

Extract from Service-Learning in the Curriculum: A Resource for Higher Education Institutions

In July 2000 JET convened a meeting of Vice-Chancellors to explore the direction of community engagement in South African higher education. Chaired by the Minister of Education, the meeting yielded the following key issues (JET, 2000):

- Purpose of higher education: 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 community engagement should not be optional in South African higher education. However, given the current constraints within HEIs, an emphasis on compliance may be counter-productive. Rather, HEIs should be encouraged and supported to take seriously their responsibility to inculcate the notion of citizenship in students through integrating community service in mainstream academic programmes.
- Add on or integrated approach: It was agreed that community engagement should not be an 'add on' or purely philanthropic exercise. It should be an integral part of the mainstream teaching and research business of every HEI.
- And five other: Faculty roles and rewards; Opportune moment; Leadership support; Institutional audits; & The role of the DoE

Community engagement can take on many different shapes and forms within the context of higher education, as illustrated in figure 1.2. These include distance education, community based research, participatory action research, professional community service and service learning. In its fullest sense, community engagement is the combination and integration of teaching and learning (e.g. service-learning), professional community service by academic staff and participatory action research applied simultaneously to identified community development priorities [p. 12].