

MENSLIKE ONTWIKKELING DEUR GEMEENSKAPSINTERAKSIE IN DIE HOËRONDERWYS

Prof Russel Botman, Rektor en Visekanselier, Universiteit Stellenbosch (US)

US-Gemeenskapsinteraksiesimposium 2010,
Volhoubaarheidsinstituut, Lynedoch, 2 September

[Hierdie dokument kan van die internet afgelaai word by
www.sun.ac.za/university/Management/rektor/toesprake.html]

INLEIDING

Dankie, voorsitter. Goeie more, kollegas. *Good morning. Molweni. Wamkelikile.*

Ek is bly om almal van julle hier te sien. Die jaar begin nou einde se kant toe staan, en ek weet almal is baie besig. Daarom is dit goed om te sien julle ruim tyd in vir 'n belangrike aspek van ons bedrywighede as universiteit: gemeenskapsinteraksie.

Ek wil vanoggend kortliks praat oor twee aspekte:

- Hoekom is gemeenskapsinteraksie belangrik?
- Hoe skakel gemeenskapsinteraksie by die res van die universiteit se bedrywighede in?

HOEKOM GEMEENSKAPSINTERAKSIE?

Kollegas, soos u weet, het die Universiteit Stellenbosch in die jare 1990 besluit om veral op **navorsing** te fokus.

*When I was appointed Vice-Rector: Teaching, I thought the most interesting challenge at the University would be to lift the profile of **teaching & learning**. And I loved every minute of it, with the people that I worked with. Every day that I went to the office I looked forward to achieving more in this area.*

*Then I became rector of the University and I thought what would be interesting would be to raise the profile of **community interaction**. I discussed it with Prof Julian Smith, and he agreed. Now he is fighting for community interaction like I used to fight for teaching & learning. He insisted on parity with other areas – a Senate committee, budget, awards and so on.*

I am now in the fourth year of my work, and I have to thank all of you in this field – Julian (Smith), Jerome (Slamat), each one of you here today because you have made my best years even better.

If we look at community interaction, it is crucial to realise that it is an important aspect of our work as university. Ons doen die navorsing, en ons dra die kennis oor, maar is dit relevant? En relevant vir wie? Hoe maak ons seker dat die Universiteit relevant is vir die samelewing? Die kennis wat ons deur middel van navorsing ontdek het, en d.m.v. leer & onderrig oorgedra het, wat beteken dit, en vir wie? Dis nou waar gemeenskapsinteraksie inpas.

Seen this way, community interaction is not an optional add-on. Community interaction becomes essential for excelling in both research and in learning & teaching. Community interaction contributes to an environment where student learning is enriched and research relevance is enhanced.

This is how universities become role models in society, how they begin to change the lives of the people. It is important because excellence in itself can be empty and dry if you don't ask excellence for whom and for what purpose. We look at excellence in research and excellence in learning & teaching to see it connected to the community interaction work that we are doing.

WHY DOES RELEVANCE MATTER?

Estate agents like to say the three most important considerations when buying a house are "location, location, location". This also applies to us as a university. What is our "location"? In what community are we situated? Among whom do we find ourselves? What does that do to us? What does that make of us?

If you start looking at the world that way, you begin to see that your immediate environment is your first laboratory. Here, in this place, in this town, among these people, I must practice my science.

*It was possible at one stage for us at this University to forget that we are connected to **all** the people of the town of Stellenbosch. But now we have to always remember that location, location, location matters – or, as we used to say in this country, "lokasie, lokasie, lokasie". Dis waar jy is, dis waar jy vandaan kom, dis die mense wie jy moet help.*

Our location as a university is Stellenbosch, but it goes further – Western Cape, South Africa, Africa, Planet Earth. Each of these "locations" has a "community" attached to it, knocking on our door, each with its own needs and priorities. And that we as a university – a place of higher learning – are well placed to make a difference in each of these communities.

That is the point about the knowledge that we discover and possess and transfer and apply – it is knowledge that can make a difference. You have to bring it back to location.

Higher education is a critical pillar of sustainable human development. Higher education imparts knowledge and produces leaders and wealth generators in society. Both the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) have prioritised higher education in Africa. And "community engagement" is highlighted by both. Interaction between university and community not only benefits both parties; it promotes a shared goal – that of sustainable human development.

Community interaction makes it possible to view the university not in terms of a well-oiled machine, but as an engaged institution that fosters hope – because of the sincere efforts of many committed and inspired individuals and group inside it.

DIE RELEVANTE UNIVERSITEIT

Die idee van die Universiteit Stellenbosch as 'n plek van relevansie, 'n plek van betekenis kan teruggevoer word tot die Universiteit se “Strategiese raamwerk vir die eeuwisseling en daarna” wat in die jaar 2000 aanvaar is (US, 2000).

Dis vir my baie lekker somtyds om te dink ek doen eintlik die werk wat die Senaat en die Raad in 1999 uitgestip het. Hulle het gekyk na wat die Universiteit moet doen want ons het mos nou 'n nuwe Suid-Afrika en hier kom mos nou 'n nuwe wêreld in 'n nuwe dekade, 'n nuwe eeu, 'n nuwe millennium. Hulle het hard daaraan gewerk om te dink hoe moet die Universiteit wees in die 21ste eeu, en hul antwoord was “relevant”. Eintlik is die groot dryfkrag agter ons gemeenskapsinteraksie dus daardie “Strategiese raamwerk”.

En dan het hulle ook die Universiteit verbind tot die “regstelling van die ongeregtighede van die verlede” – baie spesifieke woorde. Daar is twee begrippe wat onder “regstelling” uitgepak word:

- Gelykberegtiging ten opsigte van die samestelling van ons personeel- en studentekorps; en
- Dienslewering aan die samelewing, veral aan behoeftige gemeenskappe en individue.

Daar staan dit in daardie dokument, en al wat ons doen is om uitvoering hieraan te gee.

When I was appointed rector in 2007, we discussed these issues in the management team, and I am proud to say that the University as a whole united behind this vision. I went back to all the deans and managers in the Winter Institutional Planning Forum, and I asked them whether the Strategic framework was still relevant. Should we continue working with it? They said yes.

DEVELOPMENT THEMES

To guide the core functions of the University, we took the developmental agenda of the world, and distilled five themes from it.

Ons meen dat as die Universiteit Stellenbosch met sy kennis en wetenskap en uitnemendheid help om armoede en verwante toestande uit te wis, en as ons 'n bydrae lewer ter bevordering van menswaardigheid en gesondheid demokrasie en menseregte, vrede en veiligheid, asook 'n volhoubare omgewing en 'n mededingende nywerheidssektor dan kan ons van die wêreld 'n beter plek maak.

Hierdie vyf ontwikkelingsdoelwitte maak saam die temas van die Universiteit se HOOP Projek uit, wat in Julie vanjaar openbaar bekengestel is.

Hier praat jy nou van werklikheid en moontlikheid. Jy begin dink wat is die verband tussen hoe dinge is en hoe hulle kan wees. Agter dit alles lê die idee van 'n pedagogie van hoop. *I know people don't always like this idea of pedagogy of hope, but here it is for you to consider in context of the University's Strategic framework. It asks of us to look at things as they are and then to think what is possible. Look at Kayamandi, but don't accept it as it is – think of what is*

possible when you apply your knowledge. And the same goes for Stellenbosch, the country, Africa, the world. How do we change the world?

Dit vind aansluiting by die US se bestaansdoel, soos geformuleer in ons Missiestelling in die einste “Strategiese raamwerk”: “Om in verbondenheid aan die universitêre ideaal van uitmuntende wetenskapsbeoefening ’n omgewing te skep en vol te hou waarbinne kennis ontdek kan word, gedeel kan word, en tot voordeel van die gemeenskap aangewend kan word”.

HOOPSKEPPENDE AKADEMIESE INISIATIEWE

“(T)ot voordeel van die gemeenskap” is die sleutel frase hier vir jul werk en vir die HOOP Projek.

Alle universiteite word gedefinieer deur hierdie drie dinge – kennis ontdek, kennis deel en kennis toepas. Maar nie alle universiteite verbind hulle om kennis aan te wind “tot voordeel van die gemeenskap” nie. Dis hoekom gemeenskapsinteraksie by die meeste universiteite onder op die agenda is.

Luister ook mooi. Die “Strategiese raamwerk” praat nie van gemeenskappe nie, maar van net een “gemeenskap”. Die moontlikheid word verken van ’n enkele Suid-Afrikaanse gemeenskap ná apartheid.

Die HOOP Projek se 22 inisiatiewe is almal op dié uitkoms gemik – om wat is te omskep in wat moontlik is.

Ek noem net vinnig ’n paar voorbeelde [besoek www.diehoopprojek.co.za/ / www.thehopeproject.co.za vir meer inligting]:

- Ons Ukwanda Landelike Kliniese Skool op Worcester, waar dokters en gesondheidsorgwerkers vir landelike gebiede opgelei word; en
- Die Universiteit Stellenbosch Waterinstituut, ’n interdisiplinêre inisiatief om die kosbare waterhulpbronne van ons land en vasteland te help bewaar en volhoubaar te benut.
- IWWOUS en die Skolevennootskapsprojek se werk met skole en leerders.

Dit is dus duidelik dat die HOOP Projek-inisiatiewe deur leiers en akademici en studente in ons fakulteite, departemente en afdelings ontwikkel is om die gemeenskap tot voordeel te strek. Dis ook waarop gemeenskapsinteraksie gemik is.

We have to do this work before it is too late and it becomes impossible. It is only strong communities, engaged communities that can take this country to the next level of development.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

In this regard, let me say something about the Protection of Information Bill that the government is thinking of passing. They are proposing that certain information be held hidden from communities. The day that we allow knowledge to be hidden from communities again, we will be on the wrong track. We want to pursue and share and apply knowledge. All knowledge

must be accessible. Why? Not to help the media, but because it is about for whom this knowledge is useful. The same goes for us as a university – communities also have a right to the knowledge that we have.

CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY INTERACTION / UITDAGINGS

Stellenbosch University is considered a leader in the field of civic engagement because of the extent to which community interaction has been institutionalised at the University. It forms an integral part of our governance structures, budget lines, academic work and student activities. None the less, certain challenges remain (Slamat, 2009).

- *STUDENTS: The social responsiveness of students can be enhanced through their involvement in community interaction. It is hoped that socially responsive students will ideally become socially responsive citizens and professionals.*
- *AKADEMICI: Hul betrokkenheid by gemeenskapsinteraksie kan akademië inspireer en beter toerus om menslike behoeftes aan te spreek.*
- *COMMUNITIES: Civic engagement has the potential to advance a certain kind of community, namely communities with a voice, committed to partnership and a spirit of reciprocity.*

SLOT

Hierdie simposium is 'n tree op 'n reis van hoop. Ons visie is gemeenskappe, 'n land, 'n vasteland sonder armoede, waar almal se menswaardigheid beskerm word, waar ons maatskaplike en ekologiese stelsels gedy, en waar vrede, veiligheid en demokrasie gewaarborg is.

Ek het uitgewys dat hoëronderrys noodsaaklik vir die verwesenliking van hierdie visie is, en dat gemeenskapsinteraksie 'n noodsaaklike deel van uitnemende hoëronderrys uitmaak.

The implication for universities is that community interaction is far more than a peripheral activity, but in fact a key driver in the academic project. As such, higher education community interaction should be strengthened and expanded.

Mag gemeenskapsinteraksie aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch van krag tot krag gaan, en mag ons voortgaan om 'n voorbeeld vir ander universiteite te stel.

Baie dankie.

VERWYSINGS / REFERENCES

Slamat, J, 2009. *How does service-learning support pedagogy of hope?* Paper delivered at the International Symposium on Service-Learning, Athens, Greece, 22-24 November 2009.

Stellenbosch University (SU). 2000. *Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond*. Internet URL: www.sun.ac.za/university/StratPlan/index.htm

Universiteit Stellenbosch (US). 2000. *Strategiese Raamwerk vir die Eeuwisseling en Daarná*. Internet URL: www.sun.ac.za/university/stratplan/strat_afr.htm