Article

ecsj

Education, Citizenship and Social Justice
2015, Vol. 10(3) 234–253

DOI: 10.1177/1746197915607278
ecsj.sagepub.com
SAGE

University–community engagement: Case study of university social responsibility

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Abstract

Corporatisation of universities has drawn parallels between contemporary universities and business corporations, and extended analysis of corporate social responsibility to universities. This article reports on case study of university–community engagement with schools and school communities through youth engagement programmes to enhance democratic principles in student leadership and raise aspirations for university education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Data from over 1200 respondents suggest that university–community engagement produced positive outcomes for individual student participants, schools and school communities and also benefited the university in terms of brand recognition and good standing in the community. This raises questions about the social responsibility of universities as agents of change to entrench society's fundamental values of democratic participation and social justice.

Keywords

engaged university, social responsibility, civic engagement, public engagement, partnership, university–community engagement

Introduction

Whereas universities have traditionally undertaken activities that contribute to and support communities in which they are located, corporatisation of university from the late 1980s has led to discourses that draw parallels between contemporary university and business corporations. This article reports on a case study of university–community engagement with schools and school communities through youth engagement programmes to enable us to critically examine the emerging concept of socially

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responsible university. In much broader contexts, the concept of university social responsibility includes how universities address society's socio-economic, political and environmental issues. It also encompasses introspection on the university's internal processes and environment (Nejati et al., 2011) – how the university community of students, staff and governance and administrative structures manage the environmental impacts produced by the University (Jarvis, 2000). While these are important, we did not address these aspects in this study due to limitations of resources, time and contractual obligations. We limited our investigation to capture the essence of the key statements in the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) application to Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) for the Engaging and Stimulating Innovation (ESI) funding, namely that 'the programme is designed to – [build] an awareness of education's crucial role in students' future success' (AUT, 2010: 2) by providing student participants with foundational skills to be successful in life and to 'arrive at adulthood prepared to contribute productively as citizens and employees' (AUT, 2008: 5) and not just a recruitment strategy for the university.

The Agents of Change programme is an AUT youth outreach programme that engages secondary school students, their schools, families and communities to raise students' aspirations for university education by creating awareness of the range of pathways and opportunities. It targets specific groups of students to achieve identified youth development outcomes, namely, leadership, future career planning, positive engagement with school and raising aspirations for university education. The programme operated seven work-streams focusing on specific themes, namely, *SHINE* aimed at high-performing student athletes competing at provincial or national level in their sport, to motivate and mentor them to achieve at national and international stage. A special sub-stream *SHINE Disability Global Messenger* works with athletes with intellectual disability in partnership with Special Olympics New Zealand (SONZ) to create a community of empowered athletes with intellectual disability to take leadership positions within their clubs and communities nationally and internationally. *Males in Education Now* (MEN) focuses on Year 10 (14-year-old male students) who are at risk of disengaging from school to support them develop leadership skills and more actively and positively engage with and achieve at school. *Prefects Training Programme* (PTP) provides leadership training for prefects and other student leaders to support them shape their roles and develop democratic principles and practices within their school. This theme had a special stream working with student leaders in Māori Boarding Schools, *Prefects Training Programme Māori* (PTPM). *Justice* works with students from disadvantaged backgrounds interested in pursuing careers in areas related to justice such as law, the defence forces and police. *Plantation Business Challenge* (PBC) is an entrepreneurial programme targeting students from Pacific Island background to prepare them for university studies in business and entrepreneurship and also link them with industry as a means to provide equity of access to business education.

The programme was established in 2009 by the AUT University Relations Student Recruitment Department and delivered to 57 secondary schools in the North Island of New Zealand. This study covered a 3-year period 2009–2011 (see Table 1). This article examines how by seeking to create community change this programme may be an example of university social responsibility.

University social responsibility

The concept of social responsibility is heterogeneous and multifaceted (Marková, 2008) and has been applied across multiple contexts. Social responsibility has been broadly defined as an 'awareness of the social impacts of any given practice' (Jones, 2002: 2). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a broad concept which explores the role business plays or ought to play in society. The term is frequently used to incorporate concepts such as business ethics, corporate citizenship, corporate accountability, sustainability, socially responsible investing (Ingley, 2008) and corporate

Table 1. Agents of change participating schools, 2009–2011.

Programme stream	Number of participating schools			Number of participating students		
Year	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011
SHINE	55	37	23	700	777	406
SHINE Disability Global Messenger	000	1	1	000	10	10
Males in Education Now	6	6	6	150	153	136
Prefects Training Programme	25	31	28	750	868	464
Prefects Training Programme Māori	2	6	8	48	107	121
Plantation Business Challenge	11	Under review	10	125	000	50
Justice	000	Pilot	5	000	Pilot	38

community involvement (Wilson et al., 2006; Nwankwo et al., 2007; Seitanidi and Ryan, 2007). Despite the development of extensive literature over the two decades, since the 1990s no single definition of the concept is universally accepted (Caroll, 1999; Whitehouse, 2006). For example, Paul and Siegel (2006) define CSR as the advancement or promotion of some social good, while Wood and Jones (1995) maintain that CSR is the duty for business to address social, environmental, and economic demands from stakeholders.

Bouckaert and Vandenhove (1998) suggested that CSR definitions fall mainly within two perspectives, consequential and fiduciary approaches. Definitions of CSR from a consequential perspective focus on the impact of corporations' activities on key external stakeholders and holds corporations responsible/liable for consequences of those actions. The corporate is considered socially responsible if they consider the potential impact of their actions within the decision-making process (Bouckaert and Vandenhove, 1998). Fiduciary perspective sees the role of corporations as trust from society to produce social benefits. Definitions of CSR from this perspective focus on the responsibility of the corporation to self-regulate to ensure balance between the mandate entrusted to them to produce social benefits and reduce negative impacts.

However, these definitions are limited because they view social responsibility as unidirectional, where the corporation is held responsible to external stakeholders. This view stems from early literature on social responsibility which suggested that 'responsibility does not necessarily imply the reciprocity of intentions' (Marková, 2008: 255) and responsibility comes only from the corporate and not stakeholders. More recent literature has tended to conceptualise CSR as a partnership between the corporate and external stakeholders, where both may have responsibility to and for the other party (BITC, 2007; Nwankwo et al., 2007; Seitanidi and Ryan, 2007) to create mutual benefits.

The more contemporary literature also extends the concept of CSR beyond business corporations to other sectors. Unerman and O'Dwyer (2006) argue that it seems perverse to accept social responsibility and social justice needs for business and not extend this argument to address impacts arising from actions of all organisations. It is from this perspective that the concept of social responsibility may be extended to the university sector.

Research examining the social responsibility of universities has emerged since the late 1990s following the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Conference on Higher Education 1998 which declared that the responsibility of universities and institutions of higher learning is not only to educate young people and provide opportunities for

them to develop to their fullest potential but also to educate them on how they can apply those abilities and talents with the greatest sense of social responsibility:

> **Article 1 (a)** – educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens – **(b)** – educate for citizenship and for active participation in society – **(c)** – train young people in the values which form the basis of democratic citizenship and by providing critical and detached perspectives – **Article 2 (c)** enhance their critical and forward-looking functions – **Article 9 (b)** educate students who can think critically, analyse problems of society, look for solutions to the problems of society, apply them and accept social responsibilities. (UNESCO, 1998)

That declaration which forms the basis for much of current research on university social responsibility was further reaffirmed in 2009 when UNESCO (2009) again emphasised the social responsibility of universities and higher education institutions stating that their role was not just to develop individual skills but to contribute to the creation of citizens endowed with high ethical principles:

> Higher education institutions through their core functions (research, teaching and service to the community) carried out in the context of institutional autonomy and academic freedom – must also contribute to the education of ethical citizens committed to the construction of peace, the defence of human rights and the values of democracy. (pp. 2–3)

Furthermore, given the corporatisation of the university sector, extant literature has begun to draw parallels between the role and responsibilities of universities and business corporations. Thus, Newson (1998) argues that the extension of the concept of CSR to the university sector seems appropriate because the contemporary university has become increasingly 'undifferentiated from a business corporation engaged in the delivery of educational and research "products"' (p. 2). However, Jongbloed et al. (2008) and Nagy and Robb (2008) suggest that 'corporate social responsibility' is an inappropriate concept to apply within the university context as the extent and diversity of a university's stakeholder groups differentiate universities from typical corporations, and in this respect they experience 'the worst of both worlds, the negatives of state control and the negatives of market competition' (Nagy and Robb, 2008: 1426).

Within the literature which deems CSR appropriate for the university context, university social responsibility is conceptualised from diverse perspectives. Harkavy (2006) argues that 'the socially responsible university is expected to be oriented towards actions and values that emphasize that it gives something back to society beyond its traditional "outputs" of education and research responsibilities' (p. 13). Ledic et al. (2008) argue that Croatian university as an 'academic community needs to actively contribute to the quality of community life and encourage education of active and socially responsible citizens through regular academic activities which contribute to participation and development of democratic processes in society' (p. 3). Ostrander (2004) suggests that universities have a responsibility to ensure that academic knowledge generated by universities contributes directly to improving human living conditions and the development of civil society, while Atakan and Eker (2007) identify three key elements of university social responsibility in Turkey, namely, teaching ethics and CSR to its students, the education of local and national communities, and contributions to the well-being of local communities. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Universidad Construye Pais argues that university social responsibility operates at three levels, the personal level giving individuals dignity, liberty and integrity; the social level providing education as a public good; and at the universal level commitment to truth, excellence, interdependence and transdisciplinarity (Jara, 2007). These conceptualizations extend the roles and responsibilities traditionally ascribed to universities.

Traditionally, universities' roles and responsibilities were primarily to undertake research and teaching that facilitated its role as critic and conscience of society and produce graduates who were in turn critical thinkers (Bleiklie, 2004; Gunasekara, 2006; Atakan and Eker, 2007; Axelsson et al., 2008). Nagy and Robb (2008) state that the 'societal role of universities as institutions that equip individuals to become critical, analytical and adaptive is fundamentally linked with the ability to engage in questioning issues within society in a proactive way' (p. 1418). In New Zealand's context, Section 162 of the Education Act 1989 states that in their establishment all universities 'accept a role as critic and conscience of society' and further 'that academic freedom and the autonomy of institutions are to be preserved and enhanced' to ensure universities are best positioned to perform these roles responsibly (New Zealand Government, 1989).

Section 159AAA of the New Zealand Education Act 1989 further stipulates that universities need to 'respond to the needs of learners, stakeholders, and the nation, in order to foster a skilled and knowledgeable population over time' (New Zealand Government, 1989). Jarvis (2000) argues that the role of critic and conscience of society initially related to the education of society's 'elites' to equip them to take significant positions of power within society, specifically to 'prepare the elite to govern the nation' (p. 43). However, as society underwent structural shifts, the role of the university, and in particular who was deemed deserving of university education, expanded. This was reflected in the expansion of the disciplines taught and researched and the relationship between the university and its immediate communities from the development of Agricultural and Mechanical (A&M) Colleges established specifically to provide support for American agricultural economy in the 1800s (Ilvento, 1997), the industrial revolution, to post-industrial knowledge-based economies dependent on mass labour markets; the expansion of the role of the university has led to public policies that require universities to 'supply skills that are relevant to the labour market' (Ministry of Education, 2010: 18). Thus, in June 2010, New Zealand's Minister of Education proposed that government funding to universities could be aligned to the number of graduates who gained employment after their qualification (Brown and Cloke, 2009; Johnston, 2010), again reflecting the value placed on the relationship between university education and economic development.

The demand for an educated mass labour market cannot be achieved only through the expansion of post-secondary education but also through the diversification of students undertaking university education. University 'outreach' programmes to support individuals and groups of students from communities and backgrounds that traditionally could not easily access university education are supported by New Zealand education policy whereby the Education Amendment Act 1990 requires universities to provide the 'choice for students and the opportunity for people *from all backgrounds* and experiences to find a means of pursuing post-compulsory education' (Codling and Meek, 2003: 86), and the Tertiary Education Strategy 2010–2015 requires that universities should 'provide *all New Zealanders* with world class skills and knowledge' (Ministry of Education, 2010; emphasis added).

While there is clear economic rationale for massification of education, there are also ethical and human rights issues associated with providing accessible education for all. Articles 26.1 and 26.2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights outline a commitment to ensure 'access to post-basic education opportunities without discrimination' (Power, 2005: 14), which demand equitable access to under-represented ethnic, geographic and socio-economic groups such as Maori (Durie, 2009) and Pacific Islanders (Wright and Hornblow, 2008) in New Zealand and similar racial/ethnic minorities in the United States (Smith, 1998). Similar equal opportunities provisions also exist in most European Union and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

The massification of education and the corporatisation of higher education and shifts in society's expectations of universities' role have diminished the boundaries between campus and community. Universities are now expected to play a greater role in local, national and international development, which demand new approaches to university–community engagement. The concept of an 'engaged university' in participatory democracy examines the responsibility of universities to produce responsible and active citizens 'who not only excel in their chosen specialised field, but who are responsible and active citizens both of their own nation and of the world' (Power, 2005: 16). Consequently, a growing body of international literature examines the practice of university–community engagement on a range of themes including supporting civic education and democratic citizenship (Jacoby, 2009; Hartley and Huddleston, 2010), community-focused scholarship for social transformation (Laursen et al., 2012; Hudson, 2013) and partnerships to address specific communities' issues through research, advocacy or resource support (Weerts and Sandmann, 2008; Thompson et al., 2012). Similarly, a number of international movements (ANCHEP, 2013; Hudson, 2013) have emerged to promote more effective university–community engagement, such as The Tallories Network (2014) (http://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/who-we-ar/talloires-declaration/ paragraph 2 lines2-3) which seek to strengthen universities' and other tertiary institutions' 'civic role and social responsibility (through) – engagement within communities and global neighbours'; International Consortium on Higher Education (2014) (https://www.internationalconsortium.org/) 'to promote education for democracy as a central mission' of universities; and Association for Community and Higher Education Partnerships (Brukardt et al., 2004) to

> promote, enhance and sustain community-higher education partnerships to improve the quality of life and opportunities available to residents of economically distressed communities through the production and exchange of knowledge, advocacy for resources to support partnerships, and promotion of significant change within institutions of higher education, government and communities. (p. 21)

These and other innovative approaches to building university–community partnerships seek to shift university–community relationship from unidirectional 'gown-to-town' to more 'bilateral reciprocity' (Laursen et al., 2012: 48) approach.

Furthermore, the decision-making process for transition from secondary school to university is characteristically complex, iterative and often chaotic because of the number of contesting contingencies. Engler (2010) reports that progression from secondary school to tertiary study in New Zealand depends on students' performance at school, their ethnic group, and school decile. Other key factors include socio-economic status (O'Connor, 2009); students' values, attitudes and knowledge of university influenced by teachers, peers and family members (Bélanger et al., 2009); parental educational attainment; and the value placed on post-secondary study by parents (Tieben and Wolbers, 2010).

Similarly, the factors that influence the selection of specific institutions, once the student has decided to pursue post-secondary study, are also complex. They range from job prospects associated with a particular institution (Maringe, 2006; Wiese et al., 2009; De Jager and Soontiens, 2010), geographical location and proximity to the student's home and institutional characteristics such as reputation (Kusumawati et al., 2010: 5).

Given the complex nature of the decision-making process and the exponential growth and diversification of institutions offering post-secondary education, universities can no longer simply recruit students to boost numbers. They need to be more proactive in managing students' transition from secondary school to university to ensure their retention and success (Beneke and Human, 2010; Elnagar et al., 2011). This is the context in which the case study of AUT university–community engagement in the Agents of Change programme is examined.

Table 2. Summary of data collection.

Programme stream	Data collection methods											
	Interviews						Focus groups		Survey respondents			
	Staff		Students		Families		Students		Start		End	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	N	% population	N	% population
SHINE	9	4	2	4	2	4	6	7	141	36.3	195	50.3
SHINE Disability Global Messenger	5	2	2	4	3	2	00	00	NA	NA	NA	NA
Males in Education Now	6	2	00	2	5	3	4	7	68	45.3	65	43.3
Prefects Training Programme	7	7	00	14	00	2	7	19	340	73.3	270	58.2
Prefects Training Programme Māori	9	5	00	10	00	00	3	20	105	86.8	65	53.7
Total	2010 = 50 2011 = 71						2010 = 20 2011 = 53		654	58.2	595	53.0

Research design, methodology and data collection

A number of methodological approaches informed the development of the broader study from which this article is drawn, namely, grounded research, phenomenology, outreach research, ethnography, appreciative inquiry and case study research. Denzin (1978) defined multi-method as 'the combination of methodologies' (p. 291) that enables analysis from multiple perspectives and at multiple levels. We adopted multi-stage multi-method approach which used triangulation across different methods, increasing validity and giving a more holistic view of the programme from multiple perspectives. This research programme was undertaken over a period of 3 years, working with new sets of participants each year over the 3-year period.

The university–community engagement programme itself was extremely complex, consisting of seven work-streams targeting a diverse range of schools, students, families and communities over 3 years (see Table 1). This informed our adoption of an inductive research strategy capable of reflecting, adjusting and adapting to this complexity and changing circumstances across the 3-year period of study. The flexible approach allowed for simultaneous collection and analysis of data so that preliminary findings guided the development of research methods and subsequent data collection in later stages (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Denscombe, 2007) as each stage was built on the knowledge gained in the earlier stages and guided by emergent theory and findings. Data were collected using survey questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussions (see Table 2). This approach ensured that research findings were grounded in the understandings and experiences of respondents and reflect their subjective meaning. Our methodological approach privileges local knowledge and wisdom fundamental to community development research (Chile, 2007; Stoecker, 2012) to accommodate the complexity of programme target communities, namely, Māori students and their families, Pacific Island students and their families, people with disability and their families, students in boarding schools, students from European and other ethnicities, school staff and programme delivery staff from the university.

This research programme was conducted with approval from AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTEC), Ethics Approval Number: 09/248 dated 23 October 2009. AUTEC is accredited by the New Zealand Health Research Council.

Data analysis

We surveyed 654 students at the start of the programme and 595 students at the end of the programme across the programme work-streams. We undertook a total of 121 interviews, 73 focus group discussions and received 1249 completed surveys from respondents. To ensure consistency of responses across the programme and the credibility of results, we included only programme work-streams delivered over the 2-year period 2010–2011 during which primary data were collected. Therefore, two programme work-streams were excluded from analysis for this article: PBC because it was under review in 2010, and Justice was only in pilot stage in 2010.

Survey questionnaire was administered targeting total student participant population during 3-day residential camps at the university in January and summit in September. The total of 654 Start and 595 End Surveys represent a 5% accuracy and 95% degree of confidence (Sarantakos, 2005: 173). The survey questionnaire consisted of a mixture of Likert scale, multiple choice, categorical and open-ended questions. Interviews consisted of semi-structured interview guides to ensure relevant themes were covered yet still allowed for concepts to emerge through interviewee-led discussion (Bell and Bryman, 2007). Focus groups were conducted using open discussion that allowed for socialisation between group participants to allow free expression of individual understandings of concepts and group construction of meaning to uncover latent information and tease out and clarify concepts. Each focus group ranged from 8 to 16 participants and discussions lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. The iterative approach (Wimpenny and Gass, 2000) with set base questions for each participant group allowed the research team to explore more deeply and expansively with individuals and focus groups as the research progressed as data collection and analysis progressed at each stage and new themes emerged. Interviews and focus group discussions were audio-taped and transcribed. Data were coded and then analysed using thematic analysis to identify emerging themes, which were derived inductively rather than a hypothesis-deductive approach. At the completion of each of the three stages, data from all three stages were consolidated to verify, contextualise and amend earlier understandings of the programme.

In line with phenomenology, we privilege the voices of research respondents in reporting findings using direct quotes from research participants to reflect their opinions and perspectives.

Findings

The findings addressed in this article focus on two key research questions, namely, ‘in what ways does AUT’s Agents of Change community engagement programme correspond with the emerging concept of university social responsibility?’ And second, ‘what were specific identifiable returns from the university’s investment in the Agents of Change programme?’

Qualitative data from respondents’ interviews and focus groups as well as official university documents suggest that the programme was designed as part of the university’s voluntarily activities in the community beyond their core functions of research and teaching, and the traditional role of critic and conscience of society. One of the key documents for the application to TEC states that the programme was designed to support student participants to ‘arrive at adulthood prepared to contribute productively as citizens and employees’ to society. This indicates that the university was taking on some responsibility for working with schools to prepare young people to transition from

school with the skills and competencies necessary to enter post-secondary education or the workforce. While this aligns with government policy and society's expectations that universities 'respond to the needs of learners, stakeholders and the nation in order to foster a skilled and knowledgeable population' (New Zealand Government, 1989), the programme took this mandate beyond currently enrolled students to target prospective future students still at secondary school. This reflects the broader understanding of the university's mandate to broader stakeholder groups (Harkavy, 2006; Ledic et al., 2008). From a fiduciary perspective of CSR, the programme extends the university's mandate (trust) from society to produce skilled graduates, to providing opportunities for participants to explore a wider range of pathways and develop personal skills that enable them to make appropriate life choices.

One of the key features of the programme was to teach students how to set goals and work towards achieving them. This consisted of a series of sessions in which student participants learned how to set personal short-term, medium and long-term goals. In addition to setting goals, participants were also encouraged to reflect on how their engagement at school impacted their achieving their goals, and how motivation, drive and determination enhanced their capacity to achieve set goals. In total, 73% of student respondents reported that the programme helped improve their goal setting skills, and 52.8% reported they achieved their personal goals set for the year (n = 324), while 74.8% reported the goal setting process helped improve their school experience. Respondents reported that gaining the skills to set, monitor and achieve goals enabled students to feel more in control of their futures. In total, 64.5% of student respondents reported that the programme gave them confidence to feel more in control of their future, while 66.3% reported that the programme prepared them for their futures (Table 3). In all, 85.3% of respondents in the End Surveys reported their intention/aspiration to pursue post-secondary education compared with 73.8% at the start of the programme. Even participants in the 14-years age group (MEN) reported significant improvement in aspiration/desire to post-secondary education from 71.9% to 76.2%. This is particularly significant because the majority of these participants were drawn from groups that were probably not positively engaged with school, were described as 'at risk of disengaging from school' and for whom post-secondary education was probably an unrealistic aspiration. Similarly, there was significant increase from 75.2% to 80.0% of student respondents from Maori Boarding Schools aspiring to university study.

Qualitative data from a range of respondents support this finding. One of the school staff respondents, thus, reported with regard to students setting goals:

> I was looking at kids setting themselves academic and career goals basically and then us following up on them. And when AUT said that they were going to do this as part of Prefects That Peak I thought yay we're reinforcing our whole academic counselling messages. So although we went right across school for our Year 13s our big things were you know university entrance criteria, best credits, table A and B requirement, any special requirements, scholarships, all that type of stuff. We worked through quite systematic processes with them checking all that and then setting goals around it. And I like to think that was reflected, that we had a much better match between UE and level 3 last year. We were only off by one and in the other years we've been off by you know not getting a match. (INT PTP 11)

A student participant on the SHINE Disability Global Messenger programme reported that acquiring goal setting skills enabled him to achieve the qualification that opened up opportunities for employment:

> Some of the most important [outcomes] have been learning about goal-setting and then setting goals in that first workshop and achieving them. I'll give you one; one goal, a short-term goal that I set at the first workshop was [an education-based goal]. And by the end of the workshop I'd set that goal and then in

Table 3. Impact of programme on student participants: selected indicators from End Surveys.

Programme work-stream	Improved my relationships with peers (%)	Improved overall school experience (%)	Helped me prepare for my future (%)	Prepared me for university study (%)	Helped me learn more about myself (%)	Improved confidence to speak to people in authority (%)	Improve leadership skills (%)	Improved ability to set and achieve personal goals (%)	Improved ability to work with others (%)	Consider attending university in the future (%)
SHINE (n = 195)	68.3	71.0	71.3	47.9	64.6	49.3	85.7	87.4	76.2	86.6
SHINE Disability Global Messenger	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Males in Education Now (n = 65)	76.8	75.0	72.7	65.4	78.6	26.2	70.8	69.2	66.2	76.2
Prefects Training Programme (n = 270)	87.5	77.0	73.0	68.4	70.2	54.1	85.7	75.2	77.0	88.4
Prefects Training Programme Māori (n = 65)	85.7	81.0	77.4	61.9	82.2	64.6	84.6	70.0	75.4	80.0
All respondents (n = 591)	81.6	78.4	68.3	56.3	66.4	50.3	82.5	73.0	70.3	83.4

> early July I passed it. So by the third workshop I'd achieved my short-term goal and that was a real boost for me. (INT SDGM 4)

These findings show that the programme extended AUT's engagement with communities beyond simply attracting prospective students to the university itself to become an agent of community transformation (Martin, 1993; Brennan et al., 2004). By creating awareness of the range of pathways to tertiary education and raising participants' aspirations for university education, the programme sought to extend equity of access to university education to disadvantaged groups beyond the dominant and privileged social groups.

Another aspect of university social responsibility relates to the ways universities contribute to entrench democratic values and ideals in the community (UNESCO, 2009: 3). All programme work-streams focused on student/youth and community leadership development to help build young people's leadership capacity at school and communities, enhance their democratic participation and civic engagement, and the confidence to articulate their voice.

SHINE Disability Global Messenger worked with Special Olympics athletes to empower them gain the skills to become leaders and message-bearers of the Special Olympics movement, not only telling their own stories in their own words, speaking for themselves and for the Special Olympics movement, but also acting as agents of change in the wider community to impact the broader community's perceptions of people with intellectual disability. Thus, one of the student participants on the programme reported that

> The development of us 10 athletes has been beyond expectation. But I think the AUT SHINE – ALP Global Messenger programme has really given us athletes an opportunity to take on a role that Special Olympics, or anyone else for that matter, would have never considered before. (INT SDGM 6)

The programme enhanced participants' skills and capabilities, changed staff and volunteers' perceptions of athletes and opened up opportunities for athletes to more effectively participate in the governance of their organisation. By the end of 2012, one of the graduates of the programme was elected on SONZ national governance board representing athletes, and a number of athletes were appointed onto Club and Regional Committees. In addition, there were discussions to create athletes' committees:

> Now we've got athletes there who have the ability to record those meetings whereas back then we didn't actually maybe understand as much about our athletes. Like, you know, we've got [the Global Messenger] who could record, we've got [another athlete] who could record and could even possibly lead those groups whereas before we didn't have those key people. So you know, maybe we need to be re-looking at that and getting somebody like [the Global Messenger] to have an athlete leadership programme meeting once a month or something like that and then they can report to our committee meeting. (INT SDGM 3)

PTP engaged student leaders to actively shape school student leadership roles. A total of 84.6% of student respondents reported improvement in their leadership skills, enhanced communication skills that enabled them communicate more effectively with their peers, empowered them to speak to people in authority, more clearly define their roles, responsibilities and activities, and better understanding of leadership enabled them provide more effective leadership to the student population.

Respondents reported these changes in a variety of ways. One of the staff respondents reported that student leaders

– had learnt that to be a good leader you've got to learn how to follow as well. You can't lead, lead, lead, lead and never know how to follow. (INT PTPM 6)

One of the student leaders suggested that

– you've got those at the front telling everyone what to do but then you've got the ones just listening or doing the back door stuff; working at the back. One minute you can be in front of everybody and do a speech and the next minute you've got to go and stack the chair. (FGP PTPM 2)

The development of leadership skills was noticed across the school community as illustrated in the following focus group discussion of peers of student leaders:

I reckon these prefects have stepped up a bit from their actions first term. Throughout the year they've sort of picked up a bit more and they're actually starting to lead some people in some ways. (PTPM FGP 8)

Yeah, there's been a lot more motivation since first term so yeah, they finally woke up to what their real duties are. (PTPM FGP 8)

Programme participants developed critical understanding of leadership which changed the nature of school leadership to a more democratic, participatory and inclusive paradigm that enabled student leaders to build sustainable relationships within leadership teams, with the rest of the students and with staff. One of the staff respondents reported that their school had transformed from 'old system run by fear, where you will get beaten if you did not obey' to a new approach:

We're changing the whole culture of the school and it's becoming a more student-centred, led, school. And so the [students] have a lot of say in what happens in the school now, right down to the pastoral care and everything that happens in pastoral care. They have two members from this prefects team that sit on our council now, so they have a lot of sway in what happens in the kura [school] now and it's all about that leadership; giving them responsibilities. (INT PTPM 6)

Another staff respondent reported that

We certainly have far greater student voice and the school council, which drips through, have made suggestions and where possible we've acted on them and they love that and they've got pies in the café and some of the little things that they've wanted to happen have happened. There's been a huge shift in assemblies, which staff have noted because there's far more student involvement. We actually have handed over – each assembly has a theme, so it might be a sports assembly so the Sports Prefect and her team run it, or a cultural theme or whatever. So I think they're far more visible and because of that, the assemblies are a little bit more engaging. You know, there's some YouTube's and there's some music and there's skits and the kids like it, yeah. (INT PTP 4)

Student respondents endorsed these changes reporting that

– [the programme] has just given us different tools to help lead the school in different ways. Compared to when we were juniors, all we knew was to say 'shut up' and 'be quiet' but now this prefect training programme helped us understand how people work and stuff like that and listen to what they've got to say instead of trying to make them scared. (FGP PTPM 5)

In all, 87.5% of student respondents reported that the programme improved their relationship with peers, while 78.9% reported that the programme directly improved their ability to work with

others. The active involvement of student leaders in the running of schools created a greater sense of belonging within the school community and student ownership of school activities: 'Yeah, the general spirit in the whole school, it promotes ownership as well'.

Doing well out of doing good: returns on AUT investment

One of the key identifiable benefits to the university was brand recognition. As a new university finding its way in a highly competitive market against other established universities, it was important for AUT to distinguish itself and also create brand awareness in the market. A number of research respondents reported that prior to participation in the programme their awareness of AUT was limited. The following extract from one of the focus group discussions illustrates:

Participant 1: I thought Auckland University and AUT were the same thing. I thought AUT stood for Auckland.
Participant 2: Yeah, same
Participant 3: I don't know; I just thought it was little and not as important. 'Cause I thought it was like one of those Open Polytechnics.
Participant 4: Yeah, that's what I thought. (FGP SHINE 1)

Another student respondent reported,

> – didn't even know what AUT was. I thought it was a security kind of thing [a security service provider]… And then they told me it was a university and I didn't know. (FGP MEN 4)

School staff respondents also reported that prior to participation in the programme 'some of these boys would never have heard of AUT before'. Family respondents also reported that their children were not aware of AUT as an option for university study:

> I guess it just would make him aware of it. He probably wouldn't have thought about them at all beforehand. Yeah, if we'd said AUT, he would have said 'what?' You know? And he won't know that they're out there and that's an option. (Family respondent 1, INT MEN 3)

> Yeah we didn't really know what AUT had to offer, what they do there. Because yeah like last year, I thought that universities were just – (Family respondent 2, INT SHINE 3)

In a highly competitive student market, brand recognition and reputation are critical elements of student recruitment. The university benefits by raising prospective students', their families' and schools' awareness of AUT brand:

> MEN programme's been going for the third year, and with bringing that in the kids know about it at a younger stage. And each year they are building on AUT and what AUT is and what it offers. (School staff respondent 1, INT MEN 6)

> So by SHINE being involved at the early stages the kids have that knowledge of AUT and will grow up and hopefully develop their own pathways of going into more vocational side through AUT. (School staff respondent 2, INT SHINE 4)

> I have been saying to my daughter come on we need to narrow down tertiary institutions or even locations. I've been trying to get her down to Otago but she is a homely girl. She's only stayed up here but she said

Table 4. Student participants' perceptions of AUT.

Respondents' perceptions of AUT	Start Survey (%) (N = 285–292)	End Survey (%) (N = 570)	Percent change between Start and End Surveys
AUT is cool	86.20	83.90	−2.30
AUT is inviting	89.80	90.90	1.10
AUT is different to other universities	69.70	74.60	4.90
AUT understands young people	84.90	85.40	0.50
AUT is relevant to today's world	88.40	86.90	−1.50
AUT is a credible university	83.30	82.40	−0.90
AUT is an academic leader	76.40	71.50	−4.90
AUT has a good reputation	86.10	82.30	−3.80
AUT cares about its students	87.70	87.70	0.00
AUT cares about my community	75.60	72.60	−3.00
AUT is an important part of my community	63.70	61.60	−2.10

AUT: Auckland University of Technology.

> she's interested in AUT and I think it is from the SHINE programme and being actually introduced to being out there. (Family respondent, INT SHINE 7)

The programme enhanced the university's reputation, and it was 'held – in good regard' by respondents who reported they were 'impressed that they [AUT] have something for young men' (INT MEN 8), that

> it [AUT] tries to reach out to the youth when they're leaving school and encouraging them to do it. I haven't seen any of the other universities trying to do that. You see them come to school and give a really boring speech or something like that. (INT PTP 6)

The outcome for the university was positive public perception. The survey questionnaire asked student respondents to rate AUT on a number of characteristic features (see Table 4). Overall, student respondents' perceptions of AUT were positive: 'AUT is inviting' (90.9%), 'AUT is relevant in today's world' (86.9%), 'AUT cares about its students' (87.7%) and 'AUT understands young people' (85.4%).

Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions support these positive perceptions. One of the family members commented that 'my impression of AUT is that it is a quite modern, entrepreneurial, sort of a lean mean machine' (INT MEN 5), while a staff respondent from one of the participating schools reported, 'AUT people are cool people, the professionalism of the workshops and the way they carry themselves as well rub off … I am sure that they [student participants] imagine AUT to be highly professional' (INT SHINE 6).

The positive perception translated into significant improvement in the number of student respondents who reported they would select AUT as their university of choice from 14% in the Start Surveys (n = 443) to 26% in the End Surveys (n = 444), with 52% of respondents identifying AUT in their selection.

Public perception of the university extended beyond recognising its expertise and academic standing, to the university's broader social transformative role, to create community change. This view was expressed quite strongly by respondents on the SHINE Disability Global Messenger

work-stream who reported that AUT was sending a strong message through the programme that 'we want to make a difference in this particular community of special needs people', that AUT was not just a place where '– people just go to study but actually they do outside programmes'. These comments recognise the elements of public interest in the Agents of Change programme.

Discussion and conclusion

The university engaged the schools and school communities as key stakeholder partners in the development of the programme to ensure it met the needs of schools and student participants. From the perspective of stakeholder theory (Mitchell and Agle, 1997; Freeman et al., 2004) and community engagement (Attree et al., 2011) the university recognised the importance of mutuality in power relations between the university and other stakeholders, and the value of creating dialogue with stakeholder groups including industry partners, schools, communities, students and their families in the process of developing and delivering the programme.

From a participatory democratic perspective, there were some useful insights into understanding the dynamics of power relations in the ways university–community engagement was undertaken. The dynamics of power were visible to us, but did not appear to be transparent nor made explicit by AUT programme managers and staff. For example, university–community engagement consisted primarily of unidirectional information flows. At programme development stage, stakeholders provided information to the university on their needs, and during programme delivery there were 'customer feedback' and 'student evaluation' processes. Decision-making on which schools participated and which were excluded was also a matter of power relations dynamics. At the school level, once the school was selected the decision-making on which groups of students participated was also an expression of power over decision-making. Even the decision on how long engagement lasted, when and how to terminate a programme were issues of expressions of power. We therefore argue that power relations with stakeholders in university–community engagement programmes are not equal. This inequitable power relationship has the potential to impact continuity, mutuality and outcomes. Where engagement with stakeholders such as schools' senior management was characterised by open dialogue through regular frequent visits, there was greater potential for mutuality of outcomes for the school, the students and the university.

Another key feature of the power dynamics was the shift of engagement from academic to non-academic function. University–community engagement has increasingly shifted from academic departments to student recruitment, marketing and advertising. The Agents of Change as a university–community engagement programme was constructed, designed and delivered from a marketing paradigm rather than from the framework of critic and conscience of society by the 'engaged expert'. However, this shift from academic to university recruitment, advertising and marketing function has serious implications on a number of levels. One of these is how to leverage these engagement processes to enrich and expand the learning and discovery functions of academic departments. Pearce and Pearson (2007) argue that university–community engagement 'means that the university engages literally with the community so that the knowledge base of the academics involved is informed by new content derived from the members of the community with whom they are working' (p. 2). Where academic departments are not involved in the university–community engagement, it creates challenges for how the learnings and community knowledge gained through engagement may be incorporated into enhancing academic curriculum. This undermines the value of community-based knowledge and expertise whereby 'every engagement endeavour must be demonstrably connected to the enhancement of our core academic purposes of learning and knowledge management' (Holland, 2001: 25). The lack of active academic involvement in university–community engagement programmes such as the Agents of

Change creates challenges where limited academic expertise impacts the academic quality of programmes.

This reflects the corporatisation of the university whereby the increasing importance of image and branding as marketing tools makes brand management and brand recognition critical aspects of university–community engagement, reflecting Unerman and O'Dwyer's (2006) argument that managerialism has captured social responsibility. This corporatisation capture is further reflected in the language of 'market', which has redefined students as 'clients and customers' and communities as 'market segments'. Thus, university–community engagement programmes seek directly and indirectly to increase the recruitment of students from participating schools, the creation of relationships with schools to enable future recruitment, developing the community's positive perception and increasing goodwill towards the university in an increasingly highly competitive national and international environment. Furthermore, the increasing constraints on university funding means that university–community engagement programmes must provide a 'business case' for on-going funding. The primary objective of creating social value alone may not present the business case with measurable outcomes sufficient to ensure adequate and sustainable resources to support university–community engagement programmes. The shift in the language of programme framing, the nature of delivery and the university departments fronting university–community engagement reflect the trend towards corporate-inspired measures of accountability based on performance targets, and market influence on the role of the university and the challenge of university social responsibility.

Another critical aspect of the programme is the timing of the intervention especially if the focus is on preparing students for tertiary study and also exposing them to the university as a viable option. International studies indicate that the best time to engage young people about their future education plans is at 13–15 years of age (Leach and Zepke, 2005; Vaughan and Roberts, 2007). This means that to be most effective, interventions to transition young people from secondary school to university study need to start much earlier than Year 13 (17–18 years old), a view supported by school-based staff respondents:

> … (for) Year 13s it's too late and we've said that right from the start. Whereas Year 11, they're choosing their subjects, they're choosing their career pathways where they want to go and so the current course we're doing, I really think it's important that we do start with Year 11, then the following year in Year 12, is to maybe go a bit in-depth on some of those transition skills. And then by Year 13 it's all about the CVs, it's all about the references and how to apply for jobs and stuff like that.

For programmes such as the Agents of Change to have the greatest impact in terms of translating raised aspirations into university admissions and enrolment outcomes, intervention should start much earlier and sustain over 3- to 5-year period. The challenge is how universities obtain resources to sustain this form of intervention.

The roles and functions of universities in contemporary post-industrial liberal democratic context of 21st century are expansive. In a knowledge-technology-based society, it is no longer sufficient to simply produce graduates who are 'critical thinkers to contribute to a better society'. They need to have the capacity for critical self-reflection, question what constitutes 'a better society', who defines it and in whose interest. This study highlights the complex and multi-dimensional nature of university social responsibility. As in the case of CSR university, social responsibility activities have individual participants, schools and community outcomes, but also benefit the university in terms of brand recognition, goodwill and credibility in the community, and recognition for its expertise, which enhances the university's standing with prospective future students. In this specific case, AUT benefited significantly from the university–community engagement programme

in terms of reputation and brand recognition, which supports the view that being a good corporate citizen is not simply about doing good to society, but deriving benefits from doing good (Laszlo, 2008).

This study is only one case study of university–community engagement in New Zealand and illustrates the journey the university has embarked upon to better achieve its social responsibility and public service mandate. It will be pre-mature to condemn or fully endorse the whole of university–community engagement idea based on findings in one case study. Further studies including multiple institutions within countries and international comparative studies are required to more fully inform our understanding of the effectiveness of the engagement and social responsibility of universities.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the support of Melanie Wilson Research Assistant for the initial literature review for the project in 2010, Dr Carol Neill who was co-researcher for the Agents of Change research and AUT University Relations Student Recruitment Department as partners who delivered the programme which we evaluated.

Funding

The study from which this article is written was funded by New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission Engaging and Stimulating Innovation (Project 950).

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