

**DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY
PARTNERSHIPS: A PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT OF RHODES
UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MONITORING AND
EVALUATION SYSTEM**

BY

NOSIPHO NKWINTI

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Supervisor: Dr Margie Maistry

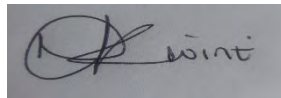
Co-supervisor: Dr Clement Simuja

JANUARY 2024

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I Nosipho Nkwinti, (G16N9056) hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been previously submitted in any form for assessment or a degree in any other higher education institution. Where I have used work from other scholars, such ideas have been acknowledged using quotations and references according to Rhodes University Education Department Guidelines.

Signature _____

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature appears to be 'N. Nkwinti' with a stylized, cursive script.

Date __16 January 2024_____

ABSTRACT

This thesis comprehensively explores transformative community engagement (CE) in higher education, focusing on the context of collaborative community-university partnerships (CUPs) in Makhanda, South Africa. The study aimed to assess and revise the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system of the Rhodes University Community Engagement division to foster a transformation in CUPs. The research employs an exploratory design to understand the complexities of CUPs and improve the M&E systems by generating new concepts and ideas. A variety of qualitative methods, including focus groups, interviews, and document analysis, were utilized to engage community partners, student leaders, and Rhodes University Community Engagement staff. The participatory approach to research was critical, involving stakeholders in finalizing the M&E framework to ensure it met the shared objective. Data analysis was conducted inductively, with themes emerging from the data to facilitate a bottom-up understanding of the research questions. The study found that diverse community engagement projects at Rhodes University enhanced partnerships between the university and the local community in Makhanda. Participants shared varied understandings and experiences of Community Engagement. They saw CE as crucial for bridging the university-community divide and aiding local development. Furthermore, the research identified the need for a Monitoring and Evaluation system that supports collaborative Community-University Partnerships. Participants collaboratively developed and refined this M&E system, ensuring it aligns with community needs and promotes sustained development in Makhanda. Challenges such as diverse perspectives, logistical issues in focus groups, and power dynamics were also highlighted and addressed through an inclusive and participatory approach. This research highlights the elaborate distinctions of community engagement and the importance of such partnerships in fostering sustainable societal development. The framework developed has practical implications for shaping policies, fostering inclusivity, and promoting responsive university-community engagement that is aligned with community needs. The research concludes by suggesting the value of inclusivity, communication, and a flexible adaptation of practices to maximize the benefits of such partnerships. Future research could explore the longitudinal impacts of university-community partnerships, examine the scalability of the current framework to other universities, and evaluate the long-term socio-economic outcomes of the engaged citizen program on the community.

Keywords: Community Engagement, Community-University Partnerships, Monitoring and Evaluation System, Collaboration, Social Change

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DEDICATIONS

This work is dedicated to my late father Mntunzima Steader Nkwinti.

&

To the Rhodes University Community Engagement dream team, my mother and daughter and the Nkwinti and Booie family.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND MEANINGS

SA DoE	: South African Department of Education
HEI	: Higher Education Institutions
CE	: Community Engagement
HEQC	: Higher Education Quality Committee
CUP	: Community-University Partnerships
M&E	: Monitoring and Evaluation
RUCE	: Rhodes University Community Engagement
UNESCO	: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
HE	: Higher Education
NDP	: National Development Plan
WPHET	: White Paper on Higher Education Transformation
SWOT	: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UNICEF	: United Nations Children Fund
CHERTL	: Centre of Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning
UNISDR	: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
S@M	: Siyakhana@Makana
ECP	: Engaged Citizenry Programme
MoU	: Memorandum of Understanding
ABCD	: Asset Based Community Development
SCT	: Social Change Theory
NPO	: Non-Profit Organization
CPR	: Community Partner Representatives
SL	: Student Leaders
SM	: Staff Member

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Universities do not exist outside communities rather they exist within a particular social, economic, cultural, political, and historical context and are an integral part of the local communities. Badat (2007) affirms the importance of context when he reminds us of having inherited a higher education system profoundly shaped by social, political, and economic inequalities of a class, race, gender, institutional and spatial nature. South Africa's democratic government post-1994, committed itself to transforming higher education, which included the definition of the purposes and goals of higher education, academic structure and programme, policy, and quality assurance, among others (Badat, 2007).

The White Paper for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997) highlighted two related purposes of higher education. The first is focused on students who are prepared for the labour market and socialised as enlightened, responsible, and constructively critical citizens. The second purpose is to address the development needs of society and a commitment to the common good (Department of Education, 1997). Thus, the responsiveness of universities, advancing the public good, and scientific and scholarly endeavours contribution to social equity, economic and social development, and making a difference in the lives of people (Badat, 2007) became integral characteristics defining the purposes and goals of higher education.

Teaching and research are the more familiarly known core functions of higher education in South Africa. Introduced post-1994 as a core function of higher education, community engagement (CE) is referred to in the Higher Education Transformation White Paper (Department of Education, 1997), as an integral and core part of higher education and makes specific reference to the role CE can play in transforming the higher education system and contributing to the developmental role of universities (Department of Education, 1997, p. 10). In describing the social responsibility role of higher education, (Tandon, 2017) integrates social responsibility in all three core functions of universities, teaching and learning, research, and community engagement, by shifting the emphasis for each of the three core missions as follows: i) learning, not teaching (acknowledging universities as learning organisations requires a shift in thinking to build a learning culture among academics, management, and

students); ii) knowledge generation and mobilisation, not research (understanding the interdependent relationship between knowledge economy and knowledge democracy); and iii) engagement as mutual empowerment, not charity (understanding the developmental role of HEIs). This understanding of CE as mutual empowerment underpins the purpose of this study, which focuses on developing transformative community-university partnerships (CUPs) through collaboration. The emphasis is on collaboration with and participation of community partners (CPs) in the review and revision of the Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system that is considered to be transformative in nature in this study. RUCE is committed to building relationships with CPs.

First, it is important to understand the meaning of partnership, which is frequently used to describe a wide range of relationships. Worrall (2009, p.5) points out that “a partnership can describe a legally formed business relationship or an informal group of individuals that have come together to work toward a common goal. Ideally, the relationship of partners should be characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility. Partnerships are often transactional (uni-directional) in nature (as in a business agreement) and/or the emphasis is on the relational aspects of interactions between human beings (Worrall, 2009). In this exploratory and qualitative case study, a participatory and collaborative approach was employed with community partners to assess and revise RUCE’s current M&E system for CUPs in two of RUCE’s student volunteer programmes. The transformative nature of participation and collaboration emphasises relationship building, mutual cooperation and responsibility between community and university partners in CE rather than being transactional. The aim is to develop transformative CUPs that are relevant and effective for community development in Makhanda in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study is based on the assumption that RUCE’s current M&E system, which was developed over five years ago, is not aligned with its evolved transformative notions of CUPs and therefore needs to be reviewed and revised accordingly.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In the past, partnerships between communities and universities often followed a more traditional and hierarchical model in which universities held a dominant role (Bell & Lewis, 2023). Universities were primarily seen as knowledge providers and experts, and they engaged with communities to provide expertise or conduct research in a somewhat one-sided manner. The main objective of these partnerships was often centred around the university's research

goals, with input and involvement from the community which was extractive in nature. CUPs were transactional, with the community typically viewed as the recipient of knowledge or services rather than transformational (Mutero & Govender, 2019). This thesis highlights that universities do not exist outside communities rather they exist within a particular milieu as mentioned above and are an integral part of the local communities (Hart & Wolff, 2006; Maistry & Thakrar, 2012). As part of the transformation agenda of higher education post-1994, (SA DoE, 1997) universities are required to contribute to communities' social and economic development and inculcate social and civic responsibilities in students through CE, the third mission of higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa.

CE is seen as being integral to teaching, learning, and research. The HEQC defines CE as "initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community. Community engagement typically finds expression in a variety of forms, ranging from informal and relatively unstructured activities to formal and structured academic programmes" (HEQC, 2006, p.12). According to the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification report of 2020, CE is described as the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. In this sense, CE is the connection between teaching, learning and research.

However, for CE to be effective, establishing strong partnerships with community organisations and members becomes imperative (Simplican et al., 2015; Holmes et al., 2019; World Health Organization, 2019). Here I adapt Westoby and Botes's (2020, p.51) exposition of "community development effectiveness" to apply to 'CE effectiveness'. The authors write that community development effectiveness is "not about the community development [CE] process leading to an outcome predetermined by a practitioner, policy maker or funder. It is about community development [CE] being a process of people or groups in communities discovering their pathway to change and gaining more options in their lives. It is therefore about a [CE] practitioner accompanying such a community in that process-an act of solidarity...". For the purpose of this study the effectiveness of CE is built on the strength of the CUP and the collaborative processes of CE as 'an act of solidarity'. Importantly, one of these collaborative CE processes is applicable to the development of the M&E system.

CUPs should be built on collaboration so that they help “mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programmes, and practices” (Centre for Disease Control, 2011, p. 9). CUPs in CE are intended to enhance and promote Ubuntu and social change. Muse (2018) writes that a partnership between a community organization and a university can engage all stakeholders towards a common goal. To strengthen the CUP, Muse (2018) recommends establishing systems for monitoring and evaluating (volunteer) programmes in which community partners actively participate. However, Ofosu and Ntiamoah (2016, p. 2) noted that there is a lack of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems in the arena of CE and CUPs and that participation in M&E is not common. Bidandi et al. (2021) further confirm that there is a scarcity of research on measuring the CE agenda. Additionally, they highlight that universities’ attempts to describe the effect of engagement and how it is perceived by the community itself appear complex.

The RUCE division has been monitoring and evaluating its CE activities over the years. RUCE's mission is to actively engage with the broader community to create meaningful social change. Therefore, to ensure that its CE programmes are effective, contributing to social change, this study contends that it is necessary to review RUCE’s M&E system. This study set out to assess and revise RUCE's existing M&E system through collaborative and participatory research and to strengthen RUCE's partnership with community organizations to promote community development as part of university transformation. The study is grounded in the notion of transformative partnerships, which emphasize the mutuality, reciprocity, and collaborative nature of partnerships between universities and communities (Brown, 2006; Curwood et al., 2011).

1.2.1 Transformative Community Engagement in Higher Education in South Africa

Higher Education Institutions have an obligation to be socially responsible to their local communities and not detach themselves from the society in which they exist (Tshishonga, 2020). Unlike in the past, universities can no longer afford to be ‘ivory towers’, with institutions disconnected from their local communities and academics mainly focused on publishing scholarly papers that do not address local social issues (Waghid, 2002). Bok and Bok (2009) write that the term ‘ivory tower’ in higher education refers to a perception of universities as disconnected or isolated from society's practical, everyday concerns. In the South African context, the term is often used to describe universities that are perceived as elitist and inaccessible to most of the population, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Boughey, 2007). As part of the national transformation agenda, universities are required to

transform the 'ivory tower' and provocatively challenge situations to remake the academy collectively (Stockdill, 2012) with other stakeholders, including local communities.

In comparison to teaching learning and research, CE may be viewed as a relatively recently introduced core function of higher education in South Africa. As the nexus between teaching and learning, and research, CE is meant to promote the public good purpose of universities. The rationale for incorporating CE as a mission of South African universities post-1994 is to promote the developmental and transformative roles of HEIs, which is to support and improve the standard of living and quality of life for all South African communities but especially those who are marginalized and disadvantaged (Adonis, & Silinda, 2021). The public good nature of universities implies that the benefits of university education should extend beyond just the individuals who can access that education; the benefits need to positively impact society (Nhamo & Mjimba, 2020). Currently, universities aim to educate students by providing them with relevant knowledge to become employable (Calhoun, 2006; Jongbloed et al., 2008; Kezar et al., 2015). However, this is a necessary but insufficient purpose for universities in democratic South Africa. Universities are required to educate students to be engaged, responsible citizens who are able to serve the public good (Chambers & Gopaul, 2008; Beaulieu et al., 2018).

Holistic education is concerned with the interconnectedness of students, the learning environment, and the community. Thus, CE serves as a bridge between communities and universities (Tinto, 1997; Spence et al., 2022), allowing pedagogy to also take place outside the four walls of lecture halls. The Higher Education Quality Council (2004) describes CE as the inclusion of community interaction in the tertiary curriculum to address social injustices confronting the majority of South African communities. By engaging with communities, universities can bring their teaching and research out of the classroom and into real-world settings, providing students with opportunities to apply what they have learned and to conduct research that addresses real-world problems (Brandy, 2016). Simultaneously, CE offers universities a source of knowledge and feedback, enabling them to continually improve their teaching and research efforts (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020). Waghid et al. (1999) suggest that universities should expand their research and teaching efforts beyond their walls and into the community, which aligns with the goal of creating a more engaged and responsive higher education system that addresses the needs of society.

The bridging role played by CE between the university and community must be built on a strong foundation of transformative CUPs because the process of transformative community

engagement is based not on the transfer of expertise from university to community (technology transfer), but rather on an interactive process in which all partners apply critical thinking skills to complex community problems. Transformational learning underpins the engagement process (Brown et al., 2006). According to Mezirow (1991) cited in Brown et al. (2006, p.10), transformational learning involves a change in the learner's [community partner\CE practitioner\academic\students] beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions; the learner [community partner\CE practitioner\academic\students] engages in critical reflection on his or her experiences, leading to a change in perspective. As such, transformative CUP means the development of long-term relationships and deep, inter-organizational ties that can allow for collaboration on fundamental and not shallow change.

1.2.2 Revitalising Community-University Partnerships at Rhodes University

Rhodes University is geographically located in Makhanda, a town with high unemployment, and in one of the poorest and most neglected provinces, the Eastern Cape Province, in South Africa (Irvine, 2021). Research on small towns in South Africa has shown that poor governance and institutional shortcomings plague local municipalities and their ability to bring about successful Local Economic Development. (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2016; Van der Merwe & Rogerson, 2018). The issues certainly appear to exist within the Makana Local Municipality, which is home to the city of Makhanda (Hoefnagels, & Irvine, et al. 2023). The RUCE division, established in 2008, has attempted over the years and especially in the last five years, to develop strong CUPs, underpinned by the philosophy of Ubuntu and social change theory as one of its key theoretical frameworks. By collaboratively working with community organisations and members, and through its programmes, the RUCE division attempts to contribute towards anchoring Rhodes University in Makhanda and addressing the social and economic problems that continue to plague the excluded and previously marginalized communities of Makhanda. As a CE coordinator of RUCE's Volunteer programmes, I have observed, in line with Hall et al. (2015) and Mydin and Amran (2019), that if CUP issues are not proactively and adequately addressed, they can impede the achievement of collective goals, reduce the quality of collaborative CE initiatives, discourage community members' commitment to active CE, and even obstruct future collaborations.

RUCE's M&E system for its Volunteer programmes was developed over five years ago. The rapid growth in the number of CE programmes and initiatives, community partners, students as volunteers, the ongoing demand for student volunteers in the past four years from community partners, and RUCE's commitment to establishing strong collaborative CUPs,

makes it imperative to review and revise the existing M&E system. In 2017, RUCE had four volunteer programmes, and 814 student volunteers were placed with 32 community partner organisations. In 2023, the number of student volunteers increased to 964 in eight Volunteer programmes and 62 community partner organisations. RUCE's current M&E system which assesses the progress achieved in CUPs in relation to mutual benefit, long-term quantitative and qualitative impact, asset-based community development and social change perspectives accrued to all stakeholders, was developed solely by RUCE staff without the participation of community partners and is facilitated by RUCE programme coordinators. Good CE practice demands an ongoing review of organisational systems (Fortino et al., 2020), and therefore, it is necessary to review RUCE's current M&E system collaboratively with community partners.

Two large volunteer programmes of RUCE are the Siyakhana@Makana (S@M) programme and the Engaged Citizens Programme (ECP). S@M is a programme that helps students build meaningful and sustainable relationships with community-based organizations while working on a shared co-created project (RUCE Handbook, 2022). The programme includes student organisations (societies, residents, and sports clubs) and independent student teams that are linked to community organisations. Students who join S@M are prepared using the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model. This programme is an effort to support the student organizations to better understand community development processes and the role of volunteers in supporting community-based organizations. The ECP is a volunteer initiative that aims to instil social responsibility in students while also contributing to their overall development. The programme is partnered with local community-based organizations to encourage volunteerism and socially engaged students. The learning opportunities of the programmes are intended to be mutually beneficial for both the individual student and community partner through reciprocal relationships. ECP volunteer opportunities for students range from music and outdoor education to mentoring, tutoring, and homework support.

Since 2019, RUCE has encouraged a co-management model for the partnership relationship with community organisations. This model requires a community organisation that participates in a volunteer programme to appoint a Volunteer Manager who becomes the contact person, orientates, and manages the students on site. The implementation of the model was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has only been since 2022 that some of the CPs have understood what is required and is affecting the model. The M&E system for RUCE's Volunteer programmes including ECP and S@M are both quantitative and qualitative, incorporating an

attendance register, reflective sessions, and a summative evaluation. Each student organization has a student leader responsible for monitoring their team members' attendance by signing a register each time they visit a community partner. In describing the current M&E system, I aim to show that while RUCE attempts to include CPs in the monitoring and evaluation processes, these attempts however, militate against RUCE's notion of participatory and transformative CUPs that could contribute to improving the well-being of the marginalised communities of Makhanda because the M&E system was developed and is driven by RUCE staff.

Under the present Volunteer programmes, RUCE staff members visit each community partner organisation to assess their readiness for the placement of student volunteers in the organisation for the year. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which spells out the roles and responsibilities of each partner is negotiated. Community partners are presented with essential resources such as a programme handbook which provides details, among others, on the Volunteer programmes, important dates for workshops, training and meeting dates, communication channels, RUCE and coordinators' contact details as well as establishing a WhatsApp group for ongoing feedback. The handbook further serves as a referential guide for students and for working with students. CPs are given programme registers that students have to sign when they visit their organizations.

The signing of the MoU is followed by a workshop that serves as an information workshop for new CPs, regrouping with older CPs to reintroduce them to RUCE's various programmes and locate each CP in a specific RUCE programme. The information provided is to ensure that CPs understand RUCE's programmes and the programme in which they are part for easy facilitation of planning for the year. Preparation and training of student volunteers and community partners follow the first workshop with CPs at the beginning of the year prior to students commencing their placement with the CP. It includes the conceptualization of CE, introduces new students to community partners and application of volunteerism, and provides guidance on student placement.

Quarterly reflection meetings, project presentations by both student leaders and volunteer managers, mid-year evaluations, and year-end exit strategies form integral components of the M&E system. The purpose of the reflection sessions is to improve the programmes. These are facilitated by a RUCE programme coordinator, where community partners meet with their student volunteers to reflect and share their experiences of the programme and refine

programmes. Open communication channels facilitate feedback, and lessons learned during the evaluation process are documented, contributing to an evolving knowledge base such as community partners learning to work interdependently rather than in silos, maximization of the asset-based approach and the establishment of centres of excellence.

The joint reflection sessions follow a structured SWOT analysis approach, which evaluates the engagements between the university and community partners. Student involvement in the M&E system is important. The M&E system is designed with specific criteria and indicators for an understanding of programme performance, using both quantitative and qualitative data. This data assists community partners and student volunteers by giving them awards and certificates at the end of the year at the famous RUCE Gala Dinner and Awards ceremony which is hosted by RUCE annually.

The M&E process concludes with a comprehensive summative year-end evaluation, facilitated by programme coordinators, which is a face-face session where all partners come together to evaluate the year's programme and plan for the upcoming year. An electronic questionnaire was sent to CPs during the period of COVID-19 (2019-2020) and discontinued after the lockdown period. Questions for this summative evaluation included a description of the organization's relationship with RUCE and whether the relationship with RUCE is considered to be a partnership relationship, a description of the learning, if any, experienced by the student volunteer with the CP organization; kind of change envisaged for the CP organization in the following year and student volunteer's role in the changes envisaged for the organization; capacity building requirements of the organization; if partnership with RUCE to be continued in the following year and number of student volunteers required by the organisation. These questions aim to gather feedback on the organization's experience and expectations within the partnership with RUCE. A clear exit plan is established for a smooth transition and ongoing positive impact where students handover to upcoming student leaders.

The collected feedback informs decision-making, enhances programme effectiveness, and ensures a continuous cycle of improvement. However, RUCE makes the final decisions, and this is typically determined by the type of community partner and the programmes they offer. Partners may shift between programmes in RUCE if they do not meet certain programme criteria. The cycle of improvement implies that the programmes remain unchanged, but the way they are delivered is flexible and determined by feedback from the evaluation process.

Changes may include whether community partner organizations continue in the same programme, move to the next one, or receive more or fewer student volunteers.

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The landscape of higher education in South Africa has changed over the years because of greater engagement with communities (Lotz-Sisitka et al., 2015; Žalėnienė & Pereira, 2021). This is in response to the White Paper for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997), which points out that transforming governance structures, values, and culture is a necessity, not an option, for South African higher education institutions. Moreover, the White Paper or the Transformation of Higher Education suggests the design and coordination of collaborative structures in transforming HEIs. It should be noted that not all CE in HEIs are inherently transformative as required by the White paper (Lotz-Sisitka et al., 2015) in the sense that they do not necessarily endeavour to alter or transform institutional structures, norms, and rules within universities, societal systems, or communities of practice (Wang et al., 2019). From the community's standpoint, this can make the behaviour of universities appear paternalistic. For instance, most universities lack an easily discernible, coherent structure, which makes it difficult for communities and community leaders to determine whom to approach with problems and concerns, as well as how to collaborate with universities in research and other developmental activities (O'Brien et al., 2016; Milem et al., 2005; Harman, 2002). This results in universities most often being the initiators and animators of partnerships rather than vice versa (Seiler, 2018; Mintrop, 2020).

Further, research on higher education CE in South Africa has primarily focused on the institutional perspective with limited attention to the voice of community partners and the impact of CE on the community itself (Bidandi et al., 2021). While CUPs have gained some importance in addressing social challenges and promoting reciprocity, sustainability, philosophy of Ubuntu and social change, there is a lack of research on their qualitative impact (Akhurst et al., 2022). Bernardo et al. (2012) acknowledge a lack of consistent tools to evaluate CE and CUPs. Therefore, deploying a well-designed M&E system for CUPs is a crucial part of CE processes that is often overlooked.

Epstein et al. (2018) suggest that HEIs that include CE monitoring and evaluation should also be reviewed regularly to enhance the nature of their existing community partnerships. In collaboration with CPs, adjustments should be made to ensure that the M&E system is purposeful and relevant to both the university and community partners' transformation or

change. Gosling & Edwards (2003) describe M&E system as an organized set of collection, processing, and dissemination activities designed to provide programme staff \participants with the information necessary to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate programmes (p. 296). It denotes a feedback system, a tool to monitor and evaluate outcomes, providing information for governance and evidence-based decision making (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). This study agrees with and adopts Westoby and Botes's (2020, p. 55) idea of developmental evaluation, which uses "evaluation to inform innovation by adapting evaluation to the particular needs and challenges of social innovation and systems change. Developmental evaluation does not impose outsider universal benchmarks or criteria".

Similarly, in the context of the RUCE division, it attempts to contribute towards anchoring Rhodes University in Makhanda and towards addressing the social and economic problems that continue to plague the excluded and previously marginalized communities of Makhanda. As a CE coordinator of RUCE's Volunteer programmes, I have observed, in line with Hall et al. (2015) and Mydin and Amran (2019), that if CUP issues are not proactively and adequately addressed, they can impede the achievement of collective goals, reduce the quality of collaborative CE initiatives, discourage community members' commitment to active CE, and even obstruct future collaborations. In problematizing the current M&E system, I aim to show that while RUCE attempts to include CPs in the monitoring and evaluation processes, these attempts however, militate against RUCE's notion of participatory and transformative CUPs that could contribute to improving the well-being of the marginalised communities of Makhanda because the M&E system was developed and is driven by RUCE staff.

Importantly, no guidelines are in place to jointly assess and revise the M&E system with community partners so that the CUPs are effective and relevant for the current context of community development in Makhanda. When I explored the literature, I found an absence of research on the collaborative development of M&E frameworks for CUPs in South African HEIs. As a result, there is a knowledge gap in empirical practices of developing collaborative engagement with community partners for the reviewing of community engagement M&E systems (Chile & Black, 2015). Most of the studies in the context of CE and partnerships have focussed on the benefits and challenges of HEI community engagement programmes (Bender, 2008; Mendoza et al., 2019; Shabalala & Ngcwangu, 2021) the perception of students on CE programmes and the role of CE in socio-economic development (Mtawa et al., 2016; Niyibizi et al., 2018; Shabalala & Ngcwangu, 2021).

There is also a lack of a structural, functional framework or model for the conceptualization of CE in HEIs in South Africa (Bender, 2008; Ferguson et al., 2019; Luckett & Shay, 2020). This directly impacts the M&E system of CE in general, and particularly one that has been developed collaboratively between university and community partners. The rationale for this study is that while RUCE is committed to the M&E of its programmes, its existing M&E system has not been reviewed in over five years. Therefore, for CE to be effective and to give effect to RUCE's commitment to building strong CUPs, the M&E system must be reviewed and revised collaboratively with community partners (Sasson, 2019; Michau & Namy, 2021). Against this background, together with community partners and utilizing a participatory approach (to the extent that it was possible within the university structure), the study aimed to assess and revise RUCE's current M&E system and finalise a framework for M&E that is relevant and effective for transformative CUPs and community development in Makhanda.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To achieve the above goal, the study focused on the following research questions:

- i) How does RUCE's current M&E system support CUPs in the volunteer programmes?
- ii) How can CUPs develop an M&E system that is relevant to the current context of community development in Makhanda?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following were the objectives of the study:

- i) To collaboratively identify the extent to which RUCE's current M&E system supports transformative CUPs.
- ii) To develop M&E system for transformative CUPs that is relevant to the current context of community development in Makhanda.

1.6 PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to develop transformative CUPs that is relevant and effective for community development in Makhanda in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

The participatory or collaborative practices to be involved in this study may provide a procedural understanding of the system's performance that goes beyond standard evaluations. Moreover, the findings from the study might deepen insight to leverage institutional anchoring and transformation (Harris & Holley, 2016; Ott & Kiteme, 2016). This study is significant

because community partners' voices will be acknowledged, encouraged to share information, becoming co-creators of knowledge voluntarily and giving voice to their lived experiences.

The value of this study is that the findings will inform RUCCE of a participatory approach to the monitoring and evaluation of CUPs and provide a collaboratively redesigned M&E system for the two volunteer programmes and progressively for all RUCCE's volunteer programmes. The study provides an M&E system framework for RUCCE. The academic community may benefit from an expanded body of knowledge on the approach used in this study. Importantly, given the scarcity of literature on M&E systems in general for CUPs and specifically on a collaborative approach to the development of an M&E system, this study will contribute (even in a small way) to the body of knowledge on M&E systems for transformative CUPs.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter One: introduces the study and focuses on situating the topic under investigation within its context. The goal of the study was to review and revise RUCCE's M&E system within two volunteer programmes, with the objective of bringing about a transformation in CUPs. It presents the problem, rationale for the study, the research questions, and objectives of the study.

Chapter Two: reviews the literature on CE in higher education. It covers the role of CE in HE, transformative community-university partnerships and monitoring and evaluation system. The chapter discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

Chapter Three: covers the research design and methodology of the study. The methodology applied in this study is explained in detail and includes the research approach, process, the participating groups, the selection procedure of study participants, data collection, data analysis, and the researcher's positionality. Notably, in this study, the term "participant group" is utilized instead of "sample group" to uphold the dignity of the individuals involved, recognizing their active participation and agency in the research process.

Chapter Four: This chapter presents the findings of the study based on data collected through focus group discussions and individual interviews for three participating groups. The results are presented under the two key themes of i) concepts and context and ii) partnerships, collaboration and M&E system for CUPs in CE.

Chapter Five: covers a consolidated discussion of the findings in line with the objectives of the study, the conclusion and recommendations that are both applicable and useful. Gaps in the

study are highlighted that may serve as potential areas for future research. The conclusion summarises key contributions and implications for the field of CE and transformative CUPs.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter serves as an overview of the study and provides a rationale for the study on assessing and revising the M&E system of the RUCE division. The chapter emphasized the need for universities to fulfil their social responsibility to local communities and overcome the perception of being disconnected from ‘ivory towers’. Universities should educate students to be engaged, responsible citizens and contribute to the public good. As a core function of higher education, CE and its contribution to the developmental and transformative roles of universities is presented to show how the public good purpose is put into effect.

The chapter highlighted the importance of strong partnerships with community organizations and members for effective CE. However, there is a lack of M&E systems in the field of CE, and community partners' participation in the development of M&E systems for CE, generally and particularly for CUPs, is not common. This study aimed to address this gap by collaboratively and participatively assessing and revising RUCE's existing M&E system to develop transformative CUPs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter one introduced the study, including its background, problem statement, research objectives, and its purpose and significance. This chapter covers the literature reviewed for the study. The purpose of a literature review is to locate and consider available research on a particular topic, published or unpublished, to have an empirical and inclusive knowledge base (Ramdhani et al., 2014; Cillo et al., 2019; Harari et al., 2020). According to O'Gorman et al. (2015), a literature review involves establishing what is known and unknown about a subject area.

This process goes beyond merely listing existing works, as Munn et al. (2018) explained, and entails evaluating, comparing, and contrasting the ideas presented in these works. By doing so, researchers can identify gaps in existing knowledge, build upon established theories, and design studies that contribute valuable insights to the academic community. Literature reviews can be compiled in different types, such as traditional (narrative) (Templier & Pare, 2018), scoping reviews, systematic literature reviews or annotated bibliographies (Synder, 2019). This study employed the narrative review, which refers to interpreting what other researchers found in the same field (Siddaway et al., 2019).

Conducting a literature review within this study enabled the researcher to critically examine, analyse and synthesise information from various sources. This examination encompassed an array of literature sources such as journal articles, dissertations/theses, e-books, conference papers, and multiple publications. The rigorous review process allowed for the exploration and assessment of arguments and perspectives from a diverse group of authors, enriching the understanding of the topic under study. It facilitated the identification of recurring patterns, prevailing trends, and common themes across various studies within the existing body of knowledge. This synthesis contributed to a comprehensive and well-rounded perspective on M&E systems through the development of transformative CUPs.

A well-executed literature review serves as a vital framework for a research study, showcasing the researcher's grasp of the subject matter and acknowledging the valuable contributions made by previous scholars in the field (Mukherjee et al., 2022). In this study, understanding the significant contributions of prior researchers is highlighted as a thematic discussion within the literature review.

The literature reviewed in this chapter served to establish the context for the examination of the monitoring and evaluation system of CE through CUPs. It provided an understanding of CE in higher education and how collaboratively establishing, reviewing, and revising M&E systems can foster transformative CUPs. The literature is reviewed under conceptual, philosophical, and theoretical frameworks. The conceptual framework examines the key concepts of community engagement in higher education, community-university partnerships, monitoring and evaluation systems and how these concepts influence social change through CUPs as a foundation of CE. The reviewed literature presents the variety of ways in which CE is understood, conceptualised, and influences the CUP programmes of engagement.

The philosophy of Ubuntu and Social Change Theory (SCT) are two important frameworks that guide RUCE's engagement with communities and these frameworks also guide this study. These frameworks emphasise relational and structural changes as components of social change intending to develop transformative CUPs.

The chapter starts with a literature review encompassing the study, followed by the presentation of a conceptual framework for CE, an examination of CUP in the context of CE, literature on monitoring and evaluation systems, and concludes with the presentation of a theoretical framework and overall conclusion.

2.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Community Engagement

Community and engagement make up the concept of community engagement. Community refers not only to a specific geographic area but to a community of interest (Aslin & Brown, 2004). In this study, the community refers both to a specific geographic area, which is Makhanda and to a community of interest where community partners and RUCE have shared goals and vision for the community of Makhanda, indicative by their collaborative relationship to contribute to the development of the Makhanda community. The word 'engagement' evokes an orientation in how the 'other' is viewed as one that emphasizes the primacy of mutuality and reciprocity in the relationship (Meindl et al., 2019). Community engagement posits that one should be cognizant of this two-way, reciprocal relationship (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010).

CE plays a critical role in higher education in the South African context. Driscoll and Sandmann (2016, p. 8) define CE as a process by which the affiliation with the community gets

prime attention. It refers to “the engagement processes and practices in which a wide range of people work together to achieve a shared goal guided by a commitment to a common set of values, principles, and criteria”. In the context of higher education, CE refers to the collaboration between universities and their surrounding communities in addressing social and economic issues (Bidandi et al., 2021, p. 2). Universities can contribute to social transformation and development through CE (Chankseliani et al. 2021). It is this type of mutually beneficial, the bi-directional definition of CE that leads to the realisation of higher education social responsibility and transformation.

The Rhodes University Community Engagement Policy (2005, pp 4-5) defines CE as activities conducted by university staff or students with community partners through which knowledge is jointly discovered and in which there is a reciprocal exchange of teaching and learning. In this policy, CE is understood as a means for the academic community to contribute to the local, national, and global development agenda through:

- Enhancing university student/staff participation in mutually beneficial activities for the advancement of community partners.
- Enhancing the processes of knowledge production and dissemination at the university to address the realities of the local, national, and international development context.
- Promoting critical self-awareness and citizenship through active citizenry and volunteerism.
- Enhancing activities that work to build collective identities in South Africa and promote core social goals of social cohesion and solidarity.
- Enhancing the value attached to engaged research or the co-production of knowledge within the scholarship of engagement.
- Since the university is ‘of’ and ‘for’ Makhanda, mutually beneficial local partnerships are encouraged to respond to the pressing and urgent local challenges.

The Glossary of the Higher Education Quality Council’s (HEQC)l (2004, p.19-26) Framework for Institutional Audits points to CE as the inclusion of community interaction in the tertiary curriculum to address social injustices in South African communities. Hall (2010) defines CE as a “process of creating a shared vision among the community (especially disadvantaged) and partners (local, provincial, national government, NGOs, HEIs, businesses, and donors) in society, as equal partners that result in a long-term collaborative programme of action with outcomes that benefit the whole community equitably” (p. 25). Such collaboration can

empower communities, students and academics through shared knowledge and skills development. However, the lack of a national policy and guidelines on CE leaves the door open for each HEI to determine its definition of CE. Muller (2010) supports this 'lack of a common or blueprint definition' and argues that 'community engagement' is:

an irreducibly contextual activity, depending variously on the mission and strengths of the university, the state of regional development of the area in which it is sited, and the ingenuity of the academics concerned, not to mention the diversity of views and interests of the local communities (p. 69).

These definitions of CE suggest a broad canvas for a variety of ways in which CE is interpreted in the South African higher education arena. However, what is critical though is the acknowledgement that transformational CE which is characterized by interactive and mutually beneficial efforts aimed at tackling real-world issues, fostering social responsibility, and instigating change is relevant to the South African democratic context. This is affirmed by the National Development Plan (NDP) (2012) which identifies CE as a key strategy for achieving social transformation and development in the country. It extends beyond mere academic undertakings, involving active involvement, the sharing of knowledge, and the pursuit of equitable results for all those engaged.

CE provides opportunities for students to develop practical skills and knowledge while also addressing social and economic issues facing communities (Zhou et al., 2020; Chankseliani et al., 2021). CE benefits students' personal development. Engaging students in community-based projects allows them to apply theoretical knowledge gained in classrooms to real-world situations, enhancing their practical skills and problem-solving abilities (Zhou et al., 2020). Moreover, CE cultivates empathy and a sense of social responsibility among students as they gain exposure to the challenges faced by communities (Collins et al., 2023).

Collaborating with local communities provides a platform for joint problem-solving, incorporating diverse perspectives and expertise to address complex issues effectively (Collins et al., 2023). Ideally involving universities in CE initiatives fosters insights into local communities, challenges, and aspirations, enabling academic institutions to fit their research and educational programmes to address specific community needs. The collaboration with communities can drive research and innovation that directly benefits local communities and empowers residents by involving them in decision-making processes and capacity-building initiatives (Collins et al., 2023). By working together, stakeholders can pool their resources,

expertise, and networks to address social challenges comprehensively, maximising the potential for positive outcomes and sustainable development (Gray & Purdy, 2018). The synergy of perspectives from different stakeholders contributes to innovative solutions for societal progress (Bornstein, 2007), and collaboration optimises resource allocation for community projects (Vangen & Huxham, 2005).

2.2.1.1 Models of CE

Most universities follow any of the three models of CE separately or in combination, summarised as follows:

Firstly, in the silo model, the university's three functions – teaching and learning, research, and CE are pursued independently of the others (Govender, 2021; Adebayo, 2019; Bender, 2008). Generally, CE in this model is confined to community outreach and student/staff volunteerism.

Secondly, in the intersection model, the university's three functions are acknowledged, and there is some intersection between the three functions. Where there is an intersection, it innovates service learning or engaged research may emerge. However, these remain separate activities and neither informs the other (Bender, 2008, p. 89).

Thirdly, the cross-cutting model identifies the university's three functions equally and as fundamental to the functioning of HE (Adebayo, 2019; Museva, 2018). In this model, CE is placed at a nexus with teaching and, learning, and research – where CE underpins teaching, learning and research and teaching and learning inform research or vice versa. The diagram below depicts an example of the cross-cutting model RUCS adopts (Bender, 2008), together with aspects of the intersection model within the HE institution.

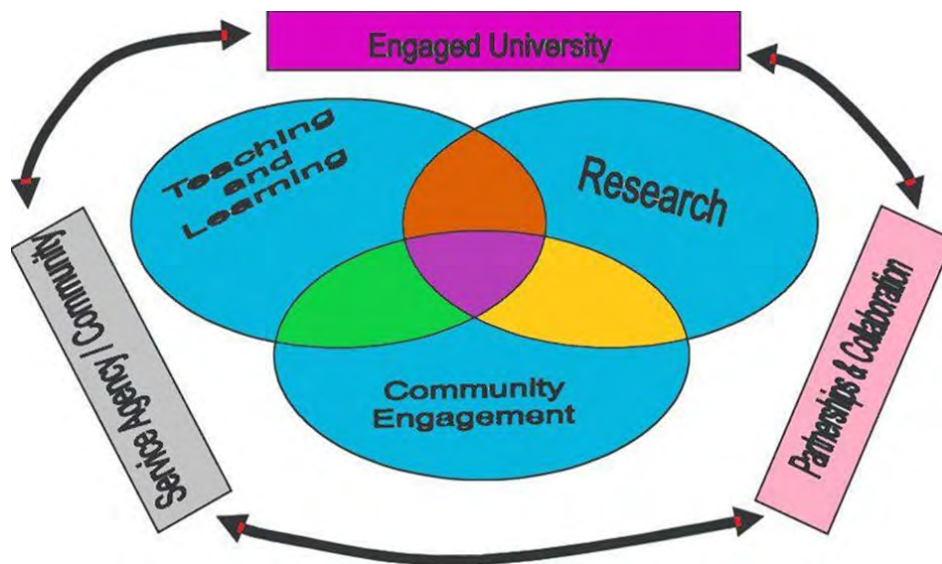


Figure 1: The Infusion (cross-cutting) Model of CE. Adapted from Bender (2008, p. 90).

In this model, the multidimensional presence of CE leaders within the university setting comes from the reality that CE is more than an operational unit but one that is articulated as one of the goals of higher education (Bernardo et al., 2014). Therefore, its scope of concern is university-wide, requiring the involvement of the university's academic, student and administrative sectors. This may also explain why CE varies in the structural locality from university to university. Some universities place CE under the student services arm to emphasize a perspective of engagement focused on service learning. Other universities embed CE across university departments, faculties, or units to facilitate its integration with the university's teaching, learning, and research (Mtawa et al., 2016).

Given the national mandate that HEIs must be committed to the common good, and while universities may conceptualise CE in relation to their specific context, they are nevertheless required to reflect on and review their practices to show their commitment to the common good purpose and removal of the 'ivory tower' image perpetuated by universities historically. Building strong CUPs and effective M&E systems are part of this commitment. The cross-cutting model assists HEIs in being locally responsive and, at the same time, globally competitive.

According to Muse (2018), "the introduction of CE in HEIs follows this shift with an emerging focus and intention on creating democratically engaged partnerships between community-based organisations and higher education institutions that are defined as inclusive, reciprocal,

and co-created” (p. 11). CE advances social change through various programmes and activities between HEIs and communities.

2.2.1.2 Forms of Community Engagement

It is possible to differentiate between various CE activities because CE can take on different forms and shapes within the context of higher education. It may include distance education, community-based research, participatory action research, professional community service and service learning, and student volunteerism (Tinkler et al., 2014). In its fullest sense, CE is the combination and integration of service with teaching and research, applied to identify community development priorities (Lazarus et al., 2008). Furco (1996) provides a widely used typology that is built on the idea of reciprocal learning and the balance between different attentions. The two key principles identified by Furco are intended beneficiaries and the primary intended purpose or focus of the activity. The intended beneficiary can range from the community to the student, and the purpose or focus of the activity can range from service to learning.

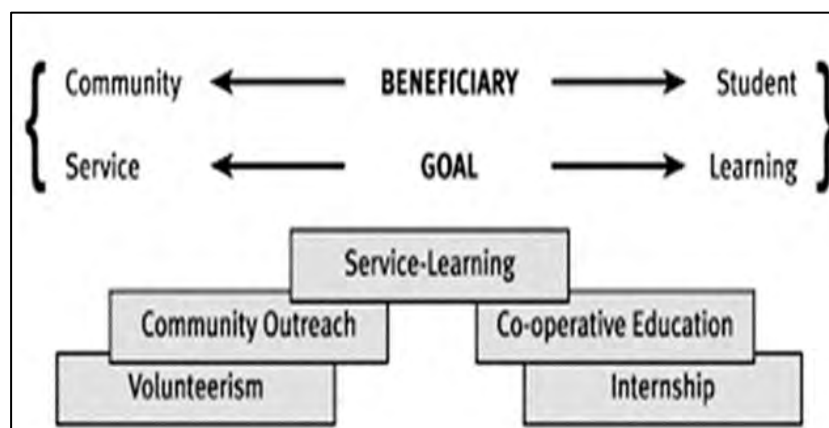


Figure 2: Furco's Continuum of Community Engagement (Cassim & Bowie, 2012, p. 203).

The diagram above basically shows what happens in the realm of CE when there is a collaboration between the community and students through activities like volunteering, service learning, and engaged research, and the goal is learning through service and engagement. CE provides opportunities for students to develop their skills and knowledge through practical experience in real-world settings (Morley & Jamil, 2021) through Service Learning (SL), which is the credit-bearing, curriculum-aligned form of CE and through volunteerism. Given that RUC has currently adopted four forms of CE which are service learning, volunteerism (referred to as engaged citizenry, and providing the context of this study through two Volunteer

programmes), engaged research in the form of community-based participatory research, and social innovation, I shall present the literature reviewed for these four forms of CE.

Service-learning involves students providing community service while learning about the social issues and challenges facing communities (Jacoby, 2015). Bringle and Hatcher (1996) define service learning as “a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience wherein students engage in organized service activities aligned with identified community goals” (p. 222). This engagement is followed by reflections that deepen understanding of course content, foster a broader appreciation of the discipline, and cultivate an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Cassim & Bowle, 2012). Research has shown that service-learning not only enhances academic learning but also fosters personal development and civic engagement (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Functioning as the credit-bearing form of CE according to Rhodes University's Community Engagement Policy (2005), service-learning integrates CE activities within academic coursework. These activities are coupled with reflections on the relationship between the service activity and the course content or discipline and receive formal recognition such as course credit or research credit. In its transformative nature, all participants recognize their role within the educational community, understanding that their contributions are important not only for the course but also for knowledge production, community advancement, and broader societal betterment.

On Furco's continuum of CE, service learning holds a central position, effectively balancing the service provided to beneficiaries with the achievement of educational objectives. Sigmon (as cited in Furco, 2011) posits that service learning occurs when both the providers and recipients of the service mutually learn through their engagement. Thus, service learning can be defined as an experiential educational approach rooted in "reciprocal learning" (p. 71).

Despite the terminological ambiguity associated with service learning, various descriptions such as "academic service learning," "community-based service learning," and "field-based community service" (Butin, 2003) are acknowledged. From a South African perspective, Lesley Le Grange (2007) critically examines the ongoing discourse on service learning, emphasizing its subjective nature is open to debate and deliberation. However, Butin (2003) sees value in the diversity of definitions, allowing for adaptability across diverse disciplines.

Unlike credit-bearing service learning, volunteerism emphasizes benefits through experiential learning and personal growth. According to the Rhodes University Community Engagement

Policy (2005), volunteerism is defined as "voluntary-based community engagement without evaluation for curricular purposes or monetary compensation, which engages students and staff in organized activities with community partners" (p. 5). The primary objective of volunteerism activities is to foster relationship-building, critical self-awareness, engaged citizenry, and learning through participation in shared projects. Volunteerism encourages students, staff, and community partners to embrace a mindset of continuous learning and unlearning, recognizing that everyone has something to teach and something to learn (ibid). Chetty and Bhagwan (2021) introduce a nuanced perspective on volunteerism, viewing it as an amalgamation of social work and voluntary activities. Drawing on the insights of Cronin and Perold (2008), cited in Chetty and Bhagwan (2021, p.1308), volunteerism and social activism share an intrinsic connection. Both are identified as potential catalysts for change, serving as mechanisms for community participation and embodying shared values such as empowerment, social inclusion, and personal transformation. Despite a scarcity of empirical evidence regarding volunteering in the realm of social work in South Africa, student volunteering initiatives thrive on campuses, transcending disciplinary boundaries internationally (Perry & Imperial, 2001; Wilson, 2000).

Stanton (2007) asserts that highly engaged universities possess a collective conviction that enhancing the well-being of communities is integral to achieving excellence in the fundamental missions of the institution, including research, teaching, and learning (p. 295). Furthermore, these institutions actively establish and nurture reciprocal relationships with their targeted communities, engaging in collaborative endeavours such as service (volunteerism) and research (ibid).

In the context of CE, an epistemological approach can influence how knowledge is produced and shared between communities and academic institutions. Engaged research encompasses a range of methodologies and research approaches with a shared core principle of collaborative engagement/participation with communities aiming to understand and improve development and sustainable challenges (Vaughn et al., 2017). RUCS (2023, p. 1) defines engaged research as a responsive, reciprocal, and respectful way for research to be conducted in partnership with communities. The research partnership aspires to be transformational, where all participating members understand that they are members of the research community and that their input and active participation are important, not only for the benefit of the research project but also for knowledge production, the advancement of communities, and more broadly, the advancement of society. In this context, engaged research helps us to grapple with contemporary

transformational challenges that confront us as a country, as communities, as higher education institutes, and as scholars (King, 2006). Ethical principles governing research relationships with communities are governed by the university policy for research ethics.

RUCE promotes community-based participatory (CBPR) as engaged research. CBPR represents a move away from the traditional research methodologies, which are extractive in nature and use a deficit-oriented approach to research on people and not with people. CBPR has brought a twist in research in that it seeks inclusivity, relationship building, and conducting research collaboratively with the community. To the extent that it was possible, my intention in this study was to promote inclusivity, relationship building, and collaboration. Shalowitz et al. (2009) describe CBPR as “a collaborative research approach that aims to ensure active participation from communities affected by the research issues, organizational representatives, and researchers throughout the research process” (p. 350). The goal is to enhance health and well-being through actionable steps, including social change. At Rhodes University, CBPR holds a prominent position in CE, particularly as the primary research method for engaged research. Within this framework, RUCE (2023) defines CBPR as the highest form of engaged research grounded in principles of mutual respect, shared decision-making, and the equitable distribution of power and resources (p.1).

The essence of “CBPR lies in its commitment to addressing complex issues through a participatory process that positions community members as equal partners in the research journey” (Rhodes University Community Engagement, 2023, p.1). However, there has been fundamental resistance from local communities which stems from systemic doubts brought about by a history of one-sided benefits in traditional research practices. Communities are tired of being objects rather than subjects and partners in research, and this is what CBPR addresses (ibid). Despite its transformative potential CBPR encounters challenges in securing research approval, particularly under the scrutiny of ethical committees. CBPR represents a shift from a transactional to a transformational research paradigm, as articulated by Maleku et al. (2021). This transition acknowledges the imperative for a more equitable, collaborative, and ethically sound approach to community-based research.

Maleku et al. (2021) assert that CBPR has firmly established itself as a transformative approach capable of developing, implementing, and disseminating effective interventions across diverse communities (p. 214). To address these challenges and embrace the changes associated with

CBPR, higher education institutions must explore innovative approaches in the realms of teaching, learning, research, and CE as well as the provision of funding.

In any context where there are problems people find innovative ways to solve the problems whether it is for the short term or long term. Social innovation exists in our daily lived experiences where people find creative ways of knowing and doing. Social innovation, therefore, serves as an alternative method for addressing sustainable challenges, seeking to reconfigure social practices to better address unmet needs not addressed by established methods (Cassim & Bowie, 2012). It is important to note that social innovation is not confined to specific incubation spaces; rather, it permeates various aspects of our lives. Its significance lies in its pivotal role in community development.

RUCE (2023) defines social innovation as the “generation of novel and creative solutions to social issues, such as poverty and unemployment” (p.1). These solutions extend beyond conventional methods and draw upon the community's own resources. Social innovation becomes instrumental in fostering sustainable and resilient communities by encouraging adaptive and innovative responses to social and environmental challenges. In doing so, it contributes to the long-term viability and well-being of communities (ibid). The integration of social innovation with service learning, volunteerism, and engaged research will amplify the impact on community development.

2.2.1.3 Effectiveness of Community Engagement in Higher Education

According to Howard et al. (2007) community engagement's effectiveness relies on a shared understanding of its meaning, principles, and processes, as emphasized. A successful CE involves building rich, authentic, and sustainable relationships and partnerships based on trust. Additionally, CE effectiveness requires mutually beneficial goals aligned with the common good, engaged citizenship, and a foundation in social justice. Supporting structures for sustainability and acknowledging and celebrating achievements by both the university and communities are integral components (ibid). In this instance, CE acts as a safeguard against social injustice within the geographical structures and communities where the university is located (Uslaner, 2005). The effectiveness of CE also manifests in research outputs that bring about positive change in local communities. This underscores the significance of building and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships, along with integrating the four forms of CE—engaged research, service learning, engaged citizenry, and social innovation—within higher

education and communities. The integration of these forms emphasizes the interconnectedness of academia and local communities in fostering positive societal impact.

There is a need, however, to evaluate the effectiveness of CE on both the community and the institution. This includes assessing social, economic, and environmental outcomes resulting from CUPs. There are challenges and barriers to CE effectiveness, such as power imbalances, cultural differences, and the need for long-term commitment that needs attention (Howard et al., 2007 p. 2). Addressing these challenges is essential for enhancing effectiveness. Reyes and Curry-Stevens (2014) recognize the need for culturally responsive approaches that respect local values and norms for CE effectiveness in diverse cultural contexts.

2.2.2. Community-University Partnerships In Community Engagement

The community-university relationship is fundamental to the conceptualization and practice of CE. This relationship is often presented in the form of partnerships aimed at achieving mutually beneficial goals (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). A CUP can be described as a collaboration between community organisations and institutions of higher learning, aiming to achieve an identified social change goal through community-engaged scholarship and other CE programmes (Mancini et al., 2022). It is a "collaboration between institutions of higher learning and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Hall & Tandon, 2015, p. 3). This partnership ensures mutual benefits for both the community organisation and the participants of the university (Curwood et al., 2011). According to Northmore and Hart (2011), CUPs have much to offer to the debate about the future of universities, and HEIs may be one of the largest, relatively untapped resources that communities have.

Despite the benefit that CUPs bring to higher education through CE, there remains a multitude of complexities to consider within these relationships. One of these complexities is the issue of power. Prins (2006) exemplifies the concept of: "power with", stating that "CUPs enable individuals and institutions to accomplish more together than they could alone. Often, however, hierarchies (i.e., disparities rooted in class, race, gender, status, and institutional power) also shape, often unconsciously, routine interactions between and among university and community representatives" (Prins, 2006, p. 2). The institutional power and status of 'expert' that university academics /researchers hold allows them to influence the research agenda intentionally and unintentionally. Reinke and Walker (2005) point out that at their worst,

partnerships can result in universities exerting and extending their community ‘partners’ by acting as detached experts and/or by treating the community as a ‘laboratory’ thereby leaving community members angry, distrustful, and dissatisfied with the partnership. According to Buys and Burnsnall (2007, p. 59), the academic "expert's mindset" clashes with the community's experiential knowledge. A consequence of this clash is a dearth of research on the relational and cultural dynamics between the university and community relationship. The partnership between HEIs and CUPs is pivotal for collectively addressing social injustices and there is an urgent need to dismantle the hegemonic systematic structures that exist in universities (Muzanenhamo et al., 2021), in order to exercise mutuality and ensure that the dignity of all parties is recognized and remains intact.

It becomes imperative then, when examining CUPs, to consider power dynamics. The implementation of a robust M&E system can be helpful in this regard. To address the issue of universities being the sole experts in CE and CUPs, I suggest utilizing a participatory approach to collaboratively review and develop an effective M&E system for CE with community partners, students and university staff members. This approach, which can be referred to as transformative in nature, helps mitigate power imbalances and ensure that community partners are involved in the decision-making process. Transformation is characterized by a profound change in form, nature, or structure, extending beyond superficial alterations (Liu & Corma, 2021; Preece & Preece, 2017; Clarke et al., 2014). This concept often implies a fundamental shift in perspectives, values, or systems, encompassing personal growth, organizational change, societal shifts, or systemic reforms (Bryson et al., 2021). The essence of transformation lies in its holistic and impactful evolution, transcending mere incremental adjustments.

In response to transformation within the higher education sector, the Rhodes University Council made a significant resolution in May 2016, when the Council deemed it timely and prudent for the institution to convene a stakeholder summit, focusing on key issues related to the university's transformation trajectory (Rhodes University Transformation Summit Report, 2016). This strategic move highlights the institution's commitment to addressing transformational challenges and fostering a comprehensive evolution aligned with contemporary higher education demands. In keeping with the institution's transformation commitment generally and specifically to the social and economic development of Makhanda, CE is given the full support of the executive leadership of the university as evidenced in the current institutional development plan (IDP 2023-2028). Within this context of institutional

support and commitment, I strongly believe that RUCE is equally committed to transformative CUPs. Therefore, this study's review and revision of RUCE's M&E system within a transformative CUP is appropriate and timeous.

Caughman et al. (2020) argue that CUPs tend to be narrowly focused on specific research, CE, and development, or capacity-building projects and while these can each have sustainability aspects, it is less common to find CUPs that are explicitly organized to centre and advance transformational sustainability goals. Problems are systemic and they require systems, policy and behaviour changes, among others. In short, they require transformation, and that takes time. The authors (Moore, 2004; Strier, 2014; Sasson, 2019) point out that CUPs must be transformative in order to effectively contribute to sustainability transformations over a long period of time. Transformative CUPs are long-term relationships between community organizations and universities and to establish those long-term relationships, critical and deep relationship development work needs to be foregrounded. Transformative CUPs must address historical and systemic issues, identify shared values across organizations, and agree to specific and measurable sustainability goals they wish to achieve together. Importantly, Caughman et al. (2020) highlight that to improve CUPs, the processes used to design and implement partnerships need to centre transformations and build and maintain the structures needed to support progress towards those transformations. RUCE values relationship-building with community partners and understands this to be a long-term process. Collaboration and the participation of community organisations in the review and revision of RUCE's M&E systems in this study may be considered as a building block of transformative CE.

2.2.3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

In the context of CE, a M&E system refers to a structured process for collecting and analysing data on the design, implementation and impact of CE programmes or initiatives (Molapo, 2019). The purpose of the M&E system is to regularly assess the progress and impact of CE initiatives, identify areas for improvement and inform future decision-making (Petts & Leach, 2000). A M&E system typically includes a set of indicators and metrics for measuring the success of CE initiatives, a process for collecting and analysing data, and a mechanism for reporting and communicating the results to community-university partners (Burns et al., 2021). It helps organizations track the progress of their initiatives, identify challenges, and make necessary adjustments to improve their effectiveness.

Monitoring is a continuous function that primarily seeks to provide early indicators of progress, or lack thereof, in achieving outcomes for management and key stakeholders of an ongoing intervention, a project, or a programme. Its goal is to determine whether the planned activities have been fulfilled (Otieno, 1999, p. 41). The role of the various stakeholders in monitoring must be recognized (Kamau & Mohamed, 2015; Kihuha, 2018). Gosling and Edwards (2003) state that the outcomes of the monitoring process can be transferred directly into the planning process, through which any necessary modifications can be formulated. Monitoring ensures that the exercise remains on track by inspecting to see that actions are implemented, progress toward objectives is measured, problems are identified as they emerge, strengths can be built upon, and there is adaptation to altering conditions. Monitoring can thus be “the key to good planning.”

Monitoring is ongoing and is key to good leadership and accountability of all team members. The project is assessed by identifying challenges and assessing the need for support. “If monitoring systems work well, evaluation is necessary less often; and when it is needed, it is much easier to carry out” (Gosling & Edwards, 2003, p. 12). The data collection tools are usually embedded into the project activities to ensure a seamless process (Jin et al., 2014). As an example, RUCE monitors its programmes and checks progress through quarterly joint meetings between community partners, volunteer managers, and student leaders by conducting reflection sessions.

Currently, RUCE follows a number of steps to monitor their volunteer programmes: RUCE reflects on the actions taken by the team (RUCE and community partners), assesses risks, and deals with challenges at various stages of the project. Activities are monitored with a SWOT analysis methodology, that is, strengths, weaknesses/challenges, opportunities, and threats are assessed. Joint decisions are made on steps to be taken to continue the activity in the agreed direction, to continue to the next activity, and on the exit plan for the project. Additionally, community partners and students' participation in training, CE workshops, and other events such as conferences and seminars form part of RUCE's monitoring system. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the current M&E system was developed by RUCE staff many years ago. Therefore, RUCE believes that the review of its M&E system is long overdue. Consequently, the required changes will be made collaboratively with community partners to make the M&E system effective and relevant to both the community partners and Rhodes University in the current context of community development in Makhanda.

Evaluation systems have been defined differently by various authors (Kabonga, 2018; Steinberg et al., 2017). Roagman et al. (2016) conceptualised programme evaluation as the process of assessing the effectiveness of a programme in achieving its objectives or the comparative effectiveness of multiple programmes in achieving shared objectives. In this thesis, the term "assessment" is also used and requires definition. According to Bachman & Palmer (2010), assessment involves systematically collecting information using established procedures. This definition emphasizes the organized and methodical collection of data through established protocols in which the study explores the participatory approach in assessing RUCE's M&E system.

Bachman and Palmer (2010) extend this definition by defining assessment as the outcome of the information collection process, often taking the form of a description or a score. Sadler (1989) defines assessment as any judgment of performance or work. These differing perspectives on assessment suggest a range of emphasis from the collection process to the final judgment of outcomes. To further complicate the matter, the terms 'evaluation' and 'assessment' are occasionally used interchangeably (Meissner, 2018). These scholars agree that evaluation is assessing programmes to verify their effectiveness. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2003) refers to the effectiveness, efficiency, impact, efficacy, relevance, and sustainability of development interventions as evaluation criteria. Most often, evaluations are conducted by external evaluators or independent evaluators, allowing for supposedly more objectivity. Evaluating a project is usually undertaken at the end of the intervention. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this kind of evaluation is criticised by Westoby and Botes's (2020, p. 55) as an evaluation that is imposed by outsider universal benchmarks or criteria. The idea of developmental evaluation works from the 'inside-out', requiring reflective practice, deep listening, and feedback mechanisms from 'the people' (community) who are setting their pathways of development. These aspects of monitoring and evaluation are essential components of RUCE's current M&E system. Evaluation, according to the authors, is used to inform innovation by adapting evaluation to the particular needs and challenges of social innovation and systems change which is the intent of this study.

There are several reasons for conducting an evaluation the critical point among them is that it informs decision-makers of ways to improve the project so that intended benefits accrue to the beneficiaries (Newcomer et al., 2022). It also shows the unintended consequences of the project outside what was planned (Kabonga, 2018). The 2018 report from the Centre of Higher

Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL) at Rhodes University states that evaluation aims to ensure and enhance quality. It emphasizes that evaluation needs to be acknowledged as a means of assuring quality and calls for individuals and departments to be accountable while simultaneously requiring protection from its misuse. According to CHERTL (2018), evaluation is also a time and resource-consuming process. In a context where time and resources are scarce, pressure is exerted to ensure that evaluative work is planned and executed efficiently and effectively, while a monitoring system demonstrates whether the process for achieving results has been effective. The effective use of resources counts, not just their efficient use (Rist & Kusak, 2004).

Relevant to this study is that evaluation has the potential to produce knowledge for organisational learning and learning about social justice (Silver, 2020), Mathison (2018) observes that most projects' evaluation does not fulfil their potential to contribute to transformative social change because evaluation is time and resource-consuming, as pointed out by CHERTL (2018). While this may be true in several cases, it may be different for evaluation (and monitoring) that is collaboratively planned and implemented in CE. It is expected that the findings of this study might reveal the potential of collaborative evaluation (and monitoring) to contribute to social change and the extent to which evaluation (and monitoring) is time and resource-consuming. There are six different types of evaluations: Formative, Process, Outcome, Economic, Impact, and Summative evaluation. However, the formative and summative assessments will be discussed as they will be used to provide methodical guidelines for meeting the study's objectives.

Various scholars define formative evaluation based on the scope of practices. According to Black and Wiliam (1998), formative assessment encompasses all activities undertaken by project coordinators and/or their participants that provide information to be used as feedback to modify the project in which they are engaged. This understanding of assessment signals a shift from an individual focus to a shared responsibility for learning within the engagement partnership. The purpose of formative evaluation is to validate or ensure that the goals are being achieved and to improve the status quo if necessary. Formative assessment is conducted before, during, and after implementation to maximize the likelihood of success and to better understand the nature of the initiative, the need for improvements, and the value of extending the project to new contexts (Kowalski et al., 2018; Stetler et al., 2006). Formative assessment is conducted in each RUCE programme to inform the overall RUCE's engaged citizenry programmes.

Summative evaluation determines the overall quality or value of the intervention. Summative evaluation builds on formative evaluation results assessing the quality, value, and results of the programme (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016, p. 153). Summative evaluation informs judgments about whether the programme worked (i.e., whether the goals and objectives were met) and requires making explicit the criteria and evidence being used to make “summary” judgments (Earle, 2021; Mertens & Wilson, 2018). Following the programme's completion, the summative assessment may analyze immediate outcomes or long-term impact, or it may summarize its overall performance, including, for example, its efficiency and sustainability (Rossi et al., 2004, p. 204). Currently, RUCE conducts summative assessments at the programmatic level, and the overall assessment of RUCE’s programmes takes place during RUCE staff strategic planning. Jointly done, a summative evaluation of RUCE volunteer programmes offers timely feedback to the RUCE directorate, community partners, and students on student progress and performance in the volunteer programmes in which they engage. Collaborative evaluation will increase the overall quality of RUCE’s volunteer programmes and CUP relationships.

Evaluations can be goal-oriented or decision-oriented evaluation. Before setting up a M&E system, it is necessary to define the specific goals the policy or project aims to achieve, select key indicators, and set targets for them. These targets serve as “a measuring rod of changes caused by the policy or project” (Wollman, 2003, p. 6). The goal-oriented evaluation emphasises the impact of service delivery toward its beneficiaries, while a decision-oriented evaluation enables intelligent judgments by decision-makers (Burger, 2022). Evaluation that shows programme processes and that values the perspectives of key programme stakeholders defines a responsive evaluation (Burger, 2022).

2.3. PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The study is anchored in the philosophy of Ubuntu and Social Change Theory, key frameworks that significantly shape the CE initiatives at RUCE. A theoretical framework is a lens through which a study is academically situated and contextualized to support and enrich one's thinking (Lester, 2005). It plays a pivotal role in establishing a connection between the researcher and existing literature (Herek, 1995; Smyth, 2004), while also furnishing underlying assumptions that steer the research direction (Miller, 2007).

Below is a representation of key concepts and the interrelatedness of the Philosophy of Ubuntu and Social Change Theory.

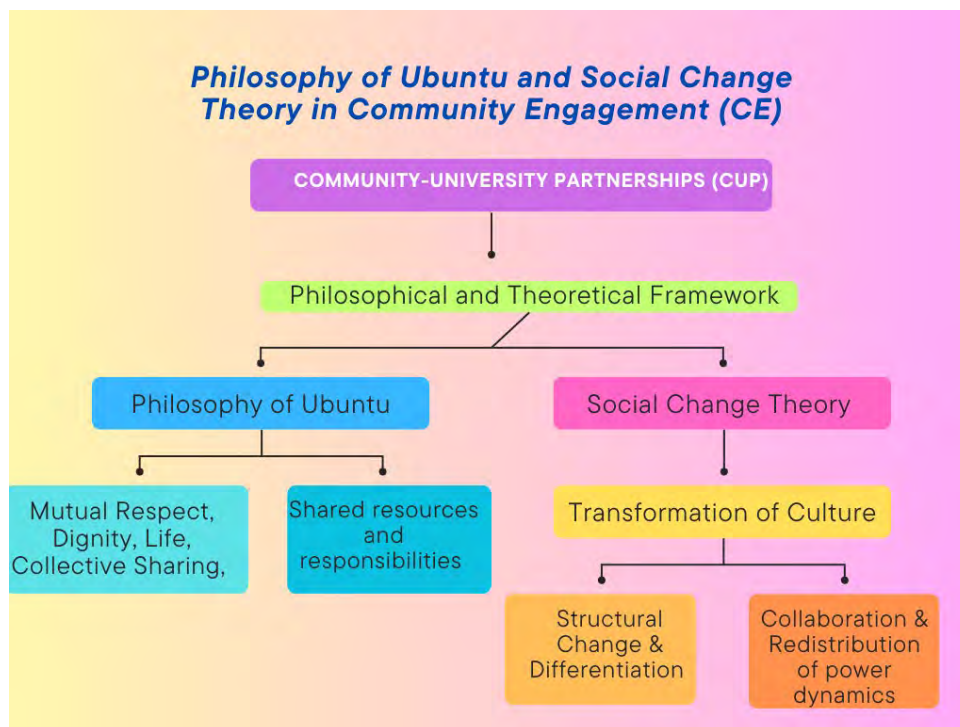


Figure 3: Integration of Philosophy of Ubuntu and Social Change Theory in CE

By integrating the Philosophy of Ubuntu and Social Change Theory, the approach to CUPs becomes holistic, ethical, and transformative, fostering a deep sense of interconnectedness and mutual benefit between universities and their community partners.

2.3.1. Philosophy of Ubuntu

Moodley et al. (2019) position Ubuntu within participatory research, emphasizing its pertinence to decision-making, power dynamics, and overall research processes. The challenges articulated by community partners regarding power dynamics and decision-making in CUPs highlight a discernible gap in the embodiment of Ubuntu within these relationships.

Drawing from Mabovula's (2011) exploration of African communal values and Battle's (1997) definition, Ubuntu is explained as originating from the Xhosa expression 'Umuntu ngumntu ngabantu,' denoting that individual humanity finds its ideal expression in relation to others. In its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, RUCE adopts Kamwangamalu's (1999, p. 28) definition of Ubuntu as the interconnectedness and interdependence of all human beings. According to this perspective, individuals exist not in isolation but in interdependent relationships with others.

Ubuntu becomes a metric for 'humanness' in communities, embodying attributes such as respect for every human being, human dignity, and human life. It also encompasses collective sharing, obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence, and communalism. RUCCE's commitment to incorporating the philosophy of Ubuntu into its approaches, as demonstrated in its strategic planning, underscores a dedication to fostering interconnectedness and shared humanity in its various initiatives. This alignment with Ubuntu serves as a foundational ethos guiding RUCCE's endeavours in CE.

2.3.2. Social Change Theory (SCT)

The thinking that change is inevitable and that every society, community, or organization must evolve is central to this study. The theoretical underpinning of this study is firmly rooted in social change theory, which posits that CUPs are instrumental in instigating and catalysing social transformation (Dewaele et al., 2022). Through collaborative endeavours with universities, social change extends its influence to reshape community frameworks, redistributing power dynamics among all participants and fostering trusting relationships (Mitchell, 2008). This theoretical framework is underpinned by the understanding that every society, at some point, encounters changes (Siregar, 2022a; 200b), and social change is a constituent of these transformations.

Sztompka (2008a; 2008b) advances a comprehensive definition of social change, characterizing it as "a transformation of culture and social institutions over time" (p. 1). Schatzki (2019) articulates the notion of social change as "the process by which new patterns of behaviour or structure replace old ones" (p. 4). Golden-Biddle and Dutton (2012) extend the definition of social change to a process that engenders transformations in patterns of thought, behaviour, social relationships, institutions, and social structures to yield favourable outcomes for individuals, communities, organizations, society, and/or the environment, transcending the benefits accrued solely by the initiators of these transformations.

HEIs are mandated to be socially responsible in accordance with the transformation agenda of the White Paper for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997) and this partly takes place through CE and strong CUPs collaboratively addressing communal challenges to bring about the required social change (Mudau, 2020; Phiri, 2016; Stefani & Blessinger, 2018). My practical experience in working with community partners has shown me that a primary motive for their involvement in CE programmes is the aspiration for improvement and change within

their organizations and communities. By employing the social change theoretical framework to underpin research and CE activities, the study aims to facilitate collaborative efforts between CE and community organizations, with the objective of contributing to human and community development in Makhanda. It is imperative to recognize that the process of learning and change in CE is mutual and bi-directional, experienced by both community partners and the university participants.

In line with these considerations, a fundamental objective of CE is to effectuate social change that benefits both community partners and Rhodes University. Consequently, this study is guided by social change theory, which aligns with the research objectives by offering a perspective on the trajectory required for an evolution in the existing M&E system (Barnett & Gregorowski, 2013; Woodhill, 2019). This theoretical framework provides a vantage point for gaining fresh insights into the M&E culture in CE and by encompassing the collaborative and other related values of RUCE, enabling the development of transformative CUPs. By understanding the mechanics of social change and the contributing factors, this study has the potential to make meaningful contributions to the development of more effective M&E systems that promote positive social change within communities through strong and trusting relationships with community partners.

Ekpenyong (1993) posits that changes in the social organization of a group and society encompass the development of new norms and the modification of role expectations. He further contends that changes in one part of the social structure reverberate across other components and the society at large. Moreover, Servaes (2011) recommends that social change theory should serve as a potent tool to steer structured social action or cultural transformation in each society, community, or context. The social change theory is applied in this study to provide insights into how transformative CUPs could operate at RUCE. It is essential to acknowledge that minor changes occurring in the lives of individuals and small, delimited groups may not be considered as full-fledged social changes. Nevertheless, these alterations may manifest as the consequences of more substantial changes transpiring on a broader scale.

The study identifies several dimensions of social change, encompassing spatial (micro, meso, and macro), temporal (short, medium, or long term), speed (slow or incremental), directional (forward or backwards), content (sociocultural, psychological, organizational, economic, among others), and impact (peaceful versus violent) dimensions. These dimensions provide

valuable guidance for the trajectory of change required in RUC's current M&E system for CUPs and the implementation process of the restructured M&E system.

2.3.3. The Components of Social Change Theory

The social change theoretical framework aims to show the mechanisms and dynamics behind transformative societal shifts, emphasizing various facets that include structural change, differentiation, and collaboration within the context of social development and change. These components offer a deeper insight into the complex interplay between societal structures, processes of change, and collaborative efforts, providing an understanding of how societies evolve and adapt over time. These components also apply to organisations and institutions. The theory serves as a guiding tool to explore and understand the intricate relationships and interactions that shape the fabric of society, providing a lens through which to analyze the transformative processes and mechanisms influencing social change. Each component sheds light on different aspects of societal (organisational\institutional) dynamics.

2.3.3.1 Structural Change

"Structure" refers to sets of relations in which people must participate, whether they wish to (or are aware of doing so) or not, because of the centrality of these relations to the production and reproduction of social life (Glassman, 2003, p. 681). Structures can be systematic, and it is the agency exercised by the collective. (Alexander, 1992) in this study, the assumption was that structural inequalities exist in CUP and are plagued by systematic power dynamics and hierarchical dominance.

2.3.3.2. Differentiation

Differentiation occurs whenever adjustment must be made (Alexander, 1992). According to Durkheim (2013), as a general process, differentiation is well understood, and it provides a backdrop for making sense of everyday life today. Institutions become more specialized over time. The assumption in this study is that the influence of HEI on social structure declines when community-based organizations do not support it. Influence and power within a community can transcend social, economic, and political boundaries or differentiation.

2.3.3.3. Collaboration

The component of collaboration in social change theory is vital to this study. Collaboration can be used to develop a sustainable solution to societal problems (Prins, 2008). However, conflicts

are prevalent in collaborative work. To combat these challenges, Prins (2008) points to three key issues: i) constructing a collective goal to establish direction; ii) working with the stakeholders and keeping the interdependent domain as the focus for change; iii) dealing with the anxiety of an emergent process with an uncertain outcome. A reason for my interest in this study was to gain a deeper insight into the movement of community partners and RUCCE's relationship with them from a space of differentiation to one of collaboration and integration, ensuring that engagement mutually benefits involved collaborators. While RUCCE has a long-standing commitment to community participation and collaboration, the social change component of collaboration, as highlighted by Collins and Makowsky (1998), was used in this study to explore systemic concerns affecting structural change.

The study aimed to recognize and respect changes that have already occurred prior to its implementation while also exploring the potential for further social change through collaboration between community partners and RUCCE through the reviewing and revising of the existing M&E system. Collaboration as an approach to CE, has immense potential to address problems that may arise in the CUP relationships. Gray and Purdy (2018) point out that a successful partnership happens through collaboration and commitment to common objectives and should be based on justice, equality, and mutual respect, associated with shared responsibilities, reciprocal obligation, the balance of power, and long-term sustainable outcomes. This approach aided me as the researcher and participants in this study in identifying and addressing issues of power dynamics, cultural differences, and other systemic barriers that could affect the success of CE initiatives and CUPs.

Communities in Makhandia face increasing challenges in public health, education, social inequality, pollution, and other environmental issues. Strong CUPs can play an important role in addressing these challenges by stimulating transformational processes to advance societal well-being and bring about social change. Consequently, social change theory is a community-driven framework that guides researchers in uncovering existing strengths within a community and scaling those existing capabilities and opportunities while motivating and training community members and university participants to change their behaviour. Golden-Biddle and Dutton, (2012), suggest that social change should include transforming patterns of thought, behaviour, social relationships, institutions, and social structure to generate beneficial outcomes for individuals, communities, organizations, society, and the environment beyond

the benefits for the instigators of such transformations. Therefore, the establishment of a M&E framework is included in the study to derive and determine the social change from CUPs.

Even though the study adopted the social change theoretical framework, it is nevertheless with the awareness that this theoretical framework also has its limitations. Social change, by its very nature, carries the potential for both beneficial and adverse outcomes, often distributed unevenly across individuals and societies (Friedland & Alford, 1991). As a case in point, the ascendancy of neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s precipitated profound social and economic transformations. While it contributed to economic growth, it also exacerbated income inequality and fostered social polarization (Harvey, 2007). This highlights the intricate interplay of positive and negative consequences inherent in social change. The claim that social change is a mere subset of cultural change warrants closer scrutiny. While it is indisputable that cultural change plays a pivotal role in social transformation, it is a reductionist viewpoint to assert that culture is the sole impetus of such change. The dynamics of social change are far more intricate and multifaceted, influenced by a web of interconnected factors. Political shifts, economic developments, technological advancements, and a host of other forces also exert significant agency in propelling social change (Karami, 2016).

Additionally, it is erroneous to suggest that social change transpires uniformly across all facets of societal structure (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2020). Social change demonstrates a non-uniform, heterogeneous nature, varying in scope and intensity across different domains of social life (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2020). For instance, technological innovations may exert a substantial influence on the economy, yet their impact on cultural norms and values may be comparatively limited. Consequently, this study is conducted with the awareness that the transformation process in CUPs even with collaborative relationships, may not be without its challenges. However, the commitment to the participatory approach, mutuality, reciprocity, long-term sustainability in CE, and the collaborative establishment of an M&E system for RUCE are worth the effort.

2.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to the study, covering key concepts, as well as philosophical and theoretical frameworks guiding the study. The literature reviewed provides a strong foundation for revising an M&E system with CUPs that is relevant to the current context of community development in Makhanda. Moreover, the

chapter discussed the theories underpinning this study, namely the philosophy of Ubuntu and Social Change theory, the rationale for using it, and its components. The rationale for selecting Ubuntu philosophy and Social Change theory lies in their relevance to the current context, offering valuable insights into fostering meaningful CE and sustainable development. The integration of these theories into the study's framework is a deliberate and thoughtful choice, promising a robust foundation for the subsequent stages of research.

In the next chapter, the research design and methodology will provide a roadmap for the empirical exploration that follows. This chapter has set the stage by explaining the theoretical underpinnings and contextual relevance, ensuring that the ensuing research is not only methodologically sound but also intricately connected to the theoretical frameworks discussed herein. The journey into the heart of this study continues, with a solid footing established through the synthesis of pertinent literature.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

3. 1. INTRODUCTION

This study explored the extent to which the current M&E system is effective in the two volunteer programmes provided by RUCE and to gain knowledge that might improve the partnership between RUCE and its community partners. The main research questions of this study are: To what extent do RUCE's current M&E systems support community-university partnerships in the volunteer programmes? How can community-university partnerships develop a M&E system that is relevant to the current context of community development in Makhandla? The objectives of the study are: i) to collaboratively identify the extent to which RUCE's current M&E system supports community-university partnerships and ii) to develop a M&E system for community-university partnerships that is relevant to the current context of community development in Makhandla.

In this chapter, details of the research design, methodology, and research process which includes the approach, method, participants and participating groups, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations, are presented as undertaken in this qualitative study. Creswell (2008) defines qualitative research as a means of exploring and understanding how individuals or groups ascribe meaning to a social or human problem. According to Cropley (2019), qualitative research, which is inductive and flexible, aims to gain insights into the constructions of reality, i.e., to understand the nature of the world as it is experienced, structured, and interpreted by people during their everyday lives. Not much has been researched on monitoring and evaluation of collaborative community-university partnerships in the field of higher education community engagement in South Africa, and my choice of qualitative research for exploring and gaining insight on the issue of M&E is considered appropriate.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study utilized an exploratory research design, which Mouton (1988) defines as a plan for conducting research to achieve the study's objectives. A research design specifies how data is collected, analyzed, interpreted, and reported. It is essential to have a robust research design as it guides researchers' methods and decision-making throughout the study and establishes the framework for interpreting findings at the end of the research (Creswell2008). The exploratory research design was used to gain a better understanding of the complexity related to the development of transformative and collaborative community-university partnerships and M&E

of the partnerships. RUCE's existing M&E system has not been reviewed for the past five years. The researcher assumed in this study that the current M&E system may not be as effective as it could be given the changes and growth in RUCE's volunteer programmes over the past five years. Due to the lack of previous studies on a collaborative approach to developing M&E systems for CUPs in CE an exploratory research design is deemed suitable. As a consequence of the limited research on M&E systems for CE in South Africa (Nelson, 2017; Sandham & Chabalala, 2019), the study aimed to develop a framework for M&E for CUPs and for the current context of community development in Makhanda. This framework will allow community partners and RUCE to jointly contribute to the development of a relevant M&E system by reviewing the existing one to effect social change. It will also serve as a guide to developing collaborative M&E systems for CE programmes.

The qualitative methodology was adopted for this study as it generally allows for the discovery of meanings people give to events they experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) describe methodology as ways, techniques, or tools for generating accurate and ethical data about a study. The significance of methodology in a study is to help the researchers understand the processes and products of scientific inquiry (Cohen et al., 2002). The qualitative methodology helped me as the researcher and the study participants to understand the lived experiences of the community-university partnership relationships in the two volunteer programmes and informed the development of an effective and relevant monitoring and evaluation system that will affect social change beyond the research itself. The flexible nature of the qualitative methodology also contributed to the partly participatory approach utilized in this study.

3.2.1 The Participatory Approach

A participatory approach, to the extent that it was possible, was adopted in this study to engage research partners, specifically community partners, in the knowledge-production process. As defined by Keefe et al. (2020), the participatory approach allows for the active involvement of communities and individuals in the research process, giving them agency and voice in defining their own development. While the participatory approach has faced criticism for being tokenistic, it is crucial for promoting community engagement and development. Ethical and meaningful conditions can be implemented to address concerns of tokenism and ensure stakeholders' participation is realistic and meaningful (Guijt 2014).

In this study, the participatory approach was adopted in line with Freire's vision (1987, p. 21) of social change and his emphasis on community empowerment and critical consciousness-raising which happen with participation. Given that the focus of this study was on establishing an effective M&E system for community-university partnerships, the study engaged community partners in the research process to co-create knowledge and promote the required change grounded in community members' experiences and perspectives. The community partners from the pilot study participated in the finalisation of the focus group data collection instrument.

3.2.2 Case Study Method

The case study method is particularly useful when the research questions are exploratory in nature and the researcher seeks to generate new insights and understandings of the research topic. A qualitative case study involves an in-depth investigation of a specific case or phenomenon (Schoch, 2020). In this case, the focus was on the community-university partnership between the Rhodes University Community Engagement division and community partners and the effectiveness of the partnership in promoting social change. Qualitative case studies are characterized by their focus on exploring the complexity and richness of the research topic using multiple sources of data and analysis methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data was collected through three participating groups in this qualitative case study, using focus group discussions and individual interviews with community partners, student leaders, and two RUCE staff.

3.2.3. Location of Study

The study was conducted in Makhanda, a town in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, which is also the location of Rhodes University. The community partners who participated in the research are from the Joza township in Makhanda. All community partner representatives involved in the study are registered as Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs), defined as organizations formed for the public benefit rather than for the advantage of its members (Hopkins, 2017; Salamon, 1999). The student leaders are registered students currently studying in different fields at Rhodes University and lastly the staff members are employees of the university based in the RUCE division.

3.3. STUDY PARTICIPANTS AND THE SAMPLING PROCESS

The identification and selection of an appropriate population and participating groups play an important role in research, ensuring the derivation of accurate conclusions. In this study, the

population encompassed community partners, student leaders, and staff members within the RUCE division, serving as the primary groups from which the participants were drawn. As articulated by Bhardwaj (2019), sampling involves the strategic selection of a subset from a larger population, aligning with specific research objectives. Employing purposive sampling, this study targeted individuals within the identified groups to fulfil the aims of the research.

3.3.1. Purposive Sampling

The purposive sampling method was employed to select the participants for this study. This technique involves selecting participants based on specific criteria and experience rather than randomly (Campbell et al., 2020). It is commonly used in qualitative research to gather in-depth insights from individuals with significant knowledge and perspectives on the research topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). The participating groups were well-suited to provide valuable insights and perspectives on the topic under research. The researcher selected community partners and student leaders who had a substantial engagement history with the university's CE programmes. The community partners were selected based on their length of time as RUCE partners, their registration as Non-Profit Organizations, their experience of working with Rhodes University student volunteers for at least two years, and their knowledge of RUCE's monitoring and evaluation system. The student leaders were chosen by the programme coordinators based on having volunteered for more than two years. The two RUCE staff members selected for this study had considerable knowledge of the programmes and over five years of experience in community engagement.

3.3.2. The Participating Groups as Study Participants

The two volunteer programmes of RUCE, Engaged Citizen Programme (ECP) and Siyakhana@Makana (S@M) were the focus of this study and under these programmes, the community partners were categorised into the following community service provisions: Care Services; Tutoring and Mentoring; Alternative Education; Homework and Reading Clubs; and Extra Mural Activities. Each category of community partner was requested to voluntarily participate in the research project. Individual contact with the participating group initially took place through face-to-face interactions. Subsequently, communication was carried out through channels deemed suitable by the participating group, including WhatsApp messages, emails, and follow-up telephone calls.

The participating group in this study consisted of eleven (11) community partners, two (2) RUCE staff members with over three years of CE experience and six (6) student leaders

selected by the programme coordinators of RUCE's two volunteer programmes. In total, the study comprised nineteen (19) participants. The study originally aimed for (22) participants but because of other commitments, one community partner and four student leaders could not participate in the study. The initial goal was to secure a larger population to mitigate any potential dropouts, prioritizing data reliability. Although the study did not meet the initial target of (22) participants, the participating group of 19 was adequate for the study because it aligned with the recommended participating group size for qualitative research, as highlighted by Sim et al. (2018), who acknowledged the variability in such numbers, ranging from four to thirty-five participants. A key ethical consideration is the voluntary nature of participation, and participants were informed about the study's voluntary aspect during recruitment. This approach aimed to create an environment of choice and active engagement among participants, respecting their autonomy.

The community partners primarily spoke isiXhosa and were comfortable expressing themselves in both isiXhosa and English, which was used interchangeably in most of the interactions with them. As for the gender of participants, the study comprised six females and five males from the community partner representatives, two female and four male student leaders, and two female staff members. In total, the study consisted of ten females and nine males. The community partner representatives had over five years of experience within the non-profit sector and community engagement, indicating their deep understanding of community development in Makhandla. The combination of their diverse experiences signifies an in-depth knowledge of the communities they serve and a strong awareness of their needs and priorities, offering substantial insights and expertise to the study. The participants' identities were anonymized using codes such as CPR for community partner representatives, SL for student leaders, and SM for staff members. The table below provides the participants' details.

Table 1: Details of Research Participants

Programme	Female	Males	No. of Participants
Engaged Citizen Programme (ECP)	2	5	7
Siyakhana@Makana (S@M)	4	0	4

Student Leaders (SL)	2	4	6
Staff member representatives (SM)	2	0	2
Total	10	9	19

The Eleven community partners coded CPR1 to CPR11 and the services that they provide are described in the table below:

Table 2: Community Partners Service Provisions

CPR Code	Summary description of Community Partners service provisions to specific target groups	Number of years of service
CPR1	Provides services to foundation phase children ages 6 to 11 years, introducing them to reading for meaning and pleasure, to chess literacy and how to play chess.	9
CPR2	Classes in ICT for educational purposes for high school learners from grade 8 to 12. Learners are recruited in grade 8 and attend classes once or twice a week until grade 12. An open, free-of-charge computer lab with fast internet connection for the public. Coding and robotics after-school classes for primary school children in seven different schools. Advocacy group for ICT with out-of-school youth. Coordination of government-funded Social Employment Fund project among NPOs in Makhanda.	7

CPR3	Offers After School Programs (ASPs) that provide academic support as well as business skills training for school-age learners from severely resource-limited environments. They enrol approximately 70 teenage students per year in grade eight and, remain with these learners through grade 12.	9
CPR4	Advances development through education in a rural, under-privileged and poor community for post-matric learners in a quest to access higher education institutions.	9
CPR5	Provides care and regular meals to children in need between the ages of 6 and 18 years old. Parents apply for their children to take part in the programme.	7
CPR6	Works in partnership with various organizations, in a bid to create opportunities and support for aspirant entrepreneurs and job seekers. The organization currently has 350 members who benefit from workshops, courses, and additional interventions.	13
CPR7	A music education centre connecting young people with their creative identities and opportunities in the creative economy, in partnership with local schools. The organization was established in response to the problem of young potential musicians not having access to music studies. In many school's music is not an option for study, and arts in general have little priority. This organization teaches musical instruments to underprivileged and previously marginalised communities.	6
CPR8	Serves children aged 2 to 5 years, offering a preschool learning environment to the youth of Eluxolweni Community and certain areas within Joza Township.	12
CPR9	Provides daycare services and pre-school teaching and learning to children between the ages of 2 – 5 in the Joza Township.	8

CPR10	Provides daycare services and pre-school teaching and learning to children between the ages of 2 – 5 in the Tanti Township.	8
CPR11	Provides day care services and pre-school teaching and learning to children between the ages of 2 – 5 within Fingo Village.	6

Table 3 below describes the participation of student leaders who participated in the study.

Table 3: Description of Student Leaders in the Study

Name	Volunteer Program	Number of Years as a student leader	Study program	Year of study
SL 1	Siyakhana@Makana (2020 only)	3 years student leader from 2021 till current [2023]) for BuddingQ program	Master of Commerce in Financial Markets (2023-2024). Bachelor of Economics Honours (2022) Bachelor of Economics (2019 - 2021).	2019 to date
SL 2	Engaged Citizen Programme Siyakhana@Makana Nine Tenths BuddingQ	Nine Tenths: 3 years. Siyakhana@Makana: 1-year Budding Q, 1 year	Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Economics	2017 to date

SL 3	Nine-Tenths Mentoring Programme	2018	Bachelor of Commerce Master's in Commerce: Year 2	2018 to date
SL 4	Nine-Tenths Mentoring Programme Siyakhana@Makhana	2019	Honors in Politics and International Studies	2019 to date
SL 5	Siyakhana@Makana, Engaged Citizen Programme	2017	Master's Programme: Year 2	2017 to date
SL 6	Engaged Citizen Programme	2016	Master's Programme: Year 2	2016 -2022

RUCE Staff who made up the participating group is presented in the table below:

Table 4: Staff Participants in the Study

Staff	Position	Number of years at RUCE
RS 1	Senior Management part of the team to conceptualise and design the two volunteer programmes.	12
RS 2	Coordinator of Engaged Citizenry Programme.	7

3.4. RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process undertaken in this study was characterized by a collaborative and partly participatory approach, acknowledging the pivotal role of the selected participants. Below the researcher details the research process for staff members, student leaders, and community

partner representatives. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee (EF-REC) on 21 July 2022 (See Appendix C1).

3.4.1. Research Process Involving Staff Member Representatives



Figure 4: Initial Engagement with RUCE Staff Members

Initial engagement with staff members involved face-to-face communication to apprise them of the study's purpose and objectives. After ethical approval was granted from the Human Resources Director on 15 August 2022 (See Appendix C2), staff members received detailed information via email outlining the subsequent procedural steps. Within this communication, a consent form (See Appendix B4) was enclosed to facilitate their understanding and acknowledgement of the study's ethical considerations. Upon their receipt of the email and associated documents, a mutually agreed-upon date for individual interviews was established. This process ensured that staff members had sufficient time to review the information provided, ask any necessary questions, and provide informed consent for their participation in the study.

3.4.2. Research Process Involving Student Leaders

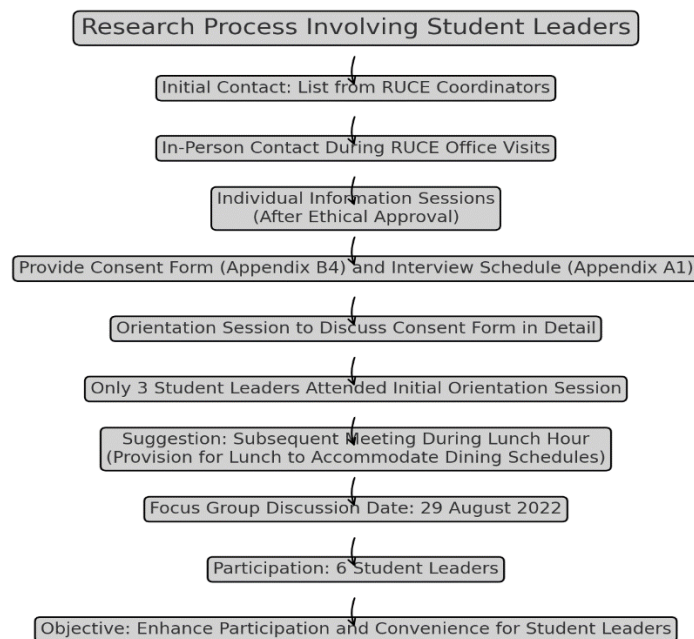


Figure 5: Initial Engagement with Student Leaders

To identify potential participants, the researcher initially obtained a list of student leaders from RUCE program coordinators who had established relationships with the student leaders. These student leaders were contacted in person during their visits to the RUCE office. The researcher conducted individual information sessions with the student leaders after receipt of ethical approval for the study. During these sessions, each student leader was provided with a consent form (See Appendix B4) and the interview schedule (See Appendix A1) for careful review, allowing them time to raise any concerns or queries. Subsequently, an orientation session was provided, during which the consent form could be discussed in detail. However, only three student leaders attended this initial orientation session. Recognizing the need for more convenient timing, three student leaders suggested that the subsequent meeting be scheduled during the lunch hour. Additionally, provision for lunch was considered to accommodate student leaders who might otherwise miss their dining hall schedules. The agreed-upon date for the focus group discussion was 29 August 2022, during which six student leaders actively participated. This approach aimed to enhance participation and convenience for the student leaders involved in the study.

3.4.3. Research Process Involving Community Partner Representatives

Below is a diagram representing the research process involving Community Partner Representatives (CPRs). It visually outlines the key steps and interactions, from initial

engagement through electronic contact, the preparatory phase with the pilot group, to the focus group discussions and the objective of addressing research objectives and obtaining diverse perspectives.

Research Process Phases for CPR

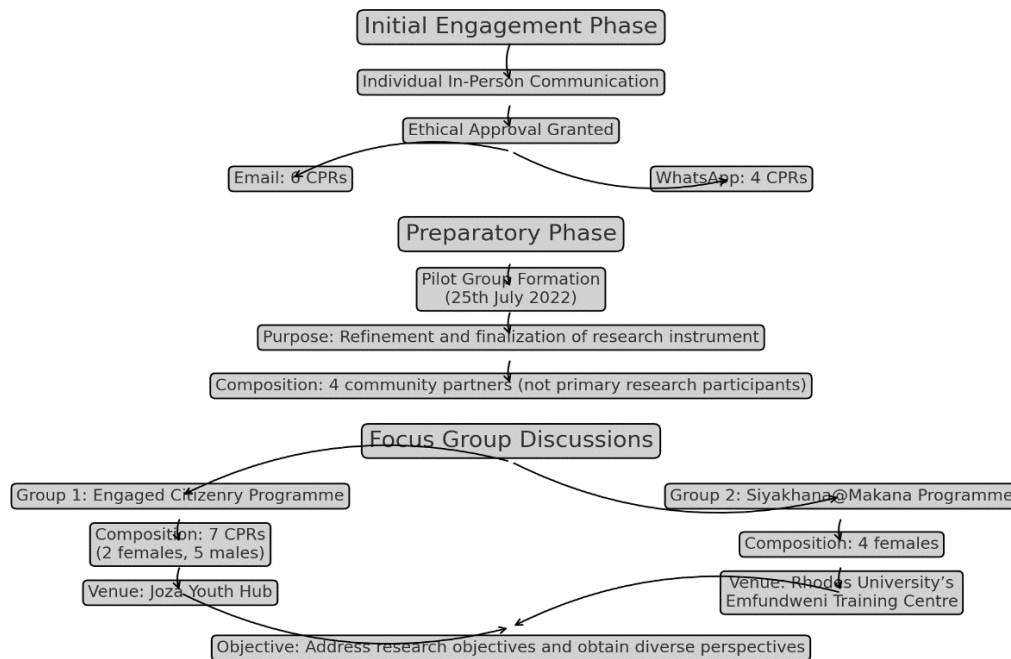


Figure 6: Research Process for Community Partners Representatives

In the initial phase of the study, engagement with CPRs involved individualized, in-person communication to apprise them of the research objectives and to seek their consent for participation. CPRs were subsequently contacted through electronic means after the granting of ethical approval. Six community partners with established email correspondence history were contacted through email, and four partners, who lacked active email accounts, were approached through WhatsApp.

As part of the preparatory phase, four community partners, not included in the primary research participating groups, were specifically selected to form a pilot group on the 25th of July 2022. This pilot group played a pivotal role in the refinement and finalization of the research instrument.

To gather valuable insights and feedback, Community Partner Representatives were invited to participate in a focus group discussion. Two distinct groups were formed for this purpose: the first group comprised seven individuals (including two females and five males) who were CPRs from the Engaged Citizenry Programme, while the second group consisted of four females

affiliated with Siyakhana@Makana Programme. Due to accessibility, two venues were selected: Joza Youth Hub and Rhodes University's Emfundweni Training Centre. All the participants agreed to participate and gave consent. The focus group discussions served as a qualitative platform for comprehensively addressing the research objectives and obtaining diverse perspectives from the community partner representatives.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION

3.5.1 Individual and Focus Group Interviews

The qualitative data collection tools for this study included document analysis; two interview schedules, one for individual interviews and the other for focus group discussions and an observation schedule (See Appendix A1 for Interview Schedules and Appendix A2 for the Observation tool). The term "data collection" refers to the systematic process of preparing and gathering data for a specific purpose from various systematically observed, recorded, and organized sources (Nardi, 2018). Primarily, efforts were directed towards collaboratively cultivating a shared understanding among the three participating groups community partner representatives (CPRs), staff members (SM), and student leaders (SLs) regarding the fundamental concepts of community engagement - community-university partnerships, and monitoring and evaluation. The interview schedules were designed with a set of common conceptual questions while also incorporating distinct questions tailored for the three participating groups. Data was collected in the months of August and October 2022.

The table below provides details of the participating group, data collection tools, and the period when data was collected.

Table 5: Focus Group Interview Schedule

Participants and Numbers	Data Collection	Period\When Data Collected
CPR from S@M (4)	Focus Group Interview	29 August 2022
CPR from ECP (7)	Focus Group Interview	20 September 2022
RUCE staff (2)	Individual Interview	28 September 2022

Students (6)	Focus Group Interview	10 October 2022
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Individual interviews were conducted with two RUCE staff members. Individual interviews are a common data collection method used in qualitative research to obtain rich and detailed data (Creswell, 2012). As noted in the literature, individual interviews provide participants with a safe and confidential space to share their experiences and perceptions (Liamputtong, 2011). The interview schedule for individual interviews (See Appendix A1) comprised mainly open-ended questions, which allowed participants to provide detailed information, reflecting their experiences, perceptions, and understanding of the research topic. The interview schedule questions were related to their conceptual, experiential, and practical knowledge to explore the RUCE staff member's conceptual understanding of M&E systems, CE, and CUPs and their practical experiences with implementing these systems. The schedule also aimed to capture the staff member's perceptions of the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing these systems.

Data was collected through three distinct focus groups. The initial group consisted of seven community partners affiliated with the Engaged Citizen Programme, while the second focus group comprised four community partners associated with the Siyakhana@Makana Programme. The third focus group involved six student leaders participating in the volunteer programs of the RUCE division. The utilization of focus groups is recognized as valuable for eliciting a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs (Gill et al., 2008). Specifically, focus group discussions prove beneficial when researchers employ a set of open-ended questions, aiming to facilitate participants in exploring issues of personal significance in their own linguistic expressions (Dilshad et al., 2013).

The collaborative and partly participatory approach enabled the finalisation of a framework for monitoring and evaluating partnership success. This framework acts as a guide for both community partners and the university (RUCE) to assess progress, identify improvement areas, and ensure alignment with shared goals. Partners collaborated in drafting and reviewing the framework, assessing existing M&E systems to determine their alignment with partnership goals and the need for adjustments to better suit CUP's needs. The framework reflects ongoing efforts to assess and enhance engagements.

All interviews were voice recorded and transcribed to allow for member checking and respondent validation.

During the interview data collection process, several challenges and important considerations were encountered:

1. **Confidentiality and Sensitivity:** Given the nature of the topics discussed, maintaining confidentiality and sensitivity was crucial. Ensuring that participants felt secure in sharing their experiences and perceptions required careful handling of the interview process.
2. **Diversity in Focus Groups:** The composition of focus groups varied, including community partners and student leaders. Managing diverse perspectives and ensuring equitable participation required skilful facilitation to encourage all participants to contribute their insights.
3. **Logistics of Focus Groups:** Organizing and coordinating three distinct focus groups involved logistical challenges. Scheduling suitable times for all participants, managing different locations, and addressing technical aspects of recording added complexity to the process.
4. **Collaborative Framework Development:** While the collaborative approach was valuable for finalizing the monitoring and evaluation framework, it required effective communication and negotiation among partners. Balancing diverse perspectives and ensuring that the framework met the needs of both community partners and the university posed challenges.
5. **Time Constraints:** The scheduling of interviews and focus groups within time constraints posed challenges. Allocating sufficient time for comprehensive discussions while adhering to the participants' availability required careful planning.

Despite these challenges, the collaborative and participatory approach proved effective in finalizing a comprehensive framework for monitoring and evaluating partnership success. The challenges encountered underscore the importance of methodological considerations and ethical practices in qualitative research, particularly when engaging diverse participant groups in discussions on sensitive topics.

3.5.2. Document Analysis

The following documents were analyzed: a report on CE in Higher Education in South Africa, CE policy and the Rhodes University Transformation Policy. Rhodes University Institutional Development Plan, CE Publications, Annual Reports, and the 1997 White Paper for Transformation of Higher Education. Document analysis was utilised as a qualitative research method to evaluate and interpret the data collected during the research. The documents analyzed in this study were chosen based on their relevance to the research focus on CE in higher education institutions, particularly in South Africa. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), document analysis is a systematic procedure for evaluating and interpreting both printed and electronic materials. This method requires researchers to review and analyze documents to extract meaningful information and gain a deeper understanding of the topic under investigation. The analysis of these documents helped to provide a deeper understanding of the current state of community engagement in higher education institutions in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa and provided insight into the policies and frameworks in place to support CE initiatives.

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is when researchers reduce data to a story and interpret it to derive insights. It helps reduce a large chunk of data into smaller fragments, which makes sense (Opie, 2019). The data collected using questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups was analysed inductively, allowing themes to emerge from the raw data. Molnár, Greiff, and Csapó (2013) state that inductive reasoning shifts from the specific to the general, from particular observations to discovering patterns, whereas deductive reasoning shifts from the general to the clear, from expected marks to observations that test if a pattern occurs. The interview records and focus group discussions yielded pages of transcripts, which had to be purposefully, systematically, and carefully studied, analysed, and interpreted to elicit empirical findings and suggest recommendations.

Collected data was transcribed and analysed thematically, following Bryman's (2016) methodology, to derive meaningful insights, patterns, and relationships that could respond to the two research questions. The effectiveness of data analysis hinges on the validity and reliability of the data, appropriateness of analytical techniques, and accuracy in interpreting and reporting findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

Thematic analysis, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Maguire and Delahunt (2017), involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data. Applied flexibly and inductively, thematic analysis in this study drew mainly from predetermined themes guided by the interview questions for the three participating groups and emergent themes from the responses.

In the initial phase of the analysis process, and after I achieved a comprehensive familiarity with the dataset, I proceeded to the generation of codes. This involved a manual process of highlighting segments of the data with distinct colour markers. Subsequently, I identified, reviewed, and defined themes based on the coded segments. Once this thematic identification process was completed, the subsequent step involved the commencement of the formal write-up.

The findings derived from this analysis were then presented to the community partner representatives for feedback, giving effect to the part participatory and inclusive approach to the research process. Based on the feedback received, a revised M&E system was finalized, aligning with the collaborative insights and ensuring relevance to community engagement and development in Makhanda. The resultant M&E system serves as a comprehensive tool, tracking partnership progress and ensuring alignment with community needs for sustained development. The presentation of the final findings to community partner representatives was important for transparency and feedback.

3.7. TRIANGULATION OF DATA

To mitigate researcher bias, the collaborative study incorporated triangulation by comparing data from multiple sources: documents, community partners, RUCE staff, and student leaders. Triangulation involved sharing transcripts and interpretations with community partners, allowing them to validate accuracy. Cohen et al. (2018) described triangulation as a technique in the social sciences attempting to map out or explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint. Various data-gathering tools, such as semi-structured questionnaires and interviews (individual and focus group), were used to ensure that the strengths of the others compensate for the shortcomings of one instrument.

Rather than corroborating current data, triangulation aimed to provide a comprehensive and detailed perspective through diverse sources. Thick descriptions were employed in reporting,

and reflexivity ensured conscious attention to researcher positionality throughout the research study. The researcher also had a traceable data trail and consistently labelled data.

3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations stand as a cornerstone within the research framework, demanding meticulous attention throughout the entire process (Madhushani, 2016). Deviation from ethical principles not only risks harm to participants but also jeopardizes the integrity of the research itself. These considerations encompass a wide array of crucial issues, such as informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, potential risks, and benefits associated with the research (Haegert, 2000; Madhushani, 2016). In this research, participants were diligently provided with comprehensive information about the study, empowering them to make voluntary decisions regarding their involvement. The process of informed consent serves as an indispensable ethical component, mandating that participants are fully informed about the research and granting them the freedom to decide on participation willingly. To ensure the respect and protection of the research participants, the researcher diligently followed the prescribed ethical application procedure approved by the Rhodes University Ethics Committee (See Appendix C1). Additionally, this study was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Margie Maistry and the co-supervision of Dr. Clement Simuja. These measures were instrumental in upholding the ethical fabric of the research and ensuring the utmost care and respect for all involved participants.

3.8.1. Gaining access

Access constitutes a pivotal aspect of qualitative research, involving the acquisition of permission from key gatekeepers or stakeholders for research endeavours (Bloor et al., 2001). These gatekeepers regulate entry to the research site or participants and can range from community leaders to organizational heads or institutional representatives. In this study, access to community partner representatives was granted via approval from the managers of community-based organizations. Student leaders were identified after acquiring approval from the university's Registrar (See Appendix C2) and further verified by RUCE's program coordinators. Staff participation was authorized by the university's Human Resources Director following their expressed willingness to engage. Securing access can pose challenges, particularly in sensitive research areas or when gatekeepers hesitate to provide consent (Madhushani, 2016). However, in this study, accessing participants was facilitated due to established relationships from prior community engagement activities. Strategies were

employed to reinforce access, emphasizing the research's value and guaranteeing confidentiality and ethical considerations (Bloor et al., 2001; Smith, 2015).

3.8.2. Confidentiality, Validity, and Credibility

Three key aspects were meticulously addressed to uphold ethical standards and enhance the robustness of the research. Confidentiality, safeguarding participants' privacy and personal information, was ensured by utilizing pseudonyms and unique identifiers, employing secure data storage, restricting access, and obtaining informed consent. The validity, the measure of research instrument accuracy, was rigorously maintained through diverse techniques such as content, criterion, and construct validity, validated via a pilot study involving participants not part of the primary participating groups.

By applying content, criterion, and construct validity, the researcher refined instruments to ensure high validity before using the instrument in the primary study, leading to more reliable and accurate research outcomes.

The research instrument, including the interview guide and focus group discussions, was tested in a pilot study. Participants in this pilot study were not part of the primary participating groups, which ensured that the instrument comprehensively covered all relevant aspects of the research topic (Malmqvist, Hellberg, et al., 2019). Feedback from the pilot study participants was then used to refine and adjust the questions, ensuring they were clear, comprehensive, and relevant to the research topic. This iterative process helped cover the full domain of the concept being studied. During the pilot study, the responses from the participants were compared with the established data measures to ensure that the instrument produced similar results (Teresi, Yu, X., et al. 2022). The findings from the pilot study were validated by comparing them with outcomes from the participating groups. If the pilot study participants' responses align with these external criteria, it supports the criterion validity of the research instrument. The pilot study also helped ensure that the research instrument accurately measures the intended constructs. By using participants who were not part of the primary study groups, the researchers could see if the instrument elicited responses that align with theoretical expectations. The pilot study allowed the researchers to test and refine the operational definitions of key constructs. If the responses from the pilot study participants matched the theoretical constructs, this supports construct validity. Data from the pilot study was likely analyzed to check if the responses fit the intended constructs. Adjustments were made if discrepancies were found, ensuring that the instrument accurately measures the constructs in the main study.

Credibility, crucial for qualitative research, was established by investing ample time with the participating groups, fostering trust, and transparently explaining research methods and data collection procedures, thereby reflecting the experiences and perspectives of participants accurately. The participatory nature of the study emphasized through transparent communication and engagement, contributed significantly to the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

3.8.3. Transferability, Confirmability, and Trustworthiness

In embracing the participatory nature of this qualitative case study, the aspects of transferability, confirmability, and trustworthiness were carefully addressed to enhance the robustness and credibility of the findings. Transferability, a crucial concept in qualitative research, pertains to the extent to which the study's findings can be applied to other contexts. In response, participants were provided with a detailed description of the study's context, participants, research methods, and data analysis processes, aligning with the literature on ensuring transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Morse et al., 2002).

Confirmability, focusing on the objectivity and neutrality of the research process, was ensured by documenting and sharing the research process with participants, allowing them to assess the integrity of the study and judge the findings independently (Anney, 2014; Cypress, 2017). Trustworthiness, vital for qualitative studies, was achieved through triangulation and a pilot focus group discussion involving community partner representatives in validating the research instrument and minimizing biases. These participatory measures significantly contributed to the overall credibility, accuracy, and trustworthiness of the research findings, aligning with the principles of a participatory approach in qualitative research.

A member checking strategy was also employed to ensure trustworthiness. The member check strategy involves data feedback, analytical categories, interpretations, and conclusions to members (participants) (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The interview transcripts were shared with the participants. This exercise was done so that the participants could see if what they said had been transcribed, which ultimately ensured the accuracy of the data. To ensure the accuracy of the data, participants were allowed to commend and give suggestions

3.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the research design and methodology employed in this study. It explains the significance of methodology in understanding research

processes, as emphasized by Cohen et al. (2002). The methodology utilized in this study was described as ways, techniques, or tools for generating accurate and ethical data, as outlined by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009).

The research design chosen for this study was an exploratory research design, which aimed to gain a better understanding of the complexity surrounding the development of transformative community-university partnerships. This design facilitated the generation of new ideas and concepts that can be explored further in future research. By utilizing an explanatory research design, the study aimed to develop a transformative framework for monitoring and evaluating community engagement in the context of Makhanda, where limited research exists on this topic. The qualitative findings of this study will contribute to explaining commonalities, discrepancies, or exceptions to add value, context, and information to the study. The review of a relevant monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for community-university collaborations in Makhanda will be a key outcome of this research. This framework was jointly reviewed and finalised by community partners, Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) staff members, and student leaders with the aim of reviewing and improving existing M&E systems in the context of community development.

Therefore, this chapter has outlined the rationale for conducting this research and provided a detailed account of the research design and methodology. The chosen explanatory research designs enabled a deeper understanding of transformative community-university partnerships and the development of a relevant M&E framework. By addressing the gaps in existing literature and research, this study aimed to make a valuable contribution to the field of community engagement and advance knowledge in the context of South Africa.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the study which was to collaboratively assess RUCE's monitoring and evaluation system in the context of developing transformative CUPs. The interview schedules for the three participating groups (refer to Appendix A1) of the study-community partners, student leaders, and RUCE staff members comprised conceptual and contextual questions and questions related to collaborative partnerships and the M&E system. As mentioned in chapter 2, CE is a relatively new concept in higher education compared to teaching, learning, and research. Conceptual clarity which sets the scene for understanding collaborative M&E systems, becomes important because it reduces if not eliminates, the taken-for-granted understanding of the terms, definitions, and concepts within the research and between CPs, student volunteers and RUCE staff (Young, 2000). Understanding the key concepts of the study is a critical part of the research. Therefore, the conceptual and contextual questions set the scene for assessing participants' understanding of the concept of CE and related concepts within the context of CE and CE volunteerism in higher education. I am of the view that participants having a common understanding and well-grounded knowledge of key concepts such as CE, CUP, volunteerism in HE, and an engaged university can potentially contribute to a strong foundation for effective collaborative CUPs in CE. The questions specific to collaborative partnerships and the M&E system are directly connected to the objectives of the study which are:

- i) To collaboratively identify the extent to which RUCE's current M&E system supports transformative CUPs.
- ii) To develop a M&E system for transformative CUPs that is relevant to the current context of community development in Makhandia.

This chapter is organised under the two main themes of conceptual and contextual findings and findings on partnership, collaboration, and M&E system. In Chapter 5, a consolidated discussion of the two main themes of the study is presented. Not everyone in the study answered all the interview questions thoroughly. Generally, RUCE staff members provided detailed responses because of their experience and extensive knowledge of higher education CE, the value of strong CUPs, and the M&E system. The students' responses varied in accordance with their different levels of understanding of the concepts and context. Their (student leaders) familiarity with the principles and values of CE and RUCE's M&E system

also played a role. However, it is important to highlight that the insights from student leaders and community partners were extremely valuable for the overall findings of the study.

4.2 CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL FINDINGS

4.2.1 Nature of Community Engagement Projects Community Partners and Student Leaders involved in with RUCE

A question was asked about the nature of projects community partners (CPs) and students are involved in with RUCE to understand the background of the study through the varied experiences of the CPs and student leaders. In response to this question, the eleven CPRs indicated their involvement in several programmes that have evolved over the years into the current four forms of CE, which are service learning, engaged research, engaged citizenry (volunteerism), and social innovation. As indicated in Chapter 3, seven of the CPRs were involved in the ECP programme, formerly known as the Student Volunteer Programme (SVP), which includes a set of structured programmes for students to volunteer in local organizations, as well as in short courses, and four CPRs were part of the S@M programme which focuses on enhancing the understanding of community development processes among student organizations, including sports clubs and societies, and students in residences. This extensive involvement of community partners in various CE programmes highlights the dynamic and adaptable nature of RUCE's initiatives. The evolution from SVP to ECP reflects a responsive approach to refining and enhancing the impact of student engagement with the community.

The SLs' responses reflect their diverse experiences and participation in a variety of RUCE's volunteer programmes. Four of the SLs, now in their fourth year of study, have been part of RUCE's programmes from their first year, participating in initiatives such as Budding Q and the Nine-Tenths Initiative. Budding Q, which was designed to address literacy challenges in Grade R through a play-based approach, emphasizes the importance of early literacy skill development. The Nine-Tenths initiative is a transformative and collaborative effort involving students and a number of CPs dedicated to equipping Grade 12 learners in local non-fee-paying high schools with the tools needed to navigate their final year of high school successfully and reach their maximum potential. Nine-Tenths is one of the programmes of the Vice-Chancellor's Education Initiative, which is concerned with providing accessibility to Grade 12 learners from disadvantaged and poorly resourced high schools to university. Budding Q and Nine-Tenths Initiatives fall under the ECP, which is one of the volunteer programmes in the study.

The SLs reflected on their experiences in specific projects of the ECP and S@M programmes and what they gained from these programmes.

SL 5: “I was part of the ECP volunteering at (...) youth development programme which basically is about tutoring and mentoring high school students. So, with that personally, I grew so much because my biggest worry was that - okay, first of all, I'm Tswana, I cannot speak Xhosa properly, but I would want to relate to the learners on a more personal level, so how am I going to do that. But because I first build relationships with the volunteer managers, they made it easy for me to interact with the kids as they would translate to me some of the words that I did not understand”.

SL 3: “I was a CE Rep under the Siyakhana@Makana, then became a student leader for nine-tenths”

SL 2: “I did not volunteer in first year but saw on Facebook student posting the projects they are doing in the community or on their WhatsApp status, then I thought let me go found out about RUCCE, then I fell in love with the Budding Q programme and three years later I'm still part of it and a student Leader. It was nice working together with the teachers as they would also be part of the BuddingQ lessons we taught as volunteers”

The student's responses show the learning that takes place in students, specifically with regard to relationship building with CPs. According to SL5, the approach to volunteerism programmes in higher education is different from those in high schools, emphasizing a more inclusive and educational approach. The SLs also stressed the significance of inclusivity, involving the community in discussions and implementation of plans. They highlighted the principle of collaboration and the importance of building relationships to achieve shared goals. This response shows a more nuanced and reciprocal understanding of CE in higher education, where the emphasis is not solely on charity but on collaborative efforts and shared goals. SL5's insights underscore the importance of recognizing the reciprocal benefits of community engagement, moving beyond a one-sided perspective (Ogunsanya & Govender, 2019), and appreciating the educational and inclusive dimensions inherent in such programs at the university level.

4.2.2. Understanding of Community Engagement in Higher Education

CE was understood by CPs in several ways. CE was considered as a means of bringing the university closer to the people and as a vital mechanism for bridging the gap between the university and the local community. CPs credited the current Vice-Chancellor for positioning the university in a way that is accessible to the community.

CPR 2: “The Vice-Chancellor’s Initiative is addressing education, there could be other programmes, you know, things that could be added. But now it’s addressing education, transforming education within Makhanda, that is why CE is important in our communities to address local issues and bring the university close to the people.”

CPR 2 recognized the positive impact of CE in strengthening CUPs. The focus on education transformation within Makhanda, as highlighted by CPR 2, underscores the potential impact of CE on addressing specific community needs. In acknowledging the role of the current Vice-Chancellor in enhancing accessibility, CPs argued for the importance of making institutional spaces more open and conducive to engagement activities.

CPR 4: “I’m not saying the rules must not be respected but make the space accessible so that the engagement can take place and engagement can only take place through activities that are of benefit to the community.”

The above response was about RU being seen as an ‘ivory tower’ in the past, inaccessible to and disconnected from the community, “*a big giant in the west of Makhanda*” was how one of the CPs described RU. However, recent efforts, especially CE initiatives, signal a shift from this historical perspective. These initiatives by RUCE contribute to transforming RU into a more accessible and community development-oriented institution, breaking away from the traditional ‘ivory tower’ image. This transformation reflects a conscious effort to foster a collaborative relationship between the university and the local community, positioning RU as an active contributor to community well-being and development. The call for the institution to actively contribute to the development of its partners was clearly articulated by CPR 1:

CPR1: “Can I bring in another element that’s sparked by this conversation, the development aspect, the institution itself developing the partners? A practical example like when it comes to these community-based research projects, that we get to learn about research processes.”

The above response reinforces the notion that one of the purposes of CE as a core function of higher education institutions post-1994 is to contribute to the developmental role of universities and their communities. According to the White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education (1997), this obligation, though recognized, has not been fully realized. HEIs are urged to actively contribute to the cultivation of a critical civil society marked by a culture of public debate and tolerance, accommodating diverse perspectives and competing interests (Reddy, 2004).

A critical issue raised by one of the CPs was that of power dynamics in the initiation of CE partnerships and the agenda.

CPR 7: “But if you look broadly in terms of the higher education institutions, the community university partners, I don't know, it's always a hierarchy relationship where you find the institution at the top, and then you find the community partners down there, so it is a sort of like top-down approach than a bottom-up approach because now if you get to ask the question: who initiate these partnerships, what is the agenda, what is the analysis? I'm not speaking just only for Rhodes; I'm speaking about all these universities that have been involved in or engaged with regarding these partnerships.

This points to the uni-directional formalized definition of CE as presented HEQC by the (2006, p.12) which will be discussed further in this chapter. In light of the above response by CPR 7, consideration needs to be given to whether CE is defined from a transactional or transformative perspective. Even though CPR 7 highlighted the power dynamics in the understanding of CE, the CPRs acknowledged the transformative potential of CE within the higher education setting and saw the value in the connection between community and university through CE.

Similar to CPRs, the Student Leaders perceived CE as a crucial link\bridge connecting the Makhandha community and RU. They believed universities, armed with substantial resources and student capital\potential, can effectively address societal challenges within the community.

SL 4: “I think, higher education institutions have privilege because it has all the resources and students also being a part of those resources that they can use. So, they are a huge part of the community as I said, in helping the community”.

This view of CE by the SLs is aligned with the Centre for Disease Control, (1997) assertion that CE must be able to mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programmes, and practices. The acknowledgement of privilege as noted by (Pease, 2021) emphasizes the responsibility of students to utilize their resources for community benefit. The thinking that CE contributes to student development is mentioned by SL2:

SL2: “I'd also say that the community engagement plays a very important role in contributing to the development of the student in the sense that I believe that students that go through community engagement might be slightly biased that they have a better understanding of the surroundings, and are not like the students that come university get the degree and leave, but they incorporate the necessary understanding of what responsibility they have with the privilege per se in society to better utilize those

extremely as opposed to just getting a degree and leaving. So, I think that is important to start increasing awareness about CE to students correctly.”

The statement that CE contributes to the development of students by fostering a nuanced understanding of their surroundings underscores the impact on student perspectives and emphasizes the importance of instilling a sense of social responsibility and awareness among students. In essence, the responses presented by the SLs emphasize the dual benefits of CE, both in addressing societal challenges and in inculcating social responsibility in students.

The social responsibility role of CE was reiterated by both RUCE staff members who recognized CE as promoting the social responsibility role of the university to the local communities, while the SLs mentioned CE inculcating social responsibility in students. University social responsibility would serve to develop a conducive relationship between the local communities and the university.

SM 1: “So, traditionally universities have been known as being aloof and separate from the community. Research has been done on people where data is collected, and it's taken to the university and turned into knowledge. Teaching is quite separate from what happens in the community. So, traditionally universities have not had productive warm relationships with other communities that surround them”.

SM1 asserted that universities should actively contribute to the social and economic development of communities. However, SM2 pointed out that CE lacked a structured mandate for social and economic community development. While this may not be accurate because the White Paper for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997) does mandate a developmental role for HEIs, what is lacking, though are policy guidelines for how this is to be realised (Cloete et al., 2006; Chetty & Bhagwan, 2021).

SM2 views CE not only as a civic responsibility but as a necessity for social advancement.

SM 2: “we still coming to terms with what Community Engagement is, it's still not clearly defined, we still trying to write a glossary about these basic terms, there still no coherence amongst universities, of what community engagement is, or the different forms of CE. Despite being legally mandated, we are still very far behind what our journey should be 27 years into it. I think that previous generations of community engagement practitioners were a lot clearer and somewhere there was a dip in that clarity and I do think that it's muddled by academics who (the academic system rather than academics) who, it's actually self-serving mechanism, you want to get promoted, you want to get a high salary, you have to do the best for your class in your time, you have

to publish papers. It's not set up for the mandate, of social and economic development, that universities are responsible for."

SM1 focused on the relational culture between the community and the university. SM2's focus is within the university, on institutional mechanisms and individuals, especially academics who are resistant to the developmental role of the university by participating in CE programmes for the social and economic development of communities. She posits that universities, despite being legally mandated for community engagement, still struggle with defining and implementing clear frameworks for CE. This lack of clarity is attributed to a self-serving mechanism within the academic system, where the pursuit of promotions, high salaries, and scholarly achievements takes precedence over the mandate of social and economic development. While this may be true and while there has been some progress with HEIs and decreased resistance to CE as a core function of universities by academics, the attitude of resistance persists to varying degrees (Gorski, 2016; Kromydas, 2017).

Both of RUCE's staff members emphasized that CE has a role in promoting knowledge democracy. Chetty and Bhagwan (2021) point to civic engagement and social responsibility as integral components of a university strategic plan, particularly under "knowledge transfer." This narrative positions universities as pivotal agents in promoting knowledge democracy, challenging traditional perceptions of academia as detached and aloof. The argument posits that universities, despite being legally mandated for community engagement, still struggle with defining and implementing clear frameworks for CE (Johnson, 2020). This lack of clarity is attributed to a self-serving mechanism within the academic system, where the pursuit of promotions, high salaries, and scholarly achievements takes precedence over the mandate of social and economic development.

4.2.3 Understanding of Community-University Partnerships in Higher Education

Insights from CPRs underscore a nuanced understanding of CUP. CPRs highlighted that CUP does not necessarily require expertise but a willingness to learn together. Respect for mutual learning and promoting a reciprocal learning environment, where both the university and community partners contribute to each other's growth (Karasik, 2020) is integral to the success of CUP as evidenced in this response.

CPR 4: "You're not coming with the expertise, and you are working with me, but I'm also developing you, upskilling you so that you can understand the community as well as you are making me understand higher education. So, I think that would be beneficial

if, specifically Rhodes University can just tap into that in terms of developing the community partners, growing that part because there's much knowledge about the work that they (Universities) do, the partners are very knowledgeable about the work that they do, but perhaps that respect part so that they also understand each other's work."

CPR 7: "A university needs not to be just an institution where people can go and access education, but also there has to be this relationship like this, in isiXhosa, we say "ina ethe".

The phrase "Ina ethe" means "give and take" or reciprocity.

These perspectives of the CPRs show the importance of recognizing the expertise within the community and promoting a collaborative approach to knowledge development and sharing within the partnership. The success of Rhodes University's removal of the 'ivory tower' image for building and nurturing partnerships is acknowledged by CPRs.

CPR 3: "Rhodes University and that's the kind of, you know, institutions that people want, not ivory towers but institutions that are accessible to the people."

As a whole, the findings from a CPR perspective on CUPs acknowledges the removal of the disconnecting space between community and university, emphasises mutual learning and promotes a collaborative approach to knowledge development and sharing within the partnership.

The SLs understand CUP in terms of mutual relationships but note the existence of power dynamics. Some student leaders feel that the relationship is unidirectional, with community partners often perceived as the ones receiving benefits rather than fostering bidirectional engagement.

SL 3: "One, in the sense that the aim is to, in some instances, create a mutual relationship, like equal footing. But I personally don't always think that might always be the achieved result in a sense that some community members might not feel as empowered as they might be in a sense that power dynamics so they (community partners) struggle to express some of their concerns and that out of fear of being sort of - like they are the ones that are basically receiving -, so they may not feel as empowered in that sense".

However, one of the SLs seemed hopeful that there may be opportunities for the development of mutual relationships.

SL 6: "But I just think there are some lessons that are available to create that mutual relationship and discussions. But it would take some time for some of them to get

comfortable with the relationship itself. But I guess it does come with the territory of Rhodes University as the biggest institution. So, there's different kinds of things, but there are various opportunities for them (community partners) to be involved in these discussions."

RUCE Staff members emphasized the indispensable nature of community partnerships, asserting that universities cannot exist without them (community partnerships). However, they acknowledged the need to persuade university management to support CUPs.

SM 2: "So, I don't think that you can have a university that exist without CUP if I think about our context here in Makhanda RU is one of the primary employers and at the same time if we weren't employing people from here, we would die as well we need the two, we would not be able to exist without each other."

It is acknowledged that the university is a primary employer in Makhanda. The staff members stressed the mutual benefit essential to CUPs, considering CUPs critical to both volunteerism and the learning that takes place in volunteerism.

CPRs, SLs, and SMs recognize the significance of relationships, accessibility, and mutual benefit in CE and CUPs. However, there are divergent perspectives on the role of expertise, challenges in achieving true mutual relationships, and the level of support from university management. These differences reflect the complex and multifaceted nature of CE and partnerships within higher education.

4.2.4 Views on Student Volunteerism in Higher Education

Community partner representatives hold diverse views on student volunteerism, with some equating volunteer work to charity, putting meaning into formalised volunteering thus extending beyond charity, while others stated that volunteerism is giving time and expertise.

CPR 7: "So, outside it has been like a matter of just charity events, university student societies who would think of doing something in the community voluntarily. And I think most universities they still use that model of volunteerism because there's no engagement."

CPR 1: "So, my understanding of volunteerism in higher education is that: One, it has been there direct and indirect, it has been taking place and mostly facilitated by student movements, student organization. Sometimes even if they don't give back it wouldn't be like an issue, so it's just a volunteer element within the university campuses."

CPR 5: “My knowledge is limited to Rhodes because I have not worked with other university spaces. But I can say what has helped Rhodes to grow for volunteerism is that it has formalized volunteerism and it has also put meaning into it, I think that's the thing.”

On the other hand, SLs believe that student volunteers serve not only Rhodes University but also the entire Makhanda community. They see themselves (student volunteers) as an integral part of the community, with the potential for a smaller student body to facilitate change within the community. One SL stated that volunteerism is a reciprocal relationship between the two parties. It is not unidirectional, and students need to understand this.

SL 5: “I just feel as though I'm just part of the Community, helping the Community, not even helping, but working with the community in achieving the goals that they need to achieve and making Makhanda a more suitable place where everyone can get to where they need to go, in terms of their goals and career-wise.”

SL 3: “There's a stable flow of communication between the students and the people that are volunteering with. Also ensure that the students that are volunteering know their role as volunteers in ensuring that they understand that it isn't a one-way relationship, it should be a reciprocal relationship between the two parties.”

RUCE Staff members perceive volunteerism as a manifestation of engaged citizenship, emphasizing its ongoing and active nature.

SM 2: “So, this is where we are in our journey at the moment, it is why we call them engaged citizens and not volunteers, we do that really intentionally. Because engaged citizens as I spoke about engagement is something active, it is something ongoing, it's something meaningful and purposeful, it's got a goal. You are engaged to do something, you are engaged to find out something, and that's why we are moving away from the sense of volunteerism to engaged citizenship.”

Volunteerism is seen as a means of educating young people to provide them with a relevant education for their context.

SM 1: “volunteerism doesn't capture the dual learning that happens from both partner and student. It doesn't capture the level of input and effort that has to happen from both the student and partner. It doesn't capture the learning that happens from both sides.”

The unique democratic requirements of South Africa, which necessitate a particular way of being in certain spaces, are highlighted in this understanding.

CPRs expressed diverse views, ranging from seeing volunteerism as charity events to recognizing the formalized efforts of universities like Rhodes. On the other hand, student leaders identify themselves as active community members, emphasizing reciprocal relationships between university students and the Makhanda community. RUCE staff conceptualize volunteerism as a manifestation of engaged citizenship, emphasizing sustained and purposeful engagement with the community (Talbot & McCann, 2023). The authors prefer the term "engaged citizenship" over "volunteerism," asserting that it better encapsulates the transformative potential of the volunteerism experience, particularly for students who extend their involvement beyond traditional academic settings (ibid).

4.2.5 Concept of an Engaged University

The CPRs discussed the concept of an Engaged University, emphasizing the potential for Rhodes University to adopt a more comprehensive approach. CPR 2 proposed incorporating CE into every department and faculty, making it a mandatory part of academic modules. This integration could involve holding classes or assignments in community settings, facilitating direct engagement with real-world issues. Community partners noted that some departments already engage with the community independently but suggest that collaboration within the university could enhance impact and efficiency.

CPR 2: "But I can say there has been progress, it might not be big, but there has been progress, like for example the fact that the statistics department when they thought of helping the matric for instance, the local matric with mathematics, they engaged with RUCE. RUCE was the link and then it linked within the nine-tenths which is within the Vice Chancellor's Initiative. So, I thought, oh, okay, like this is great because there's no point with all of these departments working in silos because RUCE already have the relationship with the schools."

The CPRs distinguish this approach from mere volunteerism, advocating for a shift towards CE. They (CPRs) argue that CE implies a structured, ongoing commitment to community development, contrasting it with the sporadic and often arbitrary nature of volunteerism. The idea is to move away from selective activism and embrace continuous, purposeful engagement with the community (Quaye et al., 2019).

The mention of the Vice Chancellor's Initiative is underpinning a positive step in addressing specific issues, such as transforming education in Makhanda. Overall, the CPRs envision a more integrated and systematic approach to CE within Rhodes University.

Student leaders described Rhodes University as an engaged institution in community work and engagement. SL1 pointed out that Rhodes collaborates closely with the community, actively addressing social and economic issues. This was clear to the students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The institution, along with its pharmacy faculty and other stakeholders, undertook projects such as providing information for matriculants and working on initiatives like sanitiser distribution and vaccination awareness. The engagement extends to online tutoring programmes in high schools aimed at improving matric performance and contributing to national education. The student leaders pointed to the collaborative nature of these projects, highlighting the university's commitment to working with the community rather than in isolation. SL 1 indicated that:

“I would say Rhodes would be an engaged institution because it works hand in hand with the community. It's not an institution that is within the community and holds itself in isolation, and we can use the RUCE office as an example. So, throughout the institution, it is where you get to work on social economic issues experienced in the community, for example, we could bring this back to during COVID when students from the institution actually work towards the project where we worked with the high schools to actually combine information for matriculants because they could no longer go to school. So, I feel like that speaks to it being an engaged institution within the community that is located.”

The various initiatives, including career exhibitions for matriculants mentioned by the student leaders, underscore Rhodes University's multifaceted engagement and commitment to community development.

The understanding of the term ‘engaged university’ among RUCE staff members reveals a historical perception of universities as detached entities (Reinke & Walker, 2005), traditionally operating independently of their surrounding communities. This perspective, articulated by SM1 underscores the historical separation of research, teaching, and community engagement. According to SM1, universities lack productive relationships with their surrounding communities, which is characterized by a perceived aloofness.

SM 1: “Traditionally universities have not had productive warm relationships with other communities that surround them. So, the role of community engagement has been introduced into our university because of our history.”

The above response highlights the rationale for the introduction of CE into the university by positioning CE within the context of a troubled and painful history, prompting a transformative

agenda. This transformation is described as a governmental strategic intervention to make universities more developmental and transformative as mandated in the White Paper for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997). The developmental aspect emphasizes the necessity for universities to actively contribute to the social and economic development of their communities.

SM1 draws parallels to the 1960s concept of anchoring universities in their local communities in the United States and later in the UK, where universities were tasked with being anchor institutions, fostering economic and social development (Harris & Holley, 2016; Addie, 2017).

SM 2: “If you look back as to the 1960s, there was a concept called the anchoring of universities in their local community or the anchoring institutions, it just had to be a big institution placed based. And you see it in the 1960s in America, where government turned to the universities and they charged them with the responsibility of being anchor institutions in the community to revive economic and social development and to contribute to making those communities more vibrant, and it worked.”

In essence, both RUC staff members agreed that the introduction of CE alongside teaching is presented as a crucial initiative and that CE was designed to impress upon universities the imperative of embedding research, teaching, and learning within local spaces to enrich, rather than diminish, the community (Preece, 2017). This conceptual shift aligns with the broader understanding of CUPs as strategic interventions by the government. These interventions aim to address historical injustices, contribute to societal redress, rebuild the fabric of society, and fortify partnerships between universities and the broader community.

According to SM2, the emphasis on "community university partnerships" over "university community partnerships" reflects a deliberate positioning. This nomenclature underscores the commitment to mutual benefit, consideration of power dynamics, and the valuation of community partner organizations and their knowledge contributions (Vaughn et al., 2017).

SM 2: “So, community university partnerships and you will note I will always say community university partnerships and not university community partnerships and that for me is because it's really important how we build those partnerships, that they're mutually beneficial that we think about the power relations that we start to value the Community partner organizations, the knowledge that they bring.”

These partnerships conceptualized as bridges, serve to render the university more porous and accessible to the broader community, signalling a paradigm shift away from historically

perceived narrow and aloof institutions toward inclusive, enriching educational spaces (Preece, 2017).

4.2.6 Students as Engaged Citizens

CPRs agreed that there has been improvement in student engagement and students' understanding of the role they must play in community development. Two of the CPRs were able to situate engaged citizenry within different programmes offered by RUCE, especially the Vice Chancellor's Initiative, the Nine-Tenths programme, which helps mentor matric learners in Makhanda.

CPR 2: “But I can say there has been progress, it might not be big, but there has been progress, like for example the fact that the statistics department when they thought of helping the Matrics for instance, the local matric learners with mathematics, they engaged with RUCE. RUCE was the link and then it linked with the nine-tenths programme which is within the Vice Chancellor’s Initiative. So, I thought, oh, okay, like this is great because there’s no point with all of these departments working in silos like this has already been established, because RUCE is there to connect the departments with the local communities.”

The role that RUCE has played in bringing about the changes, albeit small, is acknowledged by the CPRs, and CE’s bridging role is also acknowledged, lending support to ‘bridging’ as a critical characteristic of CE.

Student leaders recognized and acknowledged their active role in contributing to societal transformation. This recognition encompasses a multifaceted approach, combining both the expertise they acquire through their academic pursuits and the experiential learning derived from the wealth of knowledge present within the community. The acknowledgement of an "active role" suggests that students perceive themselves not merely as recipients of knowledge but as agents of change who actively participate in the process of societal transformation. This participation is characterized by a collaborative exchange, wherein students leverage their academic expertise and simultaneously absorb valuable insights from the community. The reciprocal dynamic reflects a view of engagement that extends beyond the traditional notion of education as a one-way transfer of knowledge. Instead, it embraces a holistic understanding of learning as a shared endeavour between students and the community (Harrington et al., 2014).

By recognizing the transformative potential inherent in their active participation, student leaders highlighted a sense of responsibility and agency. They understand that their

engagement goes beyond the confines of the academic setting and that they play a crucial role in applying their knowledge to effect positive change in the broader societal context. SL's understanding of student volunteers as engaged citizens underscores the importance of fostering a sense of civic duty, collaboration, and shared responsibility within the educational framework.

RUCE staff members believe that in the current phase of CE's developmental trajectory, there is a deliberate semantic choice to characterize individuals as engaged citizens rather than volunteers. This intentional terminology is informed by the understanding that engagement implies a dynamic, sustained, and purposeful involvement marked by specific objectives (Harrington et al., 2014). The term "engaged citizens" conveys an active commitment to exploration or accomplishment, diverging from the comparatively passive connotations associated with the term "volunteerism" (Welch & Plaxton-Moore, 2019; Keith, 2015). This terminological shift is based on the acknowledgement that the term "volunteer" inadequately captures the reciprocal learning inherent in the interactions between the student and the collaborating partner. Furthermore, it fails to adequately represent the mutual input and concerted effort demanded from both parties, as well as the bidirectional educational experiences that transpire (Keith, 2015). Consequently, the transition towards the conceptual framework of the engaged citizenry is motivated by the conceptualization that all stakeholders are active contributors to a collective enterprise. In our roles as citizens, encompassing both global and local affiliations, there exists a shared commitment to contribute collectively to the construction of a societal framework reflective of our common aspirations and values (Kabeer, 2017).

4.2.7 Role of Student Volunteers in Makhanda

CPRs recognised that Rhodes University student volunteers have changed over the years from students who merely volunteer based on the privilege of wanting to be 'saviours' of the community to students who now learn through the process of being volunteers.

CPR 1: "If you look back from before students would come to our organizations with so much sympathy and wanting to 'rescue' us from our little means. Most of the students were concerned about our congested spaces and we could not fit all of the students who were coming so we had to ask them to come in different groups at a times. But if you look at students now, they are more proactive, do not ask much but are willing to help."

CPR 7: “In my organization we always get students from pharmacy and education who are very helpful and have added so much value to our site and the beneficiaries we serve.”

CPR 3: “Students are very creative, they come with fresh ideas and our children love and relate to them more than us.”

The CPRs note a positive evolution in the role of student volunteers from Rhodes University over time. Previously seen as individuals aiming to ‘rescue’ the community, students are now characterized as more proactive, humble, and adaptable to the community's needs. This shift marks a departure from a paternalistic approach, as cautioned by King and Rivett (2015) emphasizing the importance that engagements with 'outside' communities, whether 'developing' or otherwise, should avoid a paternalistic stance and stating that “paternalistic and top-down approaches to engaging beyond the campus naturally value outcomes over processes” (p. 223). Instead, the current trend is towards a collaborative and reciprocal form of engagement. The recognition of students' diverse skills, different disciplines, and their creativity in bringing fresh ideas highlights the dynamic and enriching nature of the student-community interaction. This evolution aligns with the contemporary transformative CE paradigm that emphasizes mutual learning and the valuable contributions both students and community partners jointly bring to the engagement process (Phiri, 2016).

The SLs reflected on their introduction to student volunteerism at Rhodes University, pointing to the shift in their perception from mere charity work to understanding the importance of building relationships.

SL 5: “Before I came to Rhodes, for me community engagement was all about doing something for someone, not about relationships, you know. I got here at Rhodes, I understood that a volunteerism is different from community work because when a student actually volunteers you building a relationship with someone, so it becomes a two ways street.”

SL 3: “It is two different entities who built a relationship to ensure that we work together towards a certain goal, a particular goal that we firstly outlined together.”

SL 1: “You know, it goes back to the issue of tolerance because if you don't have passion, you would not tolerate working with other people because you cannot do it as an individual. So, it boils down to establishing relationships. So that would be my takeaway as a student volunteer in Makhanda, you build relationships between different stakeholders, like (SL 5) has said.”

While SL5's distinction between volunteerism and community work may not be accurate because the building of a trusting relationship is required in both volunteerism and community work, the student's emphasis on relationship building as 'a two-way street' in volunteerism is accurate. The key takeaway is the role of student volunteers in establishing relationships between various stakeholders, such as Rhodes University and community organizations, working together towards common goals collaboratively. The focus is on developing meaningful connections and links within the community.

In response to how they viewed students as volunteers, RUCE staff members linked the purpose of higher education with contributing to social and economic development for the public good.

SM 2: "Students, we are really lucky to have such a big student body at Rhodes University, but students in general provide a lot of social capital for us to do our work at RUCE and really provide the boots on the ground to effect the change we want to see. But in general, if you think about Rhodes University in Makhanda, students play really an important role in terms of our economy, in terms of what our community make up is, when student body leaves for holiday we lose a section of our population who contribute to our economy here, who contribute to life and living in Makhanda. So students are an integral part."

As a consequence of this purpose, students advocate for a shift from traditional, career-focused education to a more holistic approach that grew students into resilient, knowledgeable, critical thinkers with a heightened sense of social responsibility.

The role of higher education is seen as going beyond lecture halls, providing real-world learning experiences that allow students to apply, test, and rework their knowledge SM 1 alluded to. This approach aims to develop academic skills, emotional intelligence, engagement with others, and project planning. The goal is to produce well-rounded individuals who, upon leaving the institution, are citizens with social responsibility and a commitment to contributing positively to the world.

4.2.8 RUCE's Values and Principles with regards to Community Engagement and Volunteerism

CPRs stated that most universities do not have the privilege of having a CE office, and CPR pointed out that other universities focus on volunteerism while RUCE promotes the scholarship of engagement through engaged research, service learning, engaged citizenry, and social

innovation. This CPR mentioned that RUCE applies the principles of sustainability and mutuality.

CPR 2: “We are privileged here in Makhanda because Rhodes University has the CE office, it’s something you won’t see in other university. RUCE always talks about scholarship of engagement and in one of the workshops we attended of CBPR, I got to understand that this includes engaged research, service learning, engaged citizenry and social innovation.”

CPR 7: “RUCE’s values and principles mean building a mutual relationship with the community. It involves recognizing the university’s commitment to sustainable development, partnerships that benefit both the university and community, and creating opportunities for volunteerism that contribute to the livelihood of the Makhanda.”

CPR 4: “We have seen dedication of RUCE to addressing community needs through all these programmes. But I think values and principles lie in collaborating on projects that align with issues we face in Makhanda like the high unemployment rate, high school dropout, child headed homes, corruption, water and other things that we all know maybe include GBV as a priority too. So, I think the values and principles should not be too far in addressing these things.”

The discussion shows that RUCE’s values and principles are action-based and not just on paper. The commitment to collaborating on projects addressing local challenges demonstrates a practical application of these principles. Even though CPR 4 suggests that values and principles should not be too far fetched, they must speak to local issues and challenges.

SLs indicated the significance of values and principles, particularly respect and openness, in fostering positive relationships and creating a conducive environment for collaboration. Respectful engagement is seen as essential for building and maintaining relationships between stakeholders, ensuring reciprocity and cooperation. Openness is highlighted as a key factor that promotes comfort, confidence, and understanding among individuals with different values. SL 1 suggests that being open to diverse values allows for a more comfortable and confident collaboration, reducing the risk of conflicts and enhancing the overall effectiveness of community engagement initiatives (Kolopack et al., 2015).

RUCE staff members posit that the underpinning of all aspects of existence lies in values and principles.

SM 2: “Everything rest with values and principles, I think even in our own lives wherever you get your values and principles they underpin your ethics your morals,

they underpin how you function and that is exactly what happens at RUCE. Our values and principles guide and dictate our decisions. And we make very intentional decisions about which partners we want to work with, what their experiences are, we offer students, academics, partners – so things like mutuality, joint decision making, inclusion and our theory is around that of holding those morals almost central to what we are doing in our strategy.”

SM 1: “if you look around our offices, we quite deliberate in showing them (students) as well so in signages, have a look at the signs that we’ve put up around the space and have a look at the fact that we’ve got benches all over our little garden area, you will never find our area dirty, nowhere. And sometimes we’ve known to be the nuisance asking people to rake, but spaces are really important, there’s a lot of teaching that goes into spaces. If somebody sees a space that is clean and there’s care there, they will treat it like that as well. So, I think, yeah, that’s kind of the values that must come through in how we live our lives and how we teach, how we treat people. Then it’s gotta come in other deliberate ways, like signage in the materials. So, I think it’s, deeply embedded at all levels.”

Individually, the adherence to specific values and principles establishes the groundwork for one's ethical and moral framework, consequently shaping one's interactions with the surrounding world (Andriof et al., 2017). This foundational philosophy is mirrored at RUCE, where the conduct and decisions of the institution are steered by a defined set of core values.

4.2.9 Emergence of New Types of Knowledge from Involvement in Community Engagement

Three of the community partner representatives before participating in RUCE programmes, said that they were unfamiliar with managing people until they were told to become volunteer managers, preparing presentations as part of Siyakhana@Makana Programme and speaking publicly at the RUCE meetings and training for students’ volunteer preparation, but much learning on these areas have happened through the CE partnerships.

CPR 3: “Through the partnership, we have gained so much like moving away from competition to collaborating with other organizations and Rhodes students”.

CPR 1: “Working with students from different backgrounds has taught us to work in a smarter manner. Also, some of us have had the opportunity to attend RUCE conferences, where we learned valuable skills such as preparing presentations and speaking confidently in front of professionals, but the RUCE meetings has helped us get used to talking in bigger groups.”

The SLs reflected on lessons learned about CE and volunteerism in HEIs and highlighted the collaborative nature emphasized at Rhodes University, where individuals work together towards common goals.

SL 1: “I learnt about inclusivity, how we should not perceive the communities as the particular way from just looking at them and saying okay they do not know how to do this, they don't know how to do this, then let's do this for them, it's a matter of including them in the discussion, bringing them to the table and say, we have this program, so what do you think from your side could be done, deliberation, not only in the discussion, but also in implementing the plans that actually were devised.”

Inclusivity and involving communities in discussions and decision-making processes are emphasized. The student leaders drew connections with knowledge production, underscoring the need for scholars to engage with communities to understand their needs and perspectives.

Both SM1 and SM2 believed that the importance of appreciating different ways of knowing the world is a starting point for researchers. SM1 advocated for moving beyond traditional research methods (Menon & Suresh, 2020) and engaging with rich indigenous and local spaces to collect fresh knowledge.

SM 1 “I think the starting point is being able to appreciate the many ways of knowing in the world. When you get to that point then you are opening yourself up to, you know, spaces you never imagined, you know, as a researcher, you don't just read 40 papers and make sense of those and write another paper. You now going into a very rich indigenous and local spaces where you can collect fresh knowledge and you bring it back where you can co-create with what you know. So, obviously there's the indigenous, but there's the cultural, there's the spiritual and there's the social, there's you know all the dimensions of knowledge making now are enriched and so, you know we often talk about not just knowledge economies, but we now talking about knowledge democracies and that's how we're trying to tease out the spaces around the universities to say that knowledge is not the preserve of higher education only. And we are opening up those spaces and letting partners in who are specialists in their area, in their communities to co-create with us. So, I mean it's very exciting to see what is being done because your research will look quite different if you are co-creating knowledge because you build trust and you build relationships in that research process to the knowledge you might have collected from a stranger when you took a questionnaire to them which was threatening in itself. You know, so your layers and your textures of what you collect and what you begin to understand are so much deeper and richer.”

The SM1 emphasized the enrichment of knowledge-making through indigenous, cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions. SM2 advocated for a shift from knowledge economies to knowledge democracies, opening spaces around universities for collaboration with specialists

from various communities. Co-creating knowledge, as seen by Rinaldi et al. (2022), is an exciting and transformative process that builds trust and relationships and results in deeper and richer insights than more conventional research methods, such as administering questionnaires to strangers.

4.3 FINDINGS ON PARTNERSHIP, COLLABORATION AND M&E SYSTEM FOR CUPs IN CE

4.3.1 The Shape\Nature of the Partnership between RUCE and Community Partners

CPRs strongly asserted the need to dismantle power dynamics, advocating for partners to have a meaningful say in university-introduced programmes. CPR 1 particularly emphasized that university research should accurately represent the community and yield tangible results with practical solutions.

CPR 2: “Rhodes University is on our doorstep there is no reason when they make decision, we cannot make decision together, they (Rhodes University) must stop making decision for the community without the community”.

CPR1: “Thina (we) are always here when Rhodes University want to the community to participate but they are never there for community issues unless its only within the programmes they introduce in our schools, or research projects but when it comes to heating issues, we face like GBV or Crime, Rhodes is nowhere to be found, they (Rhodes University) need to be visible not only few or one face”.

CPR 6: “It seems like we are beggars in the partnership, they call us partners, but we don’t feel like we are as we are always to what to do and when to do it, that needs to stop”.

There is a concern about Rhodes University's selective involvement in community issues, with a call for more visibility in addressing broader concerns like gender-based violence and crime. The partners seek a more equitable partnership, expressing dissatisfaction with feeling like "beggars" and emphasizing the need for mutual decision-making. Overall, these statements denote a strong call for more inclusive and balanced collaboration.

From RUCE’s perspective, SM 1 observed, over a 12-year period, significant positive changes in the partnerships. Initially, partners were passive, following instructions without challenging or expressing discontent. However, now partners are more proactive, offering feedback and even rejecting offered courses to develop their own.

SM 1: "...let's say 12 years later, I'm now seeing partners that push back if they're not happy with something, we soon learn that they're unhappy, they are very quick to furnace, which is great, we've always encouraged that, we offer them the community-based CPR short course for academics and they said no, they didn't want the short course, they wanted to develop their own. We came alongside them, developed another course for them and we just piloted it now. So, they would never have done that 12 years ago, they would simply have attended the course or not attended it at all. We see now that the receiving of volunteers in their spaces is different. They are putting those volunteers to work. They're making demands on the volunteers now and they are celebrating in the success of those volunteers as well. So, you see they're coming forward now and asking for volunteers where before we were asking them to have our volunteers. So that dynamic has changed as well."

SM1 responded that engagement with volunteers has evolved from a passive acceptance to actively working towards their success. Partners now seek volunteers and request various forms of support beyond fundraising. The partnerships have shifted from a competitive mindset to one of collaboration, recognizing the collective impact of a network of organizations. The partners have become more strategic and independent in navigating university resources and tackling challenges, demonstrating increased activism.

SM 1 "And I think what did help was that we were willing to show vulnerability in those spaces, when something we didn't do well, we would say, you know, we feel we didn't do this well, we'd like to get your opinion or something like that, so we show a level of vulnerability".

SM1 is of the view that the relationships now embody mutual benefit, with a more equitable distribution of power, and attributes this positive change to RUC's willingness to show vulnerability and engage in open dialogue towards fostering meaningful and authentic partnerships.

The responses to the above question reveal different views on the nature of the partnership between RUC and CPRs. Community partners are of the view that the power dynamics are still prevalent and need to change; RUC believes that CPs have moved from a state of passivity to one of being proactive. I think that SM1 is accurate in her assessment of CPs because they were quite forthright in their responses about the kind of partnerships they prefer with RU.

4.3.2 Understanding of RUCE's Current Monitoring and Evaluation System

CPRs responded that training organized by RUCE at the beginning of the year sets the tone for how the year would unfold. They also expressed appreciation for the quarterly joint reflection meetings with their student leaders. However, they noted that the advent of COVID-19 brought about changes that disproportionately affected marginalized and poor communities. They voiced frustration over the challenges posed by the digital divide, highlighting the fact that virtual meetings became the norm, leaving some community members behind.

CPR 1: "The thing is RUCE used to organize training for us (community partners) with new and returning volunteers, that used to work very well, because after the two-day training, we leave with a list of our volunteers and that was helpful for us to monitor our volunteers".

CPR 3: "Yes, I agree, I am not really sure but the registers that we used to get from RUCE also worked for us as students will sign when they come in and when they leave. And that help me to know if they have attended all the sessions."

CPR 5: "Because we are not too involved with the M&E, we don't really know what to add. I think for us we only know that RUCE takes a register for every meeting and at every training we sign a register, I am not sure if that is to monitor if community partners attended the meetings."

CPR 2: "You know everything was going well before covid-19 because we knew exactly what was going to happen RUCE will send us a plan for the following year with all the dates of all the meetings, training, and reflection meetings. But when Covid-19 hit some of us lost connection because we did not have access to the internet for the zoom meeting and I am not sure how M&E was done in those zoom meetings."

The acknowledgement of the training's impact at the beginning of the year and the value placed on joint reflection meetings signifies the value of structured and intentional engagement between RUCE and its community partners. However, the challenges brought about by the digital divide due to the shift to virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic are noteworthy. This situation prompts a critical discussion on the importance of inclusivity in CE initiatives, especially in times of uncertainty and the context of technological disparities (Bachtler et al., 2019). It raises questions about how institutions like Rhodes University can address these challenges, ensuring that the benefits of CE are accessible to all members of the community in times of disasters\pandemics, irrespective of their digital access. These findings become integral in shaping future strategies (Lewin et al., 2015) for monitoring and evaluation

such that the impact of external factors is mitigated on CE efforts and to foster more equitable participation.

The student leaders discussed the effectiveness of a peer review system in CE at Rhodes University. They highlight how the peer review process contributes to evaluating the understanding of training across all levels among student volunteers. The student leaders see this as a way for Rhodes to identify areas for training improvement and address any difficulties in student perception. They appreciate the open-door policy at Rhodes, allowing volunteers to seek guidance and discuss plans even after training is completed. The ongoing communication (Rijal, 2023) and interaction fostered by the current system, including regular meetings, workshops and check-ins, contribute to maintaining relationships between student volunteers and the university. The student leaders expressed satisfaction with the existing M&E and emphasized the importance of ongoing support and collaboration.

RUCE staff members expressed confidence in the effectiveness of RUCE's M&E system within the Engaged Citizenry Programmes. However, they highlighted a perceived lack of a cohesive M&E system for RUCE as a whole.

SM 2: “The coordinators within RUCE are working in silos, monitoring programmes independently rather than within an integrated framework.”

SM 1 proposed drawing inspiration from the Institutional Development Plan (IDP), suggesting the incorporation of a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders for the comprehensive evaluation of RUCE. SM 2 suggested that:

SM 2: “a formal structure should be established to collate data collected from monitoring activities throughout the year. This consolidated data would then inform the evaluation of programmes, providing insights into the overall functioning of RUCE.”

The recommendation emphasizes the need for a systematic and organized approach to M&E that aligns with the broader goals and operations of RUCE. This means that the reviewed M&E system will respond to transformative CUPs and effective volunteer programmes. This alignment signifies a recognition that the M&E system should not only serve as a mechanism for assessing the success of a programme but should actively contribute to the transformative nature of CUPs. Furthermore, SM 1 advocated for RUCE to align its goals with global

frameworks, specifically referencing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and consider Africa's priorities and the National Development Plan (NDP).

The staff members' views shed light on both the strengths and areas for improvement in RUCE's M&E system. The confidence shown in two volunteer programmes suggests that certain aspects of monitoring are effective. However, the acknowledgement of siloed coordination calls for a broader discussion on the need for a more integrated and comprehensive M&E framework that spans the entirety of RUCE and its programmes, including the two volunteer programmes that this study focused on. The proposal to draw inspiration from the Institutional Development Plan emphasises the potential benefits of collaborative and inclusive evaluation involving diverse stakeholders (Rossi et al., 2004, p. 204). This recommendation prompts a discussion on the practical steps and mechanisms that can be implemented to facilitate such a collaborative approach within RUCE. Additionally, the suggestion to align with global and regional frameworks (Chankseliani et al., 2021) highlights the importance of contextualizing RUCE's goals within broader developmental agendas. This discussion delves into the significance of strategic planning, goal setting, and the continuous monitoring and evaluation of these goals over an extended period, aligning RUCE's efforts with overarching global, regional, and national priorities (Chankseliani et al., 2021).

4.3.3 Enablers and Challenges in relation to Structure, Culture, and Collaboration.

CPRs responded that the coordinators at RUCE were the ones who facilitated the monitoring and evaluation of the programmes in the workshops, strategizing with community partners for the year, training and preparing students for their placement, onsite registers for students, and the quarterly reflection sessions. They (community partners) were only asked to attend.

CPR 5: “I think one thing I should give to the RUCE coordinators because they are the ones who are always doing all the work, organizing those monthly meetings and in June we are all called in one place from all the RUCE’s different programmes to do evaluation so for me it is an open door policy that we could go to RUCE at any time to seek help and guidance sometimes when we are facing some challenges, RUCE is there to assist the community partners.”

CPR 4: “Another thing RUCE needs to put as part of their programmes is to train students, especially the foreign students or the ones who do not speak isiXhosa because they get a culture shock when they come to our organizations. Most of the times even us we don’t not know how to deal with them (students).”

CPR 1: One thing I have noted that with all these meetings and capacity building we have received from RUCE we are able now to work together as local community organizations and we are able to share information of funding in our WhatsApp groups and I think that is very powerful, before people used to run away with information, now we are even able to share resources amongst ourselves. Like we usually ask Joza Youth Hub to give a space when we have parents' meetings and that is what we have learned from RUCE. Sharing."

These insightful indicators from community partners strongly suggest the necessity for a collaborative M&E system, emphasizing the importance of involving all stakeholders in decision-making. However, two of the CPRs did not know anything about the M&E system even though the previous reflection meeting registers showed they had been in attendance.

CPR 3 "I did say that, in my organization there is only one person who deals with M&E I never thought it was important for me to know. But from here I will go back and ask relevant questions about M&E because I see it is also important for me to know the programme statuses"

This is evident in what SM 1 alluded to that some community partners previously have been passive, agreeing to anything that is put forth by RUCE, even participation in the meetings was limited to only a few community partners.

The responses from SLs mentioned the intricate dynamics at play, offering valuable insights into how RUCE's M&E system operates. SL 1's response underscores the significance of structured orientation courses and workshops for the first year students, emphasizing training initiatives for student volunteers. However, it also acknowledges the challenges posed by academic pressures and the need for constant communication.

SL 1: "I feel like that goes back to managing the CE Orientation courses and workshops we facilitate for first years, the training that we do in showing that the RUCE Office also reminds students because they know that students could be under pressure academically and all that, they remind them that we do have a submission due for this, do not forget to do it. There's constant reminder and constant communication within RUCE and student volunteers."

However, what could be discerned from the discussion with the student leaders was how RUCE's communication was effective as students alluded to the fact that they have tight school schedules and the constant reminders from RUCE assisted them (student leaders) in achieving tasks. SL 3's response echoes the desire for collaboration with community partners but brings attention to the challenges of miscommunication. The engagement of community partners in

project discussions is recognized as positive, yet challenges arising from unclear expectations are evident.

SL 3: “I remember with other student leaders we wanted to do some projects with the Community partner, but then somewhere, somehow there was miscommunication and all that and then having the community partners there present also saying from our side, actually, this is what would work.”

While the statement from SL 3 indicates that communication is a challenge, it does not talk about the areas of improvement within communication. Perhaps a potential area for improvement could be ensuring that communication strategies are not only constant but also clear, accessible, and responsive to the needs of students and community partners.

4.3.4 Shape of Partnership between RUCE and CPS

The responses from CPRs show key components that contribute to a successful and meaningful partnership between RUCE and community partners. These perspectives point out collaboration, mutual benefit, and a focus on long-term, sustainable solutions.

CPR 4: “I think a successful partnership should involve regular communication and joint planning to ensure that RUCE and community partners are on the same page. It should go beyond once-off projects, promotes a long-term relationship where both parties contribute ideas, resources, and expertise. The partnership should prioritize the needs of the community and work towards sustainable solutions. Like I always say, if we all work together there is so much, we can achieve in Makhanda.”

This suggests that sustained collaboration allows for a deeper impact on community needs. Prioritizing sustainable solutions ensures that the partnership contributes meaningfully to the community's development over time as CPR 4 indicated. CPR 1 mentioned a win-win collaboration.

CPR 1: “You know, I think for a partnership to be successful, it should be a win-win for both RUCE and community partners. Like we are already doing one through the VC’s education initiative, see we are winning on our side as we have managed to mentor learners to get a quality pass for matric and RU on the other hand is achieving its mission of creating access for local learning into RU.”

CPR 2: “First and for most the partnership should prioritize the academic and personal growth of students while meeting the needs of the community. Because at the end of the day students will want to go out and find employment when they are done with their degrees. Yes, they should be involved in community engagement but prioritize their academics.”

These responses collectively argue for a partnership model that is built on communication, mutual benefit, long-term commitment, sustainability, and a balance between academic and community-focused goals. This collaborative and holistic approach augurs well for a successful and impactful partnership between RUCE and community partners.

In response to the question SL 3 emphasized the importance of continuous communication in the partnership between RUCE and community partners.

SL 3: “There should be communication all the time. Starting at the beginning of the year while students are being assigned to certain group programme. However, despite allocating them, they should actually be like checking up on them: how is the program being, is it effective? Then in the middle of the programme instead you just check up on them to say okay we know that in the beginning of the year you set up this goal, are you still on the right track in meeting those goals, check up with them on what the challenges that they're facing so that you can be able to help them in their way if it is possible. Then at the end of, for example, semester of the year, we can actually see now just a reflection, okay in the beginning of the year we have done this, or we have set this objective, did we meet those objectives? Why did we meet them or why didn't we? Then we try to actually come with solutions on how we can improve ourselves together.”

SL 6: “I still feel like at the beginning of the year when we went to the training, community partners were coming into partner with RUCE so they still see Rhodes as this ivory tower that if they partner with Rhodes or Rhodes partners with them then whatever project or programmes, they do will be a success because it has the Rhodes name to it. And sometimes they should be the ones inviting -I'm not sure if it makes sense- but inviting Rhodes to what they have already built instead of them wanting to always partner with Rhodes for their success. So they should still have a partnership of like 50/50 partnership, but also them realizing that it's a 50/50 partnership, not Rhodes being the bigger person because it has all these resources and also just working together, instead of Rhodes approaching the partners of the certain programmes that they have, the schools or the different community partners should also be the one approaching the schools, they know Rhodes has the capacity of students and for student volunteers, so they should be the one approaching Rhodes on the programmes that they have and having students there assisting them instead of Rhodes being the one initiating a programmes.”

These responses show the importance of effective communication, mutual recognition of contributions, and a balanced partnership approach. SL 3 emphasized the need for ongoing communication, resource-sharing, and a mediating role for Rhodes. While SL 6 calls for a more equitable partnership dynamic, it challenges the perception of Rhodes as the dominant

contributor. Together, these perspectives advocate for a collaborative, inclusive, and balanced partnership model that addresses the needs of all stakeholders (Hall & Tandon, 2017).

According to SM 1, an ideal partnership between RUCS and community partners should be characterized by mutuality, reciprocity, and co-management.

SM 1: “Well, I think mutuality and reciprocity come to mind first. But that's also a complex thing, you know, and I think that what has become more and more evident over the years is we've been able to articulate what each partner wants from the partnership. I think in those early days we knew we were looking for mutuality, but our partners and us sometimes too, never really knew what that looked like. I think we are able to articulate, and we are because we're able to see now. You know, our partners are grown in leaps and bounds. I'm sure the organizations look completely different now because of the expertise they've been able to draw out to the university because of the extra hands in the form of volunteers, because of the research questions they bring to us and ask to help solve. I think they are building their organizations differently now because they've understood what this resource is, the expertise, the human resource on this campus, the physical resources on this campus, etc.”

SM 2: “I really like our concept of co-management and I say concept because although we preach that to the world, I don't think it's in its truest form yet. So, for example that power dynamic I wish that I could include teachers more confidently in the training process, that we could rely on them to actually train something, in our student volunteer training. I wish that I could more reliably depend on partners to tell me honestly when things aren't working and what they would like to see as change or contribute to the development and design of programmes. I have a really good experience with one school where the volunteer manager sends me voice notes all the time about: this person didn't pitch-up, she knows student volunteer by name, this one was coming to school as an intern and she has got emotional difficulty like you need give her help now. Like that is the level of care and attentiveness that needs to happen on both sides to make the change happen. So, for me I just wish that I could I don't want to say obliterate the power dynamic because they always will be that with such a big institution, you cannot compare a school with a university just the funding alone makes the power dynamic. But I wish there was a way that teachers can feel more empowered, principals could feel more empowered in the relationship of co-management.”

Both SM 1 and SM 2 talked about the importance of time and investment in relationships. SM 2 stressed the need to invest time in teachers and principals (CPs), recognizing that meaningful co-management requires a commitment to understanding and supporting each other. This challenges the common perception that community engagement efforts should primarily focus on students and suggests a more comprehensive approach.

4.3.5 Description of a Collaborative M&E system for CUP

In response to the question of what a collaborative M&E system for CUP should entail, CPR 4 said *"M&E in our organization is done by one person, and we never get involved."* This aligns with the responses from community partners who only referred to the training and reflection programmes offered by RUCE to both community partners and student volunteers.

CPR 2 mentioned the pre-COVID-19 situation and the understanding of M&E processes in relation to the registers that were maintained on community partner sites and submitted to RUCE during reflection meetings.

CPR 5: "Most of the M&E tools have been disrupted by covid-19, because we no longer get registers or plan of the year like we used to pre-COVID-19. We only attend meetings without our student leaders so maybe now we need to regroup as community partners, not all student volunteers but the student leaders and everyone from RUCE to discuss how we want M&E to look like."

CPR 7: "RUCE wants us to write reports, that is not a collaborative M&E, but we need to all continue with the reflection meetings, because if I sit in my organization or office and write a report, I might not be truthful, some of us don't even like writing, but when we all in one place and you find someone to scribe then I think that can be useful and RUCE shares the feedback to all the partners."

These responses indicate a need for a more inclusive and participatory approach to M&E within the CUP. The challenges presented, such as disruptions due to external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns about the non-collaborative nature of report writing, suggest opportunities for enhancing the collaborative M&E system. This may involve redefining roles, adapting to changing circumstances, and fostering a culture of shared responsibility and engagement among all stakeholders in the partnership. The current M&E system is seen as an imposition on community partners and student volunteers because of the lack of their input in its development. Not all CPRs have a comprehensive knowledge of the various components of the current M&E system.

The SLs suggested a more inclusive approach to M&E by involving community partners in discussions. They proposed collaborative reflection sessions, possibly once a term, where students, RUCE, and community partners share perspectives on the programs.

SL 1: "I feel like the reason why I actually raised that was that, yes we do have a relationship between the student and community partners, but the missing link which

might actually make the relationship stronger is people who are actually benefiting from this.”

SL 1 believed this would provide an understanding of what works, what needs improvement, and potential modifications. Student leaders emphasized the value of feedback from all parties, including high school teachers and learners, to reinforce values, guide relationships, and determine areas for improvement.

SL 4: “We need to find ways of calling everyone involved in one place and have discussions. Because it is no use to call on the school principal who is not a volunteer manager and is not directly involved in the programme. I know the community partners do not really have spaces to hold these meetings, but it could be really beneficial if the meetings can be held in the community spaces.”

SL 4 envisions these term meetings as opportunities to collectively reflect, prepare for the next term, and strengthen collaboration between student volunteers, Rhodes, and community partners.

Both RUCE staff members indicated a clear set of goals for the year and emphasized the importance of regular evaluations to assess progress and address any identified barriers. RUCE SM2 delved into the analysis of complexity levels with RUCE’s introduction of the concept of a co-management model to navigate this complexity. She highlighted simple complexities, such as basic monitoring of registers and daily communication, as well as more intricate aspects like reflection meetings, analysis of reflections, and the evaluation of programme effectiveness. The analysis revealed a perceived challenge where RUCE is situated in the medium to high complexity levels, impacting the strength of co-management efforts. Volunteer managers, as suggested by SM2, may not be sufficiently capacitated to carry out on-site monitoring. The staff members' emphasis on clear goal-setting and regular evaluations aligns with best practices in monitoring and evaluation systems, emphasizing the importance of goal-oriented planning and continuous assessment (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009).

The introduction of complexity levels adds a nuanced perspective to the discussion, categorizing monitoring and evaluation tasks based on their intricacy (Butterfoss, 2006). The acknowledgement that RUCE may be situated in the medium to high complexity levels prompts a discussion on the potential challenges and opportunities associated with these levels. This includes considerations about the capacity of volunteer managers, the need for strategic interventions to address the complexities involved, and about the organizational readiness and

capacity to manage and navigate complex monitoring and evaluation processes. It prompts discussions on strategies to strengthen co-management efforts, enhance the capacity of volunteer managers, and potentially streamline or simplify processes to improve overall effectiveness.

4.3.6 Assessing Change through CUPs

The responses from various CPRs provide diverse perspectives on the notable changes in the partnership between RUCE and the CUPs. CPR 5 notes a positive change in the reading culture among school children involved in the volunteer programmes. The engagement with Rhodes students has sparked interest and enthusiasm for reading, creating a ripple effect in the classroom.

CPR 5: “Yes, I would say the reading culture at my school has change because of the partnership, now my kids at school read and they are interested because I think they do not want the Rhodes students to come back without them not knowing how to read. They are always interested when it comes to reading because that is what the students do with them. Even the other teachers are jealous because the Rhodes students come to me and my class is the most excelling when it comes to reading because of the student volunteers.”

This change is attributed to the active involvement of RUCE student volunteers, showcasing the impactful influence of community engagement initiatives on educational practices. This aligns with Burns et al.’s (2021) view that volunteerism is a game changer.

CPR 7 on the other hand, expressed that there hasn't been a significant change in the partnership, highlighting their (community partners) use of resources, specifically computers, provided by RUCE.

CPR 7: “No, I cannot say there has been change because the only thing we use from RUCE is the Social Innovation Hub and before that we had the Joza Youth Hub lab so I would say RUCE only donated computers for us and we have been doing all the work. Maybe there is change because RUCE helps us with their old computers.”

Both SM 1 and SM 2 indicated that there is notable change, SM 1 understood that change is a process and that it happens over time and primarily focused on human development rather than material things. Both staff members highlight their commitment to supporting others through challenges, maintaining open communication, and actively involving them in various campus activities.

SM 1: “Well, I think the fact that you're going to understand change is a process, so it happens over time. It's also not so much about things, it's about human development. And so, I think the fact that they realized we were there through thick and thin when the chips were down, we didn't change and ignore them, we would go and talk to them when there was a problem in the programme, we'd go and sit down and work it out, we never walked away from any situation”.

SM 2 emphasised the importance of recognizing change as a gradual process and prioritizing human development over material concerns. Both staff members underscored their unwavering commitment to providing support through difficulties, maintaining transparent communication, and actively engaging individuals in diverse campus activities, fostering an environment of resilience and collaboration.

SM 2: “Another challenge and change is seeing community partners saying NO, that is a huge challenge I think again it comes back to the power that community partners often feel like they just have to accept everything because they are less, they have nothing but actually I learnt this lesson from a CP, and the fact that she said no to certain programmes because they didn't serve the goals and objectives of her school of her organization made that partner much more valuable, made that partner much more stronger because they were meeting the objectives at working with people who desperately wanted to be there and I wish more partners would say NO rather than spreading their selves thin just for the sake of getting the help and then they are not meeting their objectives.”

SM 2's reflection on the lesson learned, is that partners become more valuable and stronger when community partners voice out their needs and priorities to challenges, the assumption that accepting all assistance is not beneficial to all partners. The responses from both SM 1 and SM 2 highlight the complexities of CE (Netshandama & Mahlomaholo, 2010) as a core function of HE. The commitment to building relationships, addressing challenges collaboratively, and valuing the autonomy of community partners provides a foundation for positive and sustainable transformation within the CE landscape (Hall, 2010).

The success of collaborative efforts is evident in the positive transformation achieved in the education-focused programmes, with a notable increase in the number of students from fee-paying schools succeeding and contributing to the community. Overall, there is a sense of accomplishment, recognition, and positive energy in the educational space that contrasts with the initial challenges faced in the early days of the journey.

The different responses suggest that the impact of the partnership can be influenced by the nature of the collaboration and the fact that the university carries more power and resources (Mitchell, 2008). CPR 7's viewpoint indicates that providing resources alone may not necessarily lead to transformative changes without more active involvement of CPs or joint initiatives. CPR 4's recognition of the opportunity for more joint capacity-building initiatives shows there is potential for collaborative growth. It is evident that in addressing the limited change reported by community partners, it is crucial for RUCE and CUP to engage in ongoing dialogue and assessment of the partnership's goals and strategies.

4.3.7 Challenges Experienced by the Participating Groups

Undoubtedly, relationship challenges experienced by the participating groups will impact the process of collaborative M&E. CPRs indicated that establishing relationships with RUCE and student volunteers presented challenges, particularly regarding some students' commitment and expectations. These students hesitate to commit to projects, possibly due to misaligned expectations between what they envision and the reality of the volunteer work on-site. This discrepancy often leads to students deregistering from specific programmes. On the other hand, there are instances of over-committed and ambitious students who, when faced with the pressure of meeting expectations, tend to disappear from the partner site.

CPR 7: "You know one of the challenges is students who sign up to volunteer in our organizations and two months down the line you do not see them sometimes which is most of the times they do not even tell us, and we are left wondering."

CPR 5: "There wasn't a challenge for us since RUCE was the one who approached our organization, there has been ups and downs. But sometimes we lose staff members who were volunteer managers and now students become hesitant to learn from someone new and we lose the students as well because they will stop coming when they do not see a familiar face."

Another hurdle involves the perception of a one-sided partnership, where RUCE is seen as carrying more weight and making decisions, potentially leaving the CPs feeling side-lined. This perception is exacerbated by the resource disparity, with RUCE having more resources compared to smaller organizations reliant on uncertain funding. Addressing these challenges requires open communication, setting realistic expectations, and fostering a more balanced and collaborative partnership.

Another challenge highlighted is the difficulty for CPs to say 'no'. SM 2 emphasized the importance of partners being selective and saying no to CE programmes that are not aligned with their goals and objectives. The fear of being perceived as having less or lacking resources often pressures community partners into accepting RUCE's offer, potentially undermining the effectiveness of their initiatives. Learning from instances where partners assertively decline projects that do not serve their objectives can contribute to stronger and more valuable partnerships.

Student leaders discussed challenges faced during establishing relationships with CPs, particularly those CPs involved with children and high school learners. Language barriers, age gaps, and the need for positive influence were highlighted when interacting with children.

SL 5: "Like I have mentioned, I am Tswana and Xhosa for me is new, so I have to speak English and you know, speaking English to a black person makes you seem like you are "better-than-thou but at least the school the supervisor helped me to work collaboratively with other teachers, but I won't lie it is difficult, especially if they don't speak your language."

Adapting communication and behaviour to suit the context and being positive role models posed difficulties. In tutoring high school students, the challenge was to establish relatability without appearing superior. The diverse backgrounds of students required finding suitable approaches, acknowledging differences, and fostering collaboration rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. Overall, the experiences involved adapting communication and teaching methods to effectively engage with the target audience.

Student leaders indicated that they had RUCE to go to when they had challenges.

SL 3: "We would get ideas on how to deal with challenges at the meetings RUCE calls, for example the language barrier was addressed by matching a Xhosa speaker with a non-Xhosa speaking student when it comes to volunteerism."

The challenges faced by CPs and students require RUCE to give further consideration to the assessment of students as volunteers and their placements.

A significant challenge identified by SM2 was the power dynamic between university and community partners. Race is a factor that SM2 has to confront because of the stereotypes related to 'white' and 'woman', which challenges efforts to mitigate the power dynamic, especially in the project that involves the training of schoolteachers where she is perceived as

the knowledge holder. Despite recognizing her dependence on the teachers' practical knowledge, the power dynamic complicates the relationship.

SM 2: “I think especially for me as a white woman I come with a lot of stereotypes that I’m very educated and I find it really difficult to break that stereotype for example in training where I am the knowledge holder, but I really depend on teachers as knowledge holders too. I have never had a classroom experience I know in theory the realities of the education system, I know the realities of literacy, so I rely on teachers to be able to manage the classrooms to impart that skill to my students. It’s just unfortunate that they don’t see that because they are always in the classroom, they know their children, they know this program, they have been on it for how many years... the power dynamic muddies that experience. I think power is a big thing in community university relationships is a big challenge.”

SM 1: “So, what we saw when we started and was partners would never challenge us, they would come to the meetings we called, they were relatively passive in the spaces, they’re really didn’t ask a lot of questions, they followed any instructions or suggestions we had, they never pushed back, they never put us right if we were late, they never kind of complained about that, they just accepted things. We could design the programs and put them in front of them and they’d accept those. They took our student volunteers. They never always maximize their use in the space, those that did got more out of them and you know.”

The challenges spoken about by SM 1 and 2 in navigating power dynamics and passive partnerships offer an opportunity for shaping the future of CUPs. By acknowledging and actively addressing these challenges, institutions like RU with the RUCCE division can foster more equitable, impactful, and mutually beneficial partnerships that align with the principles of CE and contribute to positive social change (Jones et al., 2021).

4.3.8 Impact of working with RUCCE and student volunteers

CPRs responses indicate that firstly the university provides access to resources, students, and expertise bringing about a huge change to their organizations, from learning about fundraising, monitoring and evaluation and other capacity building programmes that the university provides. Secondly, RUCCE proactively addresses the changing needs of the community by allocating resources to confront pressing issues, such as the water crises by providing water tanks to schools and other central points in the community.

CPR 5: “Yes there is change in our organizations since we started working or partnering with RUCCE as they always assist us when there is crisis, also we open our spaces when the university wants to do research, sometimes others from the university

wants to partner with us when they have projects, they learn from us and we also learn from them.”

This perspective aligns with Hall and Tandon’s assertion (2015, p. 3) on the significance of collaborative engagement between institutions of higher education and their broader communities, emphasizing a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources within a framework of partnership and reciprocity.

Thirdly, CPR 3 underscores the importance of knowledge that promotes unity and co-existence rather than causing division within the community. They caution against research that, while accurate, may be divisive and advocate for topics that encourage people to coexist harmoniously.

CPR 3: “One, the change is that the university now provides access to its community, access in every aspect for the local learners, supporting our organizations, creating opportunities for everyone. Two, university now responds to community’s arising needs, so saying Makhandha has water crisis or any other issues so the university will rise up to the occasion to say we are going to contribute to this using the resources that we have and everything.”

Supporting this perspective, scholars such as Anderson and Martinez (2017) contend that universities, as community partners, play a crucial role in not only addressing immediate challenges but also in promoting a shared understanding and collaborative knowledge creation for sustainable community development. This collective scholarly stance reinforces the multifaceted nature of community partnerships in higher education, emphasizing the importance of addressing community needs, promoting unity, and contributing to the broader public good, as endorsed by the philosophy of Ubuntu.

SM 2 highlighted the indispensable connection between RU students and the community of Makhandha in terms of mutual survival and prosperity. They highlight the interdependence of these institutions, emphasizing that both students and the community need to thrive for the overall success of CE. She notes that the university's survival is linked to its academic projects and the valuable learning experiences provided by CE.

SM 2: “I think we share the ability to make social change, if our goal is to create a better society that we all want to live in, you need people to do that, you need warm bodies, without students it would be maybe us 12 at RUCE trying to do stuff and this is why I chose to be a community development practitioner and not a teacher as a teacher I could effect change with maximum 45 children every year in community development

I am working with 120 students every week, reaching 450 children just in 1 programme then there's 9/10s with another 250 children. And so the reach of impact is so much better and you wouldn't be able to do that without students."

SM 1: "It is seeing the growth of community partners from the ones that were passive and agreeing to every task to those that now question some of our practices. If you look at when we introduced CBPR how community partners chose their method of engagement from being part of a course to a workshop style and their willingness to participate in the design of the course contents shows the level of growth and the impact of this partnership."

Both stressed the importance of experiential learning in addressing moral and ethical dilemmas, fostering teamwork, leadership, communication skills, and reflective thinking. SM 2 also underscores the significance of appreciating different forms of knowledge, acknowledging both academic and community knowledge as crucial elements in research and teaching. The growth in community partners' active participation and decision-making reflects a positive change in the partnership with RUCE. It not only signifies a deeper and more collaborative engagement but also holds the potential to enhance the impact and sustainability of community-engaged initiatives. This transition aligns with the core principles of effective community engagement, emphasizing collaboration, shared decision-making, and mutual empowerment (Howard et al., 2007, p. 4).

SL 3 noted the positive impact on first-year students, broadening their understanding of volunteerism in higher education.

SL 3: "You can see the impact of CE when you look at the first years who are involved in CE with those who are not involved, the student volunteers are so different in ways that I can really say how. But you would see their confidence, I am now speaking as student leader who has observed the change in student volunteers that I lead in my group. There is so much change that happens once you commit to CE."

SL4 shared his experience with one of the volunteer programmes highlighting how students' initial reluctance to tutor turned into genuine interest after volunteering. This experience helped them discover their passion and aligned their interests with their studies, emphasizing the transformative impact of CE on personal and professional development.

SL 4: "I was very reserved before joining RUCE and even when I started going to the training and attending the workshops I was still hesitant of my choice as I regarded myself as a shy person who just enjoys reading books, but when we met with our mentees from the schools, I became a different person who was quiet to someone that

was able to stand in front of learners and teach, now I even present at community engagement conferences and whenever there is something the coordinators from RUCE ask me and others from my group to represent student leaders, it such an amazing journey.”

SL 5: “For me like I said before I was unable to speak isiXhosa when I first arrived at Rhodes, but through RUCE now I have gained another language. That has boosted myself esteem because Makhanda is dominated by Xhosa speakers so it’s for me to communicate with anyone who speaks isiXhosa, I have learned the language through my interactions with the mentees in the different schools.”

This first-hand account shows the student leaders' genuine commitment to the programmes and highlights the progression from starting as student volunteers to assuming leadership roles within the community engagement initiatives.

SLs discussed the transition from a charity-based approach to community engagement at Rhodes University. They highlighted the learning curve in understanding the values and principles, particularly the shift towards mutual beneficiary relationships.

SL 2: “I know sometimes when, as a first year you kind of use community engagement for example what I used to do in high school is different to what we do at Rhodes because we would only interact with the learners by playing with them and give them donations of stationary, which would be more charity based. So, you come into community engagement with that sort of mindset that you have the upper hand, and they (high school learners) have the receiving hand.”

SL 1: “ For Rhodes, that's what actually Rhodes stands for because when you get here you are taught, you'll be working with people of different ages, different cultures, different backgrounds, if you guys respect each other, then the goal of the projects that we're doing will actually be attained, but if there's no respect then it means the process would be hindered as we go on.”

The experiences of student leaders showcase the importance of equal partnership and collaboration, moving away from the perspective of offering ‘charitable’ help to working together.

4.3.9 Key components of a framework of a collaborative M&E system

CPRs expressed some satisfaction with the M&E system but emphasized a preference for non-digital approaches or perhaps a hybrid system. They highlighted the importance of M&E not being limited to mere talk shows; rather, the outcomes of evaluations should be effectively

communicated and implemented. They emphasised the need for inclusive decision-making processes that incorporate their voices.

CPR 2: “M&E worked well pre-COVID-19, since partners were also involved in the selection of student volunteers and part of the training that made it easy for partners to monitor their own student volunteers.”

CPR 4: “Yes, I agree, RUCE needs to bring back the Training where also the community partners are part of the two-day training and are able to select or sign up their own volunteers.”

CPR 7: “Like with us in (...) we knew that after the training we have a list of our own volunteers and we have their contact numbers we could call them to share information about our organization with, so RUCE needs to bring back the training and reflection meetings.”

The community partners' satisfaction with the existing M&E system, coupled with their preference for non-digital or hybrid approaches, prompts a discussion on the flexibility and adaptability of M&E systems in the context of diverse community needs. This raises questions about the feasibility and efficacy of integrating both digital and non-digital components into monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure accessibility and inclusivity. Furthermore, the emphasis on effective communication and implementation of M&E outcomes focuses attention on the importance of actionable insights derived from evaluations. This discussion is key in shaping strategies for translating evaluation findings into tangible actions and improvements within CE programmes.

The call for inclusive decision-making aligns with broader discussions on the democratization of decision-making processes within collaborative initiatives, a notion supported by Rijal (2023) on the importance of community involvement in public management planning and decision-making processes. These findings highlight the importance of ensuring that CPs have a genuine and influential role in shaping the direction and outcomes of CE programmes and they prompt further exploration into RUCE's mechanisms and structures to foster more inclusive decision-making, thereby strengthening the collaborative nature of CE initiatives.

The SLs emphasized the importance of including the perspectives of those benefiting from CE because their input could strengthen the relationship between students, RU, and CPs. They argue that incorporating the experiences of beneficiaries in reflections and collaborative discussions could encourage more students to join and engage with the community. SLs believe

that having beneficiaries share their personal experiences and reflections would provide valuable insights, contributing both to general feedback on projects and to understanding the internal, personal impact. They see this as an integral component of the framework for future community engagement, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the programmes.

The RUCE staff members outlined a structured approach to building and sustaining effective partnerships, particularly within the context of a yearly cycle. The process begins with clear expectations at the start of the partnership, defining goals, roles, and responsibilities for both parties. Quarterly reflections were emphasized as a crucial practice, providing a platform for self-evaluation and open, honest discussions about progress and challenges. For SM 1, the importance of authenticity, transparency, and honesty in fostering deep transformative development as part of key components of M&E system systems (Fortino et al., 2020) and transformative CUPs was emphasised. Barriers were acknowledged as a natural part of the process, and SM 1 encouraged collaborative problem-solving, positioning the partnership as a shared journey where neither party has all the answers. Drawing from each other's strengths and avoiding a unilateral approach to problem-solving was highlighted. SM 2 further emphasized that evaluation is not a linear process but a cyclical one, requiring ongoing engagement and flexibility to address evolving dynamics, aligned with the notion of developmental evaluation proposed by Westoby and Botes (2020). Safe spaces for partnership discussions are deemed essential, and SM 2 stressed the significance of language in providing constructive feedback that maintains the dignity of all parties involved.

Communication was identified as a key element, with both RUCE staff members advocating for accessible means such as WhatsApp for regular updates and reflections between formal evaluation sessions. The evolution of the partnership was recognized, noting increased depth and accountability on both sides, marking a departure from earlier stages where partners were less critical. The overall key component was continuous improvement, with a call to further strengthen the self-evaluation and mutual evaluation processes within the partnership framework.

4.3.10 Collaboratively reviewed and revised M&E System for CUPs Framework

The research aimed to collaboratively identify the extent to which RUCE's current M&E system supports CUPs in CE. The problem statement highlights an absence of research on a

collaborative M&E framework for CUPs in RUCE's two volunteer programmes. However, there is a gap in research on M&E that emphasizes the need for empirical practices in developing collaborative engagements with CPs for successful CE projects.

The M&E system at RUCE, initially overseen by the Student Volunteerism Programme (SVP) (now known as the Engaged Citizen Programme) coordinator, was developed and implemented without active input from CPs, resulting in the absence of their voices in the process. The components of a revised framework for a collaborative M&E system as finalized by the CPRs are presented in Table 6:

Table 6: Components of the Revised Collaborative M&E System

Components	Description
Strategic Planning: Inclusion of CPs in RUCE's Strategic Planning	The revised M&E as suggested by the three participating groups indicates that inclusivity should be prioritized from the onset, which must ensure alignment with organizational goals through collaborative strategic planning involving CPs, RUCE staff members, and student volunteers. When this was to be done was not indicated but strategic planning with CPs is done at the beginning of the year.
Workshop and Jointly Designed Training and Preparation Programmes	At the initial workshop, clear expectations have to be set on goals, roles, and responsibilities for both parties. Training and preparation programmes must be developed collaboratively among stakeholders, thereby ensuring relevance and sustainability to CUPs.
Attendance Registers	CPs receive attendance registers from RUCE for student volunteers to sign each time students visit the community partner organizations.

Reflection meetings	Currently joint reflection sessions follow a structured SWOT Analysis Approach, assessing engagements between the university and CPs for continuous improvement. CPRs and SLs expressed maintaining the reflection sessions which include joint reflection and planning together by CPs and SLs on how to jointly execute or implement their planned goals and address challenges. Reflective sessions should also monitor the extent to which the partnership objectives are being achieved. This revised framework should include mechanisms for collecting and analyzing feedback from the reflection sessions. RUCE should open communication channels for ongoing feedback and improvement
Exit Strategy	Ensure that well defined exit strategy which are clearly understood by both CPs and students are orchestrated effectively. Create a planned handover system that is understood and known by all.
Programme and Partnership Evaluation	Evaluation criteria must be aligned with each programme objective which will ensure a thorough assessment, integrating quantitative and qualitative data for a holistic understanding of the programme impact. Active involvement of CPs, RUCE, and student volunteers, in various aspects of the M&E process, will ensure a participatory and inclusive approach. A detailed year-end evaluation process must ensure an understanding of programme performance and planning for the upcoming year.
Joint Reflection on Programmes and Partnerships	Establish regular opportunities for collective reflection to foster a shared understanding and continuous improvement on CE programmes and partnerships outside of the revised M&E system. Open communication channels for feedback create a transparent environment enabling CPs to express their insights

	and concerns without judgment in relation to RUCE and its CE programmes.
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The framework for the collaboratively revised M&E system for CUPs in CE at RU reveals that CPs did not have issues with the actual components of the M&E system but wanted to be part of the whole process of the system. The changes made to the current M&E system from the findings of CPRs, students, and RUCE staff members and authenticated by the CPRs add depth and meaning for the various participants in the CE volunteer programmes. The inclusion and participation of CPs in the revised version of the M&E system addresses, albeit in a small way, the power dynamics between RUCE and CPs. As mentioned by SM 1, changes are an ongoing process, and the revised framework itself will have to be revised within a certain time frame, as agreed upon by the parties involved.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings and analysis of the study which employed a (part) participatory approach to collaboratively assess the RUCE's M&E system within the framework of transformative CUPs. The findings and the revised framework highlight the evolving dynamics within CE at RU. The importance of inclusivity and collaboration in shaping effective CUPs, the emphasis on clear expectations, regular reflections, and authentic collaboration, serves as a solid foundation for successful partnerships. The revised framework for the M&E system reflects a commitment to continuous improvement, adaptability, and responsiveness to feedback. Key components, such as jointly designed training, feedback mechanisms, and regular reflection sessions, demonstrate a strategic focus on enhancing the overall effectiveness of CE initiatives that contributes to community development in Makhandia. The emphasis on rigorous evaluation criteria, transparent communication, and collaborative problem-solving positions RUCE as a dynamic and responsive hub for community-university collaboration. Moving forward, these insights and frameworks provide a roadmap for further strengthening the integration of community perspectives, fostering impactful collaborations, and ensuring the sustained positive impact of CE programmes.

CHAPTER 5: CONSOLIDATED DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The final chapter of the study covers a consolidated discussion of the findings, conclusion, and recommendations derived from the findings of the study. The consolidated discussion is firstly presented under the main themes of i) conceptual and contextual understanding as they relate to a collaborative M&E system and ii) partnership, collaboration, and M&E system for an improved understanding of what the review and revision of the current M&E system would require of RUCE to promote collaborative CUPs. The discussion under these themes addresses the objectives of the study which are to: i) collaboratively identify the extent to which RUCE's current M&E system supports transformative CUPs, and ii) develop a M&E system for transformative CUPs that is relevant to the current context of community development in Makhandha.

5.1.2 Conceptual and Contextual Understanding

The findings in relation to the key concepts of this study will play a significant role in improving that aspect of the M&E system which is RUCE's training and preparation of CPs and student volunteers prior to student placement with community organisations in Makhandha.

In the early years, the HEQC's definition of CE provided an initial guideline for HEIs on establishing CE as a core function of universities. The HEQC defines CE as "initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community. Community engagement typically finds expression in a variety of forms, ranging from informal and relatively unstructured activities to formal and structured academic programmes" (HEQC, 2006, p.12). However, over the years, some universities have, depending on their history, context, strengths, diversity of local communities, and degree of ongoing engagement with the conceptualization of CE from a policy perspective (Muller, 2010), adapted the above conceptualization of CE to suit their individual environment.

Rather than providing a comprehensive definition of CE, the responses extracted from this study and presented below may be viewed as characteristics of CE that RUCE will have to take into consideration.

According to the study responses, CE:

- i) bridges the gap between the university and the local community, seen as CE's transformational potential.
- ii) contributes to the social and economic development of communities.
- iii) makes the university accessible to the community thereby mitigating the 'ivory tower' image of the university.
- iv) enhances self-development of students by instilling a sense of social responsibility and awareness among students.
- v) promotes the social responsibility of the university.
- vi) promotes knowledge democracy by acknowledging and respecting community voices.
- vii) transforms community and university participants (students, academics, CE practitioners) through quality CUPs.

In addition to these characteristics, as intimated by a few of the responses, CE provides the possibility of a mutual, reciprocal, and respectful exchange of ideas, practices and applications among the engaged partners (Whiteford & Strom, 2013). However, the single most important characteristic identified by the CPs was that of the power dynamics in CE, an element applicable not only to RU but all HEIs in South Africa. The critical questions of a top-down approach of, "who initiates the partnerships?", "what is the agenda?", and "what is the analysis?", were asked by a CP. One of the SLs also mentioned that RU always initiates relationships with CPs.

"And sometimes they [CPs] should be the ones inviting -I'm not sure if it makes sense- but inviting Rhodes to what they have already built instead of them wanting to always partner with Rhodes for their success."

These questions raised by the CPR are similar to issues raised in Chambers's (2008) book, *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*, which argues that central issues in development have been overlooked and that many past errors have flowed from domination by those with power.

CUPs are about learning together for CPs. Potentially a new way of thinking for the university community (academics and students) engaged in CE is the acceptance that knowledge exists in communities and not only within the walls of the university. This is aligned with Netshandama and Mahlomaholo's (2010) notion that the community engagement function in higher

education is more complex. They locate the knowledge development process at the crossroads of the divide between higher education and the society or community and position CE within this parameter of knowledge development as dialogue. It should be noted that knowledge democracy plays a significant role in the development of strong, trusting CUPs and is a characteristic of CE promotion of knowledge democracy, as mentioned above.

As indicated in Chapter 1, there has been a steady increase in the number of Rhodes student volunteers and community organisation partners. The study focused on two of RUC's volunteer programmes, the ECP and S@M. The context or the background of this study on the collaborative M&E system for CUPs is volunteerism. The understanding of both CE and student volunteerism influences the way in which CUPs are understood by the participating groups and specifically by CPs and student volunteers. This understanding will impact the kind of relationship that needs to be developed and the objectives of student placements with community organisations. From analysing the findings, volunteerism was understood as charity work. However, participating groups saw the value of formalising volunteerism in RUC and renaming it Engaged Citizenry. RUC promotes the idea that volunteerism is beyond charity, it is about developing the social responsibility of students and student citizenry. CPs clearly understand that students give their time and expertise. Importantly, the response from SLs that volunteerism needs to be understood by students as a reciprocal relationship between the two parties it is not unidirectional.

Community partners envisage an engaged university as one that has all departments involved in CE. CPRs envision a more integrated and systematic approach to CE within Rhodes University. SLs already see RU as an engaged university in community engagement and development through student involvement enabled by RUC. CUPs are the means by which an engaged university is mandated to address historical injustices, contribute to societal redress, rebuild the fabric of society, and fortify partnerships between universities and the broader community. A fully engaged university, according to the CPRs would readily enable an engaged citizenry and they acknowledged RUC's role in the progressive improvement of student volunteerism. RUC now utilizes the idea of an 'engaged citizenry' rather than 'volunteerism', as the term "engaged citizens" conveys an active commitment to exploration or accomplishment, diverging from the comparatively passive connotations associated with the term "volunteerism" (Welch & Plaxton-Moore, 2019; Keith, 2015). It is interesting to note that SLs view themselves and other student volunteers as agents of change and not just as

'volunteers', adding support to a desired characteristic of CE that enhances the self-development of students by instilling a sense of social responsibility and awareness among students.

Battacharya (2004, p.10) describes agency "as the capacity of people to order their world, the capacity to create, reproduce, change, and live according to their own meaning systems, to have the powers to define themselves as opposed to being defined by others". Solidarity (shared identity and norms) is seen as the essential characteristic of a community, and the ultimate purpose of development is to promote agency. In accordance with Battacharya's notion that community development is a positive response to the historical process of erosion of solidarity and agency, CE is one way to build solidarity between universities and communities and promote agency within universities (students and academics) and in the communities through developing strong community-university partnership relationships (CUPs) for community development.

The changes in the mindset and practice of student volunteers have not gone unnoticed by CPs as they have observed students' openness to learning, being creative and proactive rather than seeing themselves as 'saviours of the poor and needy'. Mutual learning, relationship building, sustainability, collaboration, respect, knowledge co-creation and a heightened sense of social responsibility are some of the values and principles affirmed by all participant groups in the study, largely underpinning the community-student interaction and CUPs. Much learning has taken place between CPs and students. CPs have gained confidence in letting their voices be heard on various platforms such as conferences. Students understood the need for inclusivity and that knowledge production required engagement with communities. As a learning organisation as proposed by Senge (1990), the RUCE division has in recent years, been promoting knowledge democracy-different ways of knowing and the co-creation of knowledge with CUPs in the form of engaged research. Hall and Tandon (2015, p.13) highlight that "knowledge democracy acknowledges the importance of the existence of multiple epistemologies, or ways of knowing, [and] knowledge democracy is about intentionally linking values of justice, fairness and action to the process of using knowledge".

The above consolidated discussion of the conceptual and contextual background is indicative of the scope to review and openness to revising the existing M&E system collaboratively in order to enhance the relationship between RUCE and the community partners in Makhanda and contribute to the transformation agenda of RU in Makhanda through CE.

5.1.3 Partnerships, Collaboration and M&E System for CUP in CE

CPRs identified collaboration, mutual benefit, and a focus on long-term, sustainable solutions as key components that contribute to a successful and meaningful partnership between RUCE and community partners. However, the issue of power dynamics and power hierarchy reared its head strongly in the further exploration of partnerships. As Prins (2006) reveals, “CUPs enable individuals and institutions to accomplish more together than they could alone. Often, however, hierarchies (i.e., disparities rooted in class, race, gender, status, and institutional power) also shape, often unconsciously, routine interactions between and among university and community representatives” (Prins, 2006, p. 2).

While RUCE and CPRs have acknowledged the positive changes over the recent years in CE programmes and CUPs as indicated in the findings and discussions above, the issue of power dynamics, however, directed not only at RU, RUCE and CUPs, is an issue all universities will have to take into consideration. RUCE will have to critically examine the power dynamics playing out in its volunteer programmes, given its commitment to knowledge democracy, collaborative CUPs and the participatory approach. Through participatory approaches, Chambers (2008) shows that ‘poor’ people have the ability to express and analyse their local, complex and diverse realities which are often at odds with the top-down realities imposed by professionals. He argues that personal, professional and institutional change is essential if the realities of the poor are to receive greater recognition.

CPs want to be a meaningful part of the university programmes and the emphasis was on research which should deal with the real-life situations of communities as shown in this response by a CPR, “*university research should accurately represent the community and yield tangible results with practical solutions*”. Knowledge democracy dismantles the idea of a single world view dominating the production of knowledge (Hall & Tandon, 2015) and community based participatory research (CBPR), as promoted by RUCE, encourages the co-creation of knowledge and diverse, multiple worldviews. Maistry and Lortan (2017) refer to CBPR as research that entails the co-creation of knowledge through examining community issues in all their complexity as an inter-related research exercise. It is not prescriptive but collaborative research with the aim of social change through the co-creation of knowledge and taps into the worldviews, language and knowledge embodied in the historical and material realities of communities in the research process (Maistry & Lortan, 2017). Minkler (2005, p. 23) describes CBPR:

As a systematic investigation with the participation of those affected by an issue for purposes of education and action or affecting social change. The approach further has been characterized as a collaborative process that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community with the aim of combining knowledge and action for social change.

This definition asserts that the research topic has to be of importance to the community and that the co-creation of knowledge should lead to action of social change, as also proposed by Maistry & Lortan (2017). The response of a CPR, *“There is a concern about Rhodes University's selective involvement in community issues, with a call for more visibility in addressing broader concerns like gender-based violence and crime.”*, indicates that RU’s research and other programmes may not be aligned to the needs of the community of Makanda which then presents a challenge for authentically enacting the developmental role of the university.

Without delving in any depth into the notion of decolonization (because of its complexity), we should nevertheless pay heed to the words of Bheki kaMpofu (2019, p. 236) when he writes that:

realistic decolonisation is decolonisation in which the knowledge of every ethnos is shared, and where each respects the knowledge, experiences and systems of the others. An important pathway for decolonisation of higher education is, therefore, what I would call ‘knowledge accord’. This means that all must work to see that no knowledge system is left unrepresented, and all bear responsibility for the advancement of a holistic knowledge system.

CPs seek a more equitable partnership, inclusivity and mutual decision making. This is also supported by the responses of the SLs. RUCE needs to take this into consideration as the views of RUCE staff are contrary to those of the CPRs with regards to the extent and quality of change in the relationship between RUCE and CPs that has occurred in recent years. While this study has earnestly begun the process of participation and collaboration with CPs in the review and revision of the M&E system for CUPs in RUCE’s two volunteer programmes, more work will have to be done in the relationship building process with all CPs to try to mitigate the power dynamics and issues raised by the CPRs and with regards to the collaborative monitoring and evaluation of CUPs. It should be noted though that while collaboration is an important component of social change theory, conflicts are also prevalent in collaborative work. (Prins, 2008). The component of collaboration in social change theory is vital to this study. Collaboration can be used to develop a sustainable solution to societal problems (Prins, 2008).

However, conflicts are prevalent in collaborative work. Added to the three key issues identified by Prins (2008) to combat these challenges, which are: i) constructing a collective goal to establish direction; ii) working with the stakeholders and keeping the interdependent domain as the focus for change; iii) dealing with the anxiety of an emergent process with an uncertain outcome, RUCE will also be guided by the philosophy of Ubuntu that underpins all its programmes as detailed in its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. RUCE's co-management model is an example of its understanding of the interdependency between RUCE and CPs.

RUCE's current M&E system for CUPS and the Volunteer programmes comprises the following components: workshops, training and preparation; attendance registers, reflective sessions, and summative evaluation. The M&E system was developed by RUCE and the annual facilitation of the M&E system is conducted by RUCE staff. The findings reveal that while the CPs have gained much from the M&E process, not all CPs have a comprehensive understanding of the process of the M&E system, its purpose and objectives. All participants involved in the volunteer programmes and CUPS have to have a common understanding of the process and concepts. Here again, the contradiction between the responses of the CPRs and RUCE staff members surfaced. RUCE staff expressed confidence in the effectiveness of RUCE's M&E system within the Engaged Citizenry Programmes while acknowledging the lack of a cohesive M&E system for RUCE as a whole. In addition to the response that *"the coordinators within RUCE are working in silos, monitoring programmes independently rather than within an integrated framework"*, there has been a lack of participation by CPs in the initial development of the M&E system for CUPS in CE and therefore its effectiveness falls short when measured against the qualities of collaboration and participation.

However, RUCE is committed to being a learning organisation (Senge, 1990) that incorporates collaborative learning, innovation, knowledge sharing, forward-thinking leadership, and the philosophy of Ubuntu and social change theory, among others. Therefore, the participation of CUPS in revising the existing M&E system for collaborative, transformative CUPS and effective volunteer programmes in accordance with the findings of this study and aligned to developmental evaluation as described by Westoby and Botes (2020), will be embraced by RUCE.

Apart from the challenges experienced with the M&E system, relationship challenges identified by the participating groups have implications for the development of a collaborative M&E system. The other challenges identified were effective communication, especially with

CPs, the digital divide, and clarification of expectations. Participation and inclusivity play key roles in relationship building between RUCCE and CPs. Chapter 4 presented the revised framework for a collaborative M&E system for CUPs in CE. Prior education plays a significant role in devising and maintaining a collaborative M&E system. Educating CPs and all students involved in RUCCE's programmes on CE as a core function of higher education, its purpose, various forms, etc. and on a collaborative M&E system for CE and its components may serve as a stronger starting point for the CUP relationship. Capacitating CPs, especially volunteer managers, on some of the requirements of the M&E system and on the co-management model, a system to assess the suitability of student placements and open discussions on power and power dynamics need consideration. A critical element of engagement for community development which is not mentioned by the three participating groups and should be given some attention, is the exit strategy of the collaborative M&E system. This is important for militating against CPs becoming dependent on RUCCE to the extent that it negatively impacts the organisation and the services it provides and on RUCCE's commitment to the principles of community engagement and development.

The key elements derived from the findings (some of which are included in the revised framework) of a strong collaborative CUP that should be kept in mind when implementing the revised framework include mutual benefit and focus on long-term sustainable solutions, effective communication; proper feedback structures; sustainable partnership where both parties contribute ideas, resources, and expertise; incorporation of the experiences of beneficiaries in reflections and collaborative discussions which will provide valuable insights, contributing both to general feedback on projects and to understanding the internal, personal impact on the beneficiaries; collaborative problem-solving mechanisms; promotion of authenticity, transparency, and honesty; awareness of language usage and safe spaces for the M&E process.

5.2 CONCLUSION

In addressing the research questions posed in this study, it is evident that RUCCE's current M&E system falls short of adequately supporting CUPs within volunteer programmes. The findings reveal significant challenges hindering the effectiveness of the existing M&E system, such as insufficient resources, limited community partner involvement, and a lack of capacity-building opportunities that are relevant to the needs of the community partners. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for a more comprehensive and participatory M&E system that captures

the true impact of CE programmes on the community. Importantly, the research underscores the pivotal role of CUPs in fostering transformative CE programmes. These partnerships are identified as essential for promoting community development, enhancing student learning, and driving social change. The study advocates for the prioritization of the establishment and maintenance of collaborative CUPs by higher education institutions to ensure the sustainability of CE programmes. The implications of these findings extend beyond the specific context of RUCE, offering valuable insights for higher education institutions, policymakers, and practitioners involved in CE programmes. The study proposes a framework for the development of effective collaborative M&E systems and the establishment of sustainable CUPs. This framework, rooted in the identified challenges and recommendations, serves as a guide for institutions aiming to enhance the impact and transformative potential of their CE initiatives.

This research contributes to the broader discourse on CE in higher education by shedding light on the deficiencies of current M&E systems and highlighting the critical role of collaborative CUPs in driving transformative change. As a result, it calls for a paradigm shift in how institutions approach CE, urging them to reevaluate and revise their M&E practices and actively foster collaborative partnerships for sustainable outcomes in community development. The study concludes by emphasizing the significance of these insights and recommendations for future research and the ongoing advancement of CE and transformative CUPs.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the M&E system in CE through CUPs. The study revealed valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of community partner representatives, RUCE staff members, and student leaders, providing a comprehensive understanding of the current state of the M&E system and its impact on CE initiatives. The following recommendations are made for the ongoing improvement of the M&E system and foster transformative CUPs.

- I. The study highlighted the importance of fostering collaborative relationships between community partners and the university. It is recommended to establish regular communication channels and collaborative platforms to facilitate ongoing dialogue, feedback exchange, and joint decision-making regarding the M&E processes. This can

be achieved through the establishment of joint M&E committees or working groups comprising representatives from both the community and the university.

- II. The study emphasized the value of participatory approaches in M&E processes. It is recommended to co-design M&E frameworks and indicators in collaboration with community partners, ensuring that the evaluation criteria align with the goals and priorities of the community. This participatory approach can enhance the relevance and ownership of the M&E system, leading to more meaningful and impactful evaluations.
- III. It is further recommended to prioritize the involvement of community partners, stakeholders, and beneficiaries in the design, implementation, and evaluation of CUPs. This participatory approach ensures that the needs and perspectives of the community are central to the engagement process, leading to more sustainable and impactful outcomes.
- IV. The study highlighted the dynamic nature of CE initiatives and the need for continuous reflection and adaptation within the M&E system. It is recommended to establish regular review cycles and reflection sessions to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the M&E framework. The recommendation is to have joint reflections involving CPs, RUCCE staff, and student leaders of each program. The responsibility of organizing these reflection meetings should not rest solely on RUCCE staff; instead, volunteer managers and student leaders should also have the opportunity to participate in organizing them. Additionally, it was highlighted that these meetings should be held not only at Rhodes University but also in other community spaces that can accommodate everyone. This reflective practice should involve all stakeholders, allowing for iterative improvements and adaptations based on evolving needs and contexts.
- V. The study emphasizes the need for a revised M&E system that is relevant to the current context of community development. It is recommended to develop a comprehensive M&E system that captures both quantitative and qualitative indicators of impact, aligning with the goals and values of community engagement. This system should be co-designed with community partners and should reflect the diverse dimensions of community development, including social, economic, and cultural aspects.
- VI. The findings underscore the value of continuous feedback loops and iterative improvement in the M&E process. It is recommended to establish mechanisms for ongoing feedback from community partners, stakeholders, and participants involved in community engagement initiatives. This feedback should inform adaptive management

practices, allowing for the continuous improvement of programmes based on real-time insights and evolving community needs.

- VII. The study highlights the importance of capacity building within community-university partnerships. It is recommended to prioritize knowledge sharing, skill development, and capacity enhancement among all stakeholders involved in community engagement. This can be achieved through training, workshops, and collaborative learning opportunities that empower community partners and university stakeholders to co-create and co-lead impactful initiatives.

5.3 POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of the study highlight the potential for further research in relation to CUPs in CE. CUPs determine the nature of CE and its developmental impact. Research in the areas of relationship building, power dynamics and institutional change (structurally and culturally) will serve to better understand the relationship between community and university for sustainable community development and university social responsibility.

Addressing the power dynamics with the CUPs involves fostering equitable, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationships. In which these mutually beneficial, respectful relationships have been established. However, the power dynamics can be achieved through collaborative planning, that will ensure CPs, RUCE Staff and SLs are involved in setting clear, mutual goals that prioritize the community's as well as the university's needs. Open communication is essential, with regular joint reflective meetings and transparent processes to discuss progress and challenges. Building the capacity of community partners through training, development, and resource sharing is crucial. Respecting and valuing the expertise of community partners, and being sensitive to their cultural contexts, fosters trust. Creating equitable structures with inclusive leadership and shared decision-making processes helps balance power. Accountability and continuous evaluation through joint metrics and feedback mechanisms ensure ongoing improvement. Institutional commitment to policies supporting equitable partnerships and advocating for systemic changes addresses structural inequities. Sustainable partnerships are supported by equitable funding models, ensuring long-term benefits for both the university and community partners.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Firstly, the study was conducted in a Makhanda community, the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other communities. The study's participating size was also relatively small, consisting of only 19 participants, which may limit the representativeness of the findings. Secondly, the study relied heavily on qualitative research methods, which may be subject to researcher bias and interpretation. To some extent, researcher bias was controlled by the participatory approach of the study. Finally, the study did not explicitly address the potential limitations or challenges of the community-university partnership framework itself. While the study highlighted the benefits of collaborative partnerships, it did not explore potential power imbalances or conflicts that may arise in such partnerships.

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APPENDIX A1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Please describe the nature of community engagement projects you have been involved in with Rhodes University Community Engagement.
2. How do you understand CE in Higher Education?
3. How do you understand CUP in Higher Education?
4. How do you understand volunteerism in HE?
5. What is your understanding of the term, Engaged University?
6. How do you understand the concept of students as engaged citizens?
7. How do you understand RUCE's values and principles with regards to CE and volunteerism?
8. Has there been any change to your organization since the CUP relationship with RUCE volunteer programme? Yes/No.
9. If Yes, describe the change. If No, what are the possible reasons, and how could this be addressed?
10. Can you describe the impact of working with RUCE and student volunteers in your organization?
11. What do you think a partnership between Rhodes University Community Engagement and Community Partners should look like?
12. Describe the challenges you faced while establishing relationships with RUCE and Student volunteers?
13. What new types of knowledge have emerged because of your involvement in community engagement?
14. What do you understand about RUCE's monitoring and evaluation system?
15. Describe your experience with RUCE's M&E system: Enablers and challenges: Structure, Culture and Collaboration
16. What should a collaborative M&E system for CUP entail?
17. To develop a framework for collaboratively reviewing and revising an M&E System, what would you consider to be the key components of the system?

Student leaders

1. Please provide your views on the role of student volunteers in Makhanda?
2. How do you understand the concept of students as engaged citizens?
3. How do you understand CE in Higher Education?
4. How do you understand CUP in Higher Education?
5. How do you understand volunteerism in HE?
6. What is your understanding of the term, Engaged University?
7. How do you understand RUCE's values and principles with regards to CE and volunteerism?
8. Please describe the types of community engagement initiatives in which you have participated as a student volunteer.
9. Can you describe some of your meaningful experiences as a student volunteer with community partners?
10. How did your involvement with the community partner site contribute to your personal development and as a student?
11. How have these values and principles guided or influenced your volunteerism with CP?
12. Describe the challenges you faced while establishing relationships with community partners?
13. How did you address these challenges?
14. What do you think a partnership between Rhodes University Community Engagement and Community Partners should look like?
15. What new types of knowledge have emerged because of your involvement in community engagement?
16. What do you understand about RUCE's monitoring and evaluation systems?
17. Describe your experience with RUCE's M&E system.
18. What should a collaborative M&E system for CUP entail?
19. To develop a framework for collaboratively reviewing and revising an M&E System, what would you consider to be the key components of the system?

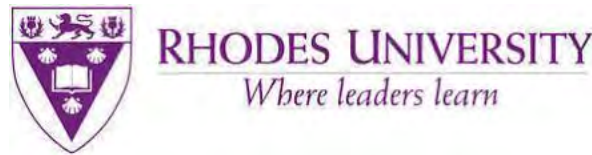
RUCE Staff

1. Please provide your views on the role of student volunteers in Makhanda?
2. How do you understand CE in Higher Education?

3. How do you understand CUP in Higher Education?
4. How do you understand volunteerism in HE?
5. What is your understanding of the term, Engaged University?
6. How do you understand the concept of students as engaged citizens?
7. How do you understand RUCE's values and principles with regards to CE and volunteerism?
8. Is there any notable change of the partnership between RUCE and CUP? Yes/No.
9. If Yes, describe the change. If No, what are the possible reasons, and how could this be addressed?
10. Can you describe the impact of working with CUP and student volunteers in RUCE?
11. What do you think a partnership between Rhodes University Community Engagement and Community Partners should look like?
12. Describe the challenges you faced while establishing relationships with RUCE and Student volunteers?
13. What new types of knowledge have emerged because of your involvement in community engagement with CUP and student volunteers?
14. What do you understand about RUCE's monitoring and evaluation system?
15. Describe your experience with RUCE's M&E system.
16. What should a collaborative M&E system for CUP entail?
17. To develop a framework for collaboratively reviewing and revising an M&E System what would you consider to be the key components of the system?

APPENDIX B1: LETTER TO THE CPS

(The letter will be translated to isiXhosa)



Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Participation of a Volunteer Manager in a research on Developing a transformative Community University Partnership: A participatory assessment of Rhodes University Community Engagement monitoring and evaluation system

I Nosipho Nkwinti, a student of the Master of Education in Community Engagement at Rhodes University, Student number 16N9056, hereby humbly request your permission to be a research participant in my research project.

The purpose of this research is to develop a monitoring and evaluation system for community-university collaborations that is appropriate to the current context of community development in Makhanda. In the first phase, I will request you to fill out a questionnaire. This is to ascertain your thoughts and feelings on RUCE's existing M&E system. In phase two, there will be an orientation session during which I will provide an outline of the research as well as illustrate how we will collectively assess RUCE's existing M & E system for community-university partnerships. In phases three, four, and five, we work to develop a shared understanding of the concepts of community engagement, community-university partnerships, and monitoring and evaluation. Finally, we develop a joint guideline/framework for monitoring and evaluating community-university partnerships. Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time you wish. I ask for your permission to take videos of the demonstrations so that I can be able to analyse the data later. I will ensure that your identity and views will be treated with high degree of confidentiality and anonymity, and data that will be collected will not be used for other purposes apart from this study.

This research has been approved by both the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee and the Education Department Higher Degrees Committee. During the research, any concerns may be directed to Ethics Coordinator, Research Office, Rhodes University +27 (0) 46 603 7727, ethics-committee@ru.ac.za

If you have any question about the research, please feel free to contact me at 083 393 3313 n.nkwinti@ru.ac.za or my supervisor Doctor S.M. Maistry margie.maistry@gmail.com or Doctor C. Simuja c.simuja@ru.ac.za.

Consent: I am aware that

- I will be the participant for the above-mentioned topic.
- I am willing to be interviewed and make time for it.
- I am free to withdraw at any time I may wish without negative or undesirable consequences.
- The information provided will be used only in the research project.
- I am also aware that the information provided by me will be strictly confidential and the findings will be reviewed in the research thesis.
- My identity in this study will be protected with the code of ethics stipulated by Rhodes University
- Having taken note of the above information, I freely and voluntarily take part in the research process and acknowledge that I have not been forced to do so.

Declaration

I..... (full name and surname of participant)
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this letter and the nature of the research project. I consent to participate in the research project.

Signature of participant Date.....

Yours Sincerely

Nosipho Nkwinti

Master of Education in Community Engagement

TRANSLATED VERSION INTO ISIXHOSA FOR CUP GATEKEEPERS:

Mnu / Nkszk Ebekekileyo

Umba: Intatho-nxaxheba yoMphathi weVolontiya kuphando ngoPhuhliso lweNtsebenziswano yeDyunivesithi yoLuntu oluguqukayo: Uvavanyo lokuthatha inxaxheba kwenkqubo yokubeka iliso kunye novavanyo yeDyunivesithi yaseRhodes University Community Engagement.

Mna Nosipho Nkwinti, umfundi owenza iMasters ze Education kwi Community Engagement neYunivesithi iRhodes, inombolo yoMfundi 16N9056, ngokuzithoba ndicela imvume yakho yokuba ngumthathi-nxaxheba kuphando kwiprojekthi yam yophando. Injongo yolu phando kukuphuhlisa inkqubo yokubeka iliso nokuvavanya intsebenziswano yoluntu neyunivesithi efanelekileyo kwimeko yangoku yophuhliso loluntu eMakhanda. Kwinqanaba lokuqala, ndiya kukucela ukuba ugcwalise iphepha lemibuzo. Oku kukuqinisekisa iingcinga neemvakalelo zakho kwinkqubo ekhoyo ye-M&E ye-RUCE. Kwisigaba sesibini, kuya kubakho iseshoni yoqhelaniso apho ndiya kubonelela ngolwandle lophando ndize ndibonise indlela esiya kuyivavanya ngayo ngokudibeneyo inkqubo ekhoyo ye-RUCE ye-M & E yentsebenziswano neyunivesithi yoluntu. Kwinqanaba lesithathu, lesine, nelesihlanu, sisebenzela ukuphuhlisa ukuqonda okwabelwanayo ngeengqikelelo zothethathethwano noluntu, ubambiswano lweyunivesithi yoluntu, kunye nokubekwa kweliso novavanyo. Okokugqibela, siphuhlisa isikhokelo esidibeneyo/inkqubo-sikhokelo yokubeka iliso kunye nokuvavanya ubambiswano lweyunivesithi yoluntu. Inxaxheba yakho kolu phando yophando ngokuzithandela kwaye unokurhoxa nangaliphi na ixesha olinqwenelayo. Ndicela imvume yakho yokuthatha iividiyo zemiboniso ukuze ndikwazi ukuhlalutya idatha kamva. Ndiza kuqinisekisa ukuba ubuwe kunye neembono zakho ziya kuphathwa ngokuyimfihlo kunye nokungaziwa, kwaye idatha eya kuqokelelwa ayisayi kusetyenziselwa ezinye iinjongo ngaphandle kolu phononongo.

Olu phando luye lwavunywa yiKomiti yeMigangatho yeYunivesithi yaseRhodes kunye neKomiti yeziDanga eziPhakamileyo yeSebe leMfundo. Ngexesha lophando naziphi iinkxalabo zingabhekiswa kuMnu Siyanda Manqele, uMnxibelelanisi wokuziphatha, iOfisi yoPhando, kwiYunivesithi yaseRhodes +27 (0) 46 603 7727, s.manqele@ru.ac.za

Ukuba unombuzo malunga nolu phando, nceda uqhagamshelane nam kule nombolo 083 393 3313 n.nkwinti@ru.ac.za okanye umphathi wam uGqirha S.M. Maistry margie.maistry@gmail.com okanye Gqirha C. Simuja c.simuja@ru.ac.za.

Mvumo: Ndiyayazi ukuba

- Ndiza kuba ngumthathi-nxaxheba kwesi sihloko sikhankanywe ngasentla.
- Ndikulungele udliwano-ndlebe kwaye ndizenzele ixesha.
- Ndikhululekile ukuba ndingarhoxa nangaliphi na ixesha endinqwenela ngaphandle kweziphumo ezibi okanye ezingathandekiyo.
- Ulwazi olunikiweyo luya kusetyenziswa kuphela kwiprojekthi yophando.
- Ndiyazi kwakhona ukuba ulwazi olunikezelwe ndim luya kuba yimfihlo engqongqo kwaye iziphumo ziya kujongwa kwakhona kwithisisi yophando.
- Ubuni bam kolu phando buya kukhuselwa ngemigaqo yokuziphatha exelwe yiY univesithi iRhodes
- Emva kokuba ndithathele ingqalelo le ngcaciso ingentla, ndikhululekile kwaye ndivolontiya ukuba ndithathe inxaxheba kwinkqubo yophando kwaye ndiyavuma ukuba andizange ndinyanzeliswe ukuba ndenze njalo.

Isibhengezo

Ndi..... (igama elipheleleyo kunye nefani yomthathi-nxaxheba) ndiyangqina ukuba ndiyakuqonda okubhalwe kule leta kunye nohlobo lweprojekthi yophando. Ndiavuma ukuthatha inxaxheba kwiprojekthi yophando.

Isiginitsha yomthathi-nxaxheba

Umhla.....

Ozithobileyo

Nosipho Nkwinti

APPENDIX B2: LETTER TO THE REGISTRAR

TO: RHODES UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR

Re: Participation of ten (10) student leaders in a research on Developing a transformative Community University Partnership: A participatory assessment of Rhodes University Community Engagement monitoring and evaluation system

I, _____ a student of the Master of Education in Community Engagement at Rhodes University, Student number 16N9056. I am a full time Coordinator for Community Relations & Student Organizations in the Community Engagement Division at Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE). I hereby humbly request your permission to conduct a research study with ten of Rhodes University student leaders under the community engagement's volunteer programmes, to be research participants in my study.

The purpose of the research is to develop a monitoring and evaluation system for community-university partnerships that is appropriate to the current context of community development in Makhandla. RUCE developed an M&E system for the volunteerism programmes that has progressively evolved over the years. Currently, RUCE evaluates its programmes and partnerships every quarter, mid and end of the year. The study assumes that the evolutionary process of RUCE's M & E system has reached a stage of renewal and needs to be reviewed and revised jointly with community partners to make M&E system more effective and relevant to the current context of social innovation and community development.

Students' participation in this research study is completely voluntary and they can withdraw at any time they wish. I request permission to also take videos of the interactions so that I can be able to analyse the data later (this will be communicated and negotiated with the students before they participate). I will ensure that their identity and views will be treated with high degree of confidentiality and anonymity, and data that will be collected will not be used for other purposes apart from this study.

This research has been approved by both the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee and the Education Department Higher Degrees Committee. During the research, any concerns may be directed to Mr Siyanda Manqele, Ethics Coordinator, Research Office, Rhodes University +27 (0) 46 603 7727, ethics-committee@ru.ac.za

The study is under the supervision of Doctor S.M. Maistry margie.maistry@gmail.com and Doctor Clement Simuja (E-mail: c.simuja@ru.ac.za).

I would further like to assure your office that, should I be granted permission, the research ethics will apply throughout the process of the study. Identity of participants and their views will be treated with a high degree of confidentiality and anonymity.

Your consideration in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely

Nosipho Nkwinti

APPENDIX B3: LETTER TO THE RHODES UNIVERSITY HR DIVISION DIRECTOR

TO: RHODES UNIVERSITY HR DIRECTOR

Re: Participation of RUCE staff members in a research on Developing a transformative Community University Partnership: A participatory assessment of Rhodes University Community Engagement monitoring and evaluation system

My name is Nosipho Nkwinti, a student of the Master of Education in Community Engagement at Rhodes University, Student number 16N9056. I am a full time Community Relations & Student Organizations coordinator in the Community Engagement Division at Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE). I hereby humbly request your permission for me to conduct a research study with two of Rhodes University staff members in the community engagement division who are directly involved in the volunteer programmes, to be my research participants.

The purpose of the research is to develop a monitoring and evaluation system for community-university partnerships that is appropriate to the current context of community development in Makhandla. RUCE developed an M&E system for the volunteerism programs that has progressively evolved over the years. Currently, RUCE evaluates its programmes and partnerships every quarter, mid and end of the year. The study assumes that the evolutionary process of RUCE's M & E system has reached a stage of establishment and needs to be reviewed and revised jointly with community partners to make M&E system more effective and relevant to the current context of community development in Makhandla.

The two staff members' participation in this research study is completely voluntary and they can withdraw at any time they wish. I request permission to take videos of the interactions so that I can be able to analyse the data later (this will be communicated and negotiated with the staff before they participate). I will ensure that their identity and views will be treated with high degree of confidentiality and anonymity, and data that will be collected will not be used for other purposes apart from this study.

This research has been approved by both the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee and the Education Department Higher Degrees Committee. During the research, any concerns

may be directed to Ethics Coordinator, Research Office, Rhodes University +27 (0) 46 603 7727, ethics-committee@ru.ac.za

The study is under the supervision of Doctor S.M. Maistry margie.maistry@gmail.com and Doctor Clement Simuja (E-mail: c.simuja@ru.ac.za).

I would further like to assure your office that, should I be granted permission, the research ethics will apply throughout the process of the study. Identity of participants and their views will be treated with a high degree of confidentiality and anonymity.
Your consideration in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely

Nosipho Nkwinti

APPENDIX B4: CONSENT FORM



Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study

**Participatory assessment of Community University Partnership monitoring and evaluation system for social change; a case study of Rhodes University Community Engagement **

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH AND YOUR PARTICIPATION

..... is invited to participate in a research study conducted by Nosipho Nkwinti. This research aims to collaboratively develop a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) instrument to assess the RUCE's community university-partnership support, operationalise or implement the instrument in community-university partnerships; identify ways to disseminate best practice in relation to the CUP programmes concerned and to formulate a methodology framework on monitoring and evaluation of community-university partnerships that is relevant to the South African context.

Potential benefits

This community based participatory action research will contribute to the democratization of knowledge through knowledge exchange between community partners and RUCE. Community partners as research participants are expected to lead in terms of narrating their own observations and experiences and will be encouraged to voluntarily share information.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this research is voluntary, participants may choose not to participate or withdraw at any stage of the research. There will not be any penalty given to participants who would like to discontinue the research process.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact (Nosipho Nkwinti) at Rhodes University at (046) 603 7482 email address: n.nkwinti@ru.ac.za

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature_____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date: _____
A copy of this consent form should be given to you.

APPENDIX C1: STUDY APPROVAL



Rhodes University, Education Faculty
Research Ethics Committee
PO Box 94, Makhanda, 6140, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8393
Fax: +27 (0) 46 603 8028
email: e.rosenberg@ru.ac.za

<https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/>

26 August 2022

Dr Clement Simuja

Education Department

C.Simuja@ru.ac.za

Dear Dr Clement Simuja and Ms Nosipho Nkwinti

Re: Developing transformative Community University Partnerships: A Participatory Assessment of Rhodes University Community Engagement Monitoring and Evaluation system

APPLICATION NUMBER: 2022-5443-6929

This letter confirms that your research ethics application has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee (EF-REC). Your permission letter(s) where applicable have been received and you are free to proceed with your study.

Approval is granted for 1 year. An annual progress report is required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the progress report is due.

Should any substantive change(s) be made during the research process, that may have ethical implications, you should notify the Education Faculty REC Chair via email. This includes changes in investigators. The REC Chair will advise as to whether a new application is necessary.

Do keep this clearance letter secure and accessible throughout your study and after its completion. It will be needed when a thesis is examined and when publications are submitted to journals.

Please also submit a brief report to the REC Chair on the completion of the research. This can be done via email. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully and whether any ethics-related matters arose that the committee should be aware of, in order to guide future studies.

Sincerely,

Prof Eureka Rosenberg

Chair: Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee

APPENDIX C2: GATEKEEPERS PERMISSION



Office of the Registrar
Eden Grove Building, Lucas Avenue, Makhanda, 6139, South Africa
PO Box 94, Makhanda, 6140, South Africa
t: +27 (0) 46 603 8101
f: +27 (0) 46 603 7561
e: registrar@ru.ac.za
www.ru.ac.za

15 August 2022

Ms N Nkwinti
G16N9056
Department of Education

Dear Ms Nkwinti

REQUEST FOR GATEKEEPERS PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH RHODES UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Name of research proposal: Participation in research on Developing a transformative Community University Partnership: A participatory assessment of Rhodes University Community Engagement monitoring and evaluation system.

This serves to confirm that you have been granted permission to conduct your proposed research at Rhodes University as requested.

Kindly be advised that the University is not obliged to make any arrangements in terms of this research, and that the onus is on the researcher. It is also your responsibility to protect the integrity of the University in the manner in which you collate and engage the data.

Please note that where necessary, permission must be sort from the HR Director for staff-related matters.

This letter is valid from 15 August 2022 to 14 August 2024.

Yours sincerely

Professor A.L. Moodly
REGISTRAR

11 August 2022

Nosipho Nkwinti
Education Department
RHODES UNIVERSITY
n.nkwinti@ru.ac.za

Dear Nosipho

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH RHODES UNIVERSITY STAFF ONLY

This letter is to confirm that your request to conduct research on ***"Developing transformative Community University Partnerships: A Participatory Assessment of Rhodes University Community Engagement Monitoring and Evaluation system."*** topic has been approved by the Ethics Committee. In my capacity as HR Director, I do not have any objection should you wish to follow a coordinated approach by surveying and/or interviewing staff. Kindly note that this approval is for research with staff members only. For student-related research, approval must be sought with the office of the Registrar.

Yours sincerely


pp Mrs S Robertson
Human Resources Director