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UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SUPPORT: HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE COMMON GOOD

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Introduction

The changing context of higher education has realised a fundamental shift in the way universities think and operate. Budget constraints and the reduced government support for universities has caused some universities to become more commercially focussed, with growth and income generation as key strategic priorities. (Prisacariu and Shah 2016: 153) The focus on consumerism has placed increasing strain on the humanist approach of education for the common good. Ethical issues have been neglected or “tended to be redefined as essentially procedural issues rather than fundamental issues directly connected to the core mission of the university.” (Scott 2004: 439) It has led to students being treated as customers, purchasing a service with the concomitant neglect of the idea of the university being a safe space for student growth and moral development. In this environment, universities have lost their

³¹⁵ Divya Singh, Executive Director, Globethics.net Southern Africa, member of the Globethics.net Board of Foundation and Globethics.net Ethics Expert.

moral compass to guide their thinking. (Parker 2014: n.p.; Macfarlane 2012: n.p.) More scathingly, Scott (2004: 439) points out:

“If not a conspiracy of silence, at any rate a culture disinterest has become established. Instead of presenting themselves as value-laden institutions, universities now seem to wish to be regarded as technically contrived service organisations that willingly accept whatever values their key stakeholders... seek to impose”.

The wheel, however, appears to be turning full circle. Social impact is being increasingly highlighted as a lever in the transformation of higher education, and social democratic principles are once again recapturing their space, currently (and regrettably) occupied by neo-liberal values.

This was succinctly highlighted by Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO (2009-2017) who points out that the world is changing, and education will have to change, too.

There is not a more powerful and transformative force than education – to promote human rights and dignity, to eradicate poverty and deepen sustainability. Education is required to build a better future for all, founded on equal rights and social justice, respect for cultural diversity, international solidarity and shared responsibility, all of which are fundamental aspects of our common humanity. (Unesco 2015: 4)

Aligned to this global movement, South Africa is on the cusp of a seismic shift in the national higher education quality regime. This is underpinned by *inter alia*, the need for relevant qualifications, and graduates who can (a) meet the demands of the twenty-first century workplace and (b) contribute to social and global sustainability. Corporate social responsibility is no longer a fiction, and as noted by Boulouta and Pitelis (2014: 349), the business world faces both moral and strategic pressure to improve corporate social responsibility. With this, has come the obligations of greater accountability on the universities to produce skilled graduates for the new workforce,

understanding that knowledge and professional requirements are inextricably interlinked with ethics and a responsible application of the social compact. This has resulted in an overarching reimagining of quality learning and teaching in universities. The new narrative of higher education is starting to challenge the traditional quality assurance approaches, and calls for a redefinition of quality that includes the drivers of ethics and moral values. Increasingly, there is an emphasis on quality seen through the lens of ethics - described by Halis, Akova and Tagraf (2007: 129) as the “total of principles, values, rules and customs that govern the relationships of people living in certain society with one another and institutions” - as one of the key agents of higher education transformation.

The draft Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) from the South African national quality assurance authority - the Council on Higher Education (CHE) – expressly reiterates this purpose, with specific references to the relevance and importance of social connectivity as a vector of quality, curriculum relevance, and graduate readiness.

Statements and commitments in the QAF include:

Describing the purpose of the Quality Assurance Framework:
“... the QAF is intended to be used as a strategic lever to a) strengthen the responsiveness of HEIs to social, economic, environmental and justice issues in South Africa”

(CHE 2020: 15)

Describing the role of the university: University transformation stands on the pillars of “social equity, quality and fundamental institutional cultural and academic change.” (CHE 2020: 16)

Describing the mission of higher education institutions:

“A focus on HEIs [higher education institutions] as sites of personal, cultural, societal and political change so that students,

graduates and the institutions themselves have positive social and personal experiences that have a constructive impact and contribute to personal development and societal transformation.” (CHE 2020: 14)

Describing university strategy:

“The QAF recognises that institutions should develop appropriate approaches to social impact, social justice, and changes in their culture which are supported by appropriate plans, policies, structures and processes (fitness for purpose). (CHE 2020: 42)

Describing the academic project:

The QAF connects

“the quality of the academic project which includes learning and teaching, research and community engagement to the wider social purpose of building a sustainable and equitable social order in South Africa, while simultaneously ensuring global relevance.” (CHE 2020: 14)

Describing curriculum:

“The curriculum [must be] politically, socially and culturally connected.” (CHE 2020: 6).

Describing pedagogic value:

Learning and teaching includes the social development of students. (CHE 2020: 22).

The unambiguous product of the QAF is a sharper lens being focussed on the alignment between ethics and moral values as a factor of quality and institutional *fitness for purpose*.

As pointed out by Bosio:

A well-rounded, transformative, value-creating curriculum not only opens students’ eyes, but also sets the stage for them to

act in ways that are inspired by their course of study and driven by a desire to make difference locally, regionally and globally (2016: n.p.).

Prisacariu and Shah (2016: 162) also pointed to the reality of

“[a] person with a high level of education [being] expected [to] be capable of ethical judgement and active commitment for humanity in society.”

As a factor of graduate readiness, therefore, universities will now be expected to foster a culture of social consciousness that ensures that graduates are able to discharge industry expectations and responsibilities with high ethical standards. And so, we find higher education at a critical juncture that requires institutions, institutional leadership, and faculty to reflect upon what it means to be a socially responsible institution and their role and function in this setting.

The Research Project

The Study and Method

Many have acknowledged the importance of instilling the values of social consciousness in university graduates, but equally recognised that up to now, it has hovered on the periphery of academic projects. A study was launched to firstly gauge students’ levels of social awareness; secondly, their perceptions of the importance of responsible citizenship; and thirdly, how, if at all, the university had influenced their thinking and behaviour.³¹⁶ The survey that was central to the study identified the personal and social responsibility of students, as well as their ethical values and standards. The aim was to focus on students’ awareness, while simultaneously requiring them to self-reflect on their participation

³¹⁶ The student sample was drawn from students at a private higher education institution in South Africa.

in community activities and the importance of civic engagement. The project was of mutual benefit to both students and the institution.

The outcomes will be used as one of the standards to inform institutional and curriculum transformation, and to build a culture of ethics, values and social awareness that will prepare students for the new, exciting world economy.

A self-administrated web-based survey was distributed via an email invitation to students for self-completion. The survey instrument contained three sections related to responsible citizenship and behaviours that demonstrated a level of social consciousness. The survey aimed to rank the probability of students to act and think in a manner that may be deemed socially responsible. To enhance the credibility of the results, four of the sixteen agreement statements in the survey were ‘reversed’ to enable the researchers to better standardise the analysis. (They are Questions 2, 4, 5 and 11 in Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 presented in the Discussion section.)

Students were informed that the survey dealt with democratic rights and responsibilities, differences among people, personal responsibility, and community mindedness. Respondents would be expected to answer the questions based on their own personal and study experiences. The survey remained open for a period of two weeks, and three separate reminders were sent to students to encourage participation. Information was collected from students anonymously, with no personal details of participants being recorded. Furthermore, students could withdraw at any stage of the survey. From a research governance perspective, it is also important to note that the Research Ethics Review Committee (RERC) of the BMR approved the study prior to commencement.³¹⁷ At the closure time of the survey, just over 10% of the student

³¹⁷ The survey instrument was developed by STADIO and rolled-out through the Bureau for Market Research (BMR), a Unit hosted at the University of South Africa (Unisa) based in Pretoria, South Africa.

population had submitted fully completed and usable questionnaires, although more than 40% of the students opened the online document. The low response rate was perhaps the first marker of concern highlighting an apparent disinterest from the student population to the issues under discussion. However, other contributing factors may have also significantly influenced the response rate such as timing (just prior to examinations), length of the questionnaire, and distrust from the students regarding the purpose of the survey. It was agreed that notwithstanding the low response rate, the data would be analysed to evaluate students' opinions at the point in time.

The student population comprises both school learners and adult learners, most of who are already in the workplace, and the descriptive analyses were conducted according to these cohorts.

Results, Analysis and Discussion

Students were requested to self-rate 16 statements related to responsible citizenship and social consciousness. The scale anchors ranged from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree').

Figures 1 and 2 present the outcome of these findings by gender and employment category.

Figure 1: Responsible Citizenship and social consciousness by gender

Statement	Rating	Male	Female	Total
Problems between people are best handled by working together to find a solution	Strongly disagree	1.70%	2.80%	2.4%
	Disagree	0.80%	0.00%	0.3%
	Neutral	3.40%	6.50%	5.4%
	Agree	31.40%	33.20%	32.5%
	Strongly agree	62.70%	57.50%	59.3%
I think about how my decisions will affect other people	Strongly disagree	0.00%	0.50%	0.3%
	Disagree	0.50%	0.50%	0.6%
	Neutral	6.80%	14.50%	11.7%
	Agree	47.50%	41.60%	43.7%
	Strongly agree	44.90%	43.00%	43.7%
Students need to accept responsibility for their actions	Strongly disagree	0.80%	0.90%	0.9%
	Disagree	0.00%	0.50%	0.3%
	Neutral	0.80%	4.70%	3.3%
	Agree	32.20%	27.10%	28.9%
	Strongly agree	66.10%	66.80%	66.6%
I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person's point of view	Strongly disagree	9.30%	7.50%	8.1%
	Disagree	28.80%	31.80%	30.7%
	Neutral	28.00%	32.20%	30.7%
	Agree	28.00%	25.20%	26.2%
	Strongly agree	5.90%	3.30%	4.2%
South Africa is a better country because people from many different cultures live here	Strongly disagree	3.40%	3.30%	3.3%
	Disagree	7.60%	15.40%	12.7%
	Neutral	28.80%	31.30%	30.4%
	Agree	38.10%	31.80%	34.0%
	Strongly agree	22.00%	18.20%	19.6%
Other people's problems don't bother me	Strongly disagree	14.40%	22.00%	19.3%
	Disagree	44.10%	41.10%	42.2%
	Neutral	20.30%	26.20%	24.1%
	Agree	14.40%	6.10%	9.0%
	Strongly agree	6.80%	4.70%	5.4%
I base my decisions on what I think is fair and unfair	Strongly disagree	0.90%	0.90%	0.9%
	Disagree	1.70%	5.60%	4.2%
	Neutral	15.30%	15.90%	15.7%
	Agree	43.20%	47.20%	45.8%
	Strongly agree	39.00%	30.40%	33.4%
No matter how angry someone makes me, I am still responsible for my own actions	Strongly disagree	1.70%	0.90%	1.2%
	Disagree	0.80%	0.00%	0.3%
	Neutral	5.10%	7.50%	6.6%
	Agree	39.80%	34.10%	36.1%
	Strongly agree	52.50%	57.50%	55.7%

Figure 1 continued: Responsible Citizenship and social consciousness by gender

Statement	Rating	Male	Female	Total
All people should have equal chances to get a good education in South Africa	Strongly disagree		1.70%	1.40%
	Disagree		0.80%	0.90%
	Neutral	6.80%	4.70%	5.47%
	Agree	20.30%	20.10%	20.2%
	Strongly agree	70.30%	72.90%	72.0%
Problems like pollution and poverty are not important to me	Strongly disagree	48.30%	58.90%	55.1%
	Disagree	31.30%	31.30%	31.0%
	Neutral	12.70%	4.70%	7.5%
	Agree	2.50%	2.80%	2.7%
	Strongly agree	5.90%	2.30%	3.6%
Teenagers should find ways to help others in the community	Strongly disagree		0.00%	2.1%
	Disagree		3.30%	0.9%
	Neutral	15.40%	15.40%	16.3%
	Agree	50.80%	44.40%	46.7%
	Strongly agree	30.50%	36.00%	34.0%
I don't care about what's happening in politics	Strongly disagree	30.50%	37.60%	28.6%
	Disagree	44.90%	43.00%	43.7%
	Neutral	12.70%	18.20%	16.3%
	Agree	8.50%	6.50%	7.2%
	Strongly agree	3.40%	4.70%	4.2%
Teenagers have a responsibility to do what they can to protect the environment	Strongly disagree		0.00%	2.30%
	Disagree		3.40%	1.5%
	Neutral	8.50%	10.30%	2.4%
	Agree	42.40%	41.60%	9.6%
	Strongly agree	45.80%	43.90%	41.9%
I feel that I can make a difference in my community	Strongly disagree		0.00%	0.6%
	Disagree	4.20%	2.80%	3.3%
	Neutral	11.90%	15.40%	14.2%
	Agree	40.70%	38.30%	39.2%
	Strongly agree	43.20%	42.50%	42.8%
People should discuss social and political problems that affect the future of South Africa	Strongly disagree		0.00%	0.90%
	Disagree		0.00%	0.6%
	Neutral	10.20%	13.10%	12.0%
	Agree	34.70%	38.30%	37.0%
	Strongly agree	55.10%	47.70%	50.3%
The world would be a better place if people were free to do what was best for themselves	Strongly disagree		11.00%	14.00%
	Disagree	21.20%	21.50%	13.0%
	Neutral	24.60%	28.00%	21.4%
	Agree	27.10%	24.30%	26.8%
	Strongly agree	16.10%	12.10%	25.3%

$N_{Males} = 118$; $N_{Females} = 214$; $N_{Total} = 332$
 (continued)

Figure 2: Responsible citizenship and social consciousness by employment category

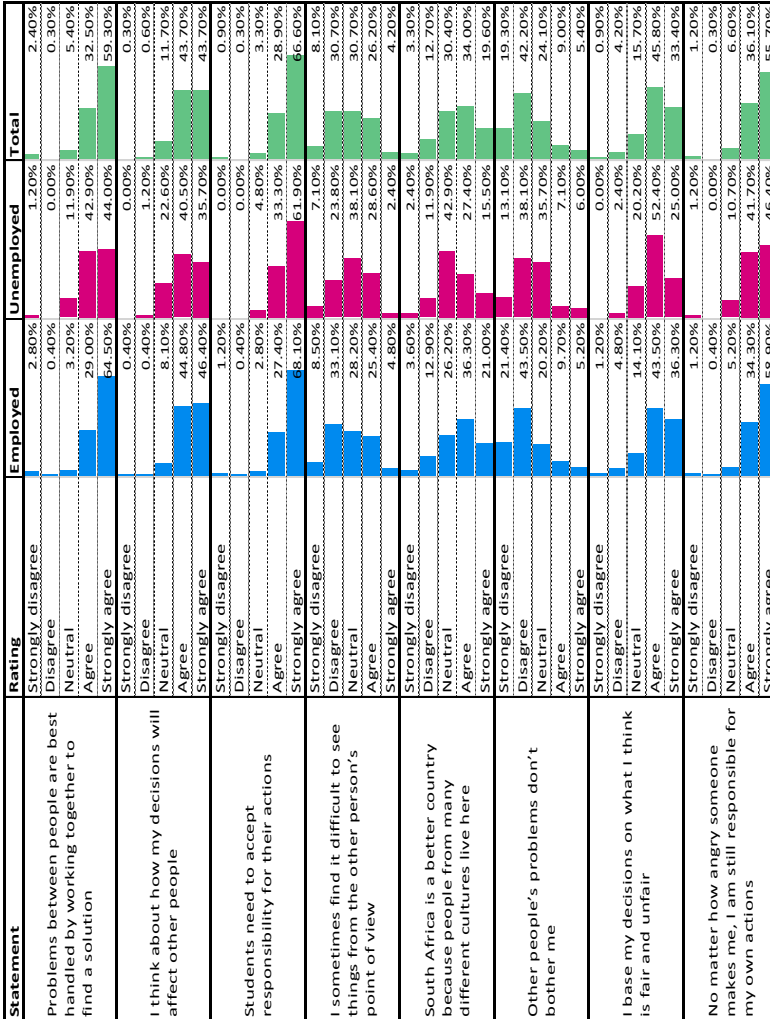


Figure 2 continued: Responsible citizenship and social consciousness by employment category

Statement	Rating	Employed	Unemployed	Total
All people should have equal chances to get a good education in South Africa	Strongly disagree	1.20%	1.20%	2.40%
	Disagree	1.20%	0.00%	0.90%
	Neutral	6.50%	2.40%	5.40%
	Agree	20.20%	20.20%	20.20%
	Strongly agree	71.00%	75.00%	72.00%
Problems like pollution and poverty are not important to me	Strongly disagree	58.10%	46.40%	55.10%
	Disagree	27.80%	40.50%	31.00%
	Neutral	7.70%	7.10%	7.50%
	Agree	3.20%	1.20%	2.70%
	Strongly agree	3.20%	4.80%	3.60%
Teenagers should find ways to help others in the community	Strongly disagree	2.40%	1.20%	2.10%
	Disagree	1.20%	0.00%	0.90%
	Neutral	15.30%	19.00%	16.30%
	Agree	45.60%	50.00%	46.70%
	Strongly agree	35.50%	29.80%	34.00%
I don't care about what's happening in politics	Strongly disagree	31.90%	19.00%	26.60%
	Disagree	44.00%	42.90%	43.70%
	Neutral	12.90%	26.20%	16.30%
	Agree	7.30%	7.10%	7.20%
	Strongly agree	4.00%	4.80%	4.20%
Teenagers have a responsibility to do what they can to protect the environment	Strongly disagree	2.00%	0.00%	1.50%
	Disagree	2.80%	1.20%	2.40%
	Neutral	10.10%	8.30%	9.60%
	Agree	40.70%	45.20%	41.90%
	Strongly agree	44.40%	45.20%	44.60%
I feel that I can make a difference in my community	Strongly disagree	0.80%	0.00%	0.60%
	Disagree	2.40%	6.00%	3.30%
	Neutral	13.30%	16.70%	14.20%
	Agree	35.90%	48.80%	39.20%
	Strongly agree	47.60%	28.60%	42.80%
People should discuss social and political problems that affect the future of South Africa	Strongly disagree	0.80%	0.00%	0.60%
	Disagree	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	Neutral	14.30%	14.30%	12.00%
	Agree	34.30%	45.20%	37.00%
	Strongly agree	53.60%	40.50%	50.30%
The world would be a better place if people were free to do what was best for themselves	Strongly disagree	14.10%	9.50%	13.00%
	Disagree	24.20%	13.10%	21.40%
	Neutral	25.00%	32.10%	26.80%
	Agree	23.00%	32.10%	25.30%
	Strongly agree	13.70%	13.10%	13.60%

The results by gender and employment tell their own tales. While there are some correlations, making it clear that students' responsible citizenship and social consciousness tendencies by gender and employment category are somewhat similar, there are overall essential differences that reflect a lack of maturity amongst specific cohorts of students regarding social consciousness and civic responsibility. The results further reflect that while students are socially conscious and aware, they are more prepared to act when it is a matter of self-interest. They find it difficult, however, to see things from the perspective of another and are less inclined to act in the benefit of third parties and/or the greater community. Bearing in mind the description of social responsibility presented by Al-Khoury *et al* (2015: 75) namely that it "constitutes the thinking and learning as well as behavioural pattern of people to focus beyond themselves and initialize caring attitude about the environment", the following further specific findings from the results are highlighted:

- There is a close correlation between the results by gender to the statement *I think about how my decisions affect others*, with an overall 87.4% agreement. Similarly, 79.2% of the respondents by gender and employment confirmed that their decision-making was based on perceptions of fairness.
- That said, almost one-third of the total respondent population (by gender and employment) admitted to sometimes *finding it difficult to see things from the other persons point of view*, which aligns with the finding that, on average, only 61.5% of the respondent sampled by gender indicated that they were *affected by the problems of others*.
- Employed respondents were more *conscious of and experienced concern for the problems of others* (64.9%), while only 51.2% of unemployed respondents agreed that they were bothered by the problems of others.

- Analysing the respondent sample by employment, while there was an overall similarity between employed and unemployed respondents to the statement about *people working together to find mutual resolutions to problems* (93.5% and 86.9% respectively), 64.5% of the employed respondents felt very strongly about this statement, while the ‘very strong’ sentiment was only expressed by 44% of the school-leaver (unemployed) group. Similar outlooks are identified regarding *community consciousness and the impact of one’s actions on others*.
- Regarding social awareness, women respondents rated more highly than their male counterparts. 78.8% of male respondents rated *concerns with poverty and pollution as important matters of concern*, and 20.2% were either neutral or did not see it as a matter of concern. On the other hand, 90.2% of the women respondents highlighted the issues as being of significance.
- 18% (almost one-fifth) of the respondents were either neutral or did not believe that they *could contribute to uplifting their communities*.
- While a significant proportion of the respondents agreed that *teenagers should be involved in community projects*, 16.3% were neutral to the idea. Similarly, 13.5% of the respondents were neutral or did not agree with the statement that *teenagers have a responsibility to protect the environment*. While not statistically significant, it is high enough to cause concern as one looks to the promise of future generations.
- Regarding political consciousness and civic responsibility, 24.6% and 29.4% of men and women respectively admitted to *not caring about what happens in politics*. Men also had stronger views about the *need for people to discuss social and political issues that affect the future of South Africa*.

- 75.9% of those in employment and 61.9% of those not employed have an interest in politics, with 26.2% of the latter group adopting a neutral view to politics. That said, 87.9% of the employed and 85.7% of the unemployed respondents agreed that people should talk about social and political issues.
- The study by Al-Khoury *et al* presented similar results leading them to conclude that possibly universities in Lebanon did not promote civic responsibility and encourage students' participation in politics, given the extreme "sensitivities around politics in Lebanon than in other parts of the world, like Germany or the United States." (2015: 79)
- With regard to the statement *South Africa is a better country because people from many different cultures live here*, it is interesting to note that women were generally less supportive of the statement than their male counterparts. 15.4% of women disagreed with the statement compared with 7.6% of the men; and 50% of the women agreed with the statement, while more than 60% of the men expressed agreement.
- 57.3% of the employed respondents agreed that the heterogeneity of South Africa was a benefit, while only 42.9% of the unemployed respondents (younger school-leaver respondents) believed that South Africa was a better country for the many cultures living together. Again, this finding is analysed looking at the effect of the finding on issues such as social cohesion and communal respect and responsibility.
- While specifically directed, the respondents' social awareness, responsibility and altruism ratings averaged at least 80%. However, in response to the final statement *the world would be a better place if people were free to do what was best for themselves*, only 32% of the male respondents disagreed (with 11% strongly disagreeing) and 35.5% of the female

respondents disagreed (with 14% strongly disagreeing). 24.6% and 28% of the men and women respectively did not have a view and were neutral about the statement. On the other hand, 38.1% of the employed sample felt that *the world would be a better place if people could do what they wanted*, and only 22.6% of the unemployed respondents agreed to this statement.

While there are some striking differences, overall, the results showed that the responsible citizenship and social consciousness tendencies by gender and employment are largely similar. Across both academic cohorts, consistent patterns are notable from the index analysis. Topping the list of student inclinations in support of responsible citizenship and social consciousness are (i) equal chances to education, (ii) accepting responsibility for actions, and (iii) working together to find solutions. However, less satisfying is the finding that half of the respondent population admitted to being self-serving, and admitting that the world would be a better place if people were free to do what was best for them. This correlates with the second finding, namely that students found it somewhat challenging to see things from another person's perspective. Being socially conscious and taking ethically responsible decisions requires making the choice that is both individually and collectively good. Therefore, when such a high number of respondents indicate that the world would be a better place if people can do what they want, self-interest clearly continues to trump the notions of collective good. Furthermore, the initial research presents a picture of respondents probably being more socially conscious than civically responsible.

Figure 3 and Figure 4 (on next page) set out the consolidated ranking of statements by gender and employment.³¹⁸

³¹⁸ An index score closer to '0' displays lower tendencies while values closer to "100" display higher tendencies towards responsible citizenship and social consciousness.

Figure 3: Ranking of responsible citizenship and social consciousness tendencies by gender

Statement	Male Index	Female Index	Total Index
The world would be a better place if people were free to do what was best for themselves.	54.03	49.77	51.28
I sometimes do not find it difficult to see things from the other person's point of view.	51.91	53.74	53.09
South Africa is a better country because people from many different cultures live here.	66.95	61.57	63.48
Other people's problems bother me.	61.23	67.41	65.21
I care about what's happening in politics.	72.67	70.56	71.31
I base my decisions on what I think is fair and unfair.	79.45	75.12	76.66
Teenagers should find ways to help others in the community.	77.75	77.22	77.41
I feel that I can make a difference in my community.	80.72	79.67	80.05
Teenagers have a responsibility to do what they can to protect the environment.	82.63	80.72	81.40
I think about how my decisions will affect other people.	84.11	81.54	82.45
Problems like pollution and poverty are important to me.	78.18	85.40	82.83
People should discuss social and political problems that affect the future of South Africa.	86.23	82.94	84.11
No matter how angry someone makes me, I am still responsible for my own actions.	85.17	86.80	86.22
Problems between people are best handled by working together to find a solution.	88.14	85.63	86.52
Students need to accept responsibility for their actions.	90.66	89.60	89.98
All people should have equal chances to get a good education in South Africa.	89.19	90.54	90.06

$$N_{Males} = 118; N_{Females} = 214; N_{Total} = 332$$

Figure 4: Ranking of responsible citizenship and consciousness tendencies by gender

Statement	Employed	Unemployed	Total
	Index	Index	Index
The world would be a better place if people were free to do what was best for themselves.	49.50	56.55	51.28
I sometimes do not find it difficult to see things from the other person's point of view.	53.73	51.19	53.09
South Africa is a better country because people from many different cultures live here.	64.52	60.42	63.48
Other people's problems bother me.	66.53	61.31	65.21
I care about what's happening in politics.	73.08	66.07	71.31
I base my decisions on what I think is fair and unfair.	77.22	75.00	76.66
Teenagers should find ways to help others in the community.	77.62	76.79	77.41
I feel that I can make a difference in my community.	81.75	75.00	80.05
Teenagers have a responsibility to do what they can to protect the environment.	80.65	83.63	81.40
I think about how my decisions will affect other people.	84.07	77.68	82.45
Problems like pollution and poverty are important to me.	83.57	80.85	82.83
People should discuss social and political problems that affect the future of South Africa.	84.98	81.55	84.11
No matter how angry someone makes me, I am still responsible for my own actions.	87.30	83.44	86.22
Problems between people are best handled by working together to find a solution.	88.00	82.44	86.52
Students need to accept responsibility for their actions.	90.22	89.29	89.98
All people should have equal chances to get a good education in South Africa.	89.62	91.37	90.06

$n_{Employed} = 248$; $n_{Unemployed} = 84$; $n_{Total} = 332$

For section B of the survey, a total of 12 responsible citizenship and social consciousness statements were posed to students to anticipate how frequently they will act responsibly, given a range of predetermined activities. The scale anchor of the response options ranged from 1 ('no time') to 5 ('most of the time'). The outcome of these findings is presented in figures 5 and 6 by gender and employment, respectively.

Figure 5: Anticipated social responsibilities behaviours by gender

Activities	Response	Male	Female	Total
Try to be nice to other students when they are sad about something?	No time	0.00%	0.90%	0.60%
	A few times	4.20%	5.60%	5.10%
	Sometimes	26.30%	17.80%	20.80%
	Many times	37.30%	34.10%	35.20%
	All of the time	27.10%	35.40%	31.10%
Try to be quiet when others are studying?	Not applicable	5.10%	5.10%	5.10%
	No time	0.80%	0.50%	0.60%
	A few times	0.00%	0.90%	0.60%
	Sometimes	2.50%	4.70%	3.90%
	Many times	20.30%	16.80%	18.10%
Help other students when they have a problem?	All of the time	72.90%	73.40%	73.20%
	Not applicable	3.40%	3.70%	3.60%
	No time	0.80%	0.00%	0.30%
	A few times	2.50%	3.30%	3.00%
	Sometimes	15.30%	21.00%	19.00%
Think about how your behaviour in school will affect other students?	Many times	37.30%	38.30%	38.00%
	All of the time	41.50%	35.00%	38.00%
	Not applicable	2.50%	1.40%	1.80%
	No time	1.70%	3.30%	2.70%
	A few times	3.40%	3.30%	3.30%
Take the time to listen to other people's arguments, even when you think they are wrong?	Sometimes	13.60%	17.30%	16.00%
	Many times	35.60%	30.80%	32.50%
	All of the time	37.30%	31.30%	38.60%
	Not applicable	8.50%	6.10%	6.90%
	No time	3.40%	5.60%	4.80%
Talk with your friends about how you can stop racism?	A few times	5.10%	7.90%	6.90%
	Sometimes	18.60%	25.20%	22.90%
	Many times	41.50%	32.20%	35.50%
	All of the time	29.70%	27.10%	38.00%
	Not applicable	1.70%	1.90%	1.80%
Talk with your friends about how you can stop racism?	No time	6.80%	8.40%	7.80%
	A few times	11.90%	18.20%	16.00%
	Sometimes	35.60%	33.60%	34.30%
	Many times	17.80%	22.00%	20.50%
	All of the time	27.90%	14.00%	17.20%
Not applicable	5.10%	3.70%	4.20%	

Figure 5 continued: Anticipated social responsibilities behaviours by gender

Activities	Response	Male	Female	Total
Speak out when other students use negative language to talk about people from other cultures?	No time	2.50%	3.70%	3.30%
	A few times	8.50%	10.70%	9.90%
	Sometimes	22.00%	19.60%	20.50%
	Many times	30.50%	31.80%	31.30%
	All of the time	30.50%	31.30%	31.00%
Talk with your friends about government and politics?	Not applicable	5.90%	2.80%	3.90%
	No time	4.20%	10.30%	8.10%
	A few times	9.30%	15.90%	13.60%
	Sometimes	27.10%	2.20%	30.40%
	Many times	35.60%	27.60%	30.40%
Help neighbours or relatives when a job needs to be done?	All of the time	18.60%	12.10%	14.50%
	Not applicable	5.10%	1.90%	3.00%
	No time	0.80%	0.00%	0.30%
	A few times	5.10%	5.60%	5.40%
	Sometimes	23.70%	20.60%	21.70%
Talk to your friends about issues like world peace or global warming?	Many times	43.20%	41.10%	41.90%
	All of the time	25.40%	29.40%	28.00%
	Not applicable	1.70%	3.30%	2.70%
	No time	5.10%	8.90%	7.50%
	A few times	7.60%	18.70%	14.80%
Participate as a volunteer in a community organization or event?	Sometimes	37.30%	33.70%	38.90%
	Many times	27.10%	22.40%	24.10%
	All of the time	20.30%	8.40%	12.70%
	Not applicable	2.50%	1.90%	2.10%
	No time	17.80%	12.10%	14.20%
Talk to your friends about what is happening in other countries?	A few times	26.30%	25.20%	25.60%
	Sometimes	28.00%	29.90%	29.20%
	Many times	15.30%	20.60%	18.70%
	All of the time	11.00%	9.80%	10.20%
	Not applicable	1.70%	2.30%	2.10%
Talk to your friends about what is happening in other countries?	No time	3.40%	4.70%	4.20%
	A few times	5.90%	19.60%	14.80%
	Sometimes	24.60%	38.90%	32.50%
	Many times	38.10%	28.50%	31.90%
	All of the time	25.40%	9.30%	15.10%
Not applicable	2.50%	0.90%	1.50%	

Figure 6: Anticipated social responsibility behaviours by employment category

Activities	Response	Employed	Unemployed	Total
Try to be nice to other students when they are sad about something?	No time	0.40%	1.20%	0.60%
	A few times	2.40%	13.10%	5.10%
	Sometimes	21.80%	17.90%	20.80%
	Many times	35.10%	35.70%	35.20%
	All of the time	33.90%	31.00%	33.10%
Try to be quiet when others are studying?	Not applicable	6.50%	1.20%	5.10%
	No time	0.80%	0.00%	0.60%
	A few times	0.00%	2.40%	0.60%
	Sometimes	2.40%	8.30%	3.90%
	Many times	15.70%	25.00%	18.10%
Help other students when they have a problem?	All of the time	76.20%	64.30%	73.20%
	Not applicable	4.80%	0.00%	3.60%
	No time	0.00%	1.20%	0.30%
	A few times	1.60%	7.10%	3.00%
	Sometimes	14.90%	31.00%	19.00%
Think about how your behaviour in school will affect other students?	Many times	37.10%	40.50%	38.00%
	All of the time	44.00%	20.20%	38.00%
	Not applicable	2.40%	0.00%	1.80%
	No time	2.00%	4.80%	2.70%
	A few times	2.00%	7.10%	3.30%
Take the time to listen to other people's arguments, even when you think they are wrong?	Sometimes	12.50%	26.20%	16.00%
	Many times	31.50%	35.70%	32.50%
	All of the time	42.70%	26.20%	38.60%
	Not applicable	9.30%	0.00%	6.90%
	No time	5.20%	3.60%	4.80%
Talk with your friends about how you can stop racism?	A few times	4.40%	14.30%	6.90%
	Sometimes	22.20%	25.00%	22.90%
	Many times	35.50%	35.70%	35.50%
	All of the time	31.00%	19.00%	28.00%
	Not applicable	1.60%	2.40%	1.80%
Talk with your friends about how you can stop racism?	No time	4.40%	17.90%	7.80%
	A few times	14.10%	21.40%	16.00%
	Sometimes	35.10%	32.10%	34.30%
	Many times	21.40%	17.90%	20.50%
	All of the time	19.80%	9.50%	17.20%
Not applicable	5.20%	1.20%	4.20%	

Figure 6 continued: Anticipated social responsibility behaviours by employment category

Activities	Response	Employed	Unemployed	Total
Speak out when other students use negative language to talk about people from other cultures?	No time	1.60%	8.30%	3.30%
	A few times	6.50%	20.20%	9.90%
	Sometimes	21.80%	16.70%	20.50%
	Many times	32.70%	27.40%	31.30%
	All of the time	33.10%	25.00%	31.00%
Talk with your friends about government and politics?	Not applicable	4.40%	2.40%	3.90%
	No time	5.60%	15.50%	8.10%
	A few times	10.90%	21.40%	13.60%
	Sometimes	30.20%	31.00%	30.40%
	Many times	32.30%	25.00%	30.40%
Help neighbours or relatives when a job needs to be done?	All of the time	16.90%	7.10%	14.50%
	Not applicable	4.00%	0.00%	3.00%
	No time	0.40%	0.00%	0.30%
	A few times	4.00%	9.50%	5.40%
	Sometimes	19.80%	27.40%	21.70%
Talk to your friends about issues like world peace or global warming?	Many times	41.90%	41.70%	41.90%
	All of the time	32.30%	15.50%	28.00%
	Not applicable	1.60%	6.00%	2.70%
	No time	5.60%	13.10%	7.50%
	A few times	12.90%	20.20%	14.80%
Participate as a volunteer in a community organization or event?	Sometimes	38.70%	39.30%	38.90%
	Many times	25.40%	20.20%	24.10%
	All of the time	14.50%	7.10%	12.70%
	Not applicable	2.80%	0.00%	2.10%
	No time	11.70%	21.40%	14.20%
Talk to your friends about what is happening in other countries?	A few times	25.40%	26.20%	25.60%
	Sometimes	31.50%	22.60%	29.20%
	Many times	19.80%	15.50%	18.70%
	All of the time	9.70%	11.90%	10.20%
	Not applicable	2.00%	2.40%	2.10%
Talk to your friends about what is happening in other countries?	No time	2.80%	8.30%	4.20%
	A few times	10.10%	28.60%	14.80%
	Sometimes	34.30%	27.40%	32.50%
	Many times	35.50%	21.40%	31.90%
	All of the time	15.70%	13.10%	15.10%
Not applicable	1.60%	1.20%	1.50%	

With the aim of consolidating the response categories of anticipated responsible student behaviour, figures 7 and 8 were constructed to rank the most apparent behaviours according to those most likely to manifest when encountering certain life events. For this purpose, an index method was once again applied, whereby scores closer to zero (0) display a very low probability while scores closer to ‘100’ display a very high probability that a student will perform in a socially responsible and conscious manner.

Figure 7: Rankings of probability of performing social responsibility and consciousness by gender

Life activities	Male	Female	Total
Participate as a volunteer in a community organization or event?	43.75	47.61	46.23
Talk to your friends about issues like world peace or global warming?	62.83	50.71	55.00
Talk with your friends about how you can stop racism?	60.04	53.88	56.05
Talk with your friends about government and politics?	64.51	53.93	57.61
Talk to your friends about what is happening in other countries?	69.57	54.60	59.86
Take the time to listen to other people's arguments, even when you think they are wrong?	74.63	67.14	69.10
Speak out when other students use negative language to talk about people from other cultures?	70.72	69.59	69.98
Help neighbours or relatives when a job needs to be done?	71.20	74.40	73.61
Try to be nice to other students when they are sad about something?	71.99	76.23	75.08
Think about how your behaviour in school will affect other students?	78.24	76.49	77.10
Help other students when they have a problem?	79.78	77.13	78.07
Try to be quiet when others are studying?	92.54	91.99	92.19

Figure 8: Rankings of probability of performing socially responsibility and consciousness by employment category

Life activities	Employed	Unemployed	Total
Participate as a volunteer in a community organization or event?	47.53	42.38	46.23
Talk to your friends about issues like world peace or global warming?	57.78	47.02	55.00
Talk with your friends about how you can stop racism?	60.00	44.88	56.05
Talk with your friends about government and politics?	61.45	46.73	57.61
Talk to your friends about what is happening in other countries?	63.01	50.60	59.86
Take the time to listen to other people's arguments, even when you think they are wrong?	71.00	63.41	69.10
Speak out when other students use negative language to talk about people from other cultures?	73.31	60.37	69.98
Help neighbours or relatives when a job needs to be done?	75.82	66.77	73.61
Try to be nice to other students when they are sad about something?	76.62	70.78	75.08
Think about how your behaviour in school will affect other students?	80.56	67.86	77.10
Help other students when they have a problem?	81.61	67.86	78.07
Try to be quiet when others are studying?	93.75	87.80	92.09

Of all live situations tested, students appeared to be the least likely to volunteer to become involved in community organisations or events. In a similar study by Ahmad, Noor and Ismail looking at students' social awareness, they made a similar finding namely that while students had some awareness of social issues in their environment; they lacked exposure to actual activities. (2015: 288) Further, in relative terms, students appear to be less inclined to engage with difficult issues, such

as expressing their dissatisfaction with students who use offensive language when speaking harmfully about other cultures, or talking with friends about avoiding racism, or about world peace and global warming. What becomes clear is that as the world expands and societies become more globally inter-connected, it is simultaneously contracting with pockets of bigotry around race, culture, and religion and it is of concern that university students indicate a lack of preparedness to be more vocal about addressing such issues. Higher education should play a pivotal role in widening students' horizons, and exposing and helping them understand different experiences, as well as their own experience in the global world. "The intent of curriculum is to enable learning. However, the curriculum can restrict learning if it is too narrowly focussed." (Leask and De Witt 2016: n.p.)

Other difficulty that students currently experience is seeing things from another person's perspective. Issues such as world peace, global warming and voluntary involvement in community organisations or events were further highlighted by the study as prominent areas, in which students displayed relatively lower levels of consciousness and familiarity.

It was thus especially interesting to note - from the open-ended question asking respondents for 'any further comment' - that an overwhelming request from the students who participated in the survey was for the institution to provide more opportunities for students to be exposed to discussions and engagements on "ethical issues", either integrated as part of the curriculum, or through on-campus seminars and debates.

There is no gainsaying in the value of the data harvested from the project. The survey information provides a baseline for the institution from two markers of gender and employment, and indirectly a third marker of age. Responsive authentic curriculum development and institutional transformation will build on these findings.

Conclusion

Chen, Nasongkha and Donaldson (2015: 165) describe university social responsibility as

“a philosophy or principle for social movement, which can be perceived as a philosophy of a university to use an ethical approach to develop and engage with the local and global community in order to sustain the social, ecological, environmental, technical, and economic development.”

It develops Marginson’s (2011) canvas of higher education as a public good, which includes human development and better-informed citizens, leading to improved democracy and more informed and inclusive society and knowledge.

Against these reflections, universities are called upon to re-envision their mission. The creation of universities invested with a mission of social awareness and responsibility

“requires new ways of thinking about ... teaching, learning and curriculum in today’s world; ways of thinking that are focussed on promoting, to quote the US philosopher Martha Nussbaum, a ‘humane, people-sensitive democracy’ through developing students’ ability to recognize fellow citizens as people with equal rights, regardless of differences in race, religion, gender and sexuality” (Leask and De Wit 2017: n.p.).

This will not be an easy task, as universities will have to grapple strategically with the difficult issues of diversity and inclusivity, ‘belonging’ and ‘otherness’, and operationalising the growth of an academic culture that shares strategic vision for the common good. More importantly, it will require an evolution of teaching roles and curriculum development to ensure that what is being taught is intrinsically relevant to the emerging world. Such a project would need to be much more than

merely involving students in a single module of community engagement.

“[C]urriculum reform will naturally involve integrating human rights education, peace education, socially responsible teaching and learning, university-community partnerships, inclusive leadership and integrating social and restorative justice into institutional leadership, governance, management and policy and strategy development” (Blessinger, Sengupta and Mahoney 2019: n.p.).

Some faculty will argue that it is not their job to produce good citizens, but as Bosio questions, “Why are we teaching and learning if not to enrich the lives of our students?” (Bosio 2017: n.p.) It is trite that the deepest motivation to change always comes from within, and as pointed out by Al-Khoury *et al* (2015: 82), if someone is not interested in participating in socially responsible activities, s/he will not be active no matter how many university courses are offered. The research by Ramos *et al* (2018) looking at the impact of a compulsory university module on social responsibility yields thought-provoking results. They note, specifically that the purpose of the module “is not to try to teach the value of social commitment but instead to help students ‘discover it themselves’.” (Ramos *et al* 2018: 25). They found that the module had a ‘definite impact’ on all students, except those in Business Management and Law courses. Discovering values, they noted, was highly reinforced amongst students in courses related to creativity, as well as those courses involving sport “where values play a very important role in the exercise of the profession.” (p.34)

However, notwithstanding the acceptance that students (like all people) are different with a will and volition to choose, it still behoves universities to tell their students about current issues and make them aware of it. (Al-Khoury *et al* 2015: 75) They also found that faculty played a significant role in students’ development and had a major

impact on students “to grow beyond themselves”. (Al-Khoury *et al* 2015: 81)

Universities are being exhorted to do the right thing. As highlighted by UNESCO on the eve of the twenty-first century, higher education:

‘... must proceed to the most radical change and renewal it has event been required to undertake, so that our society, which is currently undergoing a profound crisis of values, can transcend mere economic consideration and incorporate deeper dimensions of morality and spirituality (1998: 2)’.

Far from excluding the integration of values and quality, education for the common good, the new knowledge economy is “brim-full with values” (Scott 2004: 446). The challenge to universities, individually, and higher education collectively, is to identify the scope and enable the changes within which faculty. Changes that can be innovative with curriculum design and content development, emphasising the continuum of authentic, relevant, responsive, quality learning and teaching.

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