

CONFERENCE CALL

HIGHER EDUCATION COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE IN 2050

Globally, countries and economic regions are affected by its dynamic and changing environments resulting in a serious focus on transformations, transitions, technologies and throughput rates. To stay competitive and relevant the key players need to be up to date with the current and future trends. In a technology driven and knowledge based economy, universities and communities are challenged by both the complexity and rate of change socially, economically, politically and in the physical environment. To this end the conference aims to address the status quo of the higher education community engagement and its performance monitoring and evaluation. There is a need for visionaries to prepare our country towards 2050 to become a respected partner both in the local and global knowledge domains.

The conference calls out to academics, experts, leaders, practitioners and students to boldly state the key issues that could make our universities and communities sustainable in a global environment. In addition, participants are required to create a vision that aids government, universities and communities to effectively achieve the National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals outcomes. In this regards we should question if the current higher education, community engagement and governance “models and practices” are relevant to meet both the short-and long-term requirements of a growing nation. We therefore need to highlight and deal with the challenges and claim a path for scholarly engagement and sustainable development.

THEMES

- 1. Community engagement** – The current social, economic and political challenges in South Africa pose an opportunity for universities to engage more with the communities in regard to teaching, learning and research. University Community Engagement (UCE) has also gained prominence in South Africa as researchers continuously recognize and acknowledge the importance of both involving community members in all aspects of the research process and conducting research which is relevant to local needs. The pursuit of university community engagement is however fraught with partnership challenges, financing and poor monitoring and evaluation. A fresh understanding of what is happening under UCE today and what it will mean for the future of HEI, communities and the country in the next decade is needed. Is our preoccupation with past denying South Africans the opportunity to imagine, innovate and leapfrog into the future? Should universities engage with communities? Do we need alternate mechanisms to promote community engagement? What is the relevance of community engagement in teaching, learning and research? How do we measure community engagement performance?

2. Creative place making (Peace and non-violence) – sowing the seeds and means for diverse students, academics (and university communities) to get together to create space for social cohesion and critical citizenship. Is creative place making the only tool for minimising campus violence and damage to both public and private property?

3. Higher education – Many countries place higher education at the centre of their development strategies. The urge is to constantly change the face of higher education in South Africa, to facilitate moving forward to ensure that the education offered in this country is not only suitable for integration within the African Continent but also relevant internationally. Despite its own challenges, are universities the desired agents of change? Does the quality of education in universities provide a meaningful contribution to local, regional and global competitiveness?

4. Governance, performance monitoring and evaluation – Historically, management and leadership are of the opinion that “what get measured gets managed”. One of the mechanisms to improve overall performance of public institutions such as universities and their key stakeholders is to collectively develop and manage a monitoring and evaluation system. Despite the numerous benefits of monitoring and evaluation, little progress is being made to fully utilize M&E for developing sustainable universities and resilient communities. In our present circumstances there is a deep divide between what we have achieved and what was set out to be achieved in Higher Education, the economy, social justice and SDGs. Immunity towards corruption, abuse of power and poor leadership in communities and the public sector is prevalent. Is the performance monitoring and evaluation the appropriate tool to aid and measure good governance?

5. Public administration, management and leadership - Transitioning from a state of inequalities, unemployment, poverty and poor governance to one we hope to be more socially, politically and economically viable for its local, regional and global citizens. Can the public sector drive our transformation to become a leading nation in Africa? What is the role of the communities and universities in the transition phase?

6. Technology and the Fourth Industrial Revolution – Are we (government, higher education, public sector, businesses) doing enough to prepare the country for the Fourth Industrial Revolution to gain a competitive advantage locally, regionally and globally? How do we link the needs of the communities with education and technology?

Date of Conference: 29-30th August 2019

Venue: Durban (LOCATION TO BE ANNOUNCED)

Time: 8.30 till 4.00pm

Deadline for abstract: 3 June 2019

(Abstracts should be a maximum of 400 words)

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