Faculty Perspectives on Rewards and Incentives for Community-engaged Work

A multinational exploratory study

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Many US-based university faculty members feel their institutions discount their community-engaged work. This could mean when a faculty member’s dossier is reviewed for merit salary increases or for tenure, his or her engaged work is often deemed less rigorous than traditional forms of faculty work. Reducing access to such rewards and recognition likely influences the faculty member’s future work. The literature is sparse, however, when it comes to such perceptions among non-Western institutions. Do faculties in other regions of the world share similar concerns? Do their voices hold the same weight as those of the administration?

There is an increasing need for bottom-up and multi-directional communication and a need to fill the gap in knowledge among higher education decision-makers. Filling this gap in understanding can help policy-makers and educators foster more engaged and socially responsible higher education institutions.

WHY THE TALLOIRES NETWORK?

The Talloires Network (TN) is the largest international network focused on university community engagement. It is uniquely positioned to provide support for and conduct research on community-engaged work. TN strives to diversify voices in higher education policy and, most recently, worked to challenge policies on global university rankings and faculty support (Monaco & de la Rey 2015). As a close collaborator with regional higher education networks, TN is a global hub of information to and from regional networks that elevates the visibility of civic engagement programs – allowing cross-communication and bottom-up sharing of knowledge.

TN contributes to the university civic-engagement movement through three areas of inquiry and action: research, practice and education. The findings of this action research on faculty perspectives bring empirical significance to the field.

THE RESEARCH

This exploratory research aims to examine faculty perspectives: how community-engaged work (including teaching, research and...
scholarship) is perceived, and how institutions provide rewards and incentives. Engaged activities in higher education are often perceived as less scholarly than more traditional forms of teaching and scholarship because of controversy and challenges around assessment and measuring impact. Additionally, there is a paucity of documentation and analysis of faculty perspectives on the issue from developing countries. The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification working group revised its 2015 application to include questions such as: Do the institutional policies for promotion and tenure reward the scholarship of community engagement? This was a guiding force for the development of our research question.

Besides reviewing the literature on these problems and gaps in documentation, we conducted a pilot survey to explore how a sample of 38 pre-selected faculties at 14 member institutions in 11 countries perceived the support of their respective institutions. We wanted to know: Are there any common patterns in faculty perspectives on their engaged work and institutional policies? Can background information such as age, gender, region, discipline, title, institution type and work type be predictors of faculty perspectives?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Problem: Discounted Engaged Work
A number of higher education institutions are criticised for paying lip service to the importance of collaboration between university scholars and local communities to address economic or social challenges. Many scholars report that engaged work is often deemed neither as scholarly nor as rigorous as more traditional forms of scholarship. A report of the Global University Network for Innovation claims young academics in some universities are ‘discouraged from following an engaged scholarship career pathway’ (Hall et al. 2014, p. 308).

In a US study based on the responses of 729 chief academic officers (CAOs) of four-year institutions, O’Meara found that encouraging multiple forms of scholarship in faculty reward systems made a positive difference in institutional evaluations of engaged work. However, reforms usually change ‘the input to and process of promotion and tenure, not the outcomes’ (O’Meara 2005, p. 505). Specifically, the probabilities for individual success did not change despite formal policy reforms over the examined decade, according to data from more than half of surveyed CAOs. Moreover, she underscores the critical role of CAOs’ awareness and involvement in reforms, and recognised the impact of demographic and contextual attributes (for example, race, gender, age, discipline and institutional type) on reward systems.

Another US-based survey examined data from 59 faculties focused on community-engaged learning from 37 institutions that received Clinical and Translational Science Awards. The study shows how engaged scholars perceive their institutional support. The majority of respondents conceded ‘there was
moderate support for community-engaged scholarship in tenure, promotion, and retention decisions’ (Nokes et al. 2013, p. 265). The authors also explain that engaged scholars often expect greater acknowledgement and backing from their institutions than they receive (Goldberg-Freeman et al. 2010; Kennedy et al. 2009; Nyden 2003), but literature on faculty perspectives on rewards and incentives remains sparse (Gelmon et al. 2012).

Looking beyond the US, Watermeyer and Lewis (2014) conducted qualitative interviews with 40 early and mid-career scholars known for engaged work throughout the UK. They pointed out engaged work is inadequately supported and, in many cases, even harmful to scholars’ profiles as research-active academics. Most interviewees complained about undesirable side-effects of their techniques: a shortage of institutional acknowledgement, interest, incentives and rewards; a lack of promotions; and the fact that public engagement receives merely hollow praise (Butt 2015; Havergal 2015).

Engaged work is often further stymied because university policies fail to provide guidelines that endorse scholarship of this nature. O’Meara also identifies a set of external, cultural and leadership factors that influence institutions’ decisions to embrace community-engaged scholarship. External factors include pressure from accreditation organisations, legislative bodies, and administrators’ involvement in a national conversation on scholarship reform. Cultural factors include grassroots efforts from within the faculty and a higher level of institutional commitment to teaching and engagement. Leadership factors include presidential commitments to alternative forms of scholarship and institutional reform (O’Meara 2006).

The Gap: Little Information on Faculty Perspectives at Non-Western Institutions

Many scholars are observing these faculty perceptions in Western educational systems with an intense concentration on the US (O’Meara, Eatman & Petersen 2015). Corresponding literature on this topic at an international scale, particularly in the Global South, is scant. It is unclear whether there are similar patterns in faculty perspectives on their engaged work and institutional policies.

In the US, there have been profound studies and guidelines that respond to questions relating to faculty perspectives on, and involvement in, community-engaged work. Beere et al. (2011) instructs universities on how to institutionalise public engagement. This how-to book shows solutions to problems in recruiting, hiring and orienting faculty, and ways to address workload issues, provide support services and resources, and offer incentives and awards. In another example, faculty activities and attitudes toward engagement at Ohio State University were examined in a 436-respondent survey based on a conceptual framework that integrates institutional, personal and professional factors (Demb & Wade 2012). At Michigan State University, researchers investigated
the faculty’s intensity of activity and degree of engagement through an interpretive content analysis of 173 promotion and tenure forms (Doberneck et al. 2012). While helpful in providing theoretical foundations for the field, these studies are US-focused: the book by Beere et al. is written from the context of American post-secondary institutions, while the two surveys mentioned are isolated in two US universities.

Outside the US, most research on the topic points to national contexts and institutional policies related to engaged work, but none specifically studies faculty attitudes. For example, Annette (2010) focuses exclusively on institutional perspectives for promoting community engagement in the UK. He looks at the decline of service-learning culture and offers a philosophical and sociological approach to reward structures. Annette does not, however, touch upon the faculty view of their institutions’ incentives. Looking at Australian higher education, Muirhead et al. use an international lens to compare policy programs and make suggestions to increase university community engagement (Hartley et al. 2005; Muirhead & Graham 2002; Muirhead & Woolcock 2008). They report that market forces exert a large influence on the education process, but maintain that adjusting faculty reward mechanisms (and university culture) is crucial to generating civic-mindedness. Favish and McMillan (2009) focus exclusively on South African higher education policy. They offer an insider’s take on the structure of the South African faculty rewards system (Smout 2005). In a rare display of international scope, Rice (2006), after examining Athens, Berlin and Los Angeles, advocates for expanding the faculty’s role in emphasising civic engagement. Similarly, Ward engages in a typological examination of faculty engagement and extends her analysis to Irish institutions and higher education policy in the EU. In contrast to O’Meara’s research, Ward explores how civic engagement shapes identities. She provides a salient connection between EU and US higher education policy (Hazelkorn & Ward 2012; Saltmarsh et al.). In all, there is literature on higher education policies and programs, institutional perspectives, reward systems, faculty engagement and faculty roles; however, few consider how these concepts are perceived by the faculty.

MULTINATIONAL EXPLORATORY STUDY

Methodology

Study participants
Programs were selected based on their record of engagement and interaction with members of TN. All were recipients of a TN research and award program: the Youth Economic Participation Initiative and the Regional Perspectives on University Civic Engagement. Each program assesses, documents and shares ideas of participants’ engagement activities.

TN secretariat contacted administrative staff or liaisons at 14 member universities currently participating in the two
above programs. These institutions are in 11 countries in various continents: Africa (Burkina Faso, Egypt, Rwanda, South Africa, Zimbabwe), America (Chile, Mexico, USA), Asia (Malaysia, Pakistan) and Oceania (Australia).

Each institution was asked to identify four faculty members who embody its definition of engaged scholarship. Our criteria included: a mix of tenure track, pre-tenure and non-tenure track instructors; an even distribution of new and seasoned instructors; gender, racial, ethnic and religious diversity; and a selection from different disciplines. Because members of this group were identified by leaders of engagement projects, we assumed they might hold positive attitudes and realistic experiences about institutional commitments.

Our small, targeted sample (56 faculties) sought to identify initial outcomes from the survey for the purposes of assessing the extent to which the survey language and constructs are applicable across language, national and institutional cultures. Specifically, we tested our surveys to see whether more clarity was needed on language, if the scale used was understandable, and whether the length of time needed to complete the survey was reasonable. Results of this pilot survey will inform the administration of a larger survey, probably drawing on the broad membership of TN.

**Instrument**

Dr Carrier and Dr Furco (University of Minnesota) and Dr Hoyt (Tufts University) contributed to the creation and review of the study proposal, research questions and instrument in January 2015. The instrument, a 17-item web-based questionnaire, was original to this study and not adapted from other surveys. After peer review edits, we launched the pilot survey using Qualtrics in March 2015. The survey – translated by TN’s multilingual staff – was provided in English, Spanish and French. An English sample can be found online at [http://bit.ly/2r08ysQ](http://bit.ly/2r08ysQ).

We use the term ‘engaged work’ in the survey and this article as a unified term understood by the participating institutions and researchers. We define engaged work as teaching, research and scholarship; such as service-learning, community-based learning, volunteerism, applied research and participatory action research. This definition is not identical to the one provided by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education or the typology suggested by Doberneck et al. (2010) but the meaning is similar and consistent.

Drawing from O’Meara’s work (2006) as theoretical foundation, we designed the questionnaire to examine faculty attitudes towards their universities’ recognition of community-engaged work. For example, regarding external and leadership factors (legislative bodies, administrators’ involvement and presidential commitment), question 3 of the survey asks about the ‘greatest authority for determining the overall reward and compensation structure’. In relation to cultural factors (level of
institutional commitment), questions 7 to 10 ask about whether written policies exist that reward different types of engaged work ‘in faculty employment, promotion, or job security’.

The demographic and background information that we asked respondents were very similar to the factors listed in Demb and Wade’s Faculty Engagement Model (2012): institutional (institution type and region), personal (age and gender) and professional (discipline, title and work type). Our two research questions also shared the same interests with two of their four questions: How do various groups of faculty perceive the support for engagement activities? Can background information be predictors of faculty opinion?

With regard to psychometric properties, the reliability of the survey is most likely repeatable and stable. We are certain faculty opinions would be consistent if we survey them again, assuming their institutional context and policies have not changed. The survey received validity from Carnegie’s work because it used corresponding questions to the Carnegie classification. Although the survey is not externally valid because of its pilot and non-generalisable nature, it remains internally valid because we accomplished our goal of measuring faculty perceptions. In order to gain external validity, we first need to access and understand the detailed policies that exist at respondents’ institutions.

**Data collection**

The process of distribution and return is described in Figure 1. Email invitations were sent to 56 individuals, who were given four weeks to complete the survey. Responses were collected and data aggregated by Qualtrics so no attributions were made of responses to individuals. The response rate was fairly high (68 per cent) and not negatively affected by our timing of data collection.

**Data analysis**

We applied both descriptive and statistical analyses for exploratory purposes. Both of them helped determine the research design, data collection method and selection of subjects for future surveys.

The descriptive analysis is an attempt to answer the question: Are there any resembling patterns in faculty perspectives on their engaged work and institutional policies? Meanwhile, the key question for our statistical analysis is whether there is a significant relationship between background information of respondents and their perspectives on engaged work and institutional policies; that is: Can independent variables, which include age, gender, region, discipline, title, institution type and work type, be predictors of faculty opinions? As multiple comparisons may lead to a Type I
error, the chosen criterion for rejecting the null hypothesis is a p value <0.01. For the purpose of piloting, we tried Fisher’s exact test, multiple regressions, and logistic regressions in accordance with types of dependent variables, as shown in Appendix 1. The generic regression model is: \[ \text{opinion} = \beta_0 + \beta_{\text{age}} \times \text{age} + \beta_{\text{gender}} \times \text{gender} + \beta_{\text{region}} \times \text{region} + \beta_{\text{discipline}} \times \text{discipline} + \beta_{\text{title}} \times \text{title} + \beta_{\text{institution}} \times \text{institution} + \beta_{\text{worktype}} \times \text{worktype} \]

Findings

Descriptive results

Thanks to our recruitment process, we achieved our desired level of diversity in demographic and background characteristics, particularly in regions and disciplines, as can be seen in Appendix 2. The respondents come from various parts of the world: from the Global North (US and Australia) to the Global South (Burkina Faso, Egypt, Rwanda, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Chile, Mexico, Malaysia and Pakistan), which are both important areas for deeper investigation. Despite the small sample size, there is wide coverage across sectors: natural sciences (mathematics, computer science, parasitology, agro-ecology, neurophysiology, statistics); social sciences and humanities (sociology, psychology, theatre, culture, economics); and professional (medicine, nursing, dentistry, obstetrics and gynecology, public health, education, management, business, finance, marketing, architecture, human resource, entrepreneurship). Half the respondents are aged 40–55; two thirds are female; two thirds are associated with teaching positions; half work in public institutions; and three quarters work on a full-time basis.

The descriptive results demonstrate relatively similar perspectives on community-engaged work and reward policies across the globe. First, on the question about who has the greatest authority for determining rewards policies (question 3), more than half (53 per cent) of respondents indicated senior administration. A notable proportion of respondents (17 per cent) said the ministry of education plays the most important role. Second, when asked about what work is most rewarded (question 4), the three highest votes went to conducting research that leads to publication (97 per cent), conducting research that garners grants or other external resources (64 per cent), and conducting high-quality teaching of academic content (47 per cent). Third, the instructional practices that respondents view as most highly valued and encouraged (question 6) are: applied research and learning (75 per cent), community-based research and learning (61 per cent) and entrepreneurship (58 per cent). This is a question where respondents could select all that apply, bringing the total to more than 100 per cent. Surprisingly, no one thought civic studies are highly valued, as depicted in Figure 2.

Fourth, with respect to university policies (questions 7 to 10), half of respondents noted written policies that reward research done with community members did exist at their university. In this group, about one quarter indicated these policies are not taken
seriously; half indicated no policies exist or, if so, they do not know of them, although most of their university leaders claimed in person that such policies exist. A majority (61 per cent) of respondents said policies that ‘reward research that has societal impact exist at their university’ (question 8), and about one third (37 per cent) admitted there are written policies that ‘reward teaching students to be active citizens’ (question 9). One third (33 per cent) acknowledged the existence of policies that ‘reward public service beyond the institution’ (question 10), and only about a quarter (22 per cent) thought policies that ‘reward research done with community members’ exist (question 7). In question 10, however, none of the respondents felt that strong policies exist. Figure 3 demonstrates the results for question 8.

Lastly, regarding positive statements about engaged faculties in questions 11 and 12, a majority of respondents agreed. They concurred that faculties who conduct community-engaged research at their university are ‘primarily in academic disciplines where community issues are a central feature’ (71 per cent), ‘seen as innovators’ (66 per cent), ‘involved in some of the university’s most interesting work’ (57 per cent), ‘widely respected for conducting research that addresses important societal issues’ (57 per cent) and ‘often praised in their academic unit’ (51 per cent). They disagreed that such faculties are ‘considered to be generally less productive’ (60 per cent) and ‘often relegated to marginalized roles’ (51 per cent). However, results were mixed regarding whether such faculty are ‘considered to conduct less rigorous kinds of research’ (34 per cent agreed, 20 per cent were neutral, and 46 per cent disagreed).

Statistical results
We found that demographic and background information may be influential factors in faculty members’ opinions about which
work is perceived as important and in attitudes toward engaged faculties, as shown in Appendix 3. Faculty members who work in public universities and who are women had a higher tendency to appreciate the significance of raising the university’s profile and/or rankings. Female faculty members also showed stronger agreement that engaged faculties were widely respected in their universities for conducting research that addressed important societal issues.

Analyses with Fisher’s exact test and logistic regressions showed no significant results given that our chosen criterion for rejecting the null hypothesis is p value < 0.01. If the chosen criterion was <0.05, we would have seen many significant results showing all seven independent variables as predictors. However, we decided not to dig deeper into statistical analysis or draw definite conclusions because these are exploratory tests. Instead, these results helped us analyse the limitations of this pilot survey.

Limitations
We confess it was an oversight that we neglected to ask for respondents’ race and/or ethnicity rather than simply assessing them by region. Also, country of origin and country where terminal degree was conferred would better confirm the gap between the Global North and South.

With respect to disciplines, there are different ways of categorising. Our rationale for grouping social science and humanities together is because, in a wider sense, social science encompasses some areas of humanities. Many disciplines cross the boundaries between the two and integrate aspects of both. However, we acknowledge that separating social sciences and humanities could be more precise, given findings from previous studies in the US that faculties from those two groups often have significantly different levels of participation in engaged work (Abes 2002; Antonio 2002; Demb & Wade 2012; Doberneck et al. 2012).

For statistical analyses, other limitations that can be overcome in future surveys include: a shortage of continuous variables, the probability of a Type I error due to multiple comparisons, and a small sample size.

DISCUSSION
Through our analysis, we found the survey answers our research question. We sought to explore the nuances, as well as ascertain the extent to which faculties that conduct engaged scholarship share similar or different opinions across institutional and national contexts. We began to unearth some of these contextual factors and identify factors that transcend contexts, cultures, scholarly agendas and institutional types. This relates to what Hall et al. declared about the challenge for higher education networks: how to build community-university engagement ‘across the different terminologies and narratives’ (2014, p. 309).

The descriptive findings suggest there are a set of universal factors regarding perceptions of, and rewards for, engaged scholarship that transcend institutional and cultural boundaries.
First, the majority of respondents agree with how engaged faculty are positively viewed at their institutions: ‘seen as innovators’, ‘involved in some of the university’s most interesting work’, ‘widely respected for conducting research that addresses important societal issues’ and ‘often praised in their academic unit’. Most of them also disagree that engaged faculty are ‘often relegated to marginalized roles’ or ‘considered to be generally less productive’. Such optimism aligns with the Global University Network for Innovation’s vision and call for higher education institutions to become engaged universities and drive social change. Second, the responses to the question about the existence of written policies is quite remarkable. The responses suggest that many of the respondents cannot be much guided by policies in this area because they understand it does not exist or is not taken very seriously. Responses to the question about respected and revered faculty members suggests it is not community-based research or teaching that most engenders the respect of others. Many of these pilot findings might make one curious about what we would find in a larger survey.

The statistical findings are not firm conclusions about global trends or correlations between opinions and demographics. Instead, they offer insights about how to develop a more efficient questionnaire and better administrate a broader survey. Some potentially significant correlations, such as female faculty members being more engaged, are compatible with Demb and Wade’s theories (2012). Understanding different faculty perceptions in general and among sub-groups in particular (based on age, gender, region, discipline, title, institution type and work type) may inform future policy recommendations. In this exploratory study, we did not attempt to compare attitudes across regions, because of the small sample size. We hope to continue this work with more time and resources to achieve stronger methodology, results and interpretation.

We draw four key lessons from the creation, collection and analysis of the survey. First, there are nuances in language and culture in how engaged scholarship is defined. This has implications for how survey questions are phrased and how individuals might respond to survey items. For instance, although our participating universities are involved with civic studies, no respondent selected civic studies as highly valued and encouraged. Second, our data collection method and selection of subjects is appropriate, and ensures reliability and diversity in the sample. The scale used is understandable, and the length of time needed to complete the survey is reasonable. Third, in future surveys, we should add more quantifiable questions; for example: number of years working with communities, hours of engaged work per week, population of communities, number of students involved in the work, number of classes, projects or jobs created, and other continuous variables about finance, facilities and infrastructures. Fourth, we need to aim for a larger sample size and control the
problem of multiple comparisons. With a broader survey, we can apply the Bonferroni correction and reconsider using the criterion $p$ value $< 0.01$.

We know from this early pilot study there is much to learn from non-Western faculty perspectives on their engaged work. We seek to examine these issues more fully in our future research; this is precisely what TN and its global perspectives can offer. Our hope is to bridge and share perspectives through TN to enrich and expand this body of knowledge, for all stakeholders in the process.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OR NEXT STEPS**

Because this is a pilot survey, the findings are mainly beneficial for lessons and recommendations for future research. With larger surveys, more conclusive findings would help produce specific recommendations for faculty, students, and institutions. We hope to broaden the reach of potential member institutions for future surveys, as well as identify case studies that demonstrate best practices and lessons learned. It is important to describe deeper examples of faculty experiences from the respondent institutions, as well as from additional members with whom TN is not yet familiar. This can be done with the help of regional networks. So far, the TN Steering Committee’s feedback on our findings has focused on reality versus perceptions, such as the disparity between policies that some senior administrators purport to exist at their universities versus what faculty members perceive. A second survey among administrators and staff who oversee the reward process is another potential point of comparison with findings from the pilot faculty survey. Furthermore, another survey of engaged students would triangulate perspectives. With 368 institutional members in 77 countries and a combined enrollment of over six million students, any future surveys promise larger sample sizes to analyse. Recommendations for additional data gathering include learning how existing policies are implemented and identifying the enabling aspects of engaged scholarship at a particular university. Survey data from regional networks and government organisations can be helpful inputs in the next stages of a global survey. Real-time feedback from respondents, for example, revising questions while taking the survey, can also deepen our knowledge of local terminology and nuances to create a more inclusive understanding of engaged scholarship around the globe.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

For our preliminary analysis, a 17-item survey was administered to a small sample (56 faculty members) who were selected to take the survey by a liaison at each of 14 member universities of TN. Sixty-eight per cent (38 faculty members) responded from a diverse set of identifiers, including disciplines, age, gender, and geographic locations. This international pilot survey contributes to addressing the dearth of literature on faculty perspectives at non-Western institutions and setting a stepping stone for future research. Themes on faculty perceptions of written policies and of
their own reputations as an engaged faculty are seen to be similar across institutional and regional contexts. Despite the nuances in language and culture in how engaged scholarship is defined, a set of commonly held perceptions of incentives and rewards for engaged scholarship emerges to transcend the differences. The results also suggest there are potential relationships between demographics and faculty perceptions that should be further investigated with more continuous variables, control of multiple comparisons, and larger sample sizes. Understanding different faculty perceptions in general and among sub-groups in particular (such as age, gender, region, discipline, title, institution type and work type) will help inform policy recommendations for implementing better community-engaged programs and building stronger civic engagement.

**APPENDIX 1. MODELLING APPROACH**

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<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Tests</th>
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<td>Categorical</td>
<td>Fisher’s exact test</td>
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<td>Multiple regression</td>
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<td>Binary</td>
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**APPENDIX 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE**

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<td>Social sciences and humanities</td>
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APPENDIX 3. SUMMARY OF STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS USING MULTIPLE REGRESSION (P<0.01)

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<tr>
<th>Dependent variables:</th>
<th>Background Information</th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>Std. Err.</th>
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<th>p</th>
<th>95% Conf. Interval</th>
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