UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN





UCT Knowledge Co-op 2021 Quality Assurance report

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Overview/Executive summary:

During 2021 we conducted the seventh round of our quality assurance process with stakeholders of the UCT Knowledge Co-op. We followed the usual two-tiered approach which includes an impact assessment and end-of-project evaluation drawing on feedback received from academic supervisors, students and community partners.

Impact assessment:

One year or more after completion of the project we assess the impact of research projects.

Academic impact: Emails are sent to academic supervisors and students (where traceable)
requesting details of academic outputs (publications, conference papers, further research)
resulting from projects they were involved with. Due to the slow progression onto academic
publications this is repeated for a few years after project completion.

To date 31 *academic outputs* have been reported out of 26 Co-op projects since 2011. They include eleven published articles (2 from the last year), three book chapters, two Centre for Social Science Research (CSSR) working papers, fifteen conference presentations by the academic supervising the study and/or the Masters students or Community partners themselves.

There is also valuable feedback on *longer-term engagement* of academics with Community partners, and on the impact the experience of collaborating with and impacting on community organisations had on the *personal development* of students.

Practical impact: A once-off questionnaire was sent to Community Partners (CPs) to assess
any practical impact of projects completed at least a year before.

Most of the CPs reported using the projects to raise awareness of the issues, especially
within their organisation, but also beyond; and that the project findings helped them to
improve their services or change policies. A number of them were able to use the outcome
to access funding.

What CPs valued most about the projects is that they provided an evaluation of their services and added to their credibility.

End-Of-Project-Evaluation:

Questionnaires were sent out at or soon after completion of the project. In this cycle 15 projects were completed, including:

- a. Student theses at Honours and Masters level; here all stakeholders, i.e. community partners, students and academic supervisors are surveyed;
- b. A smaller number of short projects involving compulsory community service (all these projects were cancelled soon after starting due to COVID19-related Lockdown) or undergrad team-based projects using Design thinking; in these cases, academics are not actively involved in the partnership.

Multiple choice questions assess stakeholders' satisfaction with their **experience** during the process, its **outputs** and the level of **commitment** of all partners to the process.

The bulk of responses in this section were in the *Agree* or *Agree strongly* category, but slightly less so for the Short projects. In terms of outcomes there was wide agreement that projects met overall expectations, and that students had developed insight into the nature of the work the CPs do. A student response was rather critical about how useful her study would be to the CP, as COVID19 restrictions made it impossible to collect data from their beneficiaries.

In a qualitative section, respondents give feedback on the **most useful** aspect of the project and suggest **improvements**. Academics particularly value the opportunity the Co-op offers their students to experience 'real-life' research settings and helping to keep the students on track with their final deliverables; this is echoed by student responses who commended the expertise and support offered by the Co-op and conducting research that is of benefit to the CPs and local community. For community partners the outstanding value of projects lies in the outputs and impact of the research study which indicate what works and where and how improvements are possible, as well as gaining a concise final report on the study. Suggestions for improvement often focus on the need for more clarity and closer engagement with CPs at the outset of the project as well as more regular communication from students – something the Co-op tries to address, but evidently needs to keep working at.

The following pages provide details of the feedback received to both versions of the assessment.

1. Impact Assessment

a. Impact reported in the Academic realm

To assess impact in the academic sphere we requested feedback from each academic supervisor – and those students we could still reach – on publications, conference papers, further research or personal impact that resulted from Knowledge Co-op projects they had been involved in. Due to the slow progress into publications, we include publications arising out of projects from the period since the start of the Co-op, i.e. 2011 to date. Items added during the last reporting period appear in blue font.

To update the list for 2021 we emailed 15 academics and a few students (where traceable) – out of a total of 18 student dissertations.

Since 2011, we requested information for 85 projects involving 56 academics and received feedback on 63; 26 of these Co-op projects have resulted in 31 academic outputs since 2011, including two by the community partners involved. Some further book chapters and articles are in process.

The following Outputs were reported (UCT students' or academics' names appear in **bold**):

1. ELEVEN published articles:

- **W Barnett**, G Patten, B Kerschberger, K Conradie, DB Garone, G van Cutsem & **CJ Colvin** (2013). Perceived adherence barriers among patients failing second-line antiretroviral therapy in Khayelitsha, South Africa. *S Afr J HIV Med* 14(4):170-176. DOI:10.7196 /SAJHIVMED.981.
- **D Learmonth, S Hakala & M Keller** (2015). "I can't carry on like this": barriers to exiting the street-based sex trade in South Africa. *Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine, 3*(1), 348-365.
- **B Conradie, I L Hansen & M Oosthuizen** (2018). Experiences with and the viability of a recycling pilot project in a Cape Town township, *Development Southern Africa*, DOI: 10.1080/0376835X.2018.1484699.
- **S Hendricks, N Conrad, TS Douglas, T Mutsvangwa** (2018). Design thinking for Health innovation: assessing stakeholder participation. *Healthcare: The Journal of Delivery Science and Innovation*. 6(3):191-196.
- **S M Peters, S Kessi & F Boonzaier (**2019). Narrative identity: the construction of dignified masculinities in Black male sex workers' narratives. *Social Dynamic* 45:3, 425-441.
- D van der Westhuizen, **N Conrad, TS Douglas & T Mutsvangwa** (2020). Engaging Communities on Health Innovation: Experiences in Implementing Design Thinking. *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, 0272684X19900880.
- **M Goemans,** AD van Breda & **S Kessi** (2020). Experiences of Young People Preparing to Transition Out of Cluster Foster Care in South Africa, *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-020-00704-1.
- M Pillay & H Kathard (2018). Renewing our cultural borderlands: Equitable population innovations for communication (EPIC). *Top Lang Disorders* 38(2): 143–160.
- OJ Onyeagoziri, C Shaw, T Ryan (2021). A system dynamics approach for understanding community resilience to disaster risk. *Jàmbá Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 13 (1), 11.
- **Pitcher, S. & Boonzaier, F.** (submitted) Invisibility and hypervisibility: Photovoice research with transgender youth. South African Journal of Psychology.

Boonzaier, F. & Peters, S. (submitted). The gendered and sexual lives and identifications of South African youth: A participatory Project. HSRC Press.

2. THREE book chapters

- F **Boonzaier** (2019). Researching sex work. Doing decolonial, intersectional narrative analysis. In J. Fleetwood, L. Presser, S. Sandberg & T. Ugelvik (eds), *The Emerald Handbook of Narrative Criminology*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- N Conrad, TEM Mutsvangwa, A Doyle, T Saidi, TS Douglas (2019). User-Centred Design in a Health Innovation Course to Address Hearing Loss in the Elderly. In *Biomedical Engineering for Africa*. Ed: TS Douglas. Open UCT Publications.
- S Norgaard et al. (2023). "Reimagining Urban Planning in Africa" to be published by Cambridge University Press A manuscript remains in-submission.

3. ONE study contributed insights towards a published article with a wider scope:

M Dyer, R Mills, **B Conradie** & J Piesse (2015). "Harvest of Hope: The Contribution of Peri-Urban Agriculture in South African Townships". *Agrekon* Vol. 54, Iss. 4, 73-86, DOI: 10.1080/03031853.2015.1116400.

4. An academic acted as advisor for research and the resulting article:

M Brittijn (2013). "We're not boys anymore, we need to be courageous": Towards an understanding of what it means to be a man in Lavender Hill, *Agenda*, 27:1, 49-60. Advised by **A Africa**.

5. TWO Centre for Social Science Research working papers:

- **R Odendaal, J Morar & B Conradie** (2013). "A cost benefit analysis of a technology bundle aimed at improving the resilience of urban households in Rocklands, Mitchells Plain". CSSR Working Paper 332.
- **M Fainman & B Conradie** (2019). "Wild-harvesting fynbos flowers: Still a viable business?". CSSR Working Paper 444.

6. SIX conference presentations by the academic supervising the study:

- **D Learmonth**, Paper at the International Critical Psychology Conference, Grahamstown, 2015; presentations in Athens & New York on Exiting the street-based sex trade.
- **Kathard, H & Pillay, M.** (2016) "Demystifying Decolonization and implications for professional practice", SASLHA conference, JhB, October 2016.
- N Conrad, T Mutsvangwa, A Doyle & T Douglas (2016). "User-centred Design as used in Health Innovation and Design: Addressing Hearing loss in the Elderly." Biomedical Engineering Society Annual Meeting, October 2016, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- **F Boonzaier**, C Squire. "Health as social citizenship: Rethinking health research and social research in South African contexts". International Society of Critical Health Psychology Conference, Grahamstown, 2015; presentations in Athens & New York.
- **F Ross**, "The First Thousand Days: temporality, gender and futurity." Paper presented at 2019 Finnish Anthropological Society Conference "On Time". Helsinki, August 29–30, 2019 &

- Gendered Temporalities: Anthroplogical Perspectives Symposium. Aarhus, Denmark, 26-27 August 2019.
- **N Conrad**, R Gitou, **T Mutsvangwa**, **TS Douglas** (2019). "Improving medication adherence in the elderly: design thinking for inclusive solutions". XVII Triple Helix Conference 2019, 9-10th September 2019, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 7. FIVE conference presentations by Masters students; THREE more by both supervisor and students and ONE by a community partner:
- **Z Ndzendze** (2014). "Breast is best: Understanding the low breastfeeding rate in the Western Cape". Anthropology Southern Africa Annual Conference, 29 June 2 July 2014, Rhodes University Grahamstown.
- **Z Ndzendze** (2016). "The Role of Trust in Childcare". Contemporary Ethnography Across the Disciplines Conference,15 18 November 2016, University of Cape Town.
- **Z Ndzendze** (2016). "Luring the Infant to Life". Anthropology Southern Africa Annual Conference, 30 September 2 October 2016, University of Venda.
- **S Peters** (2016). "'But Sex Work is Good but I don't want to Do It': Black Men's Narratives of Selling Sex". Presentation, Narrative Enquiry for Social Transformation Colloquium, 6 October 2016, Melville, Johannesburg.
- **K Marais** (2016). Presented the Mothers Matter research at the Western Cape Government Dept of Health, Provincial Research Day: "The First 1000 Days", as well as at the Anthropology Southern Africa Annual Conference.
- M Harty, **H Kathard, J** Le Roux, **P Parusnath, & M Orrie** (2016). "Townmouse and country mouse go to school. Describing the communication environments in rural and urban settings in South Africa", IALP, Dublin, 2016.
- **H Kathard, M Harty, M Orrie & P Parusnath (**2016) "Lost in translation. The importance of a pilot study in refining the methodology for observing multilingual classroom communication environments", IALP, Dublin, 2016.
- **S Pitcher & F Boonzaier** (2019). "Invisibility and hypervisibility: Methodological reflections on Photovoice from a photo-narrative project with transgender youth", Psychological Society of South Africa Congress, Johannesburg 3-6 Sep 2019
- S Norgaard et al. "Fostering Connection across Informal Cities: The Need for 21st Century Digital Urban Infrastructures." American Association of Geographers (AAG) Annual Meeting. 25 February—1 March, 2022. New York, New York.

8. Longer-term engagement / personal development:

- One academic continued her research with the community partner for years; another became a Board member of the NGO she was introduced to.
- A 3-year NRF-funded study with the same NGO developed from a project.
- In another case there is an application (pending due to COVID-19 delays) for an NRF grant as follow-up to a Masters dissertation.
- Follow-up studies were developed to deepen the findings of three projects.
- A number of students continued their next degree with research in the same field: two went on to do their PhD at international universities; and one is continuing at UCT with her PHD.
 One student has continued after his Honours with further research on the broader topic with the same NGO partner for his Masters.

- One project created an awareness in both students involved in it, who were subsequently
 much involved in NGO initiatives; it also helped prepare them for opportunities in the
 corporate world.
- One student reported that her thesis research equipped her with skills and perspectives for her subsequent position as a Qualitative Research Analyst.
- One academic reported that the student is studying further in the UK, "this assignment was
 an important step in her academic career and I would not be surprised if she does further
 work in the health economics/policy field."

Checking in with students 5 or more years after their Co-op experience yielded these responses:

One student continued into her PhD on a similar topic. She is now a lecturer at another university and draws on her Knowledge Co-op experience to inspire her students, telling them that it is possible to contribute to society through their academic research, even when that is not the norm in their field: "Us Black anthropologists don't want to do research for the sake of itself; we want to put our skills to good use......This experience definitely shaped my outlook on research and its important role in social justice and social change. This is an approach I hope to carry into my DPhil field work when I start soon."

b. Impact reported by Community Partners (n = 9)

At least one year after completion of projects we sent questionnaires to community partners asking for feedback on the impact of the project in the community realm. This may include raising awareness, changing public policy, strengthening existing programmes or increasing their organisations to chances to secure funding.

We targeted 14 projects and received feedback from nine of them. This section of the report summarises the responses:

• Raising awareness:

Most community partners *agreed* that the projects helped to raise awareness of the issue(s) more widely, while one *disagreed* and two did not think it applied to their project. The impact was felt mostly within the own teams and members, but also made clients aware of issues, e.g. the need for digital platforms for job-seekers. One CP mentioned the value for the student to learn about the issues around homelessness thereby raising awareness.

• Improvements in an existing policy, programme or service:

Most respondents *agreed* that the project results helped improve their existing policy and service, some *strongly agreed* with this, and one *disagreed*.

They mentioned the following

- Having independent evidence for the value of the service made the team confident to embark on more education around abuse.
- News of university students teaching resulted in more clients enrolling for computer training.
- Findings assisted the organisation to more effectively conceptualise their work and monitor impacts; for another it encouraged a shift to becoming a Trauma informed workplace.

- "Not only the final results, but discussions during the project alerted us to areas we could improve and did."
- "We are thinking more clearly about how we offer financial assistance to underresourced schools."

• Increased capacity to get project funding:

In five cases the project increased the partners' capacity to get project funding. One mentioned that some sponsors are interested in supporting the program which the students were involved in.

Another mentioned the project in various grant applications, and received funding from two corporate donors.

• The most important impact of the project:

Under this question some important insights were reported. They include:

- Forging long-term relationships with UCT staff, students, and faculty;
- "Becoming aware as organisation how hosting schools from under-resourced areas at our centre made them feel - entering an area where they were historically banned from."
- "Some refugee youth were encouraged to take science and mathematics up to grade 12."

For some partners what stood out was receiving confirmation for their work, e.g.

- Confirming our "feelings" as to the importance of their home environment and the support and protection needed by the vulnerable.
- "Acknowledgement that our M&E processes were on track was very rewarding."
- "Hearing from volunteers about how program implementation was going, years after they were trained."
- "Valuable information on the theoretical basis and effectiveness of our urban greening programme which helped us to improve this programme and also secure additional funding for the programme."

In this round there was feedback on areas of impact that had previously elicited very little response:

• Mentions, appearances or contributions in public media

One partner appeared several times on community radio stations and other social media platforms.

• Mentions in non-academic publications

Here partners mentioned Funder reports, Annual reports, reports of partners such as the UN Refugee agency.

• Participations in conferences

For the first time we had a partner mention aspects of the partnership in an academic conference presentation as well as in a chapter submitted for publication. Both are listed under Academic impact above.

Another partner mentioned presenting their project at a World Refugee Day Forum.

• New research projects on same or related theme.

One partner mentioned that the project led to a follow-up study by another Masters student which will include an impact and client-satisfaction assessment.

• Requests for advice on policy or legal issues relating to the project topic.

One partner made submissions to the City of Cape Town on how best to include refugees and migrants in education based on their experience.

An important general comment stated that "students should be given more time for community work as it was very helpful for both organisations and to the students". As Knowledge Co-op we want to reiterate this point. In the few instances where community service is a degree requirement, CPs receive valuable practical support and students' perceptions about service changes profoundly. There are too few courses at UCT offering their students this opportunity.

2. End-Of-Project-Evaluation – dissertation projects

Soon after the end of each project, each stakeholder received a link to an online questionnaire to assess the following areas:

- **Outputs** was the final project academically sound and did it address the community partner's need; did the student learn from the experience;
- **Experience** satisfaction with the process and how it was supervised;
- Involvement the value of the partnership to all involved and their contribution to it.
 - There were 5 options for assessing statements in these sections (Agree strongly, Agree, Disagree, Disagree strongly – and in some cases Doesn't apply).
 - Respondents also gave *qualitative* feedback on the most useful aspect of the project and suggested improvements.

The 15 projects completed during the course of the 2021 academic year were included in the QA process. This number was still somewhat lower than in pre-COVID years, when more than 20 projects were completed – but it does show that students have bounced back and completed dissertations in spite of challenges and delays due to the pandemic.

The resulting response rates were rather low; we received feedback from 4 Academics, 5 Community Partners - but 7 Students, making it very difficult to report meaningfully on trends.

a. Responses from Academics (n = 4)

OUTCOMES:

- Academics all *agreed* that the final outcomes of the project represented significant academic research.
- Academics all *agreed* that outputs were consistent with the overall objectives of the project, with one *strongly agreeing*.

STUDENTS:

Academics *agreed / agreed strongly* agreed that:

- student(s) involved in the project improved their ability to perform research;
- student(s) had developed insight into the nature of working with community partners (most agreed strongly);
- student(s) involved on the project received appropriate supervision; and
- that all student(s) showed satisfactory commitment to their project.

EXPERIENCE:

- Academics generally agreed that participants seemed satisfied with how projects ran;
- They also *agreed* that forming a partnership was beneficial to all partners, with one indicating a strong view.

COMMITMENT

• All academics *strongly agreed* that both Knowledge Co-op staff and community partners showed satisfactory commitment to the projects.

THE MOST VALUABLE ASPECT OF THE PROJECT WAS:

• The students' experience of client engagement;

- Being able to provide feedback to the organization regarding participants' experience of the intervention;
- "The student in question looked like she wasn't going to finish her work but she pulled through in the end and got a mark of 70%."

HOW THE PROJECT COULD HAVE BEEN IMPROVED

• "The project was made more complicated by the COVID-19 situation. It was hard to do the fieldwork required. The student did lose stamina at some point. I don't know if any of the partners could have done more."

b. Responses from Community Partners (CPs; n = 5)

OUTCOMES:

- Most community partners strongly agreed that outcomes met their needs, and the final report was understandable. Only one community partner did not receive the report. They strongly agreed that the outcome contained significant academic research.
- Community partners strongly agreed that the outcome was consistent with overall objectives

STUDENTS:

- Most community partners *strongly agreed* that the projects improved student's ability to perform research.
- The CPs agreed that the students developed insights into the nature of working with CPs.

EXPERIENCE:

- All CPs *agreed* and strongly agreed that all involved were satisfied with how the project was run and that the expectation of all involved were met.
- They also *agreed* that students received adequate supervision during the project, with one indicating that the question did not apply.

INVOLVEMENT:

- Most community partners *strongly agreed* that forming a partnership is beneficial to all and that students and supervisor showed commitment to the project. However, one *disagreed* and felt there was not adequate commitment from the academic supervisor;
- Community partners *strongly agreed* that t the Knowledge Co-op staff showed satisfactory commitment to the project.

THE MOST VALUABLE ASPECT OF THE PROJECT WAS:

Here it was clearly the findings/outputs of the projects that were most valuable. CPs reported valuing the following outcomes by stating the following:

- "The research has opened the door to talking about child abuse and why it seems to be permissible."
- "The final report has formed an important piece of our Theory of Change review process."
- "The conclusion of this research will be invaluable in informing future iterations of this programme."
- "The fact that the research topic was chosen by the students and that the findings will feed directly into our program."
- "Getting feedback and having a well written report".

The feedback also affirmed the excellent relationship between the Knowledge Co-op and the community partners that has aided the successful facilitation of the research projects.

c. Responses from Students (n = 7)

OUTPUTS:

- Students strongly agreed that the outputs represented significant academic research, were consistent with overall objectives and that the expectations and needs of the community partner were met.
- Most students *strongly agreed* that their involvement in the project improved their ability to perform research and that they developed insight into working with community partners.

EXPERIENCE:

- Students *strongly agreed* that participants were satisfied with how the project ran, that the community partner's needs were met and that the involvement in the partnership was beneficial to all partners.
- Students *agreed*, most of them *agreed strongly*, that they received appropriate supervision.
- An overall *strong agreement* from students that the Knowledge Co-op staff, community partner and supervisors showed satisfactory commitment.

OPEN ENDED VIEWS ON MOST VALUABLE ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT:

- Conducting research about a topic that truly matters and could make a tangible difference in the community.
- That the researcher managed to conduct qualitative research which was important for the community partner as complement to data from their Annual survey.
- Being able to work independently on the project with the help of the community partners.
- Understanding the difficulties of working in a disadvantaged community.
- Engaging with the participants in the data collection phase and working with a community partner who was committed to the project it made it an easy space to navigate.

THE INITIAL PROJECT COULD HAVE BEEN IMPROVED IN THE FOLLOWING WAY:

- Being able to connect with more informants. The CP was unable to assist much with that.
- I could have benefitted from being exposed to the actual implementation of the project and engaging more with implementers which was hampered due to covid-19 limitations.

3. Short Projects - End-Of-Project-Evaluation

These were single semester projects by 3rd year Information Systems students, in which teams of four students each engaged with CPs, framed by the Design Thinking framework. In 2021 they had very limited real exposure to the community setting of the CPs due to COVID Lockdown.

A short questionnaire was sent to both students and community partners involved; no academics were directly involved in the projects. Out of six projects, involving 65 students working in teams, we received only three student responses as well as 12 from CPs.

OUTPUTS:

- Most strongly agreed, some agreed, that the outputs met the Community Partners needs.
- All *agreed*, most of them *strongly* that students had developed insight into the nature of the work the Community Partners do.
- Most strongly agreed that the project was consistent with overall objectives.

EXPERIENCE:

- All students *agreed* that participants in the projects were satisfied with how the project ran, and that their expectation were absolutely met.
- Students and CPs *agreed* that the partnership was beneficial to all involved.
- All *agreed* that the student teams, community partners and the Knowledge Co-op showed satisfactory commitment to the project, with *strong agreement* for the latter.

THE MOST VALUABLE ASPECT OF THE PROJECT:

For the students:

- The experience gained from working on a real-life project is one of great value. "Not only did my team learn first-hand what it means to be part of an IS team but also as a team leader I learnt various skills that I will use in the future, such as team management and communication. Learning to work under pressure and sticking to deadlines was also a great part of the experience. It has been the most important and insightful project that I have completed at UCT".
- "Providing assistance to the NGO in upgrading their website".
- Gained insight into project management and communication. "I've learnt a lot over this past semester".

For the community partners:

- Most partners mentioned the output received from the student team as most valuable: "The solution was exactly what Whizz needs and will likely implement."
- Specifics like receiving the cost breakdown for the suggested solution.
- Regular professional communication and commitment of the team.
- Dedicated interest in the organisation and the required product.
- The team's willingness to adjust their project and proposed solution repeatedly based on feedback from the CP.
- "We appreciated the fact that the students arranged meetings with the team to understand our needs to be able to give us the best possible solution."

HOW THE INITIAL PROJECT CAN BE IMPROVED:

For the students:

- "It seemed like the CP came with an idea and stuck with it. Therefore, all of our other solutions did not matter".
- "This experience could have been improved by implementing the official website upgrade as opposed to merely providing the final solution and a working prototype" a comment echoed by many of the CPs.

For the community partners:

- "More engagement with our team including at least one physical meeting at the organization because it is also helpful in developing the solution."
- "It would have been helpful to have regularly standing meeting dates or times, or to arrange for meetings with greater lead time."
- "The group, at first, seemed to not fully understand the project they were tasked with."

In closing

Some of the comments above, as well as the poor return rate on questionnaires sent out clearly demonstrate the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on many of the students and projects facilitated by the Knowledge Co-op during 2021. It was gratifying to see students persevering in these challenging conditions, often with creativity and enthusiasm, to make their contribution – and to note the community partners' appreciation for their efforts. We also appreciate the dedicated time CPs gave 'their' students in spite of staff being severely stretched by additional demands as a result of the pandemic.