Academia's perceptions regarding community engagement activities and perceived roles of different actors within the Wellbeing INnovation (WIN) Platform

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DECLARATION

I, **Trisha Govender**, student number: 24630535 hereby declare that this research titled "**Academia's perceptions regarding community engagement activities and perceived roles of different actors within the Wellbeing INnovation (WIN) Platform**" for the degree of Master of Health Science in Transdisciplinary Health Promotion at North West University is my original work. The sources used have been cited and acknowledged in a form of references. The work of this dissertation was done by me and it has not been accepted for any other higher degree or professional qualification at any other educational institution.

Signature: 

Ms Trisha Govender

Date: 14 May 2021

ABSTRACT

The Higher Education Quality Committee resents the concept of community engagement as an initiative and process through which the expertise of the institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community. The Wellbeing INnovation Platform, a flagship community engagement platform within the Faculty of Health Sciences at the North-West University. This study sought to answer the question: What are the perceptions of the academia of their community engagement activities and roles within the Wellbeing INnovation Platform? The primary objectives of the study were to explore and describe the roles of different actors within the Wellbeing INnovation Platform as perceived by academia, and to explore and describe perceptions of academia on community engagement activities within the WIN Platform by applying a strategic auditing tool in the form of a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis was used because such an analysis can help organisations uncover opportunities that they can take advantage of and can eliminate threats through understanding weaknesses. Ethical approval to conduct the study was obtained from the North-West University's Health Research Ethics Committee and the Research Data Gatekeeper Committee of the university. There was a total of 45 (N=45) potential academic actors that formed the population and out of these, nine (n=9) availed themselves for interviews, resulting in a 20% response rate. Of these, five were directly involved in the WIN Platform, and the rest were involved with community engagement within the Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research who were exposed to the daily operations of the Wellbeing INnovation Platform.

This study was exploratory and thus used a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by an independent interviewer; and the interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the results, with the coding list guided by the objectives of the study, the literature review, as well as the interview guide. An independent co-coder was used to verify the coding development and consistency. The data analysis concluded in five themes, 20 categories and 51 sub-categories. The five major themes identified were: academia holds varying perceptions on the key actors in the Wellbeing INnovation Platform and community engagement projects, academia's perspectives on the strengths of the WIN Platform, academia's perspectives on the weaknesses of the Wellbeing INnovation Platform, academia's perspectives on the opportunities of the Wellbeing INnovation Platform, and academia's perspectives on the threats to the Wellbeing INnovation Platform.

The main **strengths** identified were well-coordinated activities with formalised structure, translating results into practice, and working with a community that has already been identified as

having certain needs. Major **weaknesses** were organisational weaknesses related to researchers and students, actual distance from university to projects, and community-based reasons that can weaken the projects. Major **opportunities** were opportunities in the development of teaching and learning of students and future research, and the opportunity of saving on resources and optimising community engagement activities. Major **threats** identified were conflicting perspectives on the setup of research teams, the communities' expectations and responsibilities, funding risks, and insufficient community engagement knowledge and training.

The study concluded that a formal platform facilitates the development of reciprocal relationships between communities and higher education institutions and recommends that members of the community be included in the formal platform on a permanent basis.

Key words: academia, community engagement, WIN Platform, perceived roles, SWOT analysis

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUTHeR	Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research
CE	Community Engagement
CDC	Centre for Disease Control
CES	Community-engaged scholarship
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHESP	Community Higher Education Service Partnership
CIR	Community Integrated Research
CTSA	Clinical & Transitional Science Awards
DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health
FCCD	Forum for Continuous Community Development
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HREC	Health Research Ethics Committee
IAU	International Association of Universities
JET	Joint Education Trust
KTP	Knowledge Transfer Programme
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NWU	North-West University
NWU-HREC	North West University Health Research Ethics Committee
NRF	National Research Fund

OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAR	Participatory Action Research
RDGC	Research Data Gatekeeper Committee
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SA	South Africa
SL	Service learning
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats
UCE	University-Community Engagement
UN	United Nations
UNU	United Nations University
USA	Unites States of America
WFCP	World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics
WIL	Work Integrated Learning
WIN	Wellbeing INnovation (Platform)

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction

Global views regarding the importance of social responsibility and responsiveness within the educational arena have shifted, with higher education institutions (HEIs) heeding the call to re-examine their roles and priorities and their role in contributing, not only to academia but also to positive social advancement (United Nations [UN], 2005:1). These institutions have acknowledged that they have a leading role to play beyond the traditional teaching, learning, and research silos (Council for Higher Education [CHE], 2010:3). As a result, the Department of Education (DoE), through the CHE, has been engaged in the ongoing conversation about community engagement and asked "what it is, what form it takes, and how it is best undertaken" (CHE, 2010:iii). Consequently, there has been a critical shift in thinking from academically focused mandates to ones driven by the goal of social development. This shift has become evident in the movement from community service and academically based community service to that of community engagement and service-learning (Preece, 2016:105). Furthermore, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) presents the concept of 'community engagement' as an initiative and process through which the expertise of the institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community. As such, community engagement (CE) takes a variety of forms, ranging from informal and relatively unstructured activities to formal, structured academic programmes.

Despite clear policy mandates that identify CE as an important criterion within the sphere of higher education, it seems to be neglected within South African practice (Wood *et al.*, 2015:5). There lacks a structural and functional framework to facilitate the conceptualisation of CE in higher education (Kruss, 2012:13). The limited activities that universities are involved in regarding CE, such as 'service-learning' are often uncoordinated and are not planned strategically (Hall, 2010:36). The confusion between the concepts of 'community engagement', 'community research', and 'community service' further adds to the uncertainty and misalignment of academic activities (Hall, 2010:48). As a result, there is much ambiguity in terms of expectations and actions from actors in academia (academic staff involved in CE) and actors in the community (CE-involved community members). This becomes critical when trying to understand and articulate the roles of various academic and community actors taking part in laying the groundwork for the development of a future framework for CE in South Africa. Therefore, this study sought to investigate academia's perceptions of community engagement activities and the perceived roles of different actors within the context of an existing CE

programme known as the Wellbeing INnovation (WIN) Platform at the North-West University (NWU).

1.2 Background of the study

This study was framed against the origins of CE, and its positioning within the South African higher education context. It highlights critical issues of CE within South African universities and the NWU in particular. This section gives the background to the study. Topics covered include the origins of CE; CE within the South African higher education arena; and the WIN Platform.

1.2.1 The origins of CE

CE is referred to as the coming together of a group of individuals seeking change and recognises the value of unity within groups with common interests, as well as the need for their active involvement in working towards, and encouraging both change and problem-solving (Centre for Disease Control [CDC], 2011:3). The concept of CE was developed to enhance the value of social responsibility and social development to achieve sustainable development (UN, 2005:1). Furthermore, it derived from the aspiration to mobilise the global community to develop a collective understanding, shared visions and goals for CE (UN, 2005:1). The Brisbane Declaration recognised CE as a process through which the needs, concerns, aspirations and values of communities and citizens become multi-level and multi-sectoral (UN, 2005:1). Furthermore, these aspects should be integrated into assessment, service-delivery, decision-making, policy planning, and development. Civil society organisations, industry and business involve community members, communities and other stakeholders in these activities (UN, 2005:1). Therefore, the concept CE is rooted in the ideals of democracy which encourage active participation, decentralised power, and shared decision-making (UN, 2005:1). Alternatively, CE has also been presented as an outcome achieved through the realization of five characteristics, namely: community involvement in assessment, inclusion in decision making, access to information, access to information, and local capacity to advocate to institutions and governing structures (CDC, 2011:23).

The underpinning of CE validates a number of critical understandings in the field that include value, location, listening, and partnerships (Jacob *et al.*, 2015:1; Kearney, 2015:33). These notions highlight the need for communities to genuinely prioritise areas that are of importance to them; the commonality of location within the community as opposed to creating action in areas physically external to them; the need to ‘hear’ the situation from the perspective of the

community; and finally the value of establishing partnerships between role players (CDC, 2011:26).

1.2.2 CE in higher education institutions

Various higher education institutions have recognised the need to add contextual values to their teaching/learning and research curriculums to create richer experiences for students (Glass *et al.*, 2011:12). One of the early ways to achieve this was through the concept of service-learning where a scenario was created that enabled students to learn within a community context (Kruss, 2012:8). Service-learning, according to Jacoby (2003:5), was defined as student education that meets academic objectives whilst addressing community needs and integrating human and community activities in the curriculum.

The recognised deficiencies in service-learning and the realisation of the need for greater involvement of academics in contributing to social development through social responsibility eventually saw the development and acceptance of the concept of CE within higher education (CHE, 2010:33). CE seeks to go beyond the parameters of concepts such as service-learning that place the leading role and much of the initiative on learning institutions to provide opportunities for students to learn while supposedly addressing community needs (CHE, 2010:3). This concept of CE goes beyond the notion of research or working in a community for academic needs, which was the main purpose embodied in service-learning, and creates mutual benefits for the community and not just regard them as the recipients of student-focused activities. There is a need for the active involvement of the community in voicing their needs, guiding and supporting the process of identifying local issues, and developing solutions (Hall, 2010:30). As a concept in higher education, CE seeks to move away from top-down learning to create scenarios wherein broader social development can be achieved through active social responsibility of academia and community based reciprocal partnerships.

CE in higher education institutions (HEIs) goes back 35 years ago when repeated efforts were made to stimulate HEIs in the United States of America (USA) to engage more actively with society (Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010:9). Higher education institutions asked themselves the question: “How well are we performing our obligations to the society that sustains us?” (Bok, 1990:105). In 1985, the presidents of Stanford, Brown, and Georgetown universities, along with the Education Commission of the States founded the Campus Compact, whose aim was to improve support structures for CE. These structures included offices and staff to coordinate CE efforts, training of CE academic role players to integrate community work into teaching and research, providing incentives such as scholarships, and promoting institutional will to prioritise CE (Campus Compact, 2020).

1.2.3 CE within South African higher education

In 1997, the White Paper on Higher Education served as the cornerstone for transforming the higher education system (DoE, 1997:1). The transformation included an outline of requirements that would contribute to a coordinated national system for higher education in South Africa (Hall, 2010:1). The HEQC identified CE as the link to 'quality education'. As a result, CE was considered a core function of higher education (Kearney, 2015:26; Mtawa *et al*., 2016:1). The White Paper on Education (1997) served as the landmark document which recognised CE as one of the three principles (along with teaching/learning and research) of the post-apartheid reconstruction of the South African higher education system (CHE, 2010:1-2). The higher education system in South Africa was aimed at correcting the inequalities experienced and practiced in the pre-democratic era (DoE,1997:3). It developed an agenda that sought to see the transformation of higher education from "segregated, inequitable and highly inefficient apartheid institutions, towards a single national system that serves both individual and collective needs" (CHE, 2010:2). According to the strategic framework for universities in South Africa 2015-2019, one of the strategic goals and objectives was to develop and contribute to strengthen teaching/learning, research and CE activities by developing and contributing to policy creation (Universities South Africa, 2014:5).It is acknowledged that the concept of CE varies across regions and even disciplines (Kruss, 2012:1; Mtawa *et al.,* 2016:127).Issues and ambiguities in community engagement in the South African higher education.

A survey conducted in South Africa between 1997 and 1998 by the Joint Education Trust (JET) to determine the impact of CE on higher education (Lazarus *et al*., 2008:60) provided an overview of "*extra-curricular volunteer programmes, work study, community outreach, internship, and placements that form part of a formal curriculum*" (CHE, 2010:28). The survey results showed that a variety of operational CE projects were initiated, and the projects were managed and coordinated by the academia and students of HEIs (Lazarus *et al*., 2008:60). Lazarus (2007:93-94) reported that despite the inclusion of CE within the mission statements, only a single HEI out of a total of 36 operationalised it in their planning. While there was evidence of CE activity, it was not monitored, with some institutions doing no more than conducting internal audits or compiling inventories of ongoing CE activities. CE was also not institutionalised and was driven by volunteerism, with foreign students taking advantage of this as an opportunity to enter South Africa. Lastly, the study found that activities were not centralised and no senate committees were responsible for CE (CHE, 2010:3).A further complication relates to the term 'community', which might refer to anything from a university's

staff and students and a community of practice to civic organisations, schools, townships, citizens at large and "the people" in general (Hall, 2010:2). The term "community engagement" was previously referred to or labelled as community service, outreach, and community learning (Hlalele *et al*., 2015:179). As a result, these concepts are often used interchangeably and thus the idea of working in communities is confused with the notion of working 'with' communities as partners. As such, the role of actors involved in university CE (UCE) is often unclear and undefined.

1.2.4 Community engagement at the NWU

On 1 January 2004, the NWU formally came into existence as an HEI, as part of the South African government's plan to transform higher education. Apart from research and teaching and learning, the university also engages in CE, thus making teaching and learning, research, and CE its three pillars. The university strives to follow Boyer's (1990:xii) proposed model of scholarship. Boyer (1990:xii) posited that the work of the professoriate can be thought as having four separate, yet overlapping functions, namely: the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and, lastly, the scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990:16). These functions can be defined as follows: firstly, the scholarship of *discovery* comes the closest to what academia refer to when they speak of 'research'; secondly, *integration* means the connectedness across disciplines and illuminating data in a revealing way; thirdly, the *application* of knowledge refers to the manner in which knowledge can be applied to consequential problems, it is the dialogue between theory and practice; and, finally, teaching is a dynamic endeavour involving metaphors, analogies and images that build bridges between the understanding of the teacher and the student's learning (Boyer, 1990:17).

The university defines CE as staff and student activities aimed at supporting or uplifting society or individuals in need of assistance or engagement (NWU, 2016:2). To determine whether an activity meets prerequisites for true CE, the following criteria are used: the particular activity should be interactive (between the identified group/s in a community); benefit/s (needs) for both the community and the university must be identified; and, lastly, the interaction should be sustainable within a mutually defined partnership. It is important to note that the term "communities", as used above, refers to groups both within the university (such as staff and students), as well as outside.

1.2.5 Wellbeing INnovation (WIN) Platform

The NWU initiated one of the larger CE programmes in the country in the form of the WIN Platform as part of its dedication to UCE. This CE programme was implemented in the

Vaalharts Region of the North West and Northern Cape Provinces which was identified as highly vulnerable by the President's office during 2011-2013. Findings the Faculty of Health Sciences of the NWU initiated the WIN Platform in 2011 with the aim of 'creating sustainable livelihoods and promoting healthy lifestyles' (Sebeco, 2018:4; NWU, 2019d). This collaboration included various stakeholders like Vaalharts Water and the Phokwane municipality and served as an umbrella for a series of sub-projects. The initiative represented different disciplines with a strong emphasis on CE and community-based research to improve rural health and well-being, and mainly targeted resource-poor communities in Vaalharts (Sebeco, 2018:4).

The WIN Platform led 13 sub-projects and was recognised as the flagship for CE at the NWU Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR). The projects have been divided across three focal areas: 1) community engaging research, 2) service learning/work-integrated learning, and 3) skills development projects (Faculty of Education, 2020).

In 2011, the AUTHeR took over the leadership of the WIN Platform AUTHeR. This Platform provides opportunities for longer-term studies of UCE activities such as participatory and intervention research, service-learning and income-generating projects based on inter-sectoral partnerships (Sebeco, 2018:37; NWU, 2019c). In 2014, the university's extended involvement included nine disciplines and three research units (Sebeco, 2018:5). Various disciplines, such as nursing, psychology, consumer sciences, biokinetics, recreation and sports sciences, urban and regional planning, economics, and environmental science have all been involved as inter-sectoral partners (Sebeco, 2018:5).

1.3 Problem statement

The literature points to the fact that there is a lack of a structural and functional framework for the conceptualisation of CE in higher education and suggests that further investigations be undertaken (Kruss, 2012:13). Research by Hall (2010:48) concluded that academic activities and community expectations are misaligned as a result of confusion and the incorrect interchange of the concepts of 'community engagement', 'community research', and 'community service'. According to Pasque *et al*. (2005:11), there are often differing motivations for engaging in CE, with academia tending to be more interested in developing lines of research that enrich their intellectual work and wanting to see this contributing to community wellbeing than listening and absorbing information about the community's motivations and expectations. As a result, there is much ambiguity in terms of expectations and actions from actors in academia (academic staff involved in CE) and those in the community (CE-involved community members). This diversity of actions and perceptions has contributed to why CE

differs across institutions, disciplines, and implementation practices in South Africa (Hall, 2010:2; Mtawa *et al*., 2016:127). Often, the idea of working 'in' communities is confused with the notion of working 'with' communities as partners. As such, the role of actors involved in UCE is often unclear and undefined.

The WIN Platform is a flagship CE platform within the Faculty of Health Sciences and the NWU. Considering the variety of projects and established networks between the university and community, it served as ideal phenomena to explore what academia's perceive as CE activities and what are the roles that they fulfil within the WIN Platform.

1.4 Research question

This study sought to answer the question: *What are the perceptions of the academia of their CE activities and roles of different actors within the WIN Platform?*

1.5 Research objectives

1.5.1 Research aim

The study aimed to explore and describe the perceptions of academia (such as lecturers, researchers and support staff) of their CE activities and roles of different actors within the WIN Platform.

1.5.2 Research objectives

- To explore and describe the perceptions of academia of CE activities within the WIN Platform by applying a strategic auditing tool in the form of a strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis.
- To explore and describe the roles of different actors within the WIN Platform as perceived by academia.

1.6 Definition of key concepts

1.6.1 Community engagement

According to McIlrath *et al*. (2012:12), CE is "*the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities, for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity*". Jacob *et al.* (2015:1) further built on this concept of creating sustainable unions between communities and HEIs by suggesting that CE involves "*sustainable networks, partnerships, communication media and activities between*

Higher Education Institutions and communities at local, regional, national and international levels". Later research by Kearney (2015:33) supports the idea of CE as a participatory process that endeavours to establish relationships based on respect and reciprocity.

The NWU defines CE as "*activities performed by the staff and students, primarily aimed at uplifting or supporting society and or individuals in need of assistance or engagement*", to facilitate cooperation between communities and the universities, as well as provide "*the means whereby both parties can actively discover knowledge [and] teach and learn from one another in a reciprocal, mutually beneficial manner*" (NWU, 2016:2). The study will use the latter definition of CE.

1.6.2 Academia

Academia refers to NWU lecturers, researchers, support staff, and students involved in the WIN Platform coordinated by AUTHeR, within the Faculty of Health Sciences of the NWU.

1.6.3 Perceptions

The Cambridge dictionary (2020) defines perception as "*a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem*", which, in this study, refers to what academia belief or opine about the NWU's WIN Platform based on how things seem.

1.6.4 Community engagement activities

The university's CE activities are as follows: engaged research and innovation activities (which include both for-profit and not-for-profit activities); engaged teaching and learning activities; and, lastly, volunteerism (NWU, 2019a:3-4). For-profit research and innovation activities involve research and innovation types of engagement, which include contact research and innovation, consultations, associate and subsidiary companies, internal corporate ventures, and technology licensing. On the other hand, not-for-profit research activities focus on addressing the needs of society and barely succeed in recovering costs. Furthermore, these activities are conducted in collaboration with external community partners and are also referred to as participatory action research (PAR), which can feed back into the curriculum or link with aspects of students' training (NWU, 2019a:3-4). Engaged teaching-learning activities are mostly not-for-profit activities and include outreach development activities within a recruitment focus (aimed more directly at students to attract them to university, even though the scope of activities goes beyond), and community services and outreach (including advice and sharing of expertise, as well as similar but voluntary and uncompensated activities provided under the auspices of the NWU University). In addition, it may also involve work-

integrated learning (WIL) and service-learning, known also as subsidised development engagement (NWU, 2019a:4).

Volunteerism involves services which are repetitive, short-term, and mostly philanthropic, and not regulated by the university. Examples of such activities include enablement, empowerment, development, and non-discipline-based outreach activities provided by staff and students to local communities in which the University's campuses are based (NWU, 2019a:4).

1.6.5 Roles

Roles of academia are to teach, conduct research, and provide services to communities. These actions are done in a reciprocal, mutually beneficial way, and in an environment of "sharing of expertise" (NWU, 2019a:4).

1.6.6 Actors[1]

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines an 'actor' as one that takes part in any affair: participant. In this study, actors are communities (external) and academia – teachers, researchers, students, and the support staff and structures of the NWU.

1.7 Theoretical assumptions

Bender (2008:89) proposed that to gain a better understanding of CE within HEIs, it can be viewed in terms of three approaches as follows: The silo approach, the intersectional approach, and engaged scholarship. These approaches will be discussed as possible models that better explain CE in terms of HEIs in South Africa.

1.7.1 The Silo Approach

The silo approach is described as the presence of barriers to exchange and communication (Bento *et al.*, 2020:1). It must be understood that the silo approach is not a model developed by anyone but a description of relationships in organisational settings. Bender (2008:128) notes that many institutions still perceive CE and service as mere add-ons, nice-to-haves or philanthropic activities rather than integrating it as a core function in the academic field. According to Bender (2008:88), HEIs have three roles, namely: research, teaching and learning; and community service, and pursue each relatively independently of the others. As such, the silo approach (Bento *et al*., 2020:1) views CE as being external to the traditional

[1] 'Actors' is used interchangeably with 'Role-players'.

teaching, learning and research roles of universities. This independence creates a context in which CE is seen as a volunteer activity or outreach. Another factor that reinforces the silo approach is that often service, along with teaching and research, is not a key indicator of performance for the selection and promotion of staff in South African universities. Furthermore, within this setup, more resources (including money, staff and time) are allocated to research, followed by teaching and learning, while a relatively small portion is allocated for community service (Nhamo, 2012:129). The Silo Approach is significant in the context of CE in South African HEIs. It is the first port of call by any HEI for introspection – to determine that the HEI is indeed not pursuing CE as relatively independent of its scholarly pursuits.

1.7.2 The Intersectional Model (Bringle, Games & Malloy, 1999)

The Intersectional Model was developed by Bringle *et al.* (1999, cited by Bender, 2008:89). According to this model, HEIs have three roles, namely: teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. This model recognises an intersection between teaching and learning, research, and CE. It surmises that where roles intersect, there will be some form of community-based research and service-learning; furthermore, where there is no intersection, volunteerism and community outreach continue as separate activities. The Intersectional Model is presented in Figure 1.1 below:

Figure 1.1: The Intersectional Model

(Adapted from Bringle *et al*, 1999)

The Intersectional Model regards CE as an inevitable activity, directly or indirectly, resulting from the intersection of the three primary roles of HEIs (namely, teaching and learning, research and community service) (Bender, 2008:88; CHE, 2010:100).

The Intersectional Model is significant to this study because it assumes that HEIs are active in engaging communities to some extent through the provision of teaching and learning,

community-based research, and volunteerism (Sebeco, 2018:11). The distinguishing feature of this model is that it does not require a radical shift in the core functions and activities of universities. The two assumptions of this conceptualisation of CE are that all teaching and research involve engagement with the community (Thomson *et al*., 2010:17). The Intersectional Model and its assumptions have been criticized for its lack of emphasis to make CE a participatory process, which is reciprocal and mutually beneficial; i.e., not to create knowledge *about* the public, but *with* the public (Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010:14) and also for not considering is as a core function of higher education (Kearney, 2015:33; Mtawa *et al*., 2016:130).

1.7.3 Engaged scholarship (Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010:16)

Glass and Fitzgerald (2010:14) posited that engagement with communities and the core missions of research, teaching, and service cannot be separated. Therefore, CE is a participatory process, meaning that it is reciprocal and mutually beneficial. This means that by its very nature, it does not focus on creating knowledge *about* the public, but rather, aims to create it *with* the public. Community engagement is depicted in Figure 1-2 below.

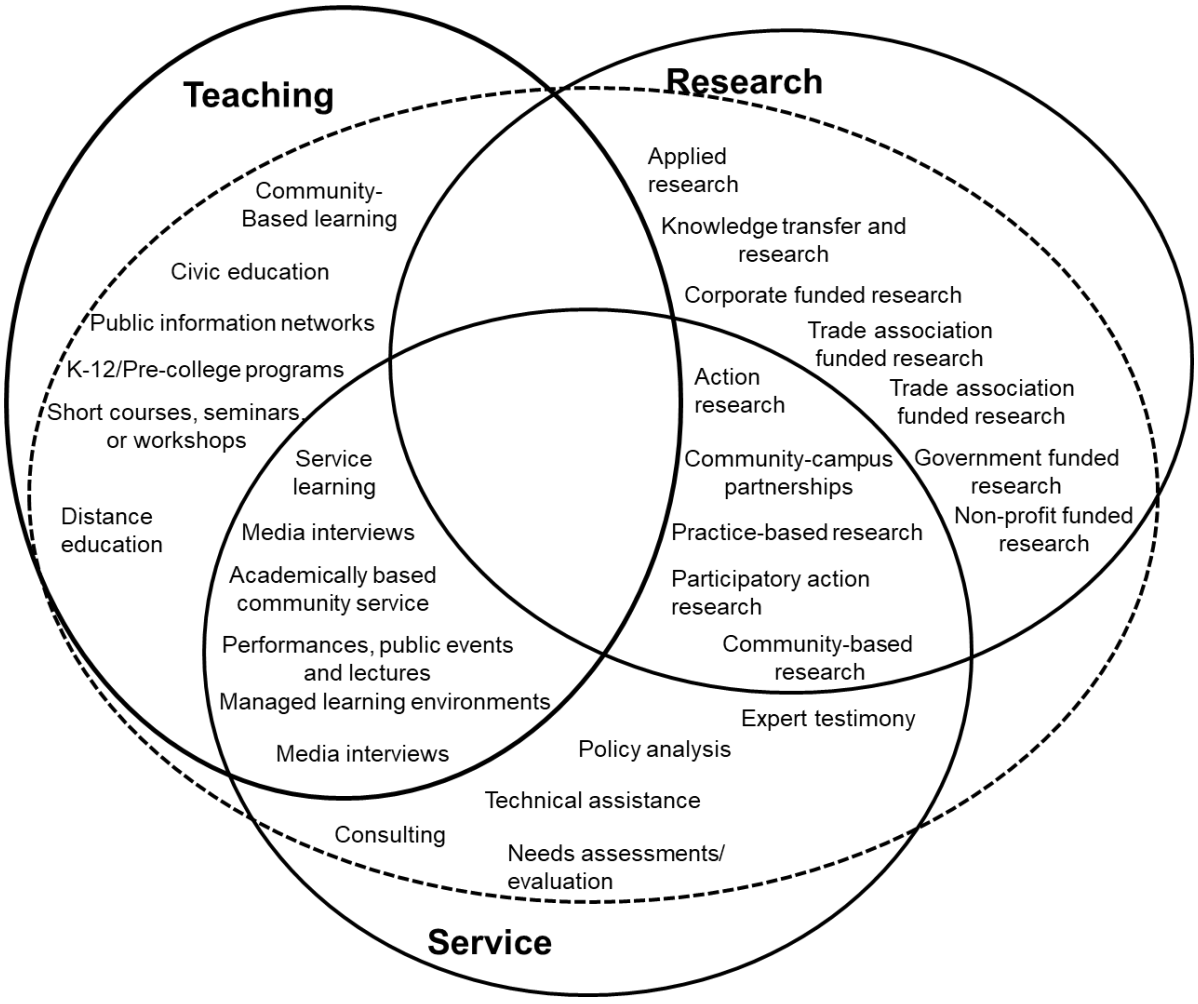

Figure 1-2: Examples of a continuum of engaged scholarship across teaching, research, and service

(Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010:16)

Also, in the USA, the Kellogg Commission (2001:13) described this type of engagement as going well beyond conventional outreach and the inherited concepts that emphasise a one-way process in which expertise is transferred by the university to its constituents. It further explained that embedded in the engagement ideal was a commitment to sharing and reciprocity – partnerships, two-way streets, with each partner respecting the other and bringing something on the table. Pasque *et al*. (2005:11) noted that academia tends to be more interested in what they want and need from communities as opposed to listening and absorbing information about the community's motivations and expectations. Moreover, the authors noted that there were often power imbalances between communities and HEIs. Based on these relational dynamics between communities and HEIs, nine (9) guiding principles that define an engaged institution were proposed by Schlake (2015:2-3). These principles are divided into three categories and are listed as follows:

1. Before starting to work with a community:

    - Define purposes, goals and populations.
    - Know the community.

2. Items necessary for engagement:

    - Go to the community.
    - Look for collective self-determination.

3. Succeeding in the engagement process:

    - Community partnerships are critical.
    - Respect community diversity and culture.
    - Mobilise community assets and develop their capacity.
    - Maintain flexibility.
    - Commitment to collaboration.

This approach also acknowledges that the university does not just produce graduates but also prepares them to be responsible citizens (Pasque *et al.,* 2005:40). Furthermore, it encourages more in-depth social problem-solving by utilising inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary

collaboration between academic actors and communities (Bender, 2008:90; Lang *et al.,* 2012:1).

1.8 Power and participation as core elements in university-community engagement

The three models outlined above, which seek to explain CE and the nature thereof in HEI, are influenced by underlying elements of power and participation (Bender, 2008:90). The idea of power refers to the ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others through force, coercion, or hegemony (Williams & Nunn, 2016:1). In the context of higher education, these institutions are centres of highly educated persons who, through formal education, have access to greater knowledge and skills than many community members, leading to unequal power relationships as communities may view academia as coming from a seemingly wealthy and privileged context (Pasque *et al.,* 2005:11). The allocation of power within UCE relationships affects the nature of the experience and the participation of role-players. This is often the case since most UCE project activities are initiated and developed by HEIs, which wield a degree of power over communities (Williams & Nunn, 2016:1). This imbalance ultimately undermines the UCE process by failing to create an environment where HEIs and communities share mutual power relations and active participation to achieve sustainable social change (Kearney, 2015:33).

1.9 Research methodology

Please refer to Chapter 3 for a comprehensive description of the research methodology. This study used a qualitative approach to ascertain perceptions of academia involved in the WIN Platform. The researchers imposed an existing theoretical framework in the form of the SWOT tool on the data during data gathering and analysis. According to this SWOT framework (Dergisi, 2017:995), an organisation (such as the WIN Platform) exists in two environments: one is internal (being in itself), and the other is external (outside). For strategic management practices, it is necessary to analyse these environments. This internal and external analysis is called a SWOT analysis (Dergisi, 2017:995). By conducting an external analysis, an organisation identifies the critical threats and opportunities in its competitive environment. Internal analysis, on the other hand, helps an organisation identify its organisational strengths and weaknesses. Based on SWOT analysis, organisations can choose the most appropriate strategy. One of the major advantages of SWOT analyses is that they present the opportunity to limit the agenda in the steps of information gathering and interpretation. Such an analysis can help organisations uncover opportunities that they can take advantage of and can eliminate threats through understanding weaknesses.

According to the NWU's website (WIN Platform, 2020), the WIN Platform has grown in the past few years to include other faculties from the NWU who have joined the Health Sciences disciplines to use the Platform to empower communities. This collaboration includes various stakeholders from academia and communities and strives to develop long-term effective inter-sectoral partnerships with communities, the private sector, and local governments. Since its inception, the Platform has not been evaluated along the lines of the SWOT analysis, and it is against this background that the SWOT framework has been considered for this study.

1.10 Population and sampling

The study focused on a selected group of people according to its aims and objectives. The following sections describe the procedures used to identify and select the participants. The population is defined as the entire set of cases that are of interest to the researcher, from which the researcher draws a sample (Taherdoost, 2016:18). The population in this study included all the academic actors who had been involved in the WIN Platform, including researchers, project managers and administrative staff, students and lecturers. The study included academic actors from the Potchefstroom Campus of the NWU where the coordination of the WIN Platform is based. This target group had to be able to share information based on their perceptions due to their involvement or interest in the WIN Platform. Because of this specific target group, the population of potential participants was 45 (N).

Criterion purposive sampling was used to select participants for the study. Sometimes called judgmental sampling, this uses deliberate selection for inclusion in the sample to provide important information that cannot be obtained from other choices (Taherdoost, 2016:23); in other words, it is used to obtain cases deemed information-rich for the study (Sandelowski, 2000:338). Due to time and availability constraints, only academic actors were available for interviews. There was a total of 45 (N=45) potential academic actors that formed the population, and, out of these only, nine (n=9) availed themselves for interviews. The sample size was small despite numerous efforts to invite potential participants. This was partially because the data gathering occurred during a difficult time in the academic calendar when researchers and supervisors and lecturers had to finalise projects.

1.11 Access to participants

The researcher requested Dr Nicole Claasen, the former WIN Platform coordinator at the time of data gathering, for permission to access the list of academic actors for the study. Dr Claasen compiled a list of all actors involved in the WIN Platform and made it available to the interviewer (not the researcher) through the support of the Community Integrated Research

(CIR) office, following the approval by the Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC) (see Appendix B) and the Research Data Gatekeeper Committee (RDGC) of the NWU (see Appendix C). The CIR office, a logistics and administrative service within AUTHeR, served in the project management of the WIN Platform. The researcher did not have direct access to the list. This list of the involved academic actors served as the source for the research sample. The signing of informed consent before data gathering could happen.

1.12 Inclusion criteria

- Academic actors (male and female), such as researchers, lecturers, support (administrative) staff and students who were involved with CE through the WIN Platform at the NWU (Potchefstroom) between 2011 to date of data gathering were eligible for inclusion as participants in this study. Also eligible were various academic actors who were or had taken part in CE projects that were not part of the WIN Platform and were also familiar with the Platform.

- Participants had to be proficient in the use of English language because English was the official mode of instruction of the WIN Platform and was utilised during data gathering.

- Participants had to be willing to participate voluntarily in digitally voice-recorded interviews.

1.13 Data gathering

Data was gathered through semi-structured face-to-face interviews of academia involved in the WIN Platform and related CE projects. Participants were invited to share their perceptions of the following aspects: their roles in the CE projects they were involved in; the types of projects they were; important role-players on both the university's and community's side; and, lastly, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a platform such as the WIN Platform. These interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim by the researcher (See Appendix F for sample transcription). This also gave the researcher an opportunity to familiarise herself with the data. In this study, an experienced interviewer conducted the semi-structured interviews sessions on behalf of the researcher. There were no hierarchical relationships with any of the participants. The interviewer was utilised since at that stage the researcher was abroad, and support was required.

1.14 Data analysis

The researchers imposed an existing theoretical framework in the form of the SWOT tool on the data during data gathering and analysis. Atlas.TI software version 8 for qualitative data

analysis was used to analyse the collected data. Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006:77-101), was used. Thematic analysis is described as a process whereby patterns or themes within qualitative data are identified (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017:3352). The six steps of thematic analysis are listed below:

- Step 1: Became familiar with the data. This entailed reading and rereading the transcripts and taking initial notes of early impressions.
- Step 2: Generated initial codes. Coding was used to reduce data into small chunks of meaning. Atlas.TI was used to generate codes. The process of generating codes is comprehensively described in chapter 3.
- Step 3: Searched for themes. In this step, codes were examined to ascertain which could be grouped into particular themes.
- Step 4: Reviewed themes. In this stage, all the data that was relevant to a theme was gathered to determine the following: whether it supports the theme; whether the themes did not overlap; and, whether there were themes within themes (sub-categories).
- Step 5: Defined the themes. In this step, the themes were refined to reflect the essence of each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006:92) and how they relate to each other.
- Step 6: Writing up. This was the point where findings were integrated into this dissertation format.

1.15 Rigour

Rigour in qualitative research ensures the stability of the research findings (Noble & Smith, 2015:1). Rigour is also referred to as trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is made up of four parts, namely: *credibility*, which attempts to demonstrate that a true picture of what is being investigated is being presented; *transferability*, which allows the reader to decide whether the findings can be applied to another setting due to similarities; *dependability*, which relates more to reliability in quantitative research; and *confirmability*, which relates to steps taken in the data analysis to minimise bias (Shenton, 2004:72). Guba (1981:80) proposed four constructs for assuring rigour in a qualitative study. These are presented in Table 1.1 below, together with parallel naturalistic terms.

Table 1-1: Scientific and naturalistic terms defining the four criteria of trustworthiness (Guba, 1981:80)

Criterion	Scientific term	Naturalistic term
Truth value	Internal validity	Credibility
Applicability	External validity Generalisability	Transferability
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability

It has been argued that ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:296). The authors proposed provisions that may be made by researchers to promote trustworthiness of the results. Table 1.2 presents the measures taken in this study to ensure rigour.

Table 1-2: Rigour for a qualitative study adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985:289-327)

Criteria	Strategies to enhance trustworthiness	Application in this study
Credibility (which attempted to demonstrate that a true picture of what was being investigated was presented)	• Established rapport before commencing interviews. • Developed a trusting relationship with the interviewee (willingness to exchange information). • Expressed compassion and empathy during interviews	• Experienced interviewer. • Co-coder used to refine codes and consensus reached • Used literature to guide the development of codes
Conformability (which involved taking steps to ensure that the findings of the study were the result of the perceptions and ideas of the participants, and are not influenced by the researcher's preferences and characteristics)	• Notes recorded in a reflective journal. • An audit trail was used to capture the data gathering and analysis processes. • Described participants' demographics. • Utilised an independent co-coder to verify coding development and consistency. • Findings represented gathered data accurately and were not biased by the researcher, which was evidenced by the inclusion of direct quotations from participants.	• Used Atlas.TI version 8 to include a reflective journal and create an audit trail. • Included in the field notes. • Used external individuals to help reduce bias and ensure consistency. • Used Atlas.TI to enable the unbiased representation of findings.
Dependability (which attempted to demonstrate repeatability by reporting the processes within the study in detail)	• Established an audit trail described as the study's methodology.	• Used Atlas.TI to enable an audit trail. • Conducted a thick description of the realization of data gathering and analysis.
Transferability (which increased the prospect of a similar study being conducted elsewhere by providing enough contextual information about the fieldwork sites)	• Criterion purposeful sampling. • Maintained a reflective journal. • Provided enough study details so that recreation could occur. • Rich description of the research context.	• Ensured that participants adhere to the inclusion criteria • Comprehensively described the research setting • Described the coding process • Audit trail in the form of recordings transcripts, and the entire data analysis procedure • Experienced interviewer

1.16 Ethical considerations

Please refer to Chapter 3 for a comprehensive description of the ethical considerations adhered to in this study. Research ethics analyses ethical and legal questions to ensure that participants are protected (Moodley, 2015:317). The Department of Health states that the core ethical principles are scientific merit and integrity, respect, distributive justice, and beneficence (DoH, 2015:2). Thus, the following steps were taken to ensure ethical practice: Approval for the research had to be obtained from the NWU-HREC (NWU-00023-19-A1) (see Appendix B) and the AUTHeR Scientific Committee before the commencement of the research. This was to ensure that all aspects of the research proposal would adhere to the ethics surrounding the research of the study. The candidates selected for this research were required to make an autonomous decision to participate, based on the information provided in the informed consent form and the information given by the researcher, and there were no incentives to persuade the candidates to participate (Britz & Le Roux-Kemp, 2012:746-748).

Ethical considerations also require the informed consent of participants and to make participants aware of their right to refuse or withdraw from the research at any time they so wish (DoH, 2015:27). The mediators sent an invitation to potential participants before the commencement of any data-gathering activities. An independent person then provided a copy of the researcher's written informed consent letter to the invitees to review. This was done in an adequate time to allow the invitees two weeks to review the document, ask questions, and to consider whether they want to participate. This document detailed, in appropriate-level language, the nature of the study, the RDGC's approval (Appendix C), NWU-HREC approval, the name of the researcher, her contact details, the type of involvement being solicited (namely, for semi-structured interviews), the time commitment required, and the proposed venue and dates. The independent person was responsible for administering the informed consent form and answering any questions that arose. The mediators then set up appointments with each willing participant according to the latter's convenience. The consent forms were signed before the interviews in a private area, which was either at the allocated conference room or the office of the participant. Both the independent individual and the participants agreed to conduct interview sessions on the same day. The independent individual handled the administration of all the forms and for directing all queries accordingly. It was the independent interviewer who, therefore, obtained informed consent. This action was necessary to ensure that every participant was fully aware of what would be expected from them during the study, in terms of the risks and benefits, as well as the concept of voluntary participation. If participants were uncomfortable with any of the questions or the direction of the interview, they could refuse to answer or remain silent as they saw fit.

Ethical principles of beneficence and non-maleficence were also adhered to in conducting this research. The ethical principle of beneficence is merely doing good or ensuring that others benefit (Kinsinger, 2009:44). Non-maleficence is an ethical principle that prevents harm or ensures that no harm is caused. This study carried a minimal risk in terms of physical, psychological, or economic harm.

1.17 Risk-Benefit analysis of the study

Benefits and risks of any research must be determined at the onset of any study (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi & Wright, 2010). According to Botma et al. (2010:351), the term "benefit" refers to positive output gained from the research study. A "risk" is defined by Botma et al. (2016:351) as a "probability that harm can occur". Table 1-3 details a Risk Analysis completed for the study.

The participants did not receive any benefits during the course of the study; however, their input has been incorporated into the compilation of study findings. Future academic research can benefit from the results of this study as it provides greater insight into the role and perceptions of academia in CE. The HEIs in South Africa can benefit from the direct results of the study and its contributions to the broader framework. This study was a minimal risk study as the benefits outweighed the risks in this context.

Table 1-3: Risk-Benefit analysis of the study

Types of risks	Example	Probability (Mark with a √ if the probability exists)	Magnitude:1– mild discomfort 5– severe trauma	Justification	Precaution
Physical harm	Fatigue	√	1	Participant could have felt tired due to interviews that were scheduled in the afternoon and could have felt fatigue to answer questions that required a dense description.	Interviews were not scheduled for longer than 60 minutes and participants were allowed to take a break and walk briefly to recuperate
	Physical discomfort	√	1	Participants could have experienced slight physical discomfort due to being seated	Participants were allowed to stand or walk briefly whilst talking in the office where the

				during the interview.	interview was conducted to relieve the discomfort of sitting.
Psychol-ogical harm	Emotional discomfort	√	1	Participants may not have felt entirely uncomfortable to share their experiences or describe their roles in depth.	Participants were reassured that all information would be anonymized; and that a short break could be requested should they feel the need to gather their thoughts and feelings.
	Feelings of deception	√	1	Participants may have felt that they were entitled to benefits by sharing or participating in the research study.	The consent form clearly indicated that no remuneration or benefits would be afforded to the participants and that their participation was voluntary.
	Coercion	√	1	Participants may have felt coerced.	The researcher ensured that participants did not feel coerced by reiterating the voluntary nature of the study and the rights of the participants to withdraw without prejudice.
	Emotional distress	√	1	Participants may have felt unsettled or uncomfortable about sharing their perceptions of how they truly felt about the	Participants were informed prior to the interview about the study being conducted and were

				CE activities at the NWU.	asked to sign a consent form that stated he/she could withdraw from the study at any given time without being victimised or punished should they be unable to overcome any emotional distress.
	Boredom	√	1	Participants may have felt the questions being asked during the interview were boring and that the interview was long.	The interviews did not last longer than 60 minutes.
	Inconvenience	√	1	Participants would perhaps not always be available due to their working and demanding schedule.	Most of the participants were at the NWU and an interview schedule and prior arrangements were made for the interview.
	Self-disclosure	√	1	Participants may have felt that their personal information might be used in the study.	The consent form as well as reassurance from the interviewer that personal details such as names and positions would be omitted mitigated doubts that names of participants or other information about them

					would be disclosed
	Embarrassment	√	1	Participants may have felt shy or embarrassed to answer questions.	The questions asked were based on the research study only.
	Anxiety	√	1	Anxiety may have arisen for some participants due to having the interview conducted, which may have been considered intimidating or overwhelming.	Participants were made comfortable as the interview was conducted at their office or a vacant office at AUTHeR. The participants were reassured and made comfortable by the interviewer, which created an open and welcoming atmosphere when communicating and conducting the interview.
	Loss of privacy and confidentiality	√	1	Participants may have felt afraid that their names or positions would be revealed in the study.	All data obtained was anonymized and managed confidentially. Data was managed according the AUTHeR data management policy.
Social harm	Loss of freedom of choice	√	1	Participants may have felt obligated to participate in the study.	All participants were issued with a consent form that clearly indicated that their participation in the study was voluntary.

1.18 Summary

The first part of this chapter presented an overview of the study background as well as the research objectives and research problem, while the second part presented the research methodology that was followed. The concept of CE in HEIs was introduced. The three pillars of CE in HEIs were identified as teaching and learning, research, and service. It was further noted that the process should be participatory, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial. Regarding CE within the South African higher education arena, it was noted that there were power imbalances between communities and the university, with the university seen as coming from a privileged and more powerful position. Three philosophical approaches to CE were also discussed, namely: The Silo approach, Intersectional Model, and engaged scholarship. Lastly, CE in the context of NWU was discussed, and the WIN Platform introduced.

The second part of the chapter discussed the research design and methodology employed in this study. A qualitative design was employed to ascertain perceptions of academia involved in the WIN Platform at the NWU using the SWOT tool for framing questions. Method of data analysis employed (deductive thematic analysis) was also discussed. Other topics discussed included access to participants and the inclusion criteria for participants. Rigour was also discussed as well as measures taken in this study to ensure it using recommendations by Lincoln and Guba (1985:289-327). Finally, ethical considerations were discussed. In the following chapter, Chapter 2, a literature review of CE within higher education and specific to the NWU, is presented.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A literature review is defined as analysis, critical review, and understanding of research done previously on a specific topic of interest (Creswell, 2013:51). This study covered several relevant areas in this literature review. These include studies of the concept of CE, its importance, values of CE, principles of CE, CE concerning the South African context, CE in terms of South Africa's higher education settings, the associated barriers and enablers, and, lastly, CE specific to the NWU. International debates surrounding the conceptualisation and implementation of CE have influenced how CE was introduced and developed within South African (SA) HEIs. This resulted in differing perceptions of CE as a concept and has contributed to why (and how) it differs across institutions, disciplines, and implementation practices in South Africa (Hall, 2010:2; Mtawa *et al*., 2016:127). To understand this concept as it relates to HEIs in South Africa, it has become critical to examine CE practices to determine how (and if) they are aligned with national expectations as informed by the Council on Higher Education (CHE).

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to CE in HEIs and the NWU's WIN Platform. First, components of CE are discussed, which include methods, standards, partnership structures, implementation and roles of the involved. Next, the benefits of CE are discussed. This is followed by principles of CE; a global perspective of CE in HEIs; origins of CE in South Africa; and CE at the NWU.

2.2 Components of community engagement

Community engagement involves various kinds of components which can be employed for the evaluation of community engagement initiatives. These may include methods, standards, partnership structures, implementation and roles of the involved (academic, university, community, and service partners), the manner of student assessment, cost implications, benefits and contributions to the production of knowledge (CHE, 2004:15). Each of these components and their contributions to CE is discussed below.

2.2.1 Methods

The HEQC has devised an audit criterion to assist in ensuring that the components of CE mentioned above are implemented, adhered to, or conducted concerning CE activities (CHE, 2004:5). This method of evaluation is done via an audit criterion that further investigates the integration of learning, teaching, research and CE and the quality of this infusion (Slamat,

2014:231). Other audited areas include policies and procedures, strategies of implementing CE, quality improvement plans and methods for CE, and learning and development in the field of CE. These institutional audits, which are conducted through the HEQC, are comprised of a panel of experts and conduct peer assessments internally (CHE, 2004:16). The results provide the institution with identified strengths, areas that require improvement, and recommendations that it can consider implementing to ensure compliance.

2.2.2 Standards

The resulting audits by HEQC are aligned with international standards to standardise the way CE activities are conducted in HEI`s. Moreover, such CE policies and procedures within HEIs provide a framework dictating how CE activities should be conducted (CHE, 2004:15). Consequently, relevant structures must be prepared and functional. Furthermore, all stakeholders must be able to identify and understand their roles and responsibilities to ensure that a standardised approach to CE activities is implemented within their specific institution.

2.2.3 Partnership structures

To ensure successful collaboration in CE approaches, HEIs must have effective and collaborative partnership structures that connect them with other role-players such as communities, other organisations, and the government (Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010:16). Since, trust and transparency are two necessary building blocks upon which an effective partnership can be built (Bhagwan, 2017:178), the university is required to present both the objectives of and reasons for the collaboration to create an interactive and cooperative atmosphere in which partnerships may flourish and succeed. In addition to the two above-mentioned elements, successful collaborations also require a sense of reciprocity. Janke and Clayton (2011:3), define reciprocity as the respect as well as the valuing of the knowledge, perspective, and resources contributed by each partner to the collaboration. Effective CE, therefore, requires the collaboration of various stakeholders to augment value through shared knowledge, resources, financial assistance, and access to facilities (Beckett, 2015:170).

2.2.4 Implementation of community engagement

According to Lazarus *et al.* (2008:68), the level of progress in the university has significantly been influenced by the implementation of CE, as seen in how it is designed and developed through one of the relevant theoretical models, namely the silo approach (Bender, 2008:127), the Intersection Model (Bringle *et al*., 1999; Thomson *et al*., 2010:17), or engaged scholarship (Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010:16). For this reason, an assessment policy should be in place that outlines or guides the particular institution in terms of how to identify and implement effective CE (CHE, 2004:18). A

practical example of this is illustrated as follows: in order to successfully complete the required CE components, HEI-students should have to pass certain curriculum-integrated modules and certificates in their studies. Furthermore, the implementation of CE strategies and approaches should be assessed by various means, such as feedback surveys from students, assessments form for distance learners, implementation surveys, or questionnaires for academia, to ascertain their effectiveness and success. Moreover, the CHE mentions procedures that reflect assessments done on academic staff by reviewing their competence, training done, and their ability to improve and review current practices and methods of implementing CE strategies. Lazarus (2007:94) further states that at some institutions additional policies have been developed in critical areas such as 'risk management' for placing students in the community and have developed criteria for 'staff promotion and rewards' related to service-learning (SL) and CE activities.

2.2.5 Roles of involved parties

There are five main roles into which individual role-players can be sub-divided, namely, the university, academia, students, community, and, lastly, service partners. Sebeco (2018:12) attempts to define the roles as reflecting the tasks and activities assigned to the various participating stakeholders of CE programmes. The university's particular role is to ensure the existence of a university community engagement (UCE) policy; in addition, this policy must explicitly reflect the institutions' objectives, vision, and goals (CHE, 2004:18). Stakeholders and communities must draft policies to ensure effectiveness, compliance, and support (Sebeco, 2018:14). This resulting CE policy serves as a framework for university activities (Nhamo, 2012:105).

Slamat (2014:65) attests that there must be a central unit in universities which acts as a hub for CE activities by coordinating, monitoring, support services, evaluating, and containing databases for related projects. Moreover, Slamat (2014:65) continues by stating that, in most instances, these units should be run and managed by experts or trained personnel who often report their functions to senior or top-level management. According to the CHE (2016:265), academia uses different ways and means of understanding CE, and, therefore, it is important to consider these interpretations when national policies and frameworks or conceptualisations of CE are created. In this light, university students also play important roles, and these should also be clearly defined by policy frameworks and structures that serve as guidelines for studying modules or conducting research (Hall, 2010:33). Communities play a key role of guiding universities to properly understand their problems, areas of concern, and to develop strategies together to address them (Hall, 2010:21). Since communities are so important, it is crucial that they understand their roles and responsibilities in a CE partnership, especially when considering the benefits, they may

potentially derive. Community leaders also have an important role to play in supporting projects, promoting buy-in by communities by gaining their cooperation, support, and trust.

2.2.6 Cost implications

Slamat (2014:154) explains that for CE in HEIs to succeed, an internal, institutional budget should be allocated or assigned for the provision of materials, financials, equipment as well as human resources to CE projects and activities. The National Research Fund (NRF), which promotes and supports research, facilitates and produces knowledge, innovation and development to improve quality of life, provides most of the funding for UCE (NRF, 2018:3). These grants need to be motivated and applied for. This study is funded by the NRF. Other stakeholders such as private institutions also offer funding and assistance in conducting research (Kruss, 2012:6).

2.3 Benefits of community engagement

Different studies conducted by different scholars have provided some of the main benefits of CE. These include clear, valuable input; community buy-in; shared resources and power; building trust; development of new leaders; mutual benefits; and contributions by communities to knowledge.

2.3.1 Clear, valuable input

Communication is the key to every successful collaboration (Pasque *et al*., 2005:40). Strong, innovative CE has been shown to play a major role in improving the levels of communication between the university and communities (Bath & Wakerman, 2015:8). These improved levels of communication ensure clearer, more valuable input when it comes to the decision-making concerning community projects (Johnston, 2018:32). It is important for the university to be able to articulate value of CE projects to communities, but the irony is that often universities must make a case for their CE projects (Pasque *et al.,* 2005:40). Strong, innovative CE therefore means that communities should be involved at every step from conceptualisation to implementation, thus building strong bonds with communities.

2.3.2 Community buy-in

According to research, CE is important in that it facilitates improved community support and satisfaction (Taylor & Kent, 2014:384). In this way, the community is better networked, informed, and confident when engaging in the planning of CE initiatives (Attree *et al.,* 2011:250). Literature shows that citizens who become supportive of CE projects as a result of their community involvement are highly likely to spread positive views or information to the members of their

families as well as to their friends, thus minimising resistance to change by the members of the community (Arthurson, 2003:357).

2.3.3 Shared resources and power

According to Hall and Tandon (2017:19), CE places much emphasis on social justice. Through it, there is a more balanced set of social, political, economic as well as cultural priorities, which results in shared resources as well as shared power (Bhagwan, 2017:179). This balance, in effect, contributes to equity as well as social justice. Community engagement also helps in shaping the services which are provided to the community (Schlake, 2015:2-3) and provides opportunities for cooperative, co-learning experiences, as well as critical reflection.

2.3.4 Building trust

According to DeLugan *et al.* (2014:166), CE is beneficial in building trust between HEIs and communities. When community leaders are invited to participate in CE projects trust is enhances as their views are taken into consideration. This may also be highly beneficial when it comes to increasing communication and creating openness when it comes to the utilisation of CE's numerous services (Strier, 2011:81). Trust then leads to openness and this increases the chances of success of CE projects (Bhagwan, 2017:178).

2.3.5 Development of new leaders

According to Strier (2011:85), CE is also highly beneficial in the development of new leaders. Inviting members of the community as well as leaders of community groups into planning processes is beneficial when it comes to identifying champions and for the development of leaders who understand issues that affect the communities (NWU, 2019a:4). These leaders can then coordinate CE activities by facilitating inputs from communities and discussing these with academic role players. They can also be used to convey messages from the university to get community buy-in (Jonker, 2016:28).

2.3.6 Mutual benefits

Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco & Swanson (2016:229) suggest that for engagement to be embedded within the three pillars of education, namely, learning, teaching, and research, it should embrace a scholarship model, which is the interaction of community and university; the infusion of teaching, learning, and research, as well as a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship. CE recognises and promotes the value of and need for not only reciprocal collaboration but also reciprocal benefits of engagement for all role-players. This reflects the notions of social responsibility, social justice and power-sharing which underpin the concept of CE in HEIs

(Swaner, 2007:18). A collaborative approach to CE adds value to the relationship and all stakeholders should benefit as a result (Bhagwan, 2017:184). The university also benefits in terms of both students and academia. Students get confronted with real-life experiences of engaging with communities, being able to understand the value of being socially responsible, and having a sense of understanding towards actual societal issues and problems (Akhurst *et al*., 2016:137); while academia benefit by understanding and gaining knowledge from learning and obtaining data through research projects and finding new strategies for improvement, as well as updating their current perspectives and visions of communities and engagement practices (Nhamo, 2012:112). In turn, these aspects benefit the related communities in the following ways: they are given expert knowledge, gain resources and strategy to improve their unique circumstances, lifestyles, and can implement other positive changes. Shareholders such as the NRF, DoE, and other funders and facilitators also benefit from such activities in that they gain recognition for their contributions as they are fulfilling their commitment to being socially uplifting organisations that are striving to improve disadvantaged, oppressed, or rural communities.

2.3.7 Contributions by communities to knowledge

Community engagement activities connect people and resources (Sharp & Dear, 2013:52). When communities are made part of processes and included in every step, they add valuable information that leads to successful and mutually beneficial CE projects (Sebeco, 2018:16). The CHE (2004:12) also places focus on the partnership between communities and universities. Moreover, they can provide insight into their needs and problem areas as well as (more accurately) present problems in their actual state instead of having outsiders' assume certain things. This reinforces the need for trust and openness as prerequisites to these successful contributions by communities.

2.4 Core values of community engagement

Attree *et al*. (2011:259) point out that some of the core values for CE generally include openness, respect for diversity, equality, and collaboration and shared purpose (Wales *et al.,* s.a.:9). Openness means that all those who are involved in CE projects ought to listen to one another, explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, learn and apply information in a manner that results in the generation of newer options besides rigorously evaluating CE activities for effectiveness (Hall, 2010:69; Sharp & Dear, 2013:51; Wales *et al.,* s.a.:9). Respect for diversity entails respecting and honouring diversity both within and across a community (Strier, 2011:88). This mainly entails respecting all the stakeholders who are involved and their different views (Hall, 2010:69).

One of the notable values is collaboration and shared purpose between the universities and communities. As DeLugan *et al*. (2014:161) point out, measures should be put in place to provide support to encourage participants, government, as well as other community institution to work together with the sole aim of advancing the common good. In light of this, measures should be taken to make sure that every participatory effort has real potential for making a difference within the community and for making sure that the participants are fully aware of their potential (Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010:16). According to Bath and Wakerman (2015:7), there is a need for the promotion of a culture of participation with programmes as well as institutions, which support continuous quality CE.

2.5 Principles of community engagement

Notable principles of CE include understanding the community, recognising diversity among those involved, transparent partnerships, setting clear aims and objectives, creating a trusting partnership, power-sharing, sharing resources, and maintaining ethical standards.

2.5.1 Understanding the community

Before embarking on CE projects and during implementation, additional measures should be taken to ensure that stakeholders are adequately equipped with knowledge about the community in terms of its economic conditions, political structures, norms and values, demographic trends, history, and experience with engagement efforts. This will ensure accuracy in the identification of populations, groups, and individuals able to facilitate mutuality in the process, and participate in or influence others to get involved in the project (Green, 2011:309; Gorski & Metha, 2016:109). Subsequently, it is important to determine how the specific community (stakeholder) perceives the CE team. This perception will act as a guideline to determine the conduct of team members in terms of their behaviour and how they present themselves to the community in order to identify possible barriers (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2015:20).

2.5.2 Recognising diversity among those involved

Schlake (2015:2) points out that diversity is an important consideration in CE. According to the author, the definition of the term “diversity” is broad, and includes aspects such as education, health, employment status, age, gender, language, location, origin, religion, literacy, and culture of communities, and their members. Sandy and Franco (2014:201) note that every aspect of CE must recognise and respect community diversity. Awareness of the various cultures of a community and other factors of diversity is paramount to designing and implementing CE approaches (Jonker, 2016:30). According to the authors, diversity also includes understanding

the roles and responsibilities that community members have and play within their specific communities.

2.5.3 Transparent partnerships

According to Borden (2015:571), partnering with the community is necessary to create change and improve health. The two parties should acknowledge that they both have roles and responsibilities in this collaboration and partnership. Ahmed and Palermo (2010:1381) also note that partnerships with the community should be transparent, open, and honest. They further note that the two parties should benefit from, learn from, and contribute to the process, equally (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2016:23)

2.5.4 Setting clear aims and objectives

There is the need for setting very clear aims and objectives in order to ensure that the community leaders can determine the strengths and weaknesses of the engagement (Wales *et al.,* s.a.:16; Schlake, 2015:2). Setting clear aims and objectives also helps to define roles of different parties involved in CE projects and clarify expectations from projects (Jonker, 2016:71). Through setting clear aims and objectives, it also becomes easier to identify opportunities and threats to projects. It also becomes easier to communicate benefits to community leaders as they become unambiguous (Schlake, 2015:2).

2.5.5 Creating a trusting partnership

As Ahmed and Palermo (2010:1387) point out, effective engagement requires the involvement of the community members in every stage of the process. According to Sandy and Franco (2014:232), there is the need to respect the community members and community leaders to create a trusting partnership. Community members taking part or assisting in CE activities must be acknowledged for work or efforts made. In addition, Foco (2013:45) notes that frequent updates and communication during the process with the community leaders and members is important to establish a strong relationship. The author further points out the need to always try to expand the pool of people that can be or form part of the CE process from the community to create and have a greater network.

2.5.6 Power-sharing

As Green (2011:309) points out, during CE initiatives, it should be noted that the community self-determination is the responsibility and right of all people who comprise a community and that no external entity should assume it can bestow on a community the power to act in its own self-interest (Gorski & Metha, 2016:109). No organisation, institution or any entity that has been

introduced to a community should perceive that it is a part of the community (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2015:20). It is also worth pointing out that being part of a community is when the community has control over the organisation, institution, or body wanting to conduct research or CE initiatives in that community. Additionally, self-determination is a core concept of CE, whereby the community has control over what is going on in their territory (Pearl, 2014:55). Communities are said to participate better in CE projects when they are part of the process in identifying problems, finding solutions, planning interventions, and evaluating the outcomes. Research has shown that when they feel they are part of the process; communities feel a sense of autonomy that results in fewer barriers in implementing CE initiatives.

2.5.7 Sharing resources

DeLugan *et al*. (2014:156) posit that CE can only be sustained by identifying and mobilising community assets, and by developing capacities, and resources for community health decisions and action. Resources are vital and essential for CE. Examples of these can be skills, expertise, human resources, tools, materials, finances, equipment, and infrastructure. The community, as well as the institution wanting to collaborate can both contribute and mobilise their existing resources (Fitzgerald *et al*., 2016:12) As Hall (2010:23) points out, having an engaged relationship sustains results in new resources created and developed.

2.5.8 Maintaining ethical standards

The Department of Health states that core ethical principles are scientific merit and integrity, distributive justice, respect, and beneficence (DoH, 2015:2). All CE projects must adhere to strict ethical standards to ensure that communities are not taken advantage of and that they are willing participants in CE projects. Further, any risks or harm that has the potential of occurring (Botma *et al*., 2016:351) must be communicated to the community members and team leaders for them to make decisions regarding the continuation of their partnership, collaboration or participation in the project (Haldeman, 2014:90). At the NWU ethical compliance is determined by the NWU-HREC and the AUTHeR Scientific Committee before the commencement of the research.

2.6 Types of community engagement in higher education

According to Kahn (2011:113), CE within higher education generally refers to sustainable partnerships, networks, communication media, as well as some of the main activities between HEIs and communities. These activities are at the local, national, regional, as well as international levels. Community engagement also refers to the collaboration between the higher learning institutions and the communities in which they operate to ensure that there is a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources (Sebeco, 2018:41). Forms of engagement include

community development, improving partnership opportunities, and building bridges between HEIs, industry, and communities (Schlake, 2015:2-3).

2.6.1 Engagements activities between communities and universities

A partnership between communities and the university is highly important towards realizing the benefits of learning, teaching, and research. It is also important in ensuring that the students are well prepared for various roles within the communities (Sharp & Dear, 2013:51). Some of the main kinds of engagement initiatives are various collaboration activities with communities; business ventures; co-sponsored meetings, sports events, conferences and research projects, among others (Jacob *et al*., 2015:1). Furthermore, various online repositories of the university libraries, as well as other kinds of digital media generally offer a unique capacity for the HEIs to easily share different kinds of information with the communities (Jacob *et al.,* 2015:1).

2.6.2 Symbiotic relationship between the communities and universities

As previously mentioned, there is as a symbiotic relationship between the institutions of higher learning and the communities (Strier, 2011:85). Communities are important in providing the necessary human resources that equip HEI systems to not only foster but also to execute their purposes (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2016:17). At a leadership level, both community leaders and tribal leaders have a relationship with universities not only to facilitate entry into communities but to also encourage buy-in from communities. In turn, HEIs always ensure that the students are properly trained to be able to interact with communities (Attree *et al*., 2011:259).

2.6.3 Community development

In the past, some of the main roles of institutions of higher learning included being involved in research and innovation, and teaching and training; however, their new role is now to encourage community development (Bath & Wakerman, 2015:7). In contrast to earlier times when scholarship evaluation was about teaching and learning, and research, it is now common for various annual evaluations of academic members to include community service (Jacob *et al*., 2015:1). Furthermore, HEIs must be established within their local communities for them to have a highly sustainable effect on the society in which they operate (Clinical & Transitional Science Awards [CSTA], 2011:48).

2.6.4 Improving partnership opportunities

Since a good relationship with communities is essential, communities and institutions should actively look for various strategies to improve both their relationship and partnership opportunities (Jacob *et al.,* 2015:1; Bhagwan, 2019:174). Engagement in CE opens numerous opportunities for

partnerships between the institutions of higher learning and the communities. Thus, there is a need for the stakeholders from the two sides to work tirelessly to do everything possible to seek mutual opportunities as well as benefits (CSTA, 2011:50). In addition, they should also advocate equitable, as well as highly sustainable, partnerships in their collective endeavours (Jacob *et al*., 2015:15).

2.6.5 Building bridges between higher education institutions, industry, and communities

To ensure that there are various successful CE initiatives, there should be a framework that encourages or enables conjoint action (Wales *et al.,* s.a.:33). One of the main reasons for establishing such frameworks is seen in the proactive government efforts to both openly build bridges between HEIs, industry, and communities (CSTA, 2011:52). Besides this, they offer an environment that encourages these role-players to further build bridges of their own. Furthermore, greater managerial autonomy can also play a key role during the bridge-building process. Developing more entrepreneurial universities that are always looking for new ways to engage communities should be an objective of higher education policies (DeLugan *et al*., 2014:160).

2.7 Community engagement in higher education: A global perspective

Community engagement does not only happen at local or national levels but also an international level (Jacob *et al*., 2015:1). Over and above encouraging international faculty research, institutions of higher learning need to provide a positive overseas experience for their undergraduates. They should strive to make sure that foreign students, postdoctoral students, as well as visiting scholars are able to learn from communities and to also contribute something to them besides contributing to campus life (Altbach, 2014:12). Examples of international engagement in the sphere of higher education include the United Nations University (UNU), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics (WFCP), and International Association of Universities (IAU) (Jacob *et al*., 2015:1).

According to its mission statement, the overarching goal of the UNU is to “contribute to global sustainable development that will enable present generations to live a decent life in peace, in freedom, in safety, and in good health, without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same” (Osman *et al.*, 2017:1, UNU, s.a.; Jacob *et al*., 2015:5). As part of the UNU, the Ford Foundation funded Community Higher Education Service Partnership (CHESP) was established in 1999 to help South Africa plan and operationalise CE initiatives (Hall, 2010:29). Over the years that followed, CHESP was able to support the development of over 250 accredited

academic courses that address CE across 40 disciplines. From 2005, CHESP began developing a joint programme together with the HEQC in order to develop this aspect of CE as a core function of South African HEIs (Hall, 2010:29).

Based in France, the OECD is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that focuses on fostering prosperity and fighting poverty through economic growth and financial stability. The OECD does this by commissioning research studies in member countries (OECD, s.a.). In order to achieve its goal, the organisation collaborates with member governments, HEIs, ministries of education, and societies in multiple areas, and on various levels (Jacob *et al*., 2015:3). According to the OECD website, South Africa is an associate in 6 OECD bodies and projects, and a participant in 15 (OECD, s.a.); furthermore, the country works with the organisation in areas such as energy, tax, labour policy, education, local development, small businesses, investment, and science and technology.

At a UNESCO conference held in Nice in 1950, universities of the world stipulated three principles that each institution should stand for; these are: the right to pursue knowledge and follow wherever the search for truth may lead; freedom from political interference; and tolerance for divergent opinion (IAU, 1998). Members of the IAU are from approximately 120 countries and include HEIs and higher education-oriented organisations. The IAU collaborates with international bodies that are active in higher education and offers various services to its members in pursuit of the three principles that it advocates for. Several HEIs in South Africa are members of IAU, including the Durban University of Technology, Nelson Mandela University, Rhodes University, University of South Africa, and University of KwaZulu-Natal (IAU, 1998).

2.7.1 Community engagement in the United States of America

As Hall (2010:14) points out, CE adopted its definition from the Carnegie Foundation; the definition of which emphasises the collaboration between the institutions and communities, an exchange of knowledge and resources, partnership, and reciprocity (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2012). Founded by Andrew Carnegie in 1905, the foundation is the pioneering institution for CE, based on its advancements in teaching and research (Pearl, 2014:59). In the USA, service-learning (SL) in HEIs used a bottom-up approach since students were the initiators of the movement (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:87-88). Community-based work was mainly service, viewed as volunteer work, which students or the civic community would engage in to assist people or communities in need as their own personal interest or initiative, making the community the only beneficiary of these acts of kindness (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:67). A vast amount of research on SL in the USA has been done which has resulted in substantial volume on this particular subject (Thomson *et al*., 2010:1).Since its early years, CE

has evolved and US universities are now striving to become 'engaged institutions' (Kellogg Commission, 1999:9), which is defined as engagement which is responsive, relatively neutral, accessible, and respectful of its partner's needs, while ensuring that it successfully integrates institutional service into teaching and research (Spanier, 2011:11).

2.7.2 Community engagement in Canada

In Canada, universities are grappling with what community-engaged scholarship (CES) promises and the challenges it faces (Barreno *et al.,* 2013:1), as growing expectations of CES have not been matched by growth in institutional supports. This has led to uncertainty about whether CES is valued by academic leaders and whether it contributes to successful tenure application, thus leading to hesitance on the part of faculty to pursue it (Beatty, 2018:ii). Canada, therefore, still lags behind in its pursuance of CES. Fitzgerald *et al.* (2016:24) recommend stressing the scholarly characteristics of engagement and determining the role of engagement scholarship in the promotion and tenure process.

2.7.3 Community engagement in Australia

Australian universities, under Engagement Australia, advance an understanding of CE as a core responsibility of higher education (Kearney, 2015:26). Although not created as a typology, CE as well as the partnership of universities, is always termed as their 'third mission'. This only comes after the first two missions of the universities, which are teaching and research (Benneworth, Ćulum, Farnell, Kaiser, Seeber, Šćukanec, Vossensteyn & Westerheijden, 2018:64) and complements them. Most Australian universities also contribute to government, civil societies, and the private sector through assisting with economic performance and helping to improve communities' quality of life and the quality effectiveness of public service (Webber & Jones, 2011:25).

2.7.4 Community engagement in Asia

The language barrier prevented a more detailed presentation of research from other parts of the Asian region since most of the literature was not published in English. In the sections that follow, CE in the Philippines and Malaysia are presented.

2.7.4.1 Community engagement in the Philippines

In the Philippines, a Needs-based Model is adopted for CE in universities, which is based on the government-mandated requisite for community outreach by such institutions (Mores *et al.,* 2019:1850). The model assumes that universities should not just offer the conventional services of education and research but should also respond to different needs of the communities in which

they operate. Local universities in the Philippines use an SL approach whereby one university would identify and partner with a certain community to assist in its social upliftment (Mores *et al.,* 2019:1850). In a private university in the Philippines, Bernardo *et al.* (2013:16) noted that CE programmes were centralised to a specific unit on the campus. Mores *et al.* (2019:1850) explain that various types of initiatives were created by CE units, and included volunteer programmes, and SL in which students and staff would live, and work, with the communities that required help.

2.7.4.2 Community engagement in Malaysia

Research by Ramachandra and Mansor (2014:588) emphasises how important CE is in Malaysia, especially because of the two-way engagement between stakeholders such as communities, non-governmental organisations, and funding that results in mutual benefits for all concerned parties. The Knowledge Transfer Programme (KTP) in Malaysia supports these mutually beneficial partnerships and promotes sustainable networks by recognising and promoting the transfer of knowledge via the exchange of research findings, creative and innovative ideas, experiences and skills between IPTA, industries, research organizations, the wider community, and government agencies (Knowledge Transfer Program[KTP] Policy, 2011:2). Although CE is an emerging trend in Malaysia (Zakariya, 2014:613) that consists largely of uncoordinated and unstructured activities not related to direct and conscious policies of higher learning institutions, there are, however, some universities that have identified CE as one of their key values (Zakariya, 2014:615).

2.7.5 Community engagement in France

In France, CE is well supported by the government in terms of finance and legislation (Bray, 2000:16). One element of the concept of CE is the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), which was created to credit people based on the experience they have gained over a time period of years. Hamer (2011:90) concurs with the concept of RPL and states that it is greatly valuable in education, especially to those who did not obtain a formal qualification but were, nonetheless, doing the work, either paid or unpaid, due to this lack. This is to encourage the social and educational advancement of people who could not access education or obtain a qualification due to their circumstances (social or financial) (Chakroun, 2019:90).

2.7.6 Conclusion

This section provided an overview of the global perspectives of CE. IT included studies from geographic areas such as America, Canada, Australia, Asia, and Europe. Hall (2010:142) highlighted how the emphasis in the definition of CE, most specifically on the two-way approach (as defined by the Carnegie Foundation), has changed the way Canadian universities view CE. In the Philippines, Mores *et al.* (2019:1850) also refer to Carnegie's definition of CE, specifically

on partnerships. Thomson *et al.* (2011:225) concur with Mores *et al.*'s (2019:1850) observation and add that when the university and the community have a mutually trusting, meaningful partnership (Ramachandra & Mansor*,* 2014:591), both parties will contribute and to and benefit from activities, sustainable and arising outcomes. Overall, universities in developed countries are moving towards community-engaged scholarship approach.

2.8 The transformation of higher education and the origins of community engagement in South Africa

Research by Clark and Worger (2016:6) highlights the fact that from 1948-1994 South Africans were largely segregated. It was a time when preferential treatment was given to some groups of people. Citizens were separated by race, which determined where they could go, live, be schooled, and, even, where they could be buried. While South Africa faced many challenges in the social spheres of inequality and injustice in that period, the country celebrated its first democratic election in 1994, which laid the foundation for future transformation. In addition, SA called for policy reforms to redress the inequities experienced in the era of segregation (Bhagwan, 2017:179). As part of the mammoth effort to rebalance the inequality and inequity within the country, the government realised that critical changes were necessary in all areas of society, including within higher education. In 1995, the White Paper 3 on the transformation of higher education was released by former President Nelson Mandela with the input of the National Commission on Higher Education (DoE, 1997:3). The Paper was established to transform higher education in South Africa and redress the inequitable patterns of wealth, ownership, and social and economic practices brought about by apartheid. The DoE, as the government body responsible for overseeing HEIs, addressed the need for responsiveness to the advancement of communities, and urged that this be integrated into higher education as part of teaching, learning and research (DoE, 1997:5). In doing so, they aimed to address, firstly, the issue of HEIs' social responsibility to communities, and, secondly, to involve students in CE-related activities to both enhance and add to their development.

The third White Paper mandated institutions to comply with the required transformation by clearly stating their roles and responsibilities in incorporating broadened participation from those who were subject to the injustices of apartheid, demonstrating social responsiveness to society and cooperating and creating partnerships (DoE, 1997:9). The concept of CE was introduced as one of the three silos of higher education in South Africa (Bender, 2008:127; Bhagwan, 2017:172; Hall, 2010:24; Machimana *et al.,* 2018:178; Muller, 2009:54; Nhamo, 2012:109; Pienaar-Steyn, 2012:49). As part of their commitment to improving education globally and aiding the work of the South African government, Ford Foundation funded the JET study on the implementation of community service in HEIs in SA (Higher Education Quality Committee/JET Education Services

South Africa, 2007). The findings of this study indicated that while most tertiary institutions had included CE in their mission statements, only a small number of universities had policies to address and execute this in practice (Lazarus, 2007:93-94).

Instead of the findings presented by the initial assessment study, the Ford Foundation initiated the JET led CHESP to support, implement, and integrate CE into student learning programmes in SA higher (CHE, 2004:15). The project was launched in 1999 (Erasmus, 2011:362), and it aimed to embed CE into the SA higher education system and adopt a culture of working with communities (Mahlomaholo & Netshandama, 2010:15). The JET project utilised the skills of US-based CE pioneers and scholars to assist in shaping and strengthening the initiative (Erasmus, 2011:351). The initiative sought to develop and introduce service-learning modules into the university curriculum. This addition was made to allow the HEIs to incorporate various aspects of CE into their curriculums; the aspects that were addressed included the following: the benefits of CE, the role of CE, how to identify a community and service sector partner with the hope of working together to uplift the community and attend to their needs. As a result, higher education policy was more focused on the delivery of service to communities (Bhagwan, 2017:172). The rise and initiation of this programme evolved into multiple SL programmes and developments. The JET also supported university staff to get involved in research related to SL through funding but the Ford Foundation (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013:75). Multiple dimensions related to service were explored and is evident in the extensive research and publications regarding SL in the context of South Africa. Furthermore, the concept of SL has become predominant within higher education and has promoted the notion of integrated SL on university campuses (CHE, 2004:5).

2.9 Community engagement at the North-West University

Situated in Potchefstroom and Mahikeng (North West Province) as well as Vanderbijlpark (Gauteng) the NWU was inaugurated on the 1st of January 2004 (NWU, 2019b) as a HEI in South Africa after the fall of apartheid. It is one of the major teaching-learning, and research institutions whose footprint spans three of South Africa's provinces, namely, the North West, Gauteng and the Northern Cape. The institution recognises its role of ensuring that the wealth of knowledge it generates through its three campuses is harnessed effectively so that the communities it serves can benefit from it. Consequently, it strives to share its research findings, as well as its innovative ideas with society in general. Moreover, it aims to engage with communities in a bid to learn from and to be taught by them (Sebeco, 2018:15). The university has initiated several projects, which are of practical value to the communities, aimed at improving the relevance and learning experience of SL, teaching-learning curricula, and related materials. Besides this, it also strives to advance numerous opportunities for in-service and experiential learning (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2016:17). Lastly, it aims to promote unique opportunities for multi-disciplinary community

connections; thus, advancing a highly coordinated and integrated approach to problem-solving within the relevant communities (Sebeco, 2018:17).

Furthermore, the university has a centre for governance, which offers its staff and students various unique opportunities to take part in community service and SL; this is made possible by its multi-disciplinary approach. Such opportunities, which arise from the initiatives, generally comprise of participatory action, and commissioned and contract research by research project teams where seconded academia, practitioners, and learners can take part (NWU, 2016:4). Subsequently, it also provides service and action learning. Olowu (2012:100) further asserts that the university also engages in strategic partnerships and networking, and always strives to maintain relationships with the public sector partners. Sebeco (2018:33) corroborates this, adding that establishing newer networks and partnerships essential for the overall success of sustainability is a central element in successful, strategic partnerships

To address the social injustices of the past associated with pre-democratic segregation and differential development, the NWU has created a forum to enable greater engagement and interaction with the community and to encourage the creation of partnerships with them (Olowu, 2012:102). This initiative, the Forum for Continuous Community Development (FCCD), was created in 2011 (Sebeco, 2018:34). The NWU introduced various CE initiatives after an *indaba* which was held by its administration and key stakeholders. As part of the aim and strategy to embed CE into their activities, the university had CE integrated with their vision and mission statements (Sebeco, 2018:34). In 2016, a formal policy on CE was created at the university. The purpose of the CE and SL policy was to ensure that the NWU integrates components and inculcates the vision and goal of the national government policy framework for CE in universities (Sebeco, 2018:3). Three principles of development were identified in the policy, which was sharing of expertise, sustainability, and development (Sebeco, 2018:10). A Success Model was also created by the university, to show continuous integration of the three silos for higher education, which is teaching, learning, research and CE (Sebeco, 2018:12). The following section highlights CE evaluation according to these three principles (teaching, learning, research).

2.9.1.1 The origin of the WIN Platform

The NWU's Potchefstroom campus, located within the Faculty of Health Sciences (Niesing *et al.,* 2015:263), is the home of the Wellbeing INnovation (WIN) Platform (AUTHeR). According to Coetzee and Du Toit (2011:6), the WIN Platform was initiated in response to a needs assessment done in the Vaalharts community through a collaboration between the university, community, and local government authorities. The scholars note the need to improve rural health and general wellbeing within the Vaalharts region. Even though the Vaalharts community is not very close to

NWU, it was selected because the WIN Platform team noted that the neighbouring communities were already over-utilised and already collaborating with the NWU in CE projects. Encompassing 13 sub-projects (AUTHeR), the WIN Platform serves as a sustainable CE programme focusing on the development and improvement of the welfare of outlying, resource-poor areas and communities (AUTHeR). Since its inceptions, the programme has involved nine disciplines and three research units; two of the involved disciplines form part of the Unit for Environmental Sciences and Management, while four fall under the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. Since these faculties depend on information and expertise in engineering, urban and regional planning, and economics, they were encouraged to participate. Such an encouraging and embracing inter-sectoral partnership has created various opportunities for students to plan their studying through this integrated approach (AUTHeR). The bolstering of the community has snowballed after the collaboration between the Faculty of Health Sciences and other faculties of the university (AUTHeR).

2.9.1.2 Management of the WIN Platform

In 2011, the AUTHeR took over the formal management of the WIN Platform. In recent years, the unit has sought to expand its contributions to support CE policy, and, as a result, has created an office known as the CIR to further support CE activities. The office came into existence in 2017 in response to a report by the CHE that highlighted the lack of a central office at universities that could coordinate CE activities in the 13 institutional audits in 2004-2008 by the HEQC (AUTHeR). The CIR is managed by support staff and research assistants as an operational service and aids the WIN Platform and other CE projects within the faculty. The CIR holds a database of past and current projects as well as mediators and gatekeepers.

2.9.1.3 Types of community engagement projects

While CE projects and initiatives continue to be implemented under the banner of the WIN Platform, they vary in focus, ranging from income generation to health promotion and health monitoring. The Farm Labour and General Health (FLAGH) and Holding Hands projects were initiated in resource-poor communities to produce handcrafted products sold in local, national, and international markets (Niesing *et al.,* 2015:262). Other projects were done in Vaalharts (Northern Cape), wherein the university collaborated with the Phokwane district municipality (Coetzee & Du Toit, 2011:5; Sebeco, 2018:15). Since most of the residents in the region had little or no education and reside in resource-poor communities (Niesing *et al.,* 2015:269), these communities depend a great deal on community projects for improvements or the means of improving their lifestyles and living conditions. The WIN Platform implemented various CE projects within these communities which were aimed specifically at improving physical health

through focusing on sports and recreation, and socio-economic components such as food and nutrition, and psychosocial wellbeing. The three areas that were addressed for this specific project included CE research, SL or WIL, and skills development projects. These initiatives included partnerships and collaborations with many local government departments through clinics and schools.

While the overall the Platform aimed to implement projects directed at improving rural health and wellbeing through CE, the projects themselves have not always effectively embraced the essence of CE as a collaborative and participatory approach. The notion that the WIN Platform was not as truly aligned with CE as originally expected and considered in a review of the WIN Platform following years of implementation, which created a need to investigate its weaknesses. Furthermore, concerns have been raised over the integrity of the WIN Platform projects because of their top-down structures and the exclusion of the community in the decision-making process (Sebeco, 2018:6).

2.10 Summary of ethical principles

The Department of Health (DoH) (DoH, 2015:14-15) lists three broad ethical principles as: Non-maleficence and beneficence, i.e. the ethical obligation to minimise harm and to maximise benefit to research participants; distributive justice (equality), which means that a fair balance of risks and benefits must exist among all role players involved in the research, which, in the case of the WIN Platform are members of the academia and communities; and respect for persons (dignity and autonomy), which means that role players must be afforded respect and permitted to exercise self-determination (which involves obtaining an informed consent from participants, protection against any form of harm as a result of involvement in the research; and autonomy to withdraw from participation).

The DoH (2015:15) also mentions key ethical norms and standards as: relevance and value, which refers to the relevance and value of the research; scientific integrity, which refers to ensuring sound design and methodology; role player involvement, which refers to engaging key role players at various stages of planning and improving the quality and rigour of the research; balance of risks and benefits, which means that the likelihood of benefit should outweigh the potential risk of harm; fair selection of participants, meaning that inclusion and exclusion of respondents must be based on ethical and scientific principles; informed consent; privacy and confidentiality; and researcher competence and expertise. Ethical considerations are discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

2.11 Summary

This chapter presented the origins of CE as a concept and its keys elements to provide insight into its development and context. The principles of CE served to elaborate based on how CE was evaluated and the importance of understanding the perceptions of role-players. The chapter then discussed the global perspective of how CE was introduced and understood by various countries and the introduction of CE into South Africa. An overview of how the different universities in South Africa have implemented and integrated CE into their education systems was also discussed. The last two sections of the chapter focused on the university-community engagement (UCE) at the NWU and the WIN Platform and suggest that a conceptual framework is not yet established for CE at the university. At the NWU, in particular, a gap was identified, and, more specifically, it was noted that a more top-down approach has been adopted and that no framework exists to determine or guide CE activities. As mentioned, it is apparent that by exploring the perceptions and experiences of how academia have understood their roles and responsibilities in CE, it may be possible to understand the academic perspective of CE. Moreover, this may even inform a refined NWU policy framework on CE. This study has, therefore, explored the perceptions of academia using research methods, approaches and tools to understand and gather information from academia involved in CE activities through the WIN Platform at the NWU. The methodology used by this study is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the literature review section of this study. It provided the results of various studies that have been carried out by the other scholars on the research topic. The section covered several aspects, including CE as a concept, some of its main principles, CE practices, and CE within the specific context of South Africa and, in particular, the NWU. This chapter aims to elaborate on the methodology that was used to meet the study's research objectives. Furthermore, it will provide detail regarding the study design, the underpinning research philosophy, the population of the study, the sample size, the data gathering instruments, data analysis tools, reliability, and validity of the research instruments, and, lastly, ethical issues in the research process.

3.2 Qualitative research design

A qualitative design was followed. In most cases, qualitative research is exploratory and used to gain a thorough insight into underlying opinions, reasons, as well as the motivations relevant to its research topic (Creswell *et al.,* 2011:45). This type of research offers highly detailed insights into the research problem and is deemed very beneficial to the development of ideas or hypotheses for a possible quantitative study to follow (Creswell, 2013:31). As a result of its nature, qualitative research is highly beneficial when it comes to gleaning an accurate and thorough understanding of a given social phenomenon, and relates directly to why or how it occurs, or is perceived (Tuli, 2010:98). Therefore, it is not a fixed or measurable phenomenon in comparison to quantitative research. Thus, this approach is inductive and less concerned with generalisability (Tubey *et al.,* 2015:226). This study was qualitative as it sought to understand the perceptions of academia about CE roles and activities. More specifically, the study strived to explore the perceptions of relevant individuals. Considering the research problem, a qualitative research approach was identified as most effective for the study.

3.3 Data gathering

This section explains the study's rationale in terms of establishing its target population, sampling strategy used, and the inclusion criteria that were used for the selection of the research participants to the study's data gathering, and subsequent analysis.

3.3.1 Population

The aim and objectives of this research study were to define the perceptions of academia within the WIN Platform of the NWU and to present their roles in CE activities. As a result, the population was comprised of academia, students, and administrators involved in the WIN Platform since its inception or other CE projects not included under the umbrella of the WIN Platform.

3.3.2 Sampling and sample size

Criterion purposive sampling was used. This sampling procedure is also referred to as judgemental sampling (Etikan *et al.,* 2016:2) because the participants were purposively selected based on their ability to provide rich and accurate information. Purposive sampling is defined as a sampling method where participants or sources of data are selected based on their anticipated relevance and richness of data concerning the research questions (Yin, 2011:311). Kumar (2012:207) explains that this type of sampling is used when knowledge is required from experts in the field. The participants for the study were selected based on their experience and involvement in CE activities and the WIN Platform. There was a total of 45 (N=45) potential academic actors that formed the population. Due to time and availability constraints, only nine (n=9) academic actors were available for interviews for a response rate of 20%.

3.3.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria determined who could and could not take part in this study and were based on specific expectations or characteristics. The inclusion criteria for this study were that the participants had to be:

- Academic actors, either male or female, such as researchers, lecturers, support staff, and students who were involved with CE and in the WIN Platform at the NWU.
- Fluent in English.
- Willing to be digitally voice-recorded during the interviews.

All those who were not involved in CE before the start of this study were excluded from taking part in the study.

3.3.4 Recruitment of participants

Participants were recruited and selected following a specific process, highlighted in the flow chart below.

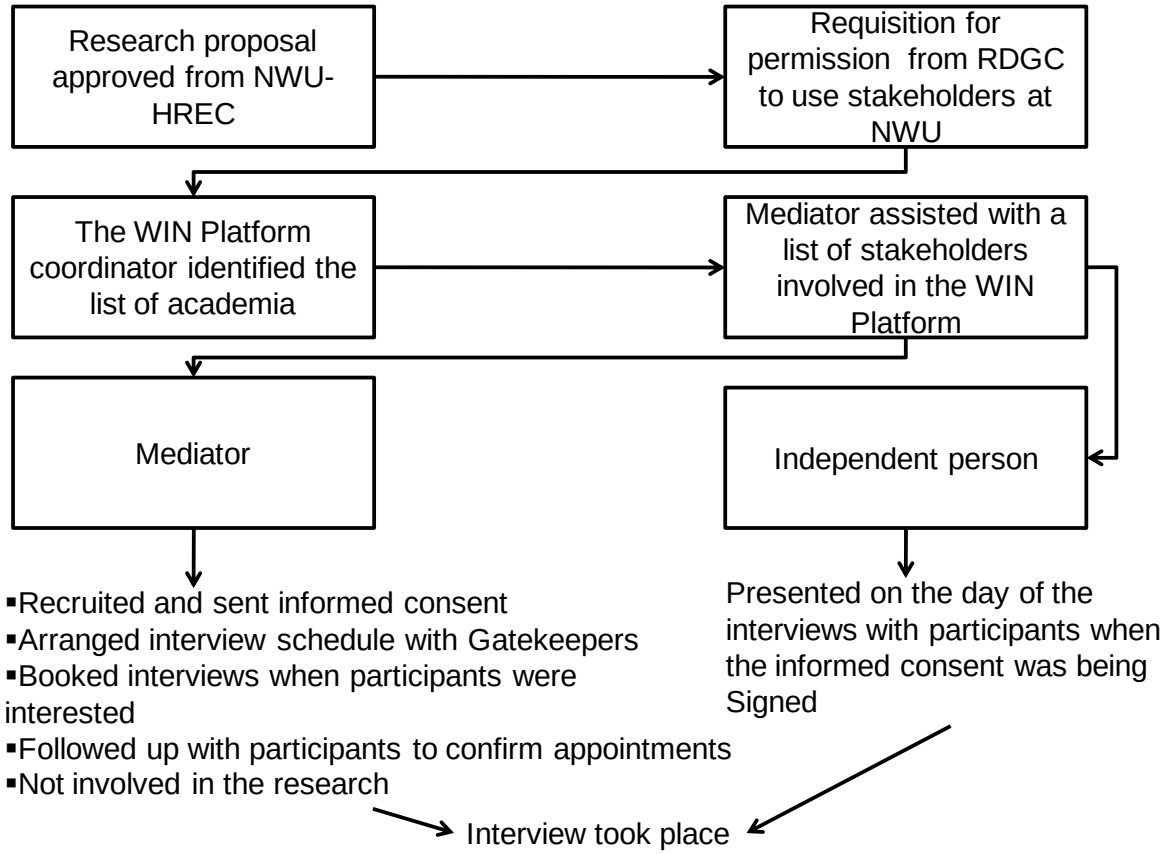

Figure 3.1: Process followed for recruitment and selection of participants

(Source: Own Illustration)

The data was gathered at the Potchefstroom Campus of the NWU. After the approval of the research proposal (NWU-HREC ethics number: NWU-00023-19-A1) by the NWU-HREC (which reviewed the proposed study and the ethical considerations of how this study would be conducted); special permission was granted by the RDGC before data gathering commenced. The RDGC served as the gatekeeper of the institution. Once approved by the NWU-HREC, permission was granted for Dr Claasen to release the list of academia involved in the WIN Platform and other CE projects.

The mediators were personnel from the CIR office that contacted the participants via email or telephone to explain and provide an overview of the study that was going to be conducted. The consent forms were issued by the independent interviewer to each of the participants by email two weeks before interviews commenced in order to provide participants with enough time to review them or ask questions. In scientific research, voluntary informed consent is the expected requirement before the research can be done (DoH, 2015:16-17); thus, voluntary participation and participants' confidentiality and privacy were emphasised. The participants were also informed

that they would not be judged or punished if they chose to not to take part in the study and could withdraw from it at any given time and for any reason.

3.3.5 Data gathering through semi-structured interviews

Participants were timeously reminded of their confirmed appointments a day before and the venue, which was the AUTHeR conference room, located in Building G16, and was booked well in advance. Semi-structured interviews were done by an independent interviewer who had the title of Project Manager. Questions asked were as follows:

- What do you play in the WIN Platform?
- How long have been involved with the WIN Platform
- Who would you say are the important role-players within the community and why?
- Who would you say are the important role players from academia and why?
- What would you say are the strengths of a platform such as the WIN Platform?
- What would you say are the opportunities provided by of a platform such as the WIN Platform?
- What would you say are the weaknesses of a platform such as the WIN Platform?
- What would you say are the threats to a platform such as the WIN Platform?

At the time the interviews were conducted the researcher was abroad and a trained interviewer was utilised (Botma *et al.,* 2010:205). Privacy was maintained, and signs were placed outside the door while the interviews were being conducted. The interviews lasted for no more than 60 minutes. With the permission of the participants, interviews were recorded (Botma *et al.,* 2010:210). Recordings were afterwards transcribed verbatim.

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis entailed identifying key phrases and codes that resonated with each of the research objectives in the study (Creswell, 2014:247). The data was transcribed verbatim and coded. Data analysis was done at the NWU using the Atlas.TI version 8 data analysis software after the recorded interviews were transcribed. The researcher was supervised throughout this process by the supervisor and co-supervisor of this study. A thematic analysis was done on the data. This method is described below.

3.4.1 Thematic data analysis

The study employed a thematic data analysis procedure that used the emergence of themes in the data and was guided by its research objectives. The rationale for adopting a thematic data analysis as the qualitative data analysis procedure was related to its ability to generate codes that could be combined to reveal an emerging theme for the study's research questions (Creswell, 2014:247). Deductive coding was used, which is a process whereby a list of pre-defined codes is developed, which was developed by making use of the literature as well as issues known to be important in the objectives of the study (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019:10). This list is presented in table 4.2.

The first stage of thematic data analysis involved the gathering and loading of primary documents that were transcribed. Coding of emerging themes was done using Atlas.TI. Figure 3.2 below depicts the steps taken in the coding process.

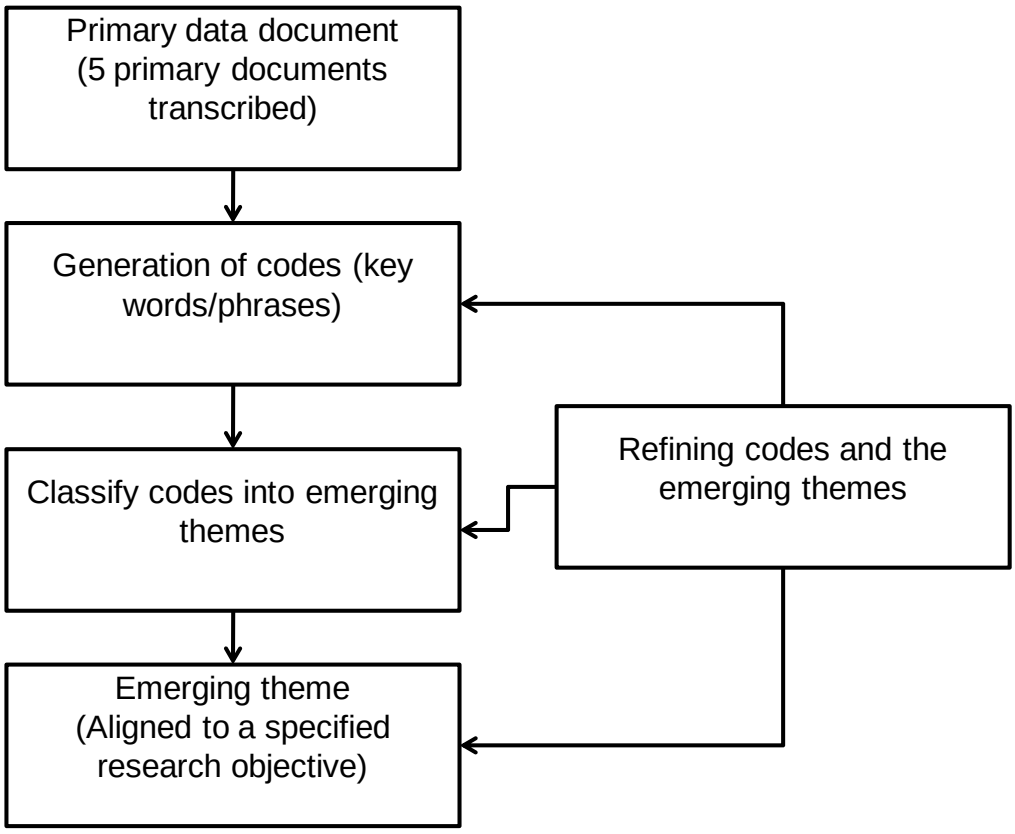

Figure 3.2: Thematic data analysis flowchart

(Source: Own illustration)

As shown in Figure 3.2, after being loaded into the computerised data analysis supporting software (Atlas.TI – version 8), the transcripts were analysed to identify and generate codes using keywords and phrases that related to the study. The emergent themes were further reviewed and

evaluated in line with the research objectives according to categories. Some themes were then collated as one argument, represented as an emerging theme or new theme for the research's enquiries. The coding process was done with the researcher and independent qualitative data analysis and consensus was reached between the researcher and the supervisor on the final codes.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are crucial to any kind of study and as such, researchers should always ensure adequate measures are taken which ensure adherence to ethical standards and concerns (see Appendices A to E). In this light, ethics play a major role in protecting the participants, the researcher, and the way that studies are conducted; furthermore, they also influence the way the studies are published (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011:4). Ethics shape a research study and guides the researcher in terms of those responsibilities and considerations they should adhere to, and which should be given to all involved in the study (University of South Africa, 2016:5-6). There are several ethical principles considered in this study. These included participant engagements and recruitment, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, risks and benefits analysis and respect.

Before the study was conducted, the researcher obtained permission and approval from the AUTHeR Scientific Committee. Details of the study were submitted for ethical approval to the NWU-HREC. Once the approval was given ethics number (NWU-00023-19-A1), data gathering could begin. To gain access to the target participants, permission had to be granted by the RDGC. Only once permission was given by the RDGC the list of names of the academia who were eligible for inclusion in the study were made available.

According to Botma *et al*. (2016:203-204), the role of the researcher in qualitative research is a lengthy process and the following aspects must be considered: Gaining access or entry into the setting required for the study. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the NWU-HREC and the RDGC, who served as the gatekeeper in this research study. The core function of the NWU-HREC is to review all aspects of the research proposal in order to protect the researcher and participants (Botma *et al*., 2016:12). Gatekeepers, on the other hand, have an important role in research since they have the power to allow or deny access to participants and can influence the participants to engage or not to engage in the study (Rizvi, 2015:2).

According to Emanuel *et al.* (2014:934) individual informed consent is identified as the main principle of ethical research and participants should be made aware of their right to refuse or withdraw from the research. The mediators sent an invitation to potential participants prior to the commencement of any data gathering activities. An independent person then provided a copy of

the written informed consent letter from the researcher to the invitees to review. This was done in adequate time to allow the invitees up to two weeks to review the document, ask questions, and to consider if they would want to participate in the study. This document detailed, in appropriate level language, the nature of the study, the confirmation of RDGC's approval (see Appendix C), ethical clearance (see Appendix B), the name of the researcher, contact details, the type of involvement being solicited (namely, for semi-structured interviews), the time commitment required, and the proposed venue and dates. An independent person was responsible for administering the informed consent form and answering any questions that arose. The independent person followed up with participants after the allocated two-week review period to determine their willingness to participate. The mediators then set up appointments with each willing participant according to the participant's convenience. The consent forms were signed prior to the interviews in a private area, which was either at the allocated conference room or the office of the participant. Both the independent individual and the participant signed at the same time. The independent individual was responsible for the administration of all the forms and for directing all queries accordingly. It was the independent interviewer who therefore sought to obtain informed consent. This action was necessary to ensure that every participant was fully aware of what would be expected from them during the study, the risks and benefits, as well as the concept of voluntary participation. If participants were uncomfortable with any of the questions or the direction of the interview, then they were permitted to refuse to answer, or remain silent, as they saw fit.

Since participants were sought from within the NWU, and for a NWU-based study, it was particularly important that they were also aware that the proper ethical clearance had been granted by the NWU-HREC (post AUTHeR Scientific Committee approval) and the RDGC and that their involvement would be voluntary and could not, in any way, be used in actions against them. The researcher ensured that the participants were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time, that their identities would always be protected, and that risks and benefits were explained.

Participation was confirmed when participants signed the written informed consent form (see Appendix E). Voluntary written informed consent was the expected requirement before the research could be conducted (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2009:30). The written informed consent form included the category of participants selected for the study (academia), purpose of the study, method in which data would be collected and analysed, who would have access to the information and how the information was expected to be utilised (Moodley, 2015:332). The text utilised in the consent form was at an appropriate level for the participants. Participants were also requested to consent to their interviews being recorded for data purposes. The researcher also regarded

participants' privacy and confidentiality as crucial; as a result, participants were assured that their names would not be used in the report.

A qualified professional was made available to participants for counselling or debriefing support in case any insecurities or discomfort was caused during the data collection stage. The written informed consent form was compiled in English given the fact that all participants had to have a high level of English language proficiency for their role in a multi-lingual tertiary institution, and because both the researcher and the supervisor required English language data for analysis.

Data management is another important aspect of the study. In this regard, the data on the digital voice recording that was obtained during the interviews was transferred to a password-protected computer and deleted from the recorder. Moreover, the computer is kept in a locked office in the AUTHeR offices of the NWU. The data on the computer, including the transcripts, will only be kept for five years and can only be accessed by the relevant head of department and study supervisors.

3.6 Summary

This chapter described the methodology that was used to meet the study's research objectives. It provided detail regarding the study design, the underpinning research philosophy, the population of the study, the sample size, the interview guide, data analysis tools, reliability, and validity of the research instruments, and, lastly, ethical issues in the research process. The next chapter (chapter 4) presents and discusses the findings from the data.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The main aim of this study was to explore and describe the perceptions of academic actors on CE activities within the WIN Platform by applying a strategic auditing tool in the form of a SWOT analysis; thereafter followed the exploration and description of the roles of different stakeholders within the WIN Platform again as perceived by academic actors. This chapter presents the research findings. First follows the realization of data gathering and analysis, then a description of the participants' role related to CE either within or in close collaboration with the WIN Platform. A discussion with the literature integration is conducted within the results.

4.2 Realisation of data gathering and analysis

Data gathering was done at the Potchefstroom Campus of the NWU between October and December 2019. Data gathering commenced after obtaining approval from the NWU's Health Research Ethics Committee and the Research Data Gatekeeper Committee. AUTHeR's research director granted written permission as the WIN Platform is coordinated by AUTHeR. The list of academia involved in the WIN Platform and associated types of community engagement projects was obtained. Personnel from the CIR office within AUTHeR were tasked with the recruitment of participants. An independent interviewer conducted the interviews as the researcher was abroad during data gathering. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted in the AUTHeR conference room, located in Building G16 on the Potchefstroom campus. Because of the specific inclusion criteria, as part of criterion purposive sampling, a small group of experienced participants agreed to be interviewed (n=9). The small sample size was also due to the academic year calendar as prospective participants indicated their willingness to participate but couldn't honour an appointment due to their schedules. Considering that the population was limited and that the anticipated sample size would have been small, after numerous attempts to invite participants, a decision was made by the supervisors and student to first analyse the data at hand and then consider continuing with recruitment.

The interviews were digitally voice-recorded and then transcribed verbatim by a transcriber and each transcript checked by the researcher. All voice recordings and anonymized transcriptions were kept on the researcher's password-protected laptop and will be transferred to the supervisor's computer once this study is completed. All hard copy signed-off informed consent forms are kept under lock in the office of the supervisor.

The transcribed documents were labelled ‘Participant 1’, ‘Participant 2”, etc. and then grouped into those who were directly involved in the WIN Platform and those that were indirectly involved. Direct involvement implied participants who participated in CE projects within the WIN Platform. Indirect involvement refers to academia within the Faculty of Health Sciences and especially within AUTHeR, who might not have had direct projects within the WIN Platform but were exposed to the operationalization of the WIN Platform daily. From the transcripts followed the process of thematic analysis as described in chapter 1 paragraph 1.14. The process of data analysis was supported by Atlas.TI version 8. A consensus discussion was conducted between the researcher and the supervisors to establish the truthfulness of the identified themes. Because the interview guide was directed by the SWOT analysis, the data analysis followed the same structure. Therefore, a coding list was compiled with the SWOT analysis as a basis. This coding list was guided by the objectives of the study, the literature review, as well as the interview guide. The data analysis concluded in five themes, 20 categories and 51 sub-categories.

Once the research team reviewed the analysed data, and after a second unsuccessful attempt to recruit more participants, it was concluded that data reporting can continue with the available sample size.

4.3 Description of participants

Criterion purposive sampling was implemented as it was essential to include participants in the study with experience in CE activities and the WIN Platform. Table 4.1 below describes the participants’ demographics.

Table 4-1: Demographic description of the participants (n=9)

Group	Participant number	Role in the NWU	Length of involvement (approximate number of years)	Additional comments
Directly involved in the WIN Platform	3	Lecturer	10 years	Directly involved in all the operational aspects of the WIN Platform, well-established networks within the Platform since its inception
	5	Lecturer	10 years	Involved in the WIN Platform whereby students present their adult education projects (food- and fashion-related) within community settings.

Group	Participant number	Role in the NWU	Length of involvement (approximate number of years)	Additional comments
	7	Senior lecturer	4 years	Lecturer and supervisor for postgraduate and final year students in their 4th year of studies.
Indirectly involved in the WIN Platform	1	Researcher	5 years	Established researcher within AUTHeR; was exposed to the WIN Platform operations daily.
	2	Principal investigator	10 years	Established researcher within AUTHeR; was exposed to the WIN Platform operations daily. Also, being Principal investigator of another large research project, this participant was exposed to the daily operational challenges of the WIN Platform as discussed on a managerial level.
	4	Lecturer	10 years	Established researcher within AUTHeR; was exposed to the WIN Platform operations daily.
	6	Support staff	5 years	Involved in financial administration and project support of various CE projects within AUTHeR.
	8	Senior support staff	8 years	Involved in meetings, minutes and reporting of all CE projects, WIN Platform committee and larger CE Committee within the Faculty of Health Sciences.
	9	Lecturer	6 years	Lecturer and researcher within AUTHeR; was exposed to the WIN Platform through daily exposure to the operational realities of CE projects within AUTHeR.

All the participants had an in-depth understanding of CE and the WIN Platform with four participants having ten years' experience in CE projects. The participants had varying responsibilities to research, teaching and learning in addition to CE.

4.4 Results and discussion

Table 4.2 presents an outlay of the research results and guides the discussion. From the five themes, it became evident that academia holds varying perceptions on the key role-players in the WIN Platform and in CE projects. The strengths highlighted that trust relationships established through the development of a platform is of optimal advantage to CE activities. Weaknesses emphasized that the importance of sustainability and impact measurement are underestimated. A platform is presented as the next level of CE, enabled by existing relationships and contextual understanding of the communities engaged with. Having an existing infrastructure where students can be supported in their own teaching and learning, emanated as opportunities in the WIN Platform. The WIN Platform can be under threat when communities and academia hold different expectations and responsibilities for CE and when students and staff aren't trained and educated on CE. The WIN Platform is also threatened when funding is limited to single projects without considering sustainability. The WIN Platform supported the translation of research results into practice. Through this prolonged engagement, it became possible to address the true needs of the communities.

Table 4-2 Description of themes, categories and sub-categories regarding academia' perceptions of WIN Platform

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
Academia holds varying perceptions on the key role-players in the WIN Platform and CE projects	Role-players imply a spectrum of individuals, groups and committees related to the community; or the university related to specific research projects, organised in a particular structure	• Key role-players include participants, fieldworkers, health workers and gatekeepers • Fieldworkers to be from the university and community • Ethics and scientific committees also viewed as key role-players • Role-players presented in a definite structure.
	Important role-players are the gatekeepers that enable community access and entry	• Permission required from tribal authorities, ward counsellors, councils, and household heads, depending on the type of research • Important to maintain good relations with significant role-players
Academia's perspectives on the strengths of the WIN Platform	WIN Platform provides logistical and organisational coordination and support	• Can coordinate and formalize the logistics of all CE projects and activities • Support from the organisation and within the community already established and activated

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
	Familiar with the context of the community	• Established relationships within communities, understand the community's needs when entering • Save time on community entry • Established and known relationships a valuable proposition
	WIN Platform enables continuous research dissemination	• Provides an infrastructure to know how and when to translate theory into practice • Can do dissemination continuously
	Positive impetus from an energetic project coordinator that is discipline-neutral	• CE project higher probability to being successful when the project coordinator is motivated • Focus on coordination, generic and not driven to boost one specific discipline
	Strong marketing platform	• Gained traction from established governance structures • Aimed to coordinate diverse programmes
Academia's perspectives on the weaknesses of the WIN Platform	Organisational weaknesses related to researchers and students	• Teams with limited expertise might be exposed within the WIN Platform and require broader experienced team members • When students aren't properly trained on CE, it can lead to reputational risk of the NWU and unintentional harm to community members • CE activities are intensive and when student numbers grow too large, it impacts on lecturers' workload and makes CE less feasible • Updated, real-time and trustworthy database • Complex communication in the coordination of different disciplines and conversion of theoretical ideals into practical realities
	The communities are too far from the university	• When the community is situated too far, it implies increased travel time, additional costs to sleep over and can be stressful • Although exposure to a rural community is a value proposition, supporting CE projects that are too far from academia's offices impacted on their overall productivity.
	Community-based reasons that can weaken CE projects	• To maintain a participatory approach, community entry is a dynamic process whereby key role-players are required to

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
		be updated, impacting on established relationships • When one cannot select who to train in communities, it impacts on the sustainability of the project
	Weakening contingency and sustainability	• Withdrawal of resources (funding, people) weakened ownership • Projects are weakened when a project champions from the community, and/or university, is pivotal. In the absence of such a champion, the project stagnates. • A project coordinator representing a specific discipline
	Expectations against rural experiences and realities	• Disconnect between the marketing experiences versus the real-life, rural experiences • Disillusioned about the living conditions, safety and security in rural communities
Academia's perspectives on the opportunities of the WIN Platform	Formalised relationships, infrastructure and understanding of communities	• Save time and resources when community entry is established, stakeholders identified and researchers already familiar with the community's context, setting and challenges • Formalised relationships strengthen a service-learning culture from the university and students where students can also experience the impact of CE activities • Established collaborative relationships strengthen transdisciplinary • A functional infrastructure can support future research and monitor overuse of the same communities • Valuable learning experience to all associated role-players and to inform future CE projects
	Opportunities in the development of teaching and learning of lecturers and students	• Should be an essential exposure to all students to put theory into practice • Students can take more responsibility for CE within their provinces and compare wellness between provinces • Explore new communities, not only local to Ikageng • Broadened perspectives on transdisciplinary collaboration • Gave local and international students and academia a real-life, typical South African rural experience

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
Academia's perspectives on the threats to the WIN Platform	Conflicting perspectives on the set-up of research teams	• Less experienced and smaller research teams can be exposed within the community • When teams are too diverse, there is less opportunity for unique contributions
	The communities' expectations and responsibilities	• The dissonance between the academia's enthusiasm and the communities' expectations • Some community members are passive passengers in projects and remain passive, don't take responsibility for the development, expect the university to be the sole provider
	Funding risks unsustainability	• Limited funding threats the sustainability of the WIN Platform and CE projects • Funding timelines and training cannot always align, causing basic health screening equipment to be distributed before proper training can realise
	Insufficient CE knowledge and training	• Communities can be overused and require efficient monitoring and evaluation • Students aren't trained in community entry and not familiar with the finer nuances in CE
	Distance as a void in communities and projects	• Physical distance caused social and personal distance between role-players as well.
	Project coordinator as pivotal stakeholder	• Changes in project coordinators can influence the trajectory of the CE project directly.

In the following paragraphs follow the reporting of each theme, with a discussion and literature integration.

4.4.1 Academia holds varying perceptions on the key role-players in the WIN Platform and CE projects (Theme 1)

From the interviews, participants voiced various perceptions regarding key role-players within the WIN Platform and CE projects. A summary of the role-players from the university and the role-players from communities in the WIN Platform is presented in table 4.2.

Table 4-3 Summary of the key role-players and their functions within the WIN Platform and associated community engagement projects

Academic role players	Functions	Community role players	Functions
Ethics Committee	Ensuring that the partnerships between the communities and the university are formalised, responsible and according to ethical research principles	Tribal leaders and gatekeepers	Ensuring access to communities and that the partnerships between the tribal leaders, communities and the university are formalised
		Ward Councillors	Ensuring that the partnerships between local government structures, the communities and the university are formalised
Scientific Research Committee	Ensuring that the partnerships between the communities and the university are formalised	Community and church leaders	Fostering collaboration and buy-in from communities, essential impetus for CE activities
University Research Team	Research and project implementation	Health professionals in community healthcare centers	Fostering collaboration and buy-in from communities
Research assistants	Research and project implementation	Household heads	Ensuring access to households as well as household dwellings
Funders, fund manager	Can be a combination of provision of funds or managing the utilisation of funds subjective to formal reporting.	Funders, recipients of funds	Community organisms that either provide funds to support CE projects or who are recipients of the funding for CE and who requires to adhere to formal reporting.
Academia	Teaching, Research, Service		
	To ensure that strategies are identified, planned, coordinated, implemented, and		

Academic role players	Functions	Community role players	Functions
	executed following the WIN Platform framework		
	To supervise and guide students in conducting CE activities		
University personnel	Experts or trained personnel in CE		
	Support staff (for general support and financial administration)		

The first theme had two categories. Firstly, ‘role-players refer to a spectrum of individuals, groups and committees from both the community and the university and these role-players are related to the specific needs within projects organised in a particular structure’ and, secondly, ‘important role-players are the gatekeepers that enable community access and entry’. Although key role-players may differ between different CE projects, it is significant to start any project with the identification of these role-players. The key role-players are significant within the community and within the university. Within the community, the key role-players include tribal leaders and gatekeepers, ward councillors, community and church leaders, health professionals in community healthcare centres, household heads and funders, and recipients of funds.

From the university, the Ethics committee, Scientific research committee, university research team, research assistants, funders, fund manager, academia and university personnel are viewed as key role-players and should have a contextual understanding of the functioning and sensitivity of CE. Gatekeepers are key role-players because they enable community access and entry and are organised into a particular structure, two functions that are central to CE in general. These gatekeepers enable permissions required from tribal leaders, ward councillors, community and church leaders, health professional in community health centres, household heads and funders, recipients of funds, councils and household heads as directed by specific project requirements. It is therefore important to maintain good relations with these key role-players throughout a CE project’s lifecycle and beyond. On both the community and university sides, financial role-players require recognition. CE projects and activities cannot occur without resources. Funders and fund managers within the university, and funders and recipients of funds within the community are required.

Literature confirms that CE extends the role of academia to more than just the traditional role of teaching and research, to also provide services to the community in a reciprocal, mutually

beneficial way, and in an environment of “sharing of expertise” (NWU, 2019a:4; Sebeco, 2018:10; Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010:14). The role of scientific - and research ethics committees is highlighted as especially important in ensuring that the partnerships between the communities and the university are formalised to manage risks, regulate expectations, ensure role clarification, and to provide ethical clearance to all research and innovation - and teaching-learning activities (NWU, 2019a:5). According to the CHE (2004:18), a university’s role in CE activities is to ensure that there is a policy on CE that is explicitly in resonance with the objectives, vision and goals of the institution. The establishment of the WIN Platform enables CE activities and therefore facilitates this role of the NWU (AUTHeR, 2020). The implementation of best practices as indicated in literature of having a central unit designated to CE activities is confirmed by Slamat (2014:65), who attests that there must be a central unit designated or located for CE in universities implementing CE projects and programmes. The WIN Platform serves as a sustainable CE platform focusing on the development of a reciprocal environment to enable improvement of the welfare of outlying, resource-poor areas and communities (AUTHeR, 2020).

As indicated in Chapter 1 of this study, it is required for higher education institutions to engage in CE activities (CHE, 2010:2; Kearney, 2015:33; Mtawa *et al*., 2016:127). CE should facilitate a reciprocal relationship amongst all stakeholders involved in CE (NWU, 2016:2; Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010:14; Fitzgerald *et al.,* 2016:229). A centralized platform enables structured CE activities, facilitates good relationships and sustainable engagement (Slamat, 2014:65). Additional functions can include coordination of CE events within a community as well as within the institution (Slamat, 2014:65; Lazarus *et al*., 2008:60). Mobilisation and management of student engagement events through the platform will ensure responsible engagement and enable maximum benefit for both the students and the community. The platform can fulfil various roles, one of these should be to effectively coordinate research and student teams with community activities. These roles require research teams to develop additional skills that will enable them to effectively communicate with communities and bridge language and cultural barriers (DeLugan *et al*., 2014:156).

The role played by communities emerging from the data analysis are in line with previous research which described the role of communities as, among others, those of giving guidance and opening avenues for universities to properly understand their problems, areas of concern and also guide universities on strategies of how these problems can be addressed (Strier, 2011:85). To facilitate optimal engagement, it is required to identify a gatekeeper in the community. This person should be nominated by the community and will enable buy-in from the community. Arthurson (2003:357) indicates that buy-in from the community is highly beneficial in change management associated with engagement with universities to facilitate sustainable impact. Buy-in is beneficial in building trust, increasing communication, and creating openness between the university and the

community (Strier, 2011:81; DeLugan *et al.,* 2014:166); as well as to ensure that there is valuable input by communities when it comes to decision-making (Johnston, 2018:32).

4.4.2 Academia's perspectives on the strengths of the WIN Platform (Theme 2)

The second theme refers to academia's perspectives on the strengths of the WIN Platform. The first category included that the 'WIN Platform provides logistical and organisational-coordination support' for CE projects in the WIN Platform. A platform becomes a functional structure to formalize CE projects and provide logistical support. Participant 4 stated "…. *There were strong organisational capabilities*…." An existing platform implies existing relationships; therefore, it enables the university and the community to support and build onto these established relationships towards sustainable impact saving time and other resources that would have been used to establish relationships. This is in agreement with the literature which states that there has to be a unit designated or located for CE in universities implementing community engagement programmes (Slamat, 2014:65; Sebeco, 2018:17; Olowu, 2012:100). As Slamat (2014:65) notes, this platform enables structured CE activities, facilitates good relationships and sustainable engagement.

Category two: Participants perceived being already 'familiar with the context of the community' as a strength in the WIN Platform. An established relationship between academia and the community members means that university-related members were informed and aware of the community's needs upon entry into the community, saving time and resources to enable bridging the gap between research and practice. Insight into the context of the communities and being able to voice the communities' needs at the university enabled researchers to respond better to these needs. Established and known relationship became a valuable proposition when academia realised that they could build forth on stable and established known-relations. This made interactions and interventions more fit to the community needs as voiced by Participant 5 "*The strengths were, of course, it's a community that's already been identified having certain needs, so it did some of the work beforehand for us".* As the development of the WIN Platform was commenced, a comprehensive needs analysis was conducted which shared with the rest of the university-related team members, it saved time on community entry. Researchers interested in collaborating in the WIN Platform were able to develop projects within the community, had the contextual background to assist possible research projects and interventions because of the analysis.

Category three: Participants explained that the 'WIN Platform enables continuous research dissemination' during CE. Participant 2 stated *"I think the platform is important in order for research results to be translated back to practice"*. The Platform provided infrastructure such as

forums, formal and informal meetings where researchers could present the translated theory into practice. This is in line with Boyer's (1990:xi) proposed model of scholarship which posits that knowledge can be applied to consequential problems to bridge the gap between theory and practice. An example includes health education, adapting processes and empowering community members. Participants further explained that the dissemination of research could occur continuously in the WIN Platform. As researchers obtained the research results, they could return to the Platform and share this information to a wider audience. As Jacob *et al.* (2015:1) encapsulates, various online facilities, as well as other kinds of digital media offer a unique capacity for the HEIs to easily share different kinds of information with the communities.

Category four: Participants explained that an energetic coordinator served as a 'positive impetus from an energetic project coordinator that is discipline-neutral', providing equal opportunity and access to all the interesting Schools, Faculties and Departments. The motivation of the project coordinator enhanced the success of the WIN Platform and enabled a strong focus on a generic and university-wide coordination and not boosting certain disciplines or programmes.

The fifth category, which named 'strong marketing platform', explains the strength of the WIN Platform was the focused marketing of the Platform within the established governance structures of the University. The project coordinator represented the WIN Platform on various meetings which was utilised to market the Platform to significant mid-level and executive management. Also, marketing the WIN Platform from established university committees enabled the project manager to package the Platform's aim of coordinating effort for diverse programmes.

These strengths are in line with reasons for community engagement by the NWU, which are to promote unique opportunities for multidisciplinary liaison, thus advancing a highly coordinated, as well as a highly integrated approach to problem-solving within the communities (Sebeco, 2018:17). In line with propositions that there must be a central unit designated or located for CE in universities (Slamat, 2014:65), the above responses also attest to the fact that the WIN Platform is succeeding in its endeavour to act as a hub for CE activities. Another advantage of strong organisational capabilities is that it ensures that the community can better access the functioning networks and are more confident when engaging in planning initiatives (Attree *et al.,* 2011:250). These strengths also agree with views of Jacob *et al.* (2015:3) who mention that being already familiar with the context of the community leads to sustainable networks and unions between communities and HEIs. The identified strengths can be leveraged to plan future CE projects.

4.4.3 Academia's perspectives on the weaknesses of the WIN Platform (Theme 3)

Aligned with the predetermined SWOT analysis structure, academia shared their perspectives on the weaknesses of the WIN Platform. In the first category, the participants identified 'organizational weaknesses related to researchers and students'. When younger, less-experienced researchers with lacking expertise accompanied students in entered communities, the need was identified to include more experienced researchers into the team. Entering communities is a sensitive step in the CE process and requires training and preparation of students. As CE activities requires students to interact directly with community members and key role-players without direct supervision training of students should enable them with the required skills to successfully facilitate these interactions. Experienced researchers should guide students through the process and as far as possible supervise the process. The development of a formal platform enables the accompaniment of students by a facilitator familiar with the community. The growing numbers of students required to do community engagement placed additional strain on the system. Community engagement activities require intense management and growing student numbers impact directly on lecturers and researchers' workload. The establishment of a platform enables proper planning and facilitates project management to optimally engage with communities creating a more sustainable impact with fewer resources.

The second category identified that 'the communities are too far from the university'. Travelling to communities is time-consuming, expensive especially when accommodation and sustenance are required for the students. Travelling to remote areas, planning and managing the engagement activities were experienced as stressful by students and researchers alike. Being far away from the University meant that students could be exposed to a typical rural community. Yet, the physical distance, time and logistical costs weighed too heavy on academia's busy programmes and overall productivity.

Another weakness was the WIN Platform database. A Platform of this size with multiple stakeholders necessitated a real-time database. Yet, keeping a university-community database updated and providing trustworthy real-time data was a weakness which also caused academia to feel insecure in utilising the database for research and publication purposes. Also, participants agreed that the university-specific communication between various disciplines, academia, students and support was complex. In between these multidisciplinary conversations ideas were impractical to operationalise.

The third category indicated weakness voiced by participants related to specific 'community-based reasons that can weaken CE projects'. The participatory approach inherent in the WIN Platform, although essential, remains a challenge in community engagement. This is for example

the communication process amongst all stakeholders take time and when one role-player changes, it impacts on the whole process. Due to the cultural functioning in communities, the people identified to participate in the WIN Platform on the community's side isn't always the most appropriate according to the university's requirements. The essential participatory approaches can be mitigated through the development of a platform that includes team members with experience in participatory approaches to enable optimal functioning of the platform (Bath & Wakerman, 2015:7; Kearney, 2015:33).

In the fourth category, participants highlighted 'weakening contingency and sustainability'. Despite a dynamic platform, every time when there was withdrawal of resources, whether it be in the form of funding or people, the ownership of the projects weakened. When people had to be replaced or funding withdrawn, the trajectory of the projects were influenced negatively. Projects were especially sensitive to the project champions, those people that played a significant role on either the community's and/or the university's side. Projects' were influenced negatively when project coordinators were pivotal in the progress of projects and replacements or removal of champions led to a stagnation. In the event where a project coordinator was appointed with a focus and agenda for a specific discipline, some participants explained that the equal and generic support changed towards discipline-specific opportunities.

The fifth category voiced by participants was the 'expectations against rural experiences and realities', created by the project coordinator about the WIN Platform. The WIN Platform was marketed as a typical, South African rural experience and where students and staff alike be exposed to. Yet, this very rural, real-life experience wasn't always positively perceived by students and staff. In many events students and staff felt disillusioned about the living conditions, safety and security in the Vaalharts environment.

4.4.4 Academia's perspectives on the opportunities within the WIN Platform (Theme 4)

The first category identified by the participants highlighted the 'formalised relationships, infrastructure and understanding of communities', which act as advantages of collaboration which provides access to researchers. This leads to the saving of time and other resources when community entry is established, stakeholders identified and researchers already familiar with the community's context, setting and challenges. Formalised relationships strengthen a service-learning culture within the university to facilitate skill transfer and exposure and facilitate an environment where students can experience the impact of CE activities. The established collaborative relationships strengthen transdisciplinarity, as one of the key aspects of transdisciplinarity is the inclusion of the community as active stakeholders in the research and CE process. An established platform facilitates functional infrastructure to support future research

and monitor overuse of the same communities towards reciprocal sustainable impact (Beckett, 2015:170; Mcllrath *et al.,* 2012:12). Also, participants explained that the valuable learning experiences of the WIN Platform whereby all associated role-players were actively involved and informed of future CE projects. It broadened the perspectives of especially academia to see the potential of transdisciplinary collaborations and gave to national and international students and staff an authentic South African, rural living experience.

Category 2 was named 'opportunities in the development of teaching and learning of lecturers and students'. These opportunities are in line with what the NWU strives for, which is to promote unique opportunities for multidisciplinary liaison, thus advancing a highly coordinated, as well as a highly integrated approach to problem-solving within the communities (Sebeco, 2018:17) as well as providing opportunities for cooperative, co-learning experiences, as well as a critical reflection (NWU, 2016:4). It should be noted, however, that such opportunities are dependent on the strength of buy-in from these communities as well as trust between the two parties (Strier, 2011:81; DeLugan *et al.,* 2014:166).

4.5 Academia's perspectives on the threats to the WIN Platform (Theme 5)

The final theme relates to the participants' perceived threats to the WIN Platform. The first category identified was the 'conflicting perspectives on the set-up of research teams'. On the one side participants felt that less experienced and smaller research teams are more vulnerable within the communities. These teams were at higher risk of blindly being exposed to real-life treats such as crime. But on the other side, having large teams that are very diverse might have increased the multidisciplinary learning opportunities between team members but led to lessened opportunities for unique contributions within the communities.

Category two was 'the communities' expectations and responsibilities'. The threat was the growing expectations from the community members and the lack of personal responsibility to utilize opportunities in the Platform. Participants explained the dissonance between the academia's enthusiasms for a project against the communities' expectations. Academia's identified projects based on the communities' situational analysis didn't always tally with the varying expectations from community members. Academia tended to identify projects that can improve the wellbeing of communities whilst individual community members had unfulfilled basic needs such as clean, running water and proper shelter, access to food and security. Participants also voiced that community members became passengers within projects and didn't take up the responsibility to participate in opportunities for their development.

Category three was the ‘funding risks unsustainability’. Funding for the WIN Platform. Participants explained that limited funding threatened the sustainability of various projects within the Platform and the WIN Platform itself. The difference between funders’ requirements and academic timelines implied that the distribution of equipment couldn’t always align with proactive training. Category four raised by the participants was the ‘insufficient CE knowledge and training’ within the broader university context. Participants explained that communities can be overused and therefore CE projects require efficient monitoring and evaluation processes, which weren’t equally functional in all the projects. Students enter communities equipped with theoretical knowledge, but they aren’t equipped in community entry and unfamiliar with the finer nuances of community engagement.

Category five named ‘distance as a void in communities and projects’. Participants explained that the physical distance caused, beside geographical space and time, also social and personal distance between role-players. Because of the distance, collaborators couldn’t respond timeously to all events and project-related challenges became less critical. The last category (category six) mentioned that the ‘project coordinator as pivotal stakeholder’ can be both a strength and weakness in the SWOT analysis. When the first project coordinator was replaced by another one, it caused a cascade of changes within CE projects and influenced the overall progress of the Platform directly.

The International Association of Universities notes that political interference exists in CE and discourages against it (IAU, 1998). There is also a suggestion in this that role players from the NWU tend to let the community representatives get away with making wrong decisions, which works against the projects. This also points to a lack of collaboration or partnership between the community and the university, as well as a lack of ownership by the community. One of the objectives of community engagement projects is that activities be sustainable between the community and the university. There has been a suggestion that power imbalances also play a part as most of the UCE project activities are initiated and developed by HEIs, which wield a degree of power over communities (Kearney, 2015:33). There have been concerns over the integrity of the WIN Platform projects because of their top-down structures and the exclusion of the community in the decision-making process (Sebeco, 2018:6). The fact that projects collapse when the university withdraws from the communities also indicates that there is a lack of planning for sustainability. This problem could also be linked to a lack of impact assessment of the projects under the WIN Platform.

The lack of monitoring of projects and lack of yearly evaluation has been cited as one of the major weaknesses of CE implementation (CHE, 2010:4). This raises an important issue relating to the need for assessing the impact of community engagement projects. Failure to do this implies a

lack of accountability. It means that some projects are undertaken without proper planning as well as without proper identification of expected benefits.

Another threat is unequal power relationships between communities and the university, with the university (especially the academia) seen as coming from what can seem like a wealthy and privileged context (Kearney, 2015:33). The three approaches to CE within HEIs, namely: The silo approach, Intersectional Model, and engaged scholarship are influenced by the underlying ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others through force, coercion or hegemony (Williams & Nunn, 2016:1). In this case, the CE approach at NWU seems to be somewhere between the silo approach and engaged scholarship, i.e. CE is not integrated into the core business of the institution.

4.6 Chapter summary

Chapter 4 presented the research results through a discussion of the five themes that emanated from the semi-structured interviews. Community engagement requires collaborative efforts from a multitude of stakeholders. The identification of key role-players and maintenance of healthy relations with these role-players are necessary to enable the university to access and enter communities.

The main **strength** from the WIN Platform is the organisational capability where communities are better networked and where academia can plan for – and enter communities with greater success. This is enabled by providing a platform with a formalised structure and coordination of CE activities in an efficient manner. The established structure enabled a continuous translation of research results into practice. Because academia had an established relationship with the communities and understood the communities' needs, it facilitated the process of community entry and engagement and directing CE adhering to address the identified needs. The project coordinator, being energetic and discipline-neutral, served as a significant positive impetus to the WIN Platform and accommodated diverse projects. Also, the project coordinator marketed the WIN Platform from various established governance structures within the University.

Weaknesses are the sustainable impact of CE projects and the WIN Platform and not prioritizing CE activities as an integral part of the NWUs research and innovation. An organisational weakness is identified when academia and students aren't trained nor experienced in CE. There are community-based reasons that can weaken CE projects. A weakness is when the community where the CE project should be operationalized is too distant from the university. The far traveling distances impacted on academia's overall productivity. When CE projects can be streamlined through a CE platform, it can improve the sustainable impact thereof. An outdated and

untrustworthy project database was a weakness to the WIN Platform as well as the complex communications between diverse disciplines that led to the slower conversion of ideas into actions. Withdrawal of resources, changes in project champions and the project coordinator's replacement weakened the contingency and sustainability of the WIN Platform. Academia were disillusioned with the marketed realities of a rural experience against the true real-life conditions.

Multiple WIN Platform-related **opportunities** are identified. There are opportunities to develop the teaching and learning of students and to do future research in CE using platforms such as the WIN. The WIN Platform did provide valuable learning opportunities that inform future CE projects. Another opportunity is the savings of resources that the WIN Platform created as well as the optimization of CE projects and activities within the Platform. Exposure to the WIN Platform strengthened transdisciplinary collaboration and gave students, locally and internationally, a typical South African rural experience. Yet, opportunities remain dependent on the dynamic trust relations and buy-in that is required between community members and academia.

The **threats** to the WIN Platform are the conflicting perspectives regarding the compilation of research teams and the dissonance between communities' expectations of and responsibilities in the WIN Platform. Because CE projects are directly linked to limited funding, it threatens the financial non-sustainability of the Platform. The physical distance led to social and personal distance as well. The lacking knowledge of and training on CE can threaten the WIN Platform. The appointment of a new project coordinator impacted the progress and trajectory of the Platform directly.

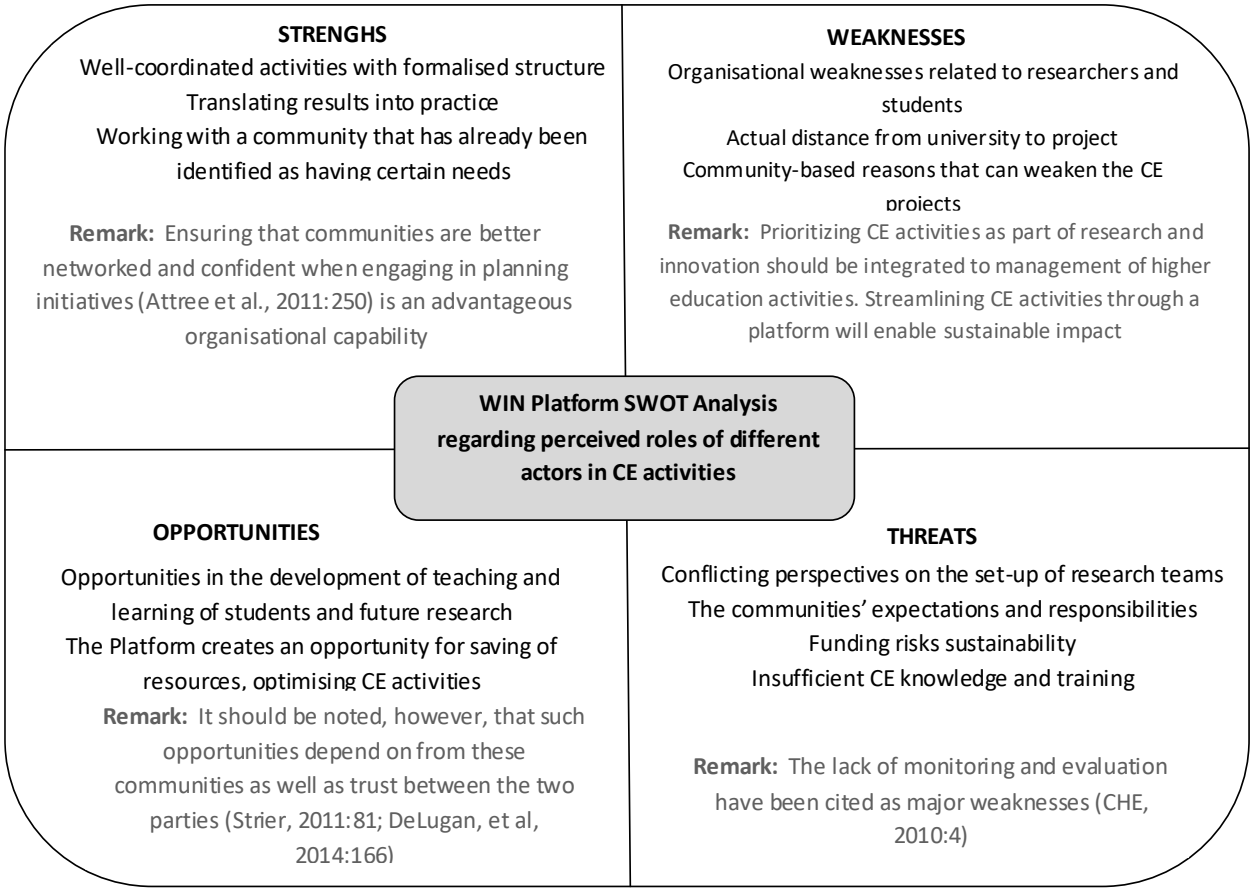

Figure 4-1: Summary SWOT analysis of perceived roles of different actors in CE activities

Hereafter follows chapter 5, the final chapter of this dissertation where the researcher presents the conclusions and make recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, EVALUATION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this study, the perceptions of academia on CE activities within the WIN Platform were investigated. In chapter 4 the realisation of the results was described and the results organised into the SWOT analysis. This chapter presents conclusions and recommendations. A brief evaluation of the study is also done highlighting the limitations; and the chapter closes with a summary.

5.2 Conclusions on findings

The literature review highlighted the diversity of perceptions of Community Engagement in Higher Education in a South African context, as well as the complexity of CE. This study aimed to explore the perceptions of academia in CE activities within the WIN Platform as well as the perceived roles of the different actors within the Platform to contribute to the development of mutually beneficial relationships between the community and Higher Education institutions. The results of the study identified various role-players in CE as well as their respective roles in the community engagement process. The identification and functioning of these role-players and their roles enables better planning of CE activities towards a transdisciplinary research approach that will facilitate the community to become an active partner in the CE process towards mutually beneficial interventions with long term sustainable impact. These findings are confirmed by Lang *et al.* (2012:1) who advocate for participatory methods in research towards transdisciplinary to facilitate sustainable impact in research and interventions.

The SWOT analysis provided a critical reflection on the functioning of CE activities in the WIN Platform to guide future CE engagement activities within HE institutions towards reciprocal relationships. The understanding of this functioning provides the WIN Platform as well as other faculties within the NWU and other HE institutions with insight to better plan, develop and implement CE activities towards sustainable impact. The complex nature of CE in HEIs calls for a transdisciplinary approach to CE activities as CE often attempts to solve grand challenges or wicked problems. Academia normally functions in silo's and view problems from their fragmented perspectives. The long-term CE in specific communities within the WIN Platform enabled researchers to work multi-disciplinary towards transdisciplinarity to facilitate a holistic view of the situations within communities. These multi-disciplinary research projects and collaboration enabled the identification of the wicked problems or grand challenges in these communities and called for a transdisciplinary approach where the community needs to become an active stakeholder in the CE process. This facilitated instances where research closed the loop and was followed by interventions towards sustainable impact in these communities. This was facilitated through the Participatory Action Research cycle that enabled co-creation between academia and

community actors. The following sections present conclusions from the five themes reported in this study.

5.2.1 Academia's perceptions of the key role-players in community engagement projects

Important role-players identified on the side of the university were academic staff, research assistants, the ethics committee, and the scientific committee. Participants reported that there was a structure in the way in which the NWU engages in CE. However, a weakness was identified in the coordination of activities. It was suggested that coordinators should be people who can work well with communities and academia; furthermore, they should be able to also speak languages that are spoken by local communities.

Important role-players identified on the side of the community were: tribal leaders, community leaders, and church leaders, ward councillors, field workers (independent of the university), health professionals in community healthcare centres, and household heads. One of their major roles that were identified was that they have to provide university actors with access to communities and households.

5.2.2 Academia's perspectives of the strengths of community engagement projects

The main strengths and advantages of a platform such as the WIN Platform that were identified by participants included: well-coordinated activities with formalised structure, translating results into practice, and working with a community that has already been identified as having certain needs. These strengths indicate that the WIN Platform is succeeding in its endeavour to function as a hub for CE activities at the NWU (Sebeco, 2018:17). These strengths can be used to plan future CE projects.

5.2.3 Academia's perspectives of the weaknesses of community engagement projects

The major weaknesses identified by participants included lack of follow-up on projects as well as communities expecting to be provided with everything. Lack of follow-up on projects was as a result of lack of monitoring and evaluation of projects, which has been cited as one of the major weaknesses of CE implementation (CHE, 2010:4). This also implies poor planning of projects in terms of expected benefits and sustainability, with seemingly little to no attention paid to these aspects.

Regarding expectations by communities, the study concludes that there are unequal power relationships between communities and the university, with communities seeing the

university/academia as coming from a wealthy and privileged context, which further indicates lack of ownership on the part of the communities. This implies that the CE approach at NWU has not matured to an engaged scholarship level which emphasises “cooperative development, collaboration, and mutual benefit-reciprocity” (Bender, 2008:91). Community engagement at the NWU can be seen as lying somewhere between the Intersection Model and engaged scholarship.

5.2.4 Academia’s perspectives of the opportunities of community engagement projects

Major opportunities of the CE projects were identified as opportunities for future research, and time-saving. These derive mainly from the strengths of the WIN Platform, namely, that its activities are well-coordinated, with formalised structure. Opportunities for future research are derived from the strength of communities’ buy-in and the level of trust between the two parties. These established collaborative relationships strengthen transdisciplinarity, as one of the key aspects of transdisciplinarity is including the community as active stakeholders in the research and CE process.

5.2.5 Academia’s perspectives on the threats to community engagement projects

A major threat identified by participants was related to withdrawing of projects from communities. Participants suggested that the moment a project withdraws from the community everything collapses. This reflects a lack of planning for sustainability. There has also been criticism of the WIN Platform structure, which is seen as a top-down structure that excludes communities in its decision-making (Sebeco, 2018:6); thus, this confirms the results of this study that indicate the power relationships are unequal, with the university seen by communities as coming from a privileged position. Overall, threats to CE projects were the result of a lack of cooperative development, collaboration, and mutual benefit-reciprocity between communities and the university.

5.3 Evaluation and limitations of the study

The primary objective of this study was to explore and describe the perceptions of academia on community engagement activities within the WIN Platform by applying a strategic auditing tool in the form of a sSWOT analysis. There was a total of 45 (N=45) potential academic actors that formed the population, and, out of these only, ten (n=9) availed themselves for interviews. The sample size was small despite numerous efforts to invite potential participants, and partially because the data gathering occurred during a difficult time in the academic calendar when researchers and supervisors and lecturers had to finalise projects. The proposed methodology was qualitative, and thematic analysis was used as this study was exploratory and, thirdly, no such study has been conducted on the WIN Platform. However, the data adequately addressed

the roles of different actors within the WIN Platform. The study identified a power imbalance between academic actors and community actors, with university actors being seen to wield more power. However, the objectives of the study were adequately addressed by the data. Recommendations to mitigate the weaknesses and threats were made.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Recommendation on engagement between the university and communities

A major conclusion of this study is that there is a lack of cooperative development, collaboration, and mutual benefit-reciprocity between communities and the university. This is seen in the power imbalances between the university and communities, where the university is seen to wield more power; at the exclusion of communities in decision-making; furthermore, there is a clear lack of planning to ensure the sustainability of such activities. Moreover, academia only saw community role-players as providing access to communities and households, as opposed to seeing them as decision-makers and collaborators in projects being undertaken, which attests to power imbalances between the university and communities. Therefore, it is recommended that community stakeholders, especially community leaders, should be made an integral part of the WIN Platform by making them permanent committee members of its highest decision-making bodies as well as the project coordination committee. In this way, community buy-in will be more easily obtained, while also instilling a sense of ownership to them.

5.4.2 Recommendation for project coordination in Academia

One of the weaknesses of the WIN Platform-type projects mentioned by participants was a lack of project coordination. They suggested that coordinators should be people who can work well with communities and academia and can also speak the languages of local communities. It is further recommended that a platform, coordinated by the project manager should be developed whereby community leaders will also be involved in the selection of project coordinators.

5.4.3 Recommendations on project sustainability

The development of a platform to facilitate CE activities within HE institutions enables long term engagement with communities. If this is done from a multi-disciplinary perspective towards a transdisciplinary approach that will facilitate communities to become active participants in the research process, wicked problems or grand challenges can be identified in communities and collaboratively addressed through co-creation practices like Participatory Action Research. The weaknesses and threats identified in the data indicated that Participatory Action Research is required but poses other challenges that need to be managed through the process. Inclusion of

community leaders in the highest decision-making bodies of the WIN Platform will go a long way in ensuring collaborative decision-making, which has the potential to lead to sustainable projects using the improved understanding of community needs, buy-in, and ownership. It is further recommended that the WIN Platform should establish a monitoring and evaluation unit to ensure the smooth running of projects and evaluate their impact on communities.

5.4.4 Recommendations for future research

This study only considered the views of academia regarding community engagement activities within the WIN Platform. First, the limitations of this study indicate that perceptions of students, as part of academia, were not included in this study due to the difficult time in the academic calendar when researchers and supervisors and lecturers had to finalise projects. It is recommended that future research involve students regarding their roles in the Platform as well as their perceptions on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the WIN Platform. It is also important to evaluate the perceptions of members of communities as well as community leaders to develop recommendations that will include all role players in the Platform.

5.5 Chapter summary

This study set out to explore and describe the perceptions of academia (such as lecturers, researchers, support staff, and students) involved in the WIN Platform hosted by the NWU by using a SWOT analysis. From the data, five major themes were identified, namely: key role-players in CE projects, and various perspectives on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to CE projects. Major weaknesses identified were power imbalances that existed between academic actors and community actors, with university actors seen to wield more power; and lack of cooperative development, collaboration and mutual benefit-reciprocity between communities and the university. A major threat of the success of the CE project was identified as follows: the moment the project withdrew from the community everything collapsed. Recommendations to mitigate these weaknesses and threats to strengthen the WIN Platform were made.

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APPENDIX A: AUTHER SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTER

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-2094
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

AUTHER SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTER

Dear Chair and members of the HREC committee,

Please find herewith the approval letter to acknowledge that the below mentioned study underwent critical quality review by members of the AUTHeR Scientific Committee and have been granted approval for review by the HREC:

Title:	Perceptions on current community engagement activities and perceived roles of different actors within the Wellbeing Innovation (WIN) platform by academia.
Student Name/Researcher	Trisha Govender
Supervisor:	Dr Kylah Forbes-Biggs
Co-supervisor	Dr Christi M Niesing
Date of the meeting	17 October 2018
Reviewers	Prof Lanthé Kruger, Drs Annchen Mielmann and Herman Myburgh.
Final date of approval	02 November 2018

Signature of the chairperson
Date: 02/11/2018

Signature of the Director
Date: 02/11/2018

APPENDIX B: NWU-HREC APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support

North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC)
Tel: 018 299-1206
Email: Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za

Dr K Forbes-Biggs
Transdisciplinary Health Promotion
AUTHeR

14 November 2019

Dear Dr Forbes-Biggs

APPROVAL OF YOUR AMENDMENT REQUEST BY THE NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NWU-HREC) OF THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Ethics number: NWU-00023-19-A1

Kindly use the ethics reference number provided above in all future correspondence or documents submitted to the administrative assistant of the North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC) secretariat.

Study title: Academia's perceptions regarding community engagement activities and perceived roles of different actors within the Wellbeing Innovation (WIN) platform by academia

Study leader/Researcher: Dr K Forbes-Biggs

Student: T Govender-24630535

You are kindly informed that your amendment request (Change to the recruitment procedure and addition of team members) to the aforementioned project has been approved. Any future amendments to the proposal or other associated documentation must be submitted to the NWU-HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences, North-West University, prior to implementing these changes. These requests should be electronically submitted to Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za, for review BEFORE approval can be provided, with a cover letter with a specific subject title indicating, "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". The letter should include the title of the approved study, the names of the researchers involved, the nature of the amendment/s being made (indicating what changes have been made as well as where they have been made), which documents have been attached and any further explanation to clarify the amendment request being submitted. The amendments made should be indicated in yellow highlight in the amended documents. The *e-mail*, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a *specific subject line* indicating that it is an amendment request e.g. "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". This e-mail should indicate the nature of the amendment. This submission will be handled via the expedited process.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support at Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

Digitally signed by Petra Bester
DN: cn=Petra Bester, o=AUTHeR, ou=NWU, Faculty of Health Sciences, email=petra.bester@nwu.ac.za, c=ZA
Date: 2019.11.14 15:07:27 +02'00'

Chairperson: NWU-HREC

Current details: (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5.3 Letters Templates\9.1.5.4.1_Approval_letter_Amend_Req_HREC.docm
30 April 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.1

APPENDIX C: RDGC APPROVAL

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za
Research Data Gatekeeper Committee

NWU RDGC PERMISSION GRANTED / DENIED LETTER

Based on the documentation provided by the researcher specified below, on 23/07/2019 the NWU Research Data Gatekeeper Committee (NWU-RDGC) hereby grants permission for the specific project (as indicated below) to be conducted at the North-West University (NWU):

Project title: Academia's perceptions regarding community engagement activities and perceived roles of different actors within the Wellbeing Innovation (WIN) platform by academia.

Project leader: Dr K Forbes-Biggs
Researcher/Project Team: T Govender

Ethics reference no: NWU-00023-19-S1
NWU RDGC reference no: NWU-GK-2019-037

Specific Conditions:

- The Committee recommend that Dr N Claasen must send the invitation mail on behalf of the researcher to prospective participants.
- The invitation mail should state that any interested parties may contact the designated person/s (Ms J Matsietso and Ms M Thomas) directly for more information and consent to participate.

Approval date: 23/07/2019 **Expiry date: 22/07/2020**

General Conditions of Approval:

- The NWU-RDGC will not take the responsibility to recruit research participants or to gather data on behalf of the researcher. This committee can therefore not guarantee the participation of our relevant stakeholders.
- Any changes to the research protocol within the permission period (for a maximum of 1 year) must be communicated to the NWU-RDGC. Failure to do so will lead to withdrawal of the permission.
- The NWU-RDGC should be provided with a report or document in which the results of said project are disseminated.

Please note that under no circumstances will any personal information of possible research subjects be provided to the researcher by the NWU RDGC. The NWU complies with the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (PAIA) as well as the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (POPI). For an application to access such information please contact Ms Annamarie De Kock (018 285 2771) for the relevant enquiry form or more information on how the NWU complies with PAIA and POPI.

The NWU RDGC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU RDGC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance

Yours sincerely

Prof Marlene Verhoef
Chairperson NWU Research Data Gatekeeper Committee

Original details: (22951930) C:\Users\22951930\Desktop\test 2.docm
13 November 2018

Current details: (22951930) M:\DSS1\8533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethics\Applications RDGC\Updated RDGC Permission Letter.docm
15 November 2018

File reference: 1.1.4.3

APPENDIX D: PERMISSION TO HAVE ACCESS TO WIN PLATFORM AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DATA

Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR)
Private Bag X6001,
Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: 018 299-2095
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

30 October 2018

Ms. T. Govender (MHSc student, 24630535)
c/o Dr K. Forbes-Biggs (Supervisor)
Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research
North-West University

Dear Ms. Govender

Re: Permission to have access to WIN data

Pending the approval of your proposal by the Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research's Scientific Committee (ASC), the North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC) and the NWU's Research Data Gatekeeper Committee, I – the coordinator of the AUTHeR's Community Integrated Research (CIR) Office and the Wellbeing Innovation (WIN) platform - hereby grant you access to information regarding academic staff, support staff and students who have been involved in various projects of the **W**ellbeing **IN**novation Platform since 2011.

This information is solely for the proposed MHSc in Transdiscipinary Health Promotion research entitled: *Academia's perceptions regarding community engagement activities and perceived roles of different actors within the Wellbeing Innovation (WIN) platform* under the supervision of Dr Kylah Forbes-Biggs and Dr Christi Niesing.

It is expected that the data management plan will be adhered to ensure the security of data at all times. It is also expected that the student will sign a confidentiality agreement before the commencement of the study.

Best,

Dr Nicole Claasen

Senior Lecturer and WIN Platform Coordinator

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222
Fax: +2718 299-4910
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

NWU-HREC Stamp

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR ACADEMICS' INVOLVED IN THE WIN PLATFORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: Perceptions on current community engagement activities and perceived roles of different actors within the Wellbeing Innovation (WIN) platform by academia

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-00023-19-A1, RDGC: NWU-GK2019-037

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr Kylah Forbes Biggs and Dr Christi Niesing

POST GRADUATE STUDENT: Trisha Govender

ADDRESS: Private Bag X6001, Bag 500, Potchefstroom, South Africa, 2520

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 299 2690

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of a Masters study. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study

that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participation. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever and you will not be penalised or prejudiced for your choice. You are also free to withdraw from the study (without explanation) at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00023-19-A1) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

- The aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of academics (such as lecturers, researchers, support staff and students) involved in the WIN platform hosted by the NWU and to, through the utilisation of an analysis tool for strategic development and auditing, the SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, contribute to an informed knowledge base necessary for developing mutually beneficial relationships in UCE to ensure that reciprocity.

- This study will be conducted on the NWU campus at the Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR) (Building G16) offices in the privacy of the AUTHeR Conference room. Or if you wish, in your office on campus. It will be led by an interviewer. With a population of 45 persons the study will continue to the point of data saturation.

Why have you been invited to participate?

- You are regarded as an academic actor (male and female), such as researchers, lecturers, support staff and students who are or were involved with Community Engagement (CE) through the Wellbeing Innovation (WIN) platform projects.
- You are proficient in English as the primary language of the interviews (based on the primary language of the student and researcher).
- You are available to be invited to participate in the study (for example – you are still present within the NWU Potchefstroom environment)

What will be expected of you?

- You will be expected to sign a voluntary consent form prior to the interview to participate in the study. The form will be explained by an independent individual and ample time (two weeks) will be allocated for you to ask questions and get any additional clarity on the study.

This individual will be responsible for administering the informed consent process. If you decide to participate you will be asked to sign the form with the Independent person in a private area (conference room or office). You will receive a copy of the consent form for your use. The interviews will take place in November 2019 at an agreed upon time and date. There will be no activities or experiments conducted therefore you are only asked to answer the interview questions. The interview will take no more than 60mins, with an interview tool consisting of six opened ended questions. We will ask for your permission to record your interview to ensure the accuracy of our capturing of your responses.

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

- There will be no direct gains for you in the study nor will there be any remuneration, however your input will be used to help the research student develop the topic and the findings will go towards developing knowledge which may give insight into your future involvement in Community Engagement (CE) projects.

- The other gains of the study are based on their contributions to the insight used as the basis for developing the university-community framework.

Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?

The risks to you in this study are minimal and are primarily related to sitting and paying attention for the interview period. All efforts will be made to accommodate needs such as giving breaks for stretching or standing if the participant prefers. A qualified professional will be made available should you experience any distress of discomfort resulting from your participation in the study. However the full risk profile of the study is presented in detail below:

Fatigue and Physical Discomfort
Interviews will not be longer than 60 minutes and consideration will be taken to the participants working hours. Participants may stand or walk briefly whilst talking in the office where the interview is being conducted to relieve discomfort of sitting.

Psychological Harm:
Emotional Discomfort
Should there be any discomfort that a short break can be requested should the participant feel the need to gather their thoughts and feelings. The participants will be reassured that all information will be anonymised to protect their identity. They will be reminded that the can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Feelings of Deception

The consent form provided clearly indicates the full expectations of the participants and of the goals of the study. The participants will be informed that they may ask questions at any point to reduce feeling of deception. The findings will be offered to participants to also ensure that they have full access to the study summary.

Coercion

The researcher must ensure that this does not take place by reiterating the voluntary nature of the study and the rights of the participants to withdraw with prejudice.

Feelings of Emotional Distress

Participants will be informed prior to the interview about the study being conducted and a consent form that states he/she may withdraw from the study at any given time without being victimized or punished should the participant be unable to overcome the emotional distress. The participants may request a debriefing by a qualified professional to address the distress if desired.

Boredom

The interview will not last longer than 60 minutes, so boredom should be minimised. And participants are invited to take breaks to reduce risk of boredom.

Inconvenience

Most of the participants are at the North-West University (NWU) and an interview schedule and prior arrangements will be made for the interview based on convenient times for the participants. The location is also common (work location) and efforts will be made to accommodate interviews at participant's offices if they prefer.

Self-Disclosure

The consent form as well as reassurance from the interviewer that personal details such as names and positions will be removed from the data and will not be included in the final study.

Embarrassment

The questions asked are based on the research study only and should be based on their experiences (within the context of the research) but are not directly personal in nature. Hence any risk of embarrassment should be minimised. Participants will be made comfortable as the interview will be done in the conference room at Africa Unit

for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR) or at the participant's office on campus.

Anxiety
The participants will be reassured and made comfortable by the interviewer creating an open and welcoming atmosphere when communicating and conducting the interview.

Loss of Privacy and Confidentiality
All data obtained will be anonymised and confidential. Data will be managed according the data management policy of AUTHeR.

Loss of Autonomy
Consent will be asked from the participants before the interview is done to ensure the participant is aware and makes a voluntary decision to participate.

Social Harm; Loss of Freedom of Choice
All participants will be issued a consent form that clearly indicates their participation in the study is voluntary and will be notified that they can withdraw at any time.

Community Harm: General community knowledge becomes known
The research study is aimed at obtaining information of how Community Engagement (CE) activities are perceived by the actors involved in the Wellbeing Innovation (WIN) platform

There are more gains for you in joining this study than there are risks. While there may not be any direct benefits to participating in this study, it should be noted that there are widespread opportunities for this study. Future academic research will benefit from the results of the study as it seeks to provide greater insight into the role and perceptions of academics in Community Engagement (CE). Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in South Africa will benefit from the results of the study.

How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?

- Your right to confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. Your name will not be used on any documents (hardcopies or electronic) including the transcriptions, file, field notes etc. You will be issued a numerical identifier as will all other participants and only the researcher and the study leader will have knowledge of this. This will be used in the study and the write up. All research related material including but not limited to audio recordings, notes, transcripts and consent forms will be kept in a locked storage area at AUTHeR (building G16 on the NWU Potchefstroom campus). Access to the data will be permitted by Dr Nicole Claassen and Dr

Petra Bester. Audio recording will be deleted from the recording device (by the interviewer) as quickly as possible immediately following the interview after being transferred to and saved on a password protected computer. All data being analysed will also be kept secure on a password protected laptop (as well as already being assigned numerical identifiers). The mediators who will serve as the liaison between the researcher and the participants, as well as the interviewer will be required to sign a confidentiality document prior to action. Data will be stored for a period of 5 years in a secure storage unit at the AUTHeR offices. The raw data will not be used for any other purpose than what is specified in this research protocol however the sponsors of the research, the National Research Foundation (NRF) official may inspect the research records. After five years the data, in **all** forms, will be destroyed according to strict NWU data destruction protocols. Dr Nicole Claassen and Prof Petra Bester will be responsible for overseeing the destruction of all forms of data (electronic and hard copy).

Your privacy will be maintained during the emailing process through the use of individual rather than bulk/group mailing practices to protect the integrity of the participant by not sharing addresses with any other participant or party. This to minimise the exposure of other parties to the details (email addresses particularly ones which reflect the participant's names) in the communication. Participants will be asked to provide an email address for the purpose of receiving the findings, and may choose to use a non-identifiable, non- institution based address.

What will happen with the findings?

- The findings of this study will only be used for this study. The recommendations will be used to guide the development of the university-community engagement framework.

How will you know about the results of this research?

- We will give you the results of this research when the research study has been completed by providing the participants with a brief via email. You will be invited to provide an email which will be stored with all of the research data in a secure location. The emails will be sent out individually and not using a group mail function which could expose participant email addresses to the other participants. The emails will be sent from a password protected computer on campus.
- You will be informed of any new relevant findings via email under the same privacy secure conditions.

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?

- No, you will not be paid nor receive a reimbursement, to take part in the study because participation is entirely voluntary. We have tried to make the situation as convenient as possible with minimal costs to you. We have tried to identify a centralised venue for your convenience and attempted to keep the time as short as possible to avoid disruption to your day. Refreshments such as tea/ coffee/water will be served when arrive for your interview.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact Dr Kylah Forbes-Biggs at 018 299 2690 (064 467 8189) or via email at Kylah.forbesbiggs@nwu.ac.za if you have any further questions or problems.
- You can also contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 1206 or carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns that were not answered about the research or if you have complaints about the research.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I …….……. agree to take part in the research study titled:…….

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) .....……..…….. on (*date*) ……...…….. 20....

.....

Signature of participant

.....

Signature of witness

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I *(name)* ……..…… declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to

  ……

- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I gave him/her time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) .....…..…….. on (*date*) ……...…….. 20....

.....

Signature of person obtaining consent

Declaration by researcher

I *(name)* ……..…… declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to …….. **or** I had it explained by …… who I trained for this purpose.
- I did/did not use an interpreter
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them
  or I was available should he/she want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) .....…….. on (*date*) ……...…….. 20....

.....

Signature of researcher

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

IV (Interviewer)

So, what is or was your role in the WIN Platform, so that can be the projects that you were involved in, when you were involved in the project.

IW (Interviewee)

I was never really involved hundred percent in WIN, but I know of a lot of things that did happen. I was in projects other than WIN, so I worked at that time more in the summer projects and I had a large lecturing role but I know that my colleague worked in WIN and I know that there was student groups going out in specific projects

IV

Did you travel to Vaalharts at any time or how often

IW

Not in the WIN project but I did travel previously to Ganyesa

IV

Who do you perceive as important role players so that can be the community that you went to or as well as the people from the university side, and why would you say they are important?

IW

I will answer that question two-fold. I had an experience when I went Ganyesa. You have your tribal chief that you have to have permission from. Then you have your community members and it's a good idea to work through some sort of leader in the community or church leader. As far as I can remember, we worked through the water personnel. In Ganyesa it was the clinic staff – it was a health-related type of study.

Then, university personnel, I think if you look in terms of WIN you need very strong key role players that can mobilise your students and a core team that can take responsibility and organise and coordinate the events, and a core team that can actually drive it in. There also needs to be key role players in the academic fields that can take responsibility for the students

IV

What are the advantages or strengths within the WIN Platform

IW

Like I said I was not primarily involved. But from what I know there was a core team in all activities and it was well coordinated. There were also strong organisational capabilities

IV

The next question has to do with the weaknesses or disadvantages

IW

What I've picked up is that it worked quite well up to a point and then something more was needed and I think once again it boils down to key role players that you kind of need to hand-select for specific roles that can work well with communities; that can work well with academics, that can speak the different languages so that you can actually have inclusive participatory approach.

IV

What other opportunities do you think the WIN Platform can create and maybe where as well?

IW

With integrated learning I think there is an essential part that is really necessary especially if you have a professional degree. A student cannot just have theoretical knowledge, they need practical experience.

All role players need to decide what is the main aim, what do you want to achieve. I think what WIN did well is that they went away from Ikageng in the sense that the university tends to work in Ikageng as it is close by. What I would like to see with WIN is that if you look at the students' perspective of training people and giving them an opportunities and also all the faculties' footprint in communities we focus quite a lot in the North West province but I think it might be a good idea to other provinces to broaden the scope a bit and also to compare wellness among provinces then the impact can be so much more.

IV

Any threats or risks you can think of that the Platform might create or where it can [create such risks]?

IW

A student might not be already shaped as a researcher with integrity and what I think is absolutely needed is that before a student can go into the community I think they should go through some sort of ethics training so that they can become aware of how to work with the community as this also reflects on the North West University

IV

Thank you for your time

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Schedule

Study Title: Academia's perceptions regarding community engagement activities and perceived roles of different actors within the Wellbeing Innovation (WIN) platform

Section I. Opening

A. (Establish Rapport) [shake hands] My name is _____ and I am will be the interviewer for this session.

B. (Ethics) As required by the North-West University (NWU), I am required to seek your permission to partake in this study and ask you, if you agree to sign a formal consent form. This form was emailed to you two weeks ago in order for you to have an opportunity to review it and to ask questions before making a decision. Did you receive the form? Were you able to review it? I would like to go over it again briefly if you do not mind (go over the consent form). Do you have any questions that you would like to ask? Do you wish to participate in the study and if so, would you kindly sign the form. (If not the interview stops without prejudice and the individual is thanked for his/her time).

C. (Purpose) I would like to ask you some questions about your perceptions on your community engagement activities and the perceived roles of different actors within the Wellbeing Innovation (WIN) platform?

D. (Motivation) I hope to use this information to explore the perceptions of academics (such as lecturers, researchers, support staff and students) involved in the WIN platform program hosted by NWU in order to contribute to knowledge necessary for developing mutually beneficial relationships in community engagement.

E. (Time Line) The interview should take about 45-60 minutes. If you need to take a break at any point please let me know.

Transition: If you are comfortable, may we begin with the questions?

Section II

Body A. (Topic) Perceptions

1. What is or was your role in the WIN platform?
   Follow-up: When were you involved? Which projects? Which specific communities? How often did you travel to Vaalharts? Your role in detail?

(Transition to the next topic: Role Players)

2. When being involved in the WIN platform, who did you perceive as important role-players within the Vaalharts community and the university?
   Follow-up: why?

(Transition to the next topic: Strengths)

3. In your view, which aspects did you experience as strength (or advantages) when being involved in the WIN platform?

(Transition to the next topic: Weaknesses)

4. Which aspects did you experience as weakness (or disadvantage) when being involved in the WIN platform?

(Transition to the next topic: Opportunities)

5. Having been involved in the WIN platform, where do you see the opportunities such a platform can provide?

(Transition to the next topic: Threats)

6. Having been involved in the WIN platform, where do you see the risks or threats such a platform can pose?

(Transition: Well, it has been a pleasure finding out more about perceptions and listening to the insight on the WIN platform. Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.)

Section III Closing

A. (Summarize) You are appear to have played a significant role in the WIN platform in terms of _____. You indicated that _____ were additional role players. You have identified strengths including _____. The weakness your perceived were _____. In terms of opportunities you felt that _____. And finally you viewed _____as the main threats.

B. (Maintain Rapport) I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know regarding your perceptions of the community engagement and the Win platform?

C. (Action to be taken) I should have all the information I need. If you are agreeable we would like to communicate the final findings to you via email. Thank you again for your time.

APPENDIX H: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

SPELL CHECK
PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE EDITING & TRANSLATION SERVICES
Tanya-Lee Stewart
Bachelor of Arts in English & Linguistics
spellcheck1977@gmail.com / +27 84 556 7745

EDITING CERTIFICATE

15 March 2020

To whom it may concern

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

Re: Research proposal for the dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Health Science in Transdisciplinary Health Promotion at the North-West University

This serves to confirm that I, Tanya-Lee Ruby Stewart, a SATI-registered language editor and translator, undertook the language editing of the above-mentioned document on behalf of T Govender, NWU student number: 24630535 for the purpose of meeting the submission requirements of an M degree.

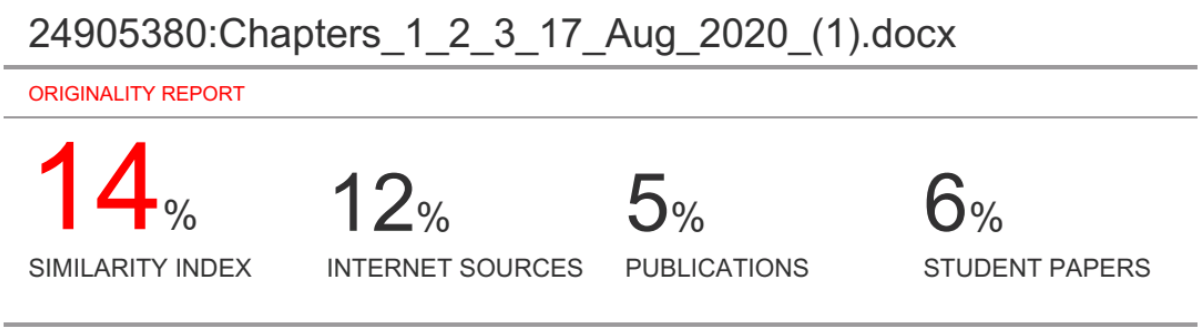
Changes and corrections were suggested by means of "track changes" and e-mails. However, implementation thereof was left entirely up to the author.

Should you have any queries, please contact me through the email address and telephone number provided by the letterhead.

Yours sincerely

TR Stewart
Member: South African Translators'
Institute SATI registration no: 1003470

APPENDIX I: TURNITIN DIGITAL CERTIFICATE


24905380:Chapters_1_2_3_17_Aug_2020_(1).docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

14%	12%	5%	6%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS