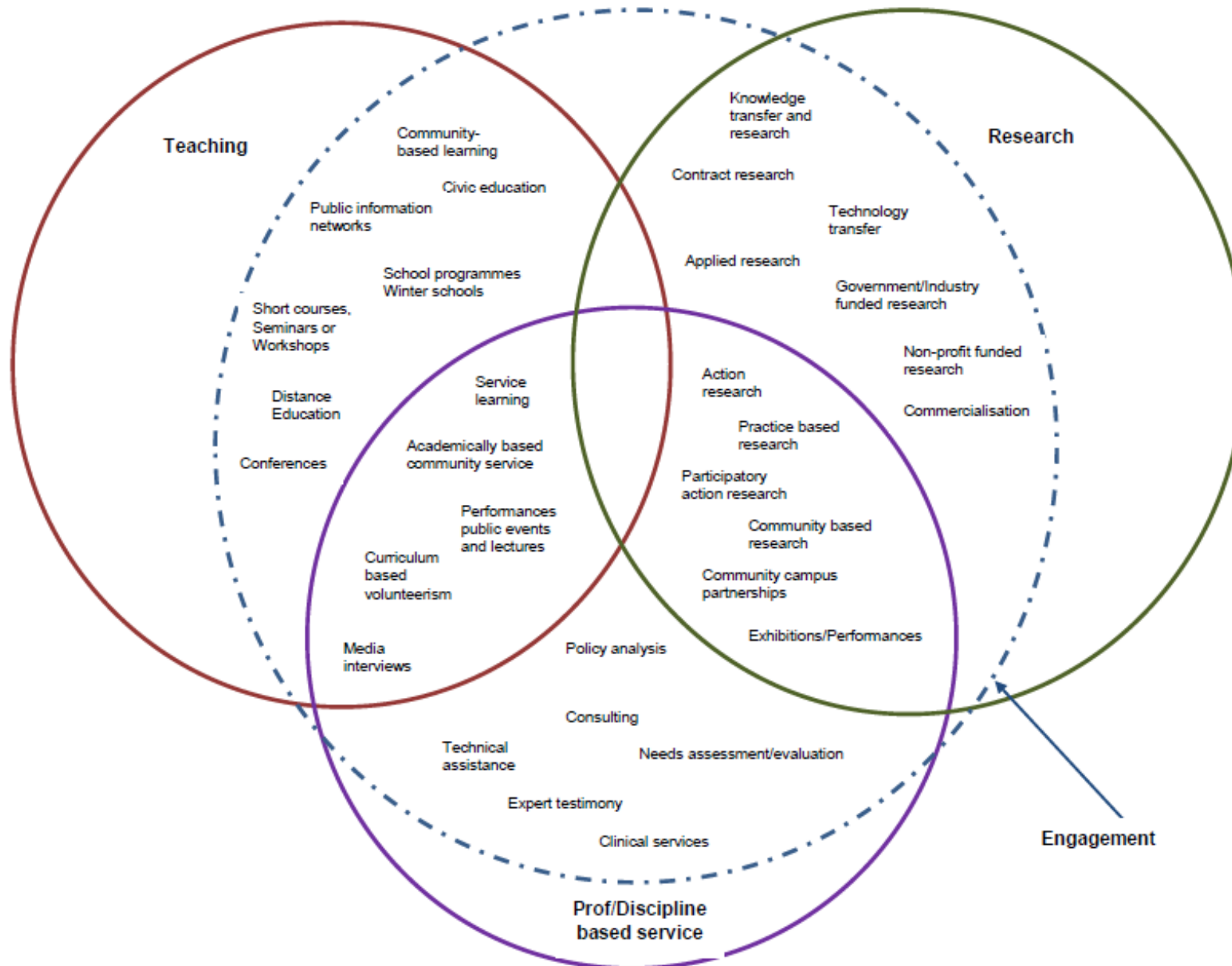
The Continuum of Engagement Activities

- The engagement activities forming part of a specific engagement project/initiative can be placed on a continuum as they often straddle categories and do not only occur within one category. The various forms of engagement activities occurring across the categories are often also interdependent and integrated .
- For example the services offered and activities performed by the Law Clinic or Psychology Clinics(Bambanani Project) straddle three categories (CISO,PDSP, ET)
- The overlapping and integrative nature of engagement activities, as well as the type and form of these activities, falling within the four engagement categories can be depicted by means of Venn diagrams.



Engagement Continuum and Integration of Engagement Categories

INTEGRATION OF ENGAGEMENT



2. Positioning the NMMU as an Engaged University: How successful have we been?

Indicators of the NMMU as an Engaged University:
Carnegie Foundation Engaged Institution Classification Criteria

Carnegie Engagement Classification Framework and Criteria for Engaged Universities

- It is an evidenced-based documentation of institutional practice used for the process of self – assessment and quality improvement of engagement activities
- Institutional documentation is reviewed to determine whether an institution qualifies for recognition as an engaged institution.
- It is based on data collection of an institutions:
mission , policies, plans ,identity, commitment, culture, curriculum and pedagogy, support, recognition and reward systems , professional development mechanisms and resources, community-campus exchanges, and promotion of engaged scholarship internally and externally.

NMMU an Engaged University: Indicators of progress made.

- **Institutional Culture** – Its Mission and Purpose explicitly articulates its commitment to engagement. Academic and Administrative support and leadership is provided for this core function and it is embedded in Institutional Policies.
- **Curriculum and Pedagogy** – Engagement is integrated into the curriculum and research activities and it has become part of its scholarly activities.
- **Institutional Support, Recognition and Rewards** – Staff given the support they need to link scholarship(discovery, teaching, application and integration)to the communities served by the university through the recognition and reward of this form of scholarship.

This is reflected by : Entities and other support structures – Staff development opportunities linked to engagement – Recognition and reward systems that are supportive of the scholarship of engagement, communicating and profiling engagement activities

Engaged institution indicators –progress made

- **Mechanisms and Resources** – Concrete structures(enablers) and specific resources(human and financial) are allocated to support engagement that will survive the pressures of competing priorities. Students are empowered and supported to participate in engagement activities.
- **Community-campus exchanges and partnerships** – Communities and external stakeholders are recognised as complementary partners who have valuable knowledge that they can contribute.
- **Engaged Scholarship is promoted internally by:** Engaging and involving Senior Leadership in promoting SOE – Ensuring that it is valued in terms of reward and recognition – Providing funding for this type of work – Providing capacity development opportunities – Setting standards/criteria for what constitutes high quality engaged scholarship

Indicators contd.

- Institutional evidence of an active promotion of engaged scholarship and an understanding that:
 1. Interdisciplinary, collaborative and engaged scholarship provides opportunities for benefitting the communities served by the university and provides opportunities for external funding and knowledge partnerships.
 2. Students and other external stakeholders are increasingly asking for engaged scholarship curricular activities and experiential learning opportunities.
 3. Demographic, cultural, economic, social and knowledge shifts in the South African society as well as globally are demanding new approaches to teaching and learning, research and problem solving
 4. Engaged scholarship adds value to teaching and learning, research and innovation

Institutionalising Engagement – Lessons learnt

- Emerging engagement scholars are grappling with the tensions between the traditional expertise-driven culture of the academy and the new developing epistemology flowing from the third core function of engagement. The scholarship of engagement is requiring an epistemology that enables going beyond the “expert” model to one of “collaboration”
- Understanding that engagement involves partnerships, mutual benefit and a two-way flow and co-creation of knowledge - which is clearly distinct from service and outreach which involves a one-way flow of information.
- The two-way flow and co-creation of knowledge may result in making the traditional university boundaries, structures, institutional culture, policies and epistemologies unworkable, requiring ongoing modification or creation of new structures and other internal changes.
- A lack of awareness during engagement project planning phase of the potential link to - and integration with the academic core (t/l, r) and the scholarly outputs that could flow from the project.

What are the current engagement strengths

Refer to Handout

Synopsis of NMMU Engagement Strengths

(Handout)

1. Science, Mathematics and Technology (CISO/ET)
2. Citizenship, Humanising Pedagogies, Democratization, Conflict and Poverty (CISO/ET)
3. Manufacturing Technology and Engineering (ET/PDSP/ER)
4. Strategic Energy Technologies (PDSP/ER)
5. Sustainable Human Settlements and Local Economic Development(CISO/ET/PDSP/ER).
6. Ecology, Biodiversity Conservation and Restoration and Earth Stewardship(PDSP/ER)
7. Health and Wellbeing (CISO/PDSP/ER)
8. Teaching and Learning and Curriculum Development (ET)