Introduction To The Issue[*]

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It gives us great pleasure on this last day of February 2014, to bring you the Spring 2014 Volume 6 Issue 1 of the *All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (AISHE–J), published by the All Ireland Society for Higher Education (AISHE). In keeping with recent practice, the Spring issue is a thematic issue, exploring one area of discourse from a variety of perspectives. In this instance, our topic is that of civic and community engagement and its role in higher education. This special edition is timely in the contemporary context of higher education in Ireland as civic and community engagement evolves and gains momentum nationally. Civic and community engagement is well established within higher education internationally and resonates with the founding missions of many institutions, but within the context of Ireland a recent national survey has indicated that while there is evolved practice, it tends to be a labour of love and typically falls under the radar (Lyons and McIlrath, 2011).

On a positive note, the current Irish policy landscape provides ample opportunity for consolidation and articulation as the current vision for higher education centralized the importance of engagement, including that of community and civic engagement, moving forward

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[*]   URL: http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/170

to 2030. The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* has placed engagement as one of three central pillars on which to position the sector. In addition, the Higher Education Authority, the Irish statutory planning and policy development body for higher education and research, has funded the founding and development of Campus Engage since 2007, as a national platform to support civic engagement activities within higher education in Ireland. It is an all-inclusive platform in that the steering committee represents seventeen higher education institutions. Our contributors offer the reader a thoughtful reflection on developments in the area from Ireland, Australia, the United States, England, Northern Ireland, Australia and Spain. Three invited articles set a context for the research articles and reports on practice, in an issue which balances the theoretical and reflective with practical implementation of civic and community engagement projects. Our overseas correspondent this issue is from the Northern Territories in Australia. Four book reviews are included, offering a varied selection of texts for your consideration.

Éidín O'Shea in *Embedding knowledge Exchange within Irish Universities – International Shifts Towards a Hybrid Academic?* welcomes the new policy discourse within the context of Ireland prompted by international debates and collapse of the economy. However, she is mindful of the need for researchers and other colleagues to embed activities fully and develop coordinated approached to knowledge exchange initiatives. She points not only to the necessity of policy, but to processes and funding, to reward these activities as central to evolving practice and as significant contributors to subsequent "socio-economic benefits for the nation, while enabling Ireland's higher education institutions to remain relevant to the public."

In a similar vein to O'Shea, Rhonda Wynne's research article, entitled *Higher Education Civic Engagement: Project or Orientation* unpacks the current context of civic engagement within Ireland. She moves into the difficult ground of defining what is meant by engagement, stemming from her analysis of the international literature surrounding the terrain. She makes the point that civic engagement can move within and through three broad domains, namely as a project, as a mission and/or as an orientation with each bringing a different bearing on the work. She makes the case for civic engagement to move beyond the margins or 'public service ghettos' (Hollister et al, 2006, p 40) into something that transcends the work of any higher

education institution. Her final message echoes the importance of leadership, "Moving engagement to an informing purpose of the institution, rather than a project in the wings, requires commitment from leaders and an orientation towards the public good role of higher education'. While drawing from an Irish context, this research article has broader application and relevance to other situations internationally.

Mark Healy, Michael Rowan and Lorraine McIlrath's research article, *The impact of service-learning on voluntary and community organizations in the west of Ireland*, investigates engagement from the perspective of community partners. Within this quantitative study over sixty organisations were surveyed in light of the contribution that students make. This small-scale study casts light on an area within the scholarly literature that needs additional attention and they make a direct call for further studies on the purpose and place of engagement activity from the perspective of community partners. This article highlights the importance of long-term versus short-term partnership in terms of deepening impact and the attention that needs to be paid by the university to prepare students for community engagement. In light of the recent focus on the positive features of service learning as a pedagogical approach in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, they ask for community voice and participation when rolling out further local and national activities.

The centrality of community voice and participation is again echoed in *What can be learned from the Rural Clinic Schools in the Northern Territory Australia.* This is both an uplifting and encouraging letter from Pascale Dettwiller based at the Northern Territory Katherine Rural Clinical School at the University of Flinders Australia. It reinforces Mark Healy, Michael Rowan and Lorraine McIlrath's call for solid and meaningful community relationships to be at the heart of engagement. While students obviously excel in their rural community engagement work in Katherine, the clinical school staff face the challenge of developing meaningful community engagement in a geographical area that is the size of the United Kingdom but yet has a population of just 17,000. Detwiller notes that the "geographic, social and cultural diversity are seen as strengths and an opportunity for cooperation and collaboration". It is through an appreciation of diversity that an integrated model of community engagement has been developed whereby the wider Katherine community, Elders of the Aboriginal communities and

the School have developed a 'social canvas' where the Rural Clinical Schools is a central component.

Juliet Millican focuses her research article on the student experience and perspective on community engagement in *Engagement and Employability: Student Expectations of Higher Education*. She confronts the new managerial tensions that exist within the UK (and elsewhere) on student as 'customer' and the university as 'provider' and fears the erosion of education for developmental purposes towards one that is instrumentalist in disposition. Taking a prompt from a study conducted in 2003 by Ahier, Beck and Moore on students at British universities sense of citizenship and employment, she undertook a small-scale study at the Univeristy of Brighton that employed a mixed method approach. Using social media platforms, focus groups, questionnaires and in-depth discussion she identifies six themes relates to the students experiences and expectations of community engagement. She concludes that there must be more to a higher education experience than employability alone and argues for the necessity of enabling within student "a broader understanding of the world, to build their resilience at dealing with it and their aspirations to changing it."

Again addressing student learning within a Spanish context, Héctor Opazo, Pilar Aramburuzabala and Rocío García-Peinado, in *Service Learning methodology as a tool of ethical development: Reflections from the university experience*, provide an overview of the ethics underpinning service learning as an approach toward the pre-service aspect of teacher education and development of social justice as a result within communities and classrooms. They trace the roots, the characteristics and potential of this pedagogical approach in terms of fostering an ethic of care among the graduate teaching population.

In their invited contribution Lorlene Hoyt and Robert Hollister, entitled *Strategies for Advancing Global Trends in University Civic Engagement – the Talloires Network, a Global Coalition of Engaged Universities,* document the global movement and commitment of universities to the pursuit of civic engagement as a fundamental component of vision, mission and practice. The Talloires Network was established at a gathering of twenty-nine university presidents in

Talloires France in 2005 developed both a declaration and network to support the role of higher education and civic engagement globally. Within this piece they articulate the work undertaken by the Talloires Network in terms of relationship building, knowledge sharing and ongoing activities to strengthen the civic purpose of higher education. This piece offers great insight to a common purpose in diverse global regions both culturally and contextually.

Randy Stoecker in his thought provoking invited contribution, entitled *What If*?, prompts us to pause and reflect on our role and the overall impact of service and other forms of engagement within the community. It asks us to consider the focus of our work and to turn, perhaps, not away from students but to incorporate deeper internal focus on the civic engagement and participation of community. This piece, which is auto ethnographic in orientation, challenges the reader to consider concepts such as knowledge power, the self as an ally and the dominant model of higher education.

In a similarly reflective vein to *What If?* Brid Connolly in *Critical Pedagogy and Higher Education: 'Really Useful Civic Engagement* challenges us to question and be critical about who we are and what we do as people and institutions in terms of embedding community engagement. She argues that critical pedagogy must be fully adopted and embedded to achieve emancipatory community engagement. Drawing on her own experience of working within the academy and the community, and utilizing feminist and progressive education theories, and critical pedagogy she welcomes the tipping point of community engagement but encourages the need for "the academy personnel, staff and students, need to re-calibrate the role of civic engagement in their work, from the charity model of the *noblesse oblige*, or the less effective active citizenship, which, in its own way, is quite close to the charity model, to genuine democratic participation."

Catherine Bates and Niamh O'Reilly have contributed a wonderfully creative piece described by the authors as a "reflective correspondence between a community partner and a community-based research coordinator" in which they investigate the experience of collaboration on two community-based research (CBR) projects. In a process of mutual interrogation of the shared experience, they have arrived at an insightful contextualized

understanding of their activities that serves as a reflective and practical basis for recommendations for colleagues contemplating future CBR projects. The seamless integration of the two perspectives is particularly helpful.

Emma McKenna and Eileen Martin situate their report in the context of in preparing students for a knowledge economy. They argue that linking student research projects with community organisations provides a route that is both educationally powerful and beneficial to the community. Part of of the EU funded *Public Engagement with Research and Research Engagement with Society* (PERARES) the report draws on existing literature and the experience of practitioners in this field. The paper shows how *Community Knowledge Exchanges* or *Science Shops* can be potent tools for creating public engagement with research that is fully integrated into the curriculum. The paper gives a timely and useful explanation of Science Shops and Community Knowledge Exchanges as organisations that focus on research with and for society rather than research on society, again reiterating the importance of mutual benefit that is called for again and again in the context of community engagement. Three practical examples from different geographical areas are useful illustrations of practice.

We are also pleased to include in this issue four book reviews that relate broadly to the area of higher education, policy, democratic participation and change. Emma McKenna reviews *Politics, Participation and Power: Civil Society and Public Policy in* Ireland and notes the complexity and contested nature of civil society in Ireland documented in this publication. Lorraine McIlrath reflects on role of Chuck Feeney and Atlantic Philanthropies within higher education in Ireland, in Conor O'Clery's *The Billionaire How Chuck Feeney Made and Gave Away a Fortune.* Ben Berger, Attention Deficit Democracy: The Paradox of Civic Engagement is reviewed by Mary Murphy and notes the call of the author for us to consider four approaches to enhance political engagement. Timothy Shaffer's review of Hoy, A., & Johnson, M., (Eds.) *Deepening Community Engagement in Higher Education,* documents the normalisation and mainstreaming of civic engagement activities within higher education in the United States presenting diverse case studies of successful activities presented by an array of authors.

We hope you enjoy reading these significant additions to the scholarly field of civic and community engagement as much as we did.

Finally, in presenting you with this issue, we have some words of appreciation and a number of announcements.   We would like to record our appreciation of the work of all our authors who made the issue possible. We also wish to acknowledge the work of the peer reviewers who toiled behind the scenes and gave much valuable advice and assistance to the authors and the editors. The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and Campus Engage have notified us of forthcoming events, and we as the editorial team, would like to take the opportunity to remind you that there are three issues of AISHE-J per year with suggested submission dates as follows:

Publication date	Indicative Submission Date
February 28	October 31
June 30	February 28
October 31	June 30

The submission dates are indicative and there is usually some measure of flexibility available. If you are interested in submitting a paper to the Journal you can find out more about us at http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/about. This page will also give you the link to register with the journal and submit online.

As we commend this issue to you, co-editors Lorraine McIlrath and Saranne Magennis, would like to record their sincere thanks to the authors and the peer reviewers without whom the issue would not be possible. It gives us great pleasure to bring you AISHE-J 6:1.

Saranne Magennis and Lorraine McIlrath, February 2014