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Foundations of the Engaged University Model

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Purpose and overview of presentation

To position participatory engagement within the Engaged University Model relevant to SADC institutions.

- Evolution of the engaged university
- Quadruple & quintuple helix models
- Institutional enablers: leadership, governance, incentives
- Linking engagement to teaching, research and innovation



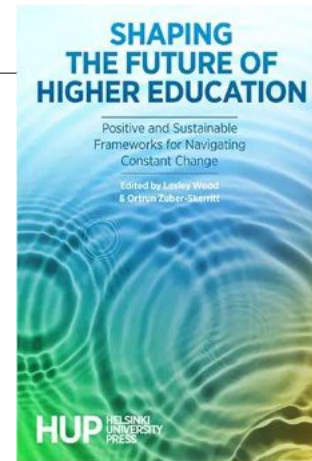
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Participatory approaches for navigating change in HE

In an era marked by complexity, uncertainty, and rapid change, higher education must evolve into a globally engaged and socially transformative force. But how?

Participatory approaches to systemic change emphasise **inclusive** and **transformative praxis** across teaching, research, leadership, and community engagement. They reimagine the university as a **co-creator of knowledge** that is locally grounded and globally relevant, responsive to public needs, and committed to fostering lifelong learning and social justice. How is this change to start? **It starts with us- you and me.**



<https://hup.fi/books/e/10.33134/HUP-25>

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Engaged university

Knowledge generation, application, dissemination and sustainability done in collaboration with external partners for positive social impact.

Education of socially responsible graduates who have the required skills and can use them for the good of humanity and the planet

Engagement efforts are mutually beneficial for all partners—community, faculty, students, and others—and all can participate in the design, operation, and evaluation of projects. Grounded in relationships and multi-disciplinary approaches to problem-solving.



GROUNDING IN LIFE-ENHANCING **VALUES** THAT LEAD TO FLOURISHING OF HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN LIFE



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What does the engaged university do?

TRADITIONAL ACADEMIC TEACHING

University faculty provide instruction on campus to registered students. Curriculum designed by 'experts' with little or no regard to context

SCHOLARLY ENGAGED TEACHING AND LEARNING

CEL integrates academic study with meaningful collaboration **with** community partners to address real-world needs while enhancing students' learning, civic responsibility, and social impact (service-learning). Curriculum more locally relevant

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What does the engaged university do?

TRADITIONAL RESEARCH

University faculty members pursue research studies according to their various professions and interests and publish results in academic books and journals.

COMMUNITY ENGAGED RESEARCH

A collaborative partnership is established to conduct research for the direct benefit of external partners; outcomes of the research lead to improved, evidence-based practice, emancipatory and educational intent. Knowledge shared in community.

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What does the engaged university do?

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO SERVICE

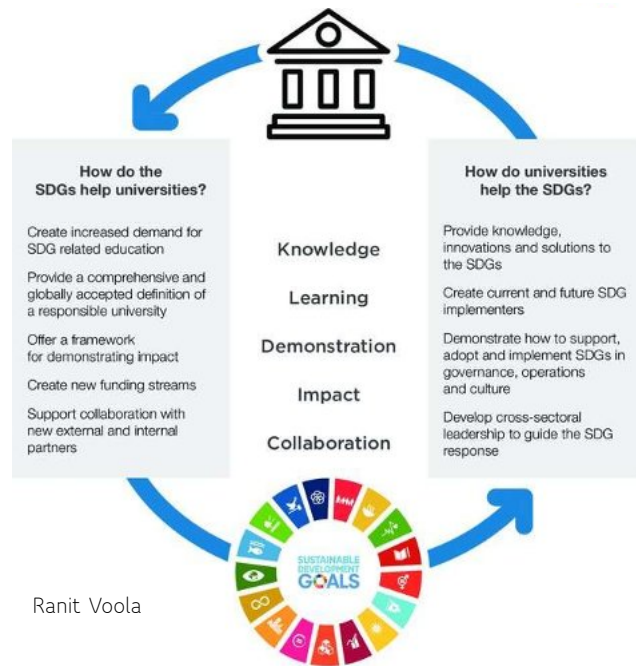
University faculty and students undertake departmental or college administrative duties and serve on committees.

ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP

Engaged citizenship is an educational platform of preparing and supporting staff and students to play a leading role through building sustainable partnerships with other stakeholders, to respond to pressing societal challenges by deploying intellectual, human, and other resources for the development of communities.

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UNIVERSITIES AND THE SDGs – a mutually beneficial relationship



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Evolution of the engaged university in SADC region

1. Early Foundations: Universities for Nation-Building (Pre-1990s)



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Most SADC universities established in the late colonial and early post-independence periods (1960s–1980s) with the primary mandate of elite human-capital development for new nation-states. Engagement existed mainly as:

- Agricultural extension
- Teacher training
- Public service roles of graduates

Engagement was one directional and paternalistic with communities seen as recipients of expertise, not co-creators

Strong link to the developmental state, weak links to civil society

Engagement was present, but not conceptualised or institutionalised as a core university function.

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2. Regionalisation and Cooperation: The SADC Protocol Era (1990s)

SADC Protocol on Education and Training (1997) - first explicit regional policy framework that indirectly shapes the engaged university model in SADC.



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Its key principles were:

- Regional cooperation and harmonisation
- Responsiveness to socio-economic development
 - Academic freedom and quality
- Collaboration in research and innovation

Regional centres of specialisation and excellence were founded to conduct applied research addressing regional challenges. This was a shift from national missions to regional developmental roles that framed engagement as contribution to economic growth and regional integration.

Still largely state and university-led, not participatory

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3. Post-Apartheid and Transformation Discourses (Late 1990s–2000s)

South Africa's Education White Paper 3 (1997) - While national, this policy became norm-setting for the region due to South Africa's leadership and influence.



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Explicit positioning of **community engagement as a core function**, alongside teaching and research.

Universities tasked with:

- Redress
- Social justice
- Democratic citizenship

Knowledge linked to the **public good**

Many SADC universities adopted similar language in:

- Strategic plans
- Mission statements
- Engagement policies

Engagement shifts from “outreach” to “responsiveness”

This period marks the **conceptual birth of the engaged university** in Southern Africa.

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4. Continental Development Agendas and the Engagement Turn (2000s–2010s)

African Union: Agenda 2063 (2015–) reframes higher education as a people-driven development engine.

Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25)



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Key aspirations influencing engagement:

- Inclusive growth
- Knowledge based economies
- Sustainability and environmental stewardship
- Youth and community empowerment

Higher education is expected to produce socially responsive knowledge, address inequality, unemployment & climate vulnerability through working with communities and not only state/industry.

CES aligns universities with SDGs, emphasizing innovation, relevance and social impact.

Led to : **Broadening of engagement** beyond national priorities and growing recognition of **indigenous knowledge, informal economies and sustainability challenges**

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5. From Outreach to Co-Creation: Participatory and Engaged Scholarship (2010s)

SARUA Thought Leadership -
Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) plays a crucial role in ideational change.



Key messages emerging from SARUA dialogues:

Universities as **anchor institutions**

Knowledge co-production with society

Engagement linked directly to teaching, research and innovation

This period sees:

Service-learning, community-based research, transdisciplinary approaches increasing

Engagement becomes **academically legitimate**, but implementation remains uneven.

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6. Sustainability, SDGs and the Quintuple Helix (2020s–Present)

UNESCO Higher Education Roadmap (2022) & Campus Africa



UNESCO explicitly calls for universities to become “**incubators for social transformation**” and integrate engagement into institutional DNA to address complex societal challenges through partnerships.

EngageSDG (2023–2026) – A SADC-Specific intervention focused directly on:

- Participatory approaches
- Co-production of knowledge
- Engaged university models in SADC

Outcomes: Integrated Participatory Framework, Community-university partnerships around SDGs based on quadruple and quintuple logic

This phase marks a shift from engagement as rhetoric to engagement as **method, pedagogy and institutional system**

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7. Current State of the Engaged University in SADC

The engaged university in SADC has evolved through:

Nation-building imperatives
Regional cooperation frameworks
Post-transformation justice agendas
Continental development strategies
Global sustainability and participatory knowledge paradigms



Engagement is **widely recognised**, but often under-resourced, weakly incentivised & unevenly embedded

Growing focus on social innovation, climate resilience and community-based teaching and research

Policy-driven tensions include global rankings vs local impact, academic reward systems vs hard work of engagement, short-term projects vs long-term partnerships

Today's challenge is not policy absence — it is **institutional alignment, leadership commitment and incentive reform**

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A de-colonizing movement for higher education



1. **Reinvigorate debates** about what constitutes knowledge in the academy, and whose knowledge counts and working against 'epistemicide'.
2. **Re-establish** the centrality of **justice and transformation** in a world that everyday grows more unequal, more unloving, and less sustainable.
3. **Create structures and processes** for the co-creation and democratization of knowledge with community and civil society partners.
4. Adhere to the **principles of open access** to all knowledge created, free of charge.

Universidad de los Andes - November 1,
2019

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Discussion questions

How is “community engagement” currently understood at your institution?

What engagement activities already exist, even if they are not labelled as such?

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Triple helix model (1995)

Developed by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff. Innovation emerges from dynamic interaction between **Universities** (knowledge production), **Industry** (commercialisation), and **Government** (policy and regulation)

In SADC, the Triple Helix model was introduced mainly through HE reform. Universities were expected to drive economic development and industrial relevance, especially in resource-constrained contexts.

BUT

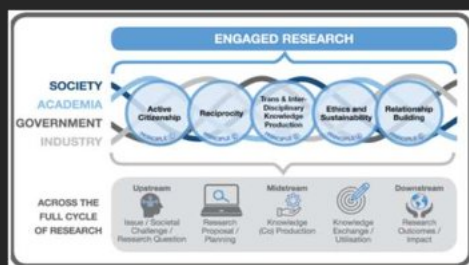
Faced structural challenges in SADC such as:

- Weak industrial bases
- Historically exclusionary innovation systems
- Limited inclusion of local communities, traditional knowledge, and informal economies
- Poor public trust and weak social legitimacy of innovation initiatives

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Quadruple helix model (2009)

The Quadruple Helix (QH) model introduced by Carayannis & Campbell adds a fourth helix



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The addition of civil society / public / community reframed innovation as socially embedded, culturally informed and democratically negotiated.

SADC countries innovation viability depends on **community acceptance** especially in informal, rural, and indigenous contexts,

Social problems (poverty, inequality, service delivery) demand **co-creation**, not top-down transfer.

Participatory community engagement though inclusion of NGOs, cooperatives, traditional leaders and social movements,

Recognition of **Ubuntu and communal value systems** as innovation assets rather than obstacles.

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Quintuple helix model (2010)

Carayannis & Campbell. Addition of the natural environment to reframe innovation within socio-ecological systems



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5 helices consist of :

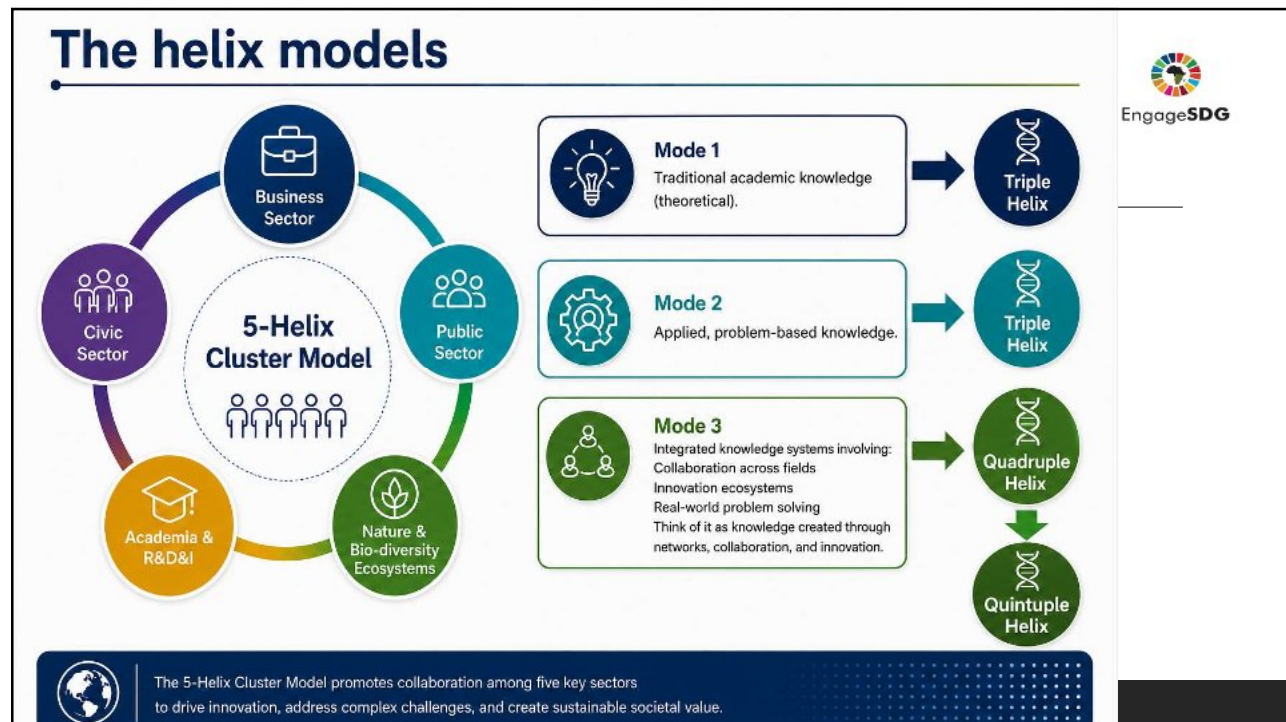
- Universities/education system
- Industry/economic system
- Government / political system
- Civil society / social system
- Natural environment

SADC region dependent on natural resources and vulnerable to climate change. 3H and 4H models treated environmental impacts as externalities.

5H reframes nature as a co-producer of knowledge, not just a resource. Has implications in SADC for climate suitable agriculture, water governance, energy production, sustainable mining.

Makes the Quintuple Helix most suited to sustainable development

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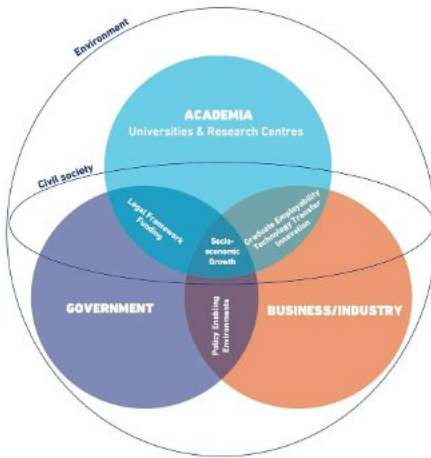
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Challenges in implementation in SADC

"The responsiveness of universities cannot be only economic in character: it has to be of a wider social character" Saleem Badat,
Vice-Chancellor, Rhodes University, South Africa



- Lack of institutional investment in structures to support collaborative partnerships
- Large variation in the language, conceptualisation and practice of these engagements
- Contradiction between professed commitment to co-construction and actual practice
- Different nature of knowledge cultures and diverse institutional processes that shape how research partnerships function, and ideally, flourish.

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Discussion questions



Which actors (government, industry, communities, environment) are most visible in your current engagement work?

Which actors are missing or least engaged — and why?

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INSTITUTIONAL ENABLERS FOR ENGAGEMENT

 LEADERSHIP Strategic commitment from executive management Engagement embedded in institutional vision and plans	 GOVERNANCE Policies that recognise engaged teaching and research Structures (engagement offices, committees, partnerships)	 INCENTIVES & RECOGNITION Promotion criteria valuing engagement Funding and workload models Capacity building for staff
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Engagement seen as “extra work”
Lack of funding or recognition
Fragmented initiatives

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Discussion questions

What institutional policies or practices help engagement at your university?

What are the biggest internal barriers (leadership, incentives, culture)?



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Linking engagement to teaching, research and innovation



Engaged Teaching -

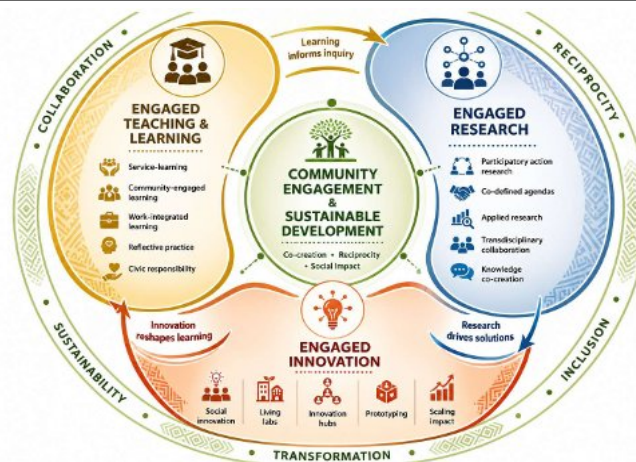
Service-learning,
community-engaged
learning, work-integrated
learning

Engaged Research -

Participatory action
research, co-defined
research agendas, applied
and transdisciplinary
research

Engaged Innovation -

Social innovation, living
labs and innovation hubs



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SOUTH AFRICA: Institutionalising engagement as a core function



Policy and Context

South Africa has the **most explicit policy framework** for engaged universities in the SADC region.

Education White Paper 3 (1997) – formally identified **community engagement as a core function** alongside teaching and research

Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) institutional audits reinforced engagement governance and reporting

Most universities have a community-engagement policy/office

1. TEACHING + RESEARCH + SERVICE
COMMUNITY-ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP
COMMUNITY (co-creation of knowledge & social change)
2. TEACHING ↔ RESEARCH ↔ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
↓ COMMUNITY (co-learning, shared knowledge, development)
3. UNIVERSITY → EXTENSION/OUTREACH → COMMUNITY
(knowledge transfer & services)

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Zimbabwe: Engagement amid resource constraints



Guided by the SADC Protocol on Education and Training (1997) and national development agendas, Education 5.0. Limited dedicated national community engagement policy, leading to institution led interpretation.

Decolonial agenda, recognising value in community knowledge and action e.g. Bindura University of Science Education

Rural science education, agricultural extension, Teacher support programmes

Strong collaboration with: Local schools, farmers, traditional leadership structures.

- Research: Context driven studies on science pedagogy
- Innovation: Low cost, locally adapted agricultural practices
- Quadruple Helix, with strong civil society emphasis

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Different models of engagement in SADC



Country	Engagement Driver	Dominant Helix	Key Strength
South Africa	Policy & quality assurance	Quadruple/Quintuple	Institutionalisation
Zimbabwe	Local development needs	Quadruple	Contextual relevance
Zambia	State–community brokerage	Triple → Quadruple	Policy impact
Mauritius	Sustainability & SDGs	Quintuple	Environmental integration

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Conclusions



What We Know

-  From *teaching* → *co-creation*
-  Engagement is now a **core university function**
-  Knowledge systems must include **community + environment**

Real impact happens when universities move beyond knowledge production to knowledge partnership.

What Must Change

-  Stronger **leadership & institutional commitment**
-  Embed engagement in **teaching, research & innovation**
-  Align systems with **real social impact** (not just outputs)

Current Reality

-  Policies exist, but **implementation is uneven**
-  Engagement still seen as “**extra work**”
-  Gaps in **incentives, funding, and alignment**

Way Forward

-  **Co-create knowledge** with communities
-  Align with **SDGs & sustainability priorities**
-  Value **indigenous & local knowledge systems**

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Thank you

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Discussion questions



UNESCO (2022) STUDY: Universities need to embody:

- inclusivity and accessibility
- diversity of knowledge ecologies
- social responsiveness
- engaged scholarship

□ *What has been your experience of integrating community-based research (CBR), community engaged learning (CEL) and transformative leadership into HE to reach the SDG? (successes, challenges)*

□ *How do we action the findings of UNESCO for HE CE?*