Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education

Snježana Prijić Samaržija, Rector
University of Rijeka, Croatia

Ninoslav S. Schmidt
Institute for the Development of Education, Croatia

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OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Definitions: community engagement
4. Challenges
5. Towards a European Framework for community engagement
6. Piloting the TEFCE Framework: University of Rijeka
7. Conclusions
1. INTRODUCTION

• This presentation was developed as part of the project *Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education: TEFCE.*
• **Funding:** Erasmus+, Key Action 3, **Forward Looking Cooperation projects**
• **Duration:** 01.2018 - 12.2020
• [www.tefce.eu](http://www.tefce.eu)
PROJECT COORDINATORS

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Institute for the Development of Education

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Community engagement is emerging as a policy priority in higher education:

- reflecting increasing pressure on universities to demonstrate how they deliver public benefits.
- priority in the European Commission’s Renewed Agenda for Higher Education.
- Initiatives of the United Nations, particularly through the Sustainable Development Goals, have contributed to placing universities’ role in responding to societal needs higher up on the policy agenda.
3. DEFINITIONS

‘Community engagement’

• Process whereby universities engage with community stakeholders to undertake joint activities that are mutually beneficial.

• There should be co-determination and interdependence between the university and community through open dialogue.
3. DEFINITIONS

‘Community’

• Community refers to a broad range of external university stakeholders:
  + government, business
  - NGOs, social enterprises, cultural organizations, schools, local governments, citizens.

• Emphasis on those communities with fewer resources.
### 3. DEFINITIONS

Community Engagement (with illustrative examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Service/knowledge exchange</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>University management / governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community-based learning</td>
<td>Research <em>about</em> the community</td>
<td>‘Science shops’</td>
<td>Student <em>volunteering</em></td>
<td>Open access to university resources and facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service-learning</td>
<td>Research <em>with</em> the community:</td>
<td>Capacity-building for community groups</td>
<td>Student activism etc.</td>
<td>Community represented in university committees etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project-based learning etc.</td>
<td>- participatory research</td>
<td>Academic staff involvement in public (policy) debates etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- action research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- participatory research</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- <em>citizen science</em></td>
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</table>
4. CHALLENGES

• Policy priorities in higher education focus on **excellence and global league tables** and do **not** encourage community engagement.

• Focus on forms of university engagement that have more **tangible economic benefits and are easier to measure** (technology transfer, commercialisation of research, entrepreneurship, etc).

• Community engagement is **resistant to being measured**.
5. TOWARDS A EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK

The TEFCE approach:

• **Dropping the search for** the perfect *quantitative indicators* of community engagement.

• **Rejecting** the logic of *ranking* and competitive benchmarking.

• **Avoiding** a bureaucratic *self-assessment* process.

• **Learning from previous** tools, but **proposing a new approach** with a new set of principles.
### The TEFCE Toolbox: 4 principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Authenticity of engagement</th>
<th>2. Empowerment of individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Toolbox's interpretative framework differentiates <strong>authentic</strong> community engagement (that provides the <strong>community with a meaningful role and tangible benefits</strong>) from instrumental and 'pseudo-' engagement.</td>
<td>The Toolbox aims to <strong>recognise and award</strong> value for different kinds of <strong>individual efforts</strong> and results in community engagement, thus encouraging universities to <strong>develop empowering environments</strong> for individuals at the university.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Toolbox is <strong>based on mapping stories of practitioners</strong> (rather than on best practices selected by senior management) and <strong>providing both university staff and the community with a say in the process.</strong></td>
<td>The Toolbox <strong>results in a qualitative discovery of good practices</strong>, a critical reflection on strengths and areas to improve, <strong>achieved through a collaborative learning process.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The TEFCE Toolbox: 6 stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Quick scan</td>
<td><strong>Initial discussion</strong> by university/community team on the type and extent of community engagement at the university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evidence collection</td>
<td><strong>Collecting stories</strong> of community-engaged practitioners throughout the university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mapping</td>
<td>Using a TEFCE Toolbox matrix to <strong>map the level of community-engagement</strong> of the university and to identify good practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self-reflection</td>
<td><strong>Open discussions</strong> among university management, staff, students and the community on strengths and areas of improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Institutional report</td>
<td>Promoting good practices and impact, and critical self-reflection for planning improvements to university-community engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Into action</td>
<td>Using report to advocate and/or plan improvements to community engagement practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The TEFCE Toolbox: Theoretical Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superficial</td>
<td>Pseudo</td>
<td>Tentative</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building block</td>
<td>Network</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hallmark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Relationships</td>
<td>Exploitative</td>
<td>Donating</td>
<td>Assisting</td>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>Including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mutuality</td>
<td>Dissemination</td>
<td>Hearing voices</td>
<td>Listening to the voices seriously</td>
<td>Creating structures to hear voices</td>
<td>Co-creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Endowment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### THE TEFCE TOOLBOX: 7 DIMENSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement activities</th>
<th>Supportive environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIMENSION I. TEACHING AND LEARNING</td>
<td>DIMENSION VI. MANAGEMENT (policies and support structures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMENSION II. RESEARCH</td>
<td>DIMENSION VII. SUPPORTIVE PEERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMENSION III. SERVICE / KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMENSION IV. STUDENTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMENSION V. MANAGEMENT (communication and partnerships)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## THE TEFCE TOOLBOX: MATRIX

### Dimension 1: Teaching and learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUB-DIMENSIONS</th>
<th>CRITERIA FOR MAPPING PRACTICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-dimension 1.1</td>
<td>The university has study programmes that include content about societal needs that are specific to the university's context and its external communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-dimension 1.2</td>
<td>Community-based learning is included in relevant study programmes at the university and...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-dimension 1.3</td>
<td>The university has study programmes that are created, reviewed or evaluated in consultation/cooperation with external community representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-dimension 1.4</td>
<td>The university facilitates the participation of community representatives in the teaching and learning process in some study programmes (in a curricular or extra-curricular context)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE TEFCE TOOLBOX: HEATMAP

Synthesis: Community engagement heatmap for Dimension I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of engagement</th>
<th>Heatmap level</th>
<th>Heatmap criterion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity of engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td>(See sub-dimensions levels above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal needs addressed</td>
<td></td>
<td>From business needs to needs of vulnerable groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities engaged with</td>
<td></td>
<td>From businesses and highly-structured organisations to hard-to-reach groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional spread</td>
<td></td>
<td>From one department to university-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional sustainability</td>
<td></td>
<td>From short-term projects to embedded/continual activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Insert a narrative description of the heatmap findings and an assessment of the overall achieved level]
6. PILOTING THE TEFCE TOOLBOX:
University of Rijeka experience
PILOTTING THE TOOLBOX

- Piloted at universities in Dresden, Twente, Rijeka, and Dublin.
- Involved focus groups for university staff, students, and communities.
- Quality of the Toolbox framework confirmed!
Universities of the future:

- Collaborative and aware of the role of higher education in securing a sustainable future (SDG)

- “A clearly-defined ‘European university’ label could reward research and higher education institutions which actively and successfully promote open science, open innovation, and openness to the world”

- “The European Union has launched the concept (and funding) for conducting ‘responsible research and innovation’, which includes the concept of public engagement and regional innovation impact”
EUROPEAN COMMISSION: TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION TOWARDS UNIVERSITIES OF THE THIRD GENERATION

• Challenge-based approach: working together with regions, cities, businesses, civil society, and citizens on societal challenges linked to the Sustainable Development Goals

• Students from all disciplines taught to act on sustainable development

• Entrepreneurship and civic engagement: universities strongly connected to economy and society
EUA’s Values

• “EUA protects and defends the values of universities: academic freedom, institutional autonomy, freedom of speech, integrity, inclusivity, diversity, sustainability, solidarity, promotion of creativity, and critical thinking.”
Achieving a new balance in recognizing and rewarding universities and academics:

- Diversifying university outcomes and promoting flexible academic career paths

- Quality and Balance in individual and team performance in teaching/research/innovation/serving the society
THE PILOTING PROCESS

- Piloting Report: 17/07/2019 – 12/9/2019: we analysed 45 practices within the framework of 7 dimensions and 21 sub-dimensions on 50+ pages
- We created a heatmap for each sub-dimension
- Piloting Visit: September 24-25, 2019 (Rijeka piloting team and peer reviewers - 4 external experts)
EXAMPLES OF UNIRI PRACTICES – R&D CENTRES

• Centre for Industrial Heritage
• Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
• Centre for Advanced Studies – Southeast Europe
• Centre for Logic and Decision Theory
• Centre for Micro and Nano Sciences and Technologies
• Centre for Advanced Computing and Modelling
• Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity
• Centre for Urban Transition, Architecture and Urbanism
• Centre for Support to Smart and Sustainable Cities
EXAMPLES OF UNIRI PRACTICES

- **Work Placements in Culture**
  - In students’ personalized curricula, UNIRI organizes and recognizes 86 hours of practice at a cultural institution in Rijeka (theatres, museums, NGO’s, libraries, art galleries, internet news portals, etc.)

- **Citizen Portal (YUFE)**
  - Direct contact with citizens, through which citizens can provide higher education institutions with information **about what challenges the community is facing** (a reality check for UNIRI)

- **University for the Third Age**
  - Educational programs for the ‘silver’ generation, **aiming to cultivate social inclusion, improve general levels of motivation and mental health, and foster community wellbeing**.

- **Students & Community**
  - A community-based teaching and learning course that **functions as a platform for students engaged in various community-based projects**

- **StepRi Education Center**
  - Various educational activities directed towards **improving entrepreneurial and managerial competences in existing and wannabe entrepreneurs**, targeted at various groups, such as students, scientists, the unemployed, managers, and employees already working in companies.
Piloting Process - SLIPDOT Analysis

• The „SLIPDOT” analysis is a framework developed by the TEFCE project, that works as a SWOT analysis of community engagement at the university, but with a key difference:

**SWOT**
- **Strengths**
- **Weaknesses**
- **Opportunities**
- **Threats**

**SLIPDOT**
- **Strengths**
- **Low Intensity**
- **Potential for Development**
- **Opportunities**
- **Threats**
UNIRI - SLIPDOT ANALYSIS

AREAS OF STRENGTH

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

ENGAGEMENT CULTURE

UNIVERSITY CENTERS

STUDENTS

ACADEMICS


**Areas of Strength**

**University Leadership**

- **Strong leadership support** for the policy of community engagement (CE)

- The university leadership has made a **strategic choice** to focus on CE - rare example

- **Student-centred university approach** as a value and strategic decision for university governing - “you can feel it all across the university, it is real, it’s not just lip talk”
AREAS OF STRENGTH

→ the culture of working together at the UNIRI: working with communities
→ the emergence of a strong engagement culture across the university

ENGAGEMENT CULTURE

→ the authenticity of CE practices at the UNIRI -
→ positive and close ties with the local community and government
### AREAS OF STRENGTH

- **UNIRI university centers** as units for fostering CE - quite unique approach - impressive work done
  - examples of real co-creation of study courses (combining scientific and community perspective) - this could serve as an exemplary practice that could be multiplicated across the university
SLIPDOT ANALYSIS

AREAS OF STRENGTH

STUDENTS

➔ students as partners in a true sense (crucial for the decision-making process)
➔ students as strong & loud CE advocates

ACADEMICS

➔ a lot of academics taking ownership of CE + lots of CE champions
➔ academics as CE advocates - loving what they do
AREAS OF LOWER INTENSITY & POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

- LEADERSHIP & POLICY
- RESEARCH
- UNIVERSITY CENTERS
- CENTER & PERIPHERY
- MAINSTREAM CE
The CE legacy of the current leadership might be threatened
- secure long-term sustainability of the CE activities
  - on the university and community level, display CE “stars”
  - create additional awards - recognize CE champions
- support academics in their CE activities so that they do not feel as victims of their own CE success
SLIPDOT ANALYSIS

AREAS OF LOWER INTENSITY & POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

CENTER & PERIPHERY

move from the centre to the periphery - policy should “go down” from central management to the periphery (faculties and departments)

MAINSTREAM UNICE IMAGE

talk more about your university CE image in public

go out and teach others how to do CE
make it your advantage in attracting students
SLIPDOT ANALYSIS

AREAS OF LOWER INTENSITY & POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

RESEARCH

- raise the level of CE in research & development
- greater involvement of scientists in CE is needed

UNIVERSITY CENTERS

- unique model that works!
- sustainability grants for centers
7. CONCLUSION: piloting the TEFCE Toolbox - key messages

• The Toolbox is comprehensive – institution learns a lot in the process about the wealth of engagement activities that takes place.

• The Toolbox allows for context-specific application – it is not framed as ‘one size fits all’.

• The process is participative and allows for participants (including communities) to have a meaningful say in the process.
  • The participants appreciate the process and are empowered.

• The process is holistic and developmental - it does not result in a narrow scoring exercise.

• The institution learns a lot in the process about potential for improvement.
Thank you for your attention!

www.tefce.eu
Twitter: www.twitter.com/TEFCEProject

Contacts:

University of Rijeka, Croatia
• Snježana Prijić Samaržija, prijic@uniri.hr, Rector

Institute for the Development of Education, Zagreb, Croatia
• Ninoslav S. Schmidt, nscukanec@iro.hr, Executive Director