

A theoretical understanding of student engagement in curriculum review and development

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First received 15/10/12

Accepted for publication 17/01/13

ABSTRACT

The question every academic teaching in a higher education institution should ask is whether education is an investment or an end? The answer to the question highlights the difference between institutional success and student engagement as part of institutional success. The reality of the ever-changing environment is that what academics teach their students today becomes superfluous tomorrow. How students learn and engage becomes just as important as what they learn. The article argues that what Public Administration students should know should be guided by how they learn. The article focuses on student engagement as an important consideration during the process of curriculum review and development, since the relationship between content and how content is engaged with is the foundation for successful lifelong learning.

The article will discuss the multiple studies which have made a positive contribution to understanding the different dimensions involved in and constructive outcomes of student engagement. Specific arguments will support the integrated alignment between student, academic and institution in ensuring a successful higher education experience. The changing role of higher education is highlighted within the context of continued calls for relevancy and applicability in curriculum content. The argument supported throughout the article is that since higher education should consider and reflect the needs of its society, it stands to reason that the student should be an active collaborator in determining what is taught as well as how it is taught. It lies in the how a curriculum is taught

that the principles of student engagement, and thus the concept of lifelong learning, are embedded.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in South Africa is in a state of constant flux of development and assessment. Higher education institutions are asked questions regarding their ability to produce quality students. Although an emphasis might be placed on producing quality students, higher education institutions in South Africa are increasingly also pressured to produce more quality students – to increase their enrolment and throughput rates. Universities should ask themselves whether they are satisfied with the number and quality of students produced, or whether measures should be taken to increase retention and throughput.

The article will question the manner in which higher education institutions challenge and support students through the curriculum as measure of retention and increasing throughput. The reality is that the current job market requires postsecondary education and students are becoming increasingly aware of the necessity to demonstrate the appropriate skills, competencies and knowledge required to perform the task at hand.

However, higher education institutions should ask themselves why time and energy should be invested in determining the key to student success. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh and Whitt (2005:3-4) maintain that students are no longer passive recipients of institutional efforts to change or educate them, but that they are willing to accept the responsibility for gains achieved through postsecondary experiences. Higher education institutions should focus on how they shape their academic, interpersonal and curricular activities to promote or enhance student engagement. Furthermore, lecturers can no longer passively transfer knowledge to students, because by the time the student enters the job market, the knowledge might be outdated. What will be remembered is the manner in which the student was engaged in the curriculum and lecturers are, thus, increasingly tasked with imparting ways to foster learning, rather than merely act as facilitator of student change. Higher education institutions need to focus on both fostering and facilitating learning if student success is an important indicator of institutional success.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Education is a journey and embarking on higher education should imply

that the importance of lifelong learning is a fundamental consideration for any higher education institution and its students. Lifelong learning entails the improvement of knowledge, skills and competencies through a variety of formal, non-formal or informal learning opportunities accessed throughout an individual's life. The purpose of lifelong learning is to ensure active citizenship, personal fulfilment, social inclusion and professional enhancement (Van Dijk 2012:54). Higher education institutions which acknowledge their specific place in the lifelong learning journey will be responsive to both its own institutional needs as well as that of society. Badat (2010:16-17) argues that the responsiveness of higher education should be seen in the context of ensuring economic growth and preparing students for the workplace in order to be productive workers for the economy. *The Education White Paper 3 – A Programme for Higher Education Transformation, 1997*, identifies the chronic mismatch between higher education products and modern economy needs as evident from the shortage of trained graduates in various fields of science, engineering and commerce. Interesting to note is that Section 1.4 of the *White Paper 3, 1997*, specifically states that:

“Higher education has an unmatched obligation, which has not been adequately fulfilled, to help lay the foundations of a critical civil society, with a culture of public debate and tolerance which accommodated differences and competing interests.”

The above implies that higher education should fulfil and address the need for critical thinking and empowerment in order to produce a graduate able and capable of contributing productively to society. Cicarelli (1987:128) states that a higher education institution is where students learn to sharpen their skills in critical thinking and communication in order to transform themselves from self-centered individuals into decent and caring citizens. While the educational paradigm underpinning education in South Africa is outcomes-based education (OBE) Maree and Fraser (2004:4) contend that OBE is based on the assumption that all learners can learn, although not at the same pace or in the same manner.

Habermas (1990) argued for higher education as the *“institution assisting in the construction of a rational society”* (Barnett 2007:65), while the reality is that the current understanding of what constitutes a rational society is complex and subject to interpretation. Thus, the higher education institution cannot provide a single version of a single truth, but should rather be a place where discourse and debate reflect the understanding of the world that is both *“too many and insufficient”* (Barnett 2007:65). While traditionalists bemoan the loss of academic standards or the loss of purity in the mission of higher education, more contemporary academics understand the need for responsiveness towards

the production of a knowledge economy, while being accountable and efficient in that endeavour.

Cretchley and Castle (2001:488) argue that since lifelong learning takes place in a variety of settings using a variety of methods, universities need to acknowledge the importance of, for instance, the workplace as site for the production of knowledge. This indicates the importance of including the community in the curriculum development, delivery and review process. The responsiveness of higher education implies its needed engaged character. Barnett (2007:67) makes provision for four types of engagement, namely non-reflectional (higher education being blind and unreflective); extractional (higher education only engaging in that which serves its own benefit); impositional (where higher education engages society knowingly and with the purpose of realising itself within the expectations set by society); and realisational (where engagement is entered into out of obligation or realisation that the purpose of higher education is towards society). Realisational engagement is needed to ensure a proper alignment between higher education needs and societal/economy needs. So the question might arise as to what the obligation of higher education is? What is its responsibility towards society and itself?

The above is not easy questions to answer, since the conditions faced by higher education have an impact on its ability to realise its obligation/responsibility. Barnett (2007:62) argues that higher education is changing rapidly due to globalisation, the interpenetration of higher education with its wider society, the agendas of participation, access and equal opportunities, the marketisation of higher education and competition. The above is substantiated by the *White Paper 3*, 1997, which states that higher education in South Africa should be increased to broaden participation, while ensuring responsiveness to societal needs and interests. The National Plan for Higher Education (2001:7) asserts that the competition between higher education institutions is most significant in its attempts to attract students and obtain financial support for activities. Again, the argument is supported that the more responsive a higher education institution, the more it will be in a position to engage not only with its society (implying producing more relevant and employable graduates), but also engaging students in the journey of lifelong learning.

Kilfoil (2008:1020-1021) maintains that engaging the student means creating a learning space that would connect the "guru" with the beginner, a space that would allow for self-expression in assessment, debate and dialogue during contact, a space to learn in a structured manner through courses and tutorials, while ensuring that the space is maintained through which information and knowledge flow. Thus, the answer to the question of responsibility might lie in understanding the requirements of graduateness as a result of higher education. Glover, Law and Youngman (2002:303) explain graduateness as "the

description of a set of qualities that usually mark a person who has undertaken a degree course developed under the auspices of nationally monitored quality systems.” Graduateness incorporates specific generic graduate attributes and skills for employability, but should not be seen as context-specific, rather as a demonstration of the ability of the graduate to learn and to continue learning in his/her workplace.

Employability refers to the application of a mix of personal qualities, beliefs, understandings, skilful practices and the ability to reflect on experience in situations of complexity and uncertainty. Griesel and Parker (2009:5) state that employability is influenced by four broad inter-related components, including skilful practices regarding problem solving, communication and lifelong learning, deep understandings of discipline specific knowledge, effectual beliefs about self-worth and personal identity and metacognition which includes the ability to reflect and develop self-awareness. Higher education institutions should not be seen as skills factories, but rather as spaces of engaged learning which produce employable graduates. The tension in higher education lies in balancing job readiness with an unpredictable future, thus implying the need for students to be actively engaged in the process of learning in order to enjoy a state of employability while understanding the importance of lifelong learning. Since the student is such an integral component in the learning process, the concept of student engagement will now be discussed.

WHAT IS STUDENT ENGAGEMENT?

Student engagement is built on two principles, namely determining the amount of time and energy spent by the student on educationally purposeful activities and the amount of time and energy spent by the higher education institution in developing and employing effective educational practices to induce students towards success or doing the right thing (Strydom and Mentz 2010:v). Kuh *et al.* (2005:4) state that time and energy that students spend on activities or tasks should lead to experiences and outcomes that constitute student success. The manner in which the institution allocates human and other resources and organises learning opportunities and services to encourage students to participate and benefit from such activities, should also contribute to student success.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005:17-60) identified the conceptual categories for the different theories of student engagement. These categories include:

- Developmental theories which focus on the nature and content of intra-individual change. Change is perceived as developmental with emphasis on the ways individuals think and behave.

- College impact models describe student change as the product of environmental and inter-individual experiences. Change is attributed to the characteristics of the higher education institution which the student attends. Thus, student change is the product of student-related characteristics, such as academic achievement, socio-economic status, gender or ethnicity; structural and organisational characteristics, including institutional size, control and selection; or environment characteristics, for example academic, political or social climate created by staff and students on campus.

The developmental theories can further be categorised into clusters which deal with psychosocial development, cognitive structural theories, typological models and person-environment interaction theories and models. Psychosocial theories are based on Chickering's seven vectors for identity development (1969). Chickering and Reisser (1993) argue that the vectors clarify student integration by explaining how students reconcile increasing complex ideas, values and people with their own ideas, values and beliefs. The seven vectors include achieving competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity. The questions higher education institutions should ask if what they need to do to facilitate this student engagement process. Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggests the following:

- clarity of institutional objectives and internal consistency of policies, practices and activities;
- institutional size does not restrict opportunity for participation;
- frequent staff-student relationships in diverse settings;
- curricula integrating thought and process;
- teaching is flexible, varied in style and encourages student involvement in learning;
- friendships and student communities become meaningful subcultures; and
- student development programmes and services is offered collaboratively with staff members.

From the above the link between curricula and student identity development becomes apparent. The curriculum should not be only a reflection of the higher education institution, but also of the student it intends to produce through an engaged curriculum.

Cognitive structural theories originate from the work of Jean Piaget (1964) and have subsequently become the cornerstone for describing the nature and processes of change. The construct or meaning which individuals give to their reality during times of change. This has given rise to thinking that the developmental process is hierarchical and that a student will never fit into

his/her 'old' world, since the world now has new meaning. The following are examples of cognitive structural theories:

- Perry's Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development (1998) in which students develop their thinking in the following manner. Firstly dualism describes first encounters with change. Difference in opinions lead to discomfort and ambiguity creeps in. Secondly multiple perspectives are recognised and students admit that holding a different view is not necessarily bad. Thirdly, students come to recognise that knowledge is contextual and relative. This is a transformational change and students develop analytical and critical thinking skills. Fourthly students will be compelled to a relative truth by making choices about, for instance, their career, another person, values or behaviour.
- King and Kitchener's Reflective Judgment Model which tracks student change through three stages. Stage one is pre-reflective thinking, stage two is quasi-reflective thinking and stage three is reflective thinking. The eventual aim is to make students realise that knowledge is neither given nor understood, but constructed (King and Kitchener 2002:39-40).
- Magolda's Epistemological Reflection Model describes knowledge as the product of interaction with lecturers, peers and individual students. Knowing and patterns of knowing are socially constructed which result in four stages of knowing, namely absolute knowing, transitional knowing, independent knowing and contextual knowing (Carney 2002).

The cognitive structural theories thus determine student engagement as a product of individual change and adaptation as a result of their encounters with learning. Ensuring that the learning (through the curriculum) is relevant and contextual will result in positive engagement, which implies a more engaged and successful student.

Typological models describe the differences in the way in which individuals perceive their world and respond to it. David Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning theory (1984) is an example of how two students from different backgrounds will experience higher education differently. Kolb (1984:26) argues that learning should be perceived as a process and not in terms of outcomes. Thus, what is known is never absolute, but formed by and a product of experience. The implication of this on curriculum development is that the outcome of the curriculum is not the primary product of the curriculum, but emphasis should rather be placed on the manner in which the student engaged with the curriculum and it was transformed by his/her experience thereof.

Person-environment interaction theories and models, as posited by Holland (1997), Moos (1991) and Wright and Lopez (2002), focus on the extent to which the environment will have a specific impact on student development.

Here aspects of physical surroundings, attitudes and behaviour of peers, visible organisational goals and support and social climate will determine the level of student engagement and subsequent success (Neufield, Rasmussen, Lopez, Ryder, and Magyar-Moe 2006:2-3). Neufeld *et al.* (2006:3) argue that students will engage with the environment because they perceive a similarity with that environment and will be successful because the initial perception is proven positive. In curriculum development terms, the curriculum presents the environment with which the student will share a similarity or interest, but if the curriculum fails to engage the student, the student will choose to leave or fail the curriculum. Consideration should be given to the fact that the engagement with the curriculum takes place in a complex environment which will also have an impact of the engagement of the student. It should be evident from the above arguments that leaving the student out of the curriculum development and review process implies negating a crucial element in eventual student success.

What the development theories contribute is that there is a level of student awareness and self-interest as key ingredient to student engagement. Progression through development leads from self-awareness to self-determination, from impulsiveness to self-control and from external to internal locus of control.

The college impact models have gained attention in the past 15 years and emphasis is placed on creating the conducive and supporting campus that would engage a student as partner in learning. The most important authors contributing to current thinking include:

- Astin's Theory of Involvement (1999 originally published in 1984) where involvement relates to the quality and quantity amount of physical and psychological time the student spends on his/her academic experience. Involvement is argued to be achieved through (Astin 1999:519):
 - investment of psychological and physical energy in tasks;
 - acknowledging that different students will view their investments of time and energy differently;
 - accepting that the amount of learning or development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of involvement; and
 - determining success is related to the capacity to induce involvement.
- Tinto's Theory of Student Departure which specifically identifies the reasons why students will leave a higher education institution. Tinto's research is longitudinal in nature and describes that students leave because of sociological reasons, and not because of a lack of cognitive or intellectual ability. Students enter university with a variety of different family, personal and academic characteristics which are subsequently altered through their interaction with their environment. Students are integrated when their university experience is positive and if they can identify with what they experience. Should the experience be negative, the student will decide to

leave. This model is based on the extent to which students end up sharing the normative attitudes and values of peers and staff as well as accept their membership into the student-institutional fraternity (Tinto 1997:599-623).

- Pascarella's General Model for Assessing Change (1985) suggests that growth is the product of the direct and indirect impact of five specific variables, namely structural/organisational characteristics of the institution, student background, interactions with agents of socialisation, institutional environment and quality of student effort. The Model posits that learning and cognitive development is indirectly influenced by the structural features of the organisation (including manner of selection, enrolment and student-staff ratio) while the quality of the student effort is mediated by interaction with peers and staff (either informally or formally through the curriculum), obviously taking own aptitude, aspiration and personality into consideration (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005).

Hutley (n.d) argues that through the college impact models the focus is taken away from teaching content and own teaching style to student-oriented practices. The success of the curriculum is a product of the degree to which student involvement is fostered. All college-impact models share the emphasis on environment as active force in student success. Student success is not only the product of how student respond to change, but also based on the nature and intensity of the institutional environment as inducer of change. Morgan (2001) identifies the benefits of student involvement as contributing to *"an enjoyment of academics and learning"*, while ensuring that a desire to further their education beyond the undergraduate years is established.

Student engagement is thus based on the following:

- Promoting a wide range of educational practices and conditions, including
 - purposeful student-staff interaction;
 - active and collaborative learning;
 - institutional environment perceived by students as inclusive and affirming;
 - and
 - expectations for performance are clear and set at a reasonably high level.
- Promoting student satisfaction based on:
 - learning and development on a variety of dimensions;
 - persistence; and
 - educational attainment.

The reality is that students choose higher education institutions and specific curricula because they want access to high paying jobs which will result in them achieving success in life. Higher education institutions need to identify the mechanisms through which youth arrogance and cynicism can be harnessed

in order to improve institutional performance while guaranteeing a worthwhile student experience. Bennett (2005:3) postulates that higher education institutions should confront students with new ideas which will *“get you breathing, quicken your senses and animate a conscious examination of life’s enduring questions”*. Students will experience their higher education as a series of engagements – engaging with their student houses, their libraries, their student clubs, but most of all with their curriculum and lecturers. Higher education institutions need to recognise that the lecturer who is able to bring the subject matter in a curriculum to life will succeed in engaging his/her student into accepting the joint responsibility for lifelong learning.

DIFFERENT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT INSTRUMENTS

In 1998 the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was developed in the United States of America in order to provide documentation on the quality of undergraduate education. The aim of the instrument is to offer information and assistance to lecturers wanting to improve student learning. In the development of instruments to assess the level of student engagement, five benchmarks have been identified as critical, including (SASSE 2009):

- Active and collaborative learning which describes the extent to which students are active in classes, either through answering questions, or group work or making presentations. The premise here is that a student that is able to think about what they encounter and apply it in their own context will actively take responsibility for what has been learned.
- Level of academic challenge which deals with the extent to which work is challenging, both intellectually as well as creatively. Questions regarding time spent before, during and after classes are asked to determine whether students actively feel responsible for doing preparation, completing assignments and meeting the expectations set by the lecturer. From an academic point of view, every higher education institution will focus on significant time spent on academic work.
- Enriching educational experiences which focuses on augmenting the classroom experience through exposure to diversity, both culturally (different lecturers, different cultures), but also technologically (using technology to facilitate a closer relationship between lecturer, students and peers).
- Supportive campus environment which describes the influence that a positive and supportive campus working and social environment will have on the success of the student. Campus support focuses on both academic and on-academic support offered to students in the form of, for instance, counsellors, mentors and faculty houses or clubs.

- Student-staff interaction which details the role of the lecturer in promoting life-long learning by acting as role model, mentor and guide to students. Closer interaction can be facilitated by allowing students the opportunity to discuss marks or assignments, discuss career plans or ideas from readings not prescribed in course work. Lecturers should prompt feedback on all class activities which could become part of the lecturer's own research on teaching practices.

The use of an instrument to measure student engagement has the benefit that it produces data that indicates the relationship between the learning environment created (including the curriculum) and the individuals occupying that environment (Oblinger 2006:13.5). Although engagement changes over time, the fact of the matter is that the value of understanding a student's learning activity within the formal learning environment created by a curriculum is undeniable.

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) was developed in 2007 and first used in 2009 by 35 participating education institutions in Australia and New Zealand. The primary objective of AUSSE is to *“develop a source of information about students' engagement with learning”* (AUSSE 2010). The survey asks students to assess all above benchmarks while identifying two additional benchmarks, namely work integrated learning and higher order thinking outcomes comprising general learning outcomes, general development outcomes, career readiness, average overall grade, departure intention and overall satisfaction.

In 2009 the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) was piloted in seven higher education institutions, including University of Fort Hare, University of the Free State, University of the Witwatersrand, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Tshwane University of Technology, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and the University of Johannesburg. All universities were selected to represent both rural and metropolitan institutions. Representation was also achieved based on type of institution being universities, universities of technology and comprehensive universities. The final sample included 13 636 respondents. The purpose of the instrument is to identify drivers of student success over which institutions have control and which can be changed to increase student throughput. Recommendations made focused on (Strydom and Mentz 2010:viii):

- the design and implementation of a four-year undergraduate degree;
- assessing the effectiveness of higher education (throughput and success rates);
- improving the quality of teaching and learning; and
- addressing social cohesion.

Through the use of surveys to determine levels of student engagement, higher education institutions are able to identify and sustain those student experiences which add value to their individual development while also ensuring that institutional success is enhanced. The purpose is to create a university community – a community which does not only nurture knowledge and skills, but becomes the incubator for intellect and integrity (MacDonald 2002:8). Boyer (1990) describes this community as purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring and celebrative. The reality is that students do not just seek academic education when choosing a higher education institution, they seek a place to belong and a place where they will connect.

ENHANCING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Riggs and Gholar (2009:1) propose conation as a strategy to ensure student engagement and argues that conation will assist students to discover and then understand that they themselves have the power, will and ability to unearth elements which will contribute to their success. Students cannot be made to learn, which means that lecturers can teach, can motivate, but cannot learn on behalf of the student. The mind of the student can be identified as demonstrating cognitive ability, affective ability and conation being the ability to strive and direct your energy towards goal achievement. Riggs and Gholar (2009:7-8) describe conation as achieved through the following attributes:

“Belief gives courage. Courage inspires our powerful energy. Energy sustains our commitment to our goal(s). When we activate and combine the first four attributes we strengthen our conviction. When we purposefully act upon our convictions, we experience internal and external change.”

When institutions realise the potential unleashed by students experiencing conation, engagement becomes a must.

Kuh *et al.* (2005:9-16) propose eight principles for higher education institutions wanting to invest in student engagement. The eight principles are:

- *Context is everything* which focuses on placing institutional effectiveness within a context (physical environment, geographic location, history, composition of students and staff)
- *The whole is greater than the sum of the parts* which emphasises learning as a product which takes place both inside and outside the classroom. Students involvement with the whole campus should be seen as integral to classroom learning, if it is to be meaningful or engaging to students.

- *Evidence is essential*: the more, the better which focuses on institutional capacity for accountability and improvement. Higher education institutions capable of being learning institutions themselves means that emphasis is placed on monitoring where they were, what they were doing, where they wanted to go and how to gain momentum to ensure positive change.
- *Test prevailing assumptions* in order to clarify expectations regarding students, staff and the institution.
- *Cast a wide net* which means that in order to understand student success, students should be engaged in the process. Student perceptions about how to succeed in university should be an integral part of understanding how the institution succeeds in promoting student success.
- *Use outsiders to ask hard questions* through engaging with those who challenge insiders to think differently about their institution.
- *Focus on what matters to student success* in order to achieve what is worthwhile for students. Institutions need to improve their internal processes to create a nurturing environment which will add value to student experiences. Institutions who have a strong emphasis on continuous improvement achieve success even when facing declining resources.
- *Stay on course* which emphasises sustainable transformation through a series of small changes which will bring desired results.

From the above the argument to support student engagement as critical in curriculum development and review is evident. The relationship between student engagement and curriculum development and review is also a reciprocal relationship in which one cannot be sustained without the other. Relevant curricula will engage the student and an engaged student will require relevant curricula. Thus, the extent to which Public Administration curriculum development and review consider a level of student engagement will now be discussed.

THE RELEVANCE OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

The traditional approach to curriculum development and review includes planning the curriculum, developing the curriculum, implementing the curriculum and curriculum review. Since the emphasis of the article is not on curriculum development and review, but on student engagement as integral part of curriculum development and review, the process will not be discussed in detail. However, SAQA (2000:6) argues that the curriculum should be understood to include:

- “the aims and objectives of the education system as well as the specific goals of learning institutions;
- what is taught, the underlying values, the selection of content, how it is arranged into subjects, programmes and syllabuses, and what skills and processes are included;
- the strategies of teaching and learning and the relationships between teachers and learners;
- the forms of assessment and evaluation which are used, and their social effects;
- how the curriculum is serviced and resourced, including the organisation of learners, and of time and space and the materials and resources that are made available; and
- how the curriculum reflects the needs and interests of those it serves, including learners, teachers, the community, the nation, the employers and the economy.”

Thus, the curriculum is a broad concept which describes standards set for learning, the design, delivery and assessment thereof, and the quality assurance processes associated with learning. Integral to this is the recognition of the student in the learning process. Since the curriculum should identify the value of learning, the student should be involved as it is the student who should also experience the value of learning obtained through a qualification attained at a higher education institution.

Van Dijk and Thornhill (2011:8-9) argue that the Discipline of Public Administration is the product of its interdisciplinary nature as was already proposed by JN Cloete (1967:4). Public Administration, as a social science, finds its application in various political, social, economic and physical environments. The reality is that some common characteristics in the practice of public administration can be discerned, which contributes to the requirement that Public Administration should impart skills. The fact that the majority of Public Administration curricula in South African higher education institutions are part of economic, management or commerce faculties also have a specific impact on the skills orientation evident in the curricula.

However, the focus of the article is not in the content of the curricula, but on the extent to which students are engaged in the process of curriculum development and review. Based on the arguments presented throughout the article, it should be clear that an engaged student results in institutional and student success.

In the process of curriculum development and review the use of advisory panels are considered to be a crucial element in determining the content of curricula. Advisory panels usually comprise curriculum development and review experts and discipline specific experts/practitioners. The purpose is to ensure

that the curriculum appropriately reflects the issues and challenges apparent in the practice of the discipline. Students can become part of such an advisory panel and should be sourced to ensure that the concerns of students are also reflected in the curriculum. However, since the article makes the argument that the focus should not necessarily be on the content of the curriculum, but on how the curriculum supports an engaged student, the inclusion of the students in the advisory board is not enough. Subsequent to discussing the content, lecturers will decide how the curriculum is to be delivered and this is where the voice of the student should be heard. An engaged student, as was conceptualised earlier in the article, will demonstrate specific graduate attributes and in order to facilitate this, Kilfoil (2008:1021) suggests creating learning spaces where the following types of knowing are promoted:

- *knowing what* which implies knowing about the content of the curriculum;
- *knowing how* which implies demonstrating skills embedded in the curriculum;
- *knowing where* which implies demonstrating skills in application and context;
- *knowing why* which implies a noticeable change resulting from interaction with the curriculum; and
- *knowing to be* which implies embodying the curriculum and thus becoming an employable graduate.

The complex nature of curriculum development and review is reflected if the above types of knowing are considered throughout the process. Practically, the curriculum should reflect activities which engage students and Kuh (2007) suggests the following for increased student engagement:

- first-year seminars and experiences;
- common intellectual experiences;
- learning communities;
- writing-intensive courses;
- collaborative assignment and projects;
- undergraduate research;
- diversity/global learning;
- community-based learning;
- internships; and
- capstone courses and projects.

Thus, in curriculum development and review it is not only the content which should be scrutinised, but specifically the delivery thereof to produce an engaged student. The value of curriculum development and review and the time and effort spent on such an endeavour will be richly rewarded by an engaged student who not only demonstrates the required graduate attributes

when obtaining their qualification, but who will also be an active and willing participant in their own lifelong learning journey.

CONCLUSION

The question might still be asked: Why should higher education institutions care about student engagement? Student engagement affects the bottom line – the money. Without successful throughput universities lose subsidy. University performance is directly affected by student performance and research has proven that without engagement there will be little performance. Through investing in student engagement higher education institutions obtain relevant, quality information about key aspects of the student experience. By knowing how students spend their time, institutions are able to link student learning to educational activities and the institutional processes associated with it.

In knowing how students spend their time and what engages them in the curriculum, higher education institutions will come to realise the importance of including the student in the process of curriculum development and review. Curriculum development and review are processes which facilitate appropriate communication between the designer of the curriculum and its recipient. The purpose is to produce an employable student, one capable of demonstrating specific graduate attributes which could have a positive impact on the economic growth of a country.

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