

TEFCE CONSULTATION WITH THE NATIONAL COORDINATION CENTRE FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (NCCPE) - UK

Skype meeting, 15 March 2019

Paul Manners, Director of NCCPE; Thomas Farnell, Institute for the Development of Education

MEETING CONCLUSIONS

Overview of NCCPE work so far on public engagement

- NCCPE has worked for over a decade with support UK Research and Innovation, the UK Higher Education Funding Councils and Wellcome to support public engagement at UK universities. The increasing dominance of the 'impact agenda' in UK higher education (primarily through the Research Excellence Framework - REF) has played a key role in consolidating the relevance of public engagement in UK higher education.
- The EDGE self-assessment tool on the public engagement of universities that NCCPE developed was inspired by previous self-assessment tools from the US and has been very successful and widely accepted by UK universities. Some of the lessons learnt have been:
 - A one-page matrix will always work better than a 100-page workbook!
 - People do not like being told what to do – tools should allow for context-specific differences
 - The tool has value because it allows for tracking progress over time
- NCCPE also developed the EDGE Watermark quality label for universities, which follows a comprehensive assessment led by NCCPE for participating universities including a survey, interviews, a review, and action-plan development and an award for universities. Lessons learnt:
 - The external assessment/facilitation component provides an immensely useful intervention for universities, that they are prepared to pay for.
 - The awarding of a label was seen as valuable: it was universities themselves who requested to have different levels of achievement for the Watermark, from gold, to silver and bronze

New developments in England for public engagement in HE

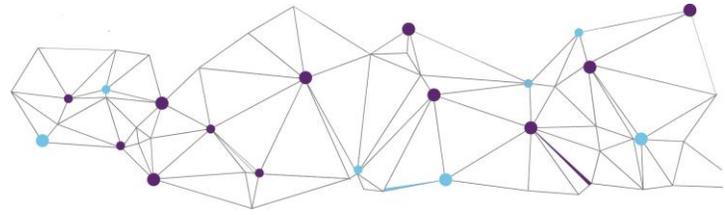
- Two recent initiatives may further strengthen the public engagement agenda in England: the proposal for a Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) and an initiative for universities to sign Civic University Agreements. The timing of the TEFCE project outputs is therefore very relevant.
- Regarding the KEF, the NCCPE's initial opinion is that the indicators for public engagement are based on metrics that are too 'blunt' and that a better way to capture universities' efforts would be

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through the results of university self-assessments or through a more rigorous external review process like the Watermark.

Reflection on the TEFCE Toolbox

- Overall, there was a very positive initial reaction to the principles of the TEFCE Toolbox and to its first draft. The Toolbox captures the key elements of engagement and there is value in placing a critical approach to engagement (differentiating authenticity of commitment to engagement) at the Toolbox's core.
- However, some aspects of the Toolbox, however, could benefit from additional clarification - as proposed below.
- The TEFCE project currently provides a broad definition and a very broad scope of particular kinds of engagement, e.g.
 - Location of engagement: The TEFCE project provides a broad definition of engagement, including in terms of its geography, with community engagement being possible local, regional, national and even international levels.
 - Societal goals of engagement: The TEFCE project also avoids a narrow 'social justice' interpretation of community engagement, but provides a spectrum of engagement that can cover social justice, economic development and the public good.

This broad scope may represent a difficulty in practice. An idea that was proposed was that the Toolbox could perhaps **consider how to add a section to the Toolbox that could help users to tackle these dimensions of engagement, and map where their practices (or university as a whole) would best fit.**

- The definition of 'community' was also seen as a potential difficulty for some users, since the term can be interpreted in many different ways and the Toolbox in its current form provides only a broad definition, without providing examples. **An approach adopted by NCCPE, which could provide an useful reference for the TEFCE project was to define 4 core categories of publics/communities (public sector, business, civil society and the general public), with associated sub-groups – see diagram below.** This could help the process for users to consider what 'counts' as a community.

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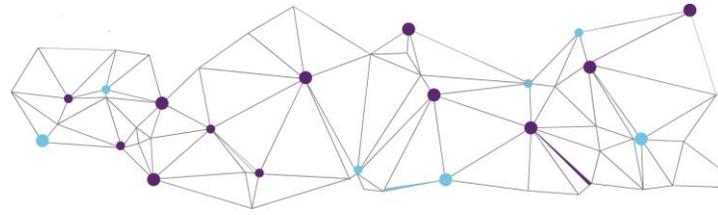
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TEFCE

Towards a European Framework for
Community Engagement in Higher Education



National
Co-ordinating
Centre for
Public Engagement



CIVIL SOCIETY & THIRD SECTOR
Charities & associations; societies and clubs



POLICY
Policy makers,
regulators, civil
servants



PUBLIC SECTOR
Professionals and
practitioners

BUSINESS
Companies, SMEs,
entrepreneurs



National
Co-ordinating
Centre for
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- An additional note was made that sometimes activities such as technology transfer (which the TEFCE Toolbox excludes from the category of community engagement) can in some cases create broader social value – so it may be worth keeping that option open.

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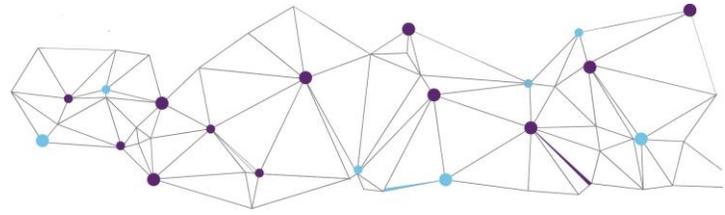


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How to mainstream public engagement in the long term?

- The discussion then focused on how to ensure that community engagement does not remain a peripheral concern for universities and higher education policy. One conclusion is that the very term 'community engagement' may already be a limiting factor, that is immediately associated to 'local community' and 'social justice'. An alternative would be to use **the concept of innovation to frame the discussion, and associated terms such a social innovation, user-centred design, organisational innovation and even pedagogical innovation**. Adopting such an approach would be more cutting-edge and could open up the discussion with a much broader audience (especially with government and business).
- Regarding the TEFCE project scepticism about using metrics for measuring community engagement, the NCCPE perspective is that metrics can provide a highly valuable tool for organisational management and change, and that in the long term it may be possible (and desirable) to develop a meaningful set of metrics for community engagement.

Conclusion and future cooperation

- NCCPE are open to the idea of participating in a more detailed dialogue about the TEFCE Toolbox and the project as a whole at a special stakeholder event at the end of 2019 – but would need more details and dates as soon as possible.
- NCCPE suggested that the TEFCE project could present its findings and recommendations at the NCCPE Engage 2019 conference that will be held in the UK in December 2019.

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