



# UCT Knowledge Co-op 2020 Quality Assurance report

September 2021

Compiled by Barbara Schmid & Prince Qwaka

## Overview/Executive summary:

During 2020 we conducted the sixth round of our quality assurance process with stakeholders of the UCT Knowledge Co-op. We followed the usual two-tiered approach:

### Impact assessment:

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

- **Academic impact:** Emails to academics and students (where traceable) request 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** 27 *academic outputs* have been reported out of 23 Co-op projects since 2011. They include nine published articles (2 from the last year), two book chapters, two CSSR working papers, fourteen conference presentations by the academic supervising the study and/or the Masters students 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 sent to Community Partners (CCPs) assesses 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 beyond their organisation, and that the project findings helped them to improve their services or change policies. One was 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 only seven 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 Design projects; in these cases, no academics are 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; this is echoed by student responses. For community partners the outstanding value of projects lies in the outputs which indicate what works and where and how improvements are possible. They also express appreciation for the way in which students interact with them and their beneficiaries. Suggestions for improvement often focus on the need for more clarity at the outset of the project – something the Co-op tries to address, but evidently needs to keep working at.

Many of the comments, as well as the low project completion and return rate on questionnaires sent out clearly demonstrate the impact the COVID pandemic had on many of the students and projects facilitated by the Knowledge Co-op during 2020.

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 2020 we emailed 12 academics and a few students (where traceable). In total out of the 77 projects (involving 55 academics) for which we requested information we received feedback on 63; to date 27 academic outputs have been reported out of 23 Co-op projects since 2011. Some further book chapters and articles are pending publication.

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

#### 1. *NINE 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.

## 2. TWO 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.

## 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 CSSR 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: Anthropological 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; and THREE more by both supervisor and students:**

**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

## **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.

## 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 = 7)

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 or helping their organisations to secure funding.

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

- **Raising awareness:**

Most of the respondents *agreed* that the project results helped raise awareness of the issue(s) more widely; three of them *agreed strongly* with this; while one *disagreed*.

Here some specific examples they mentioned: a study on e-cigarettes was presented by the CP to the National Department of Health to inform the revised tobacco control act; another provided data on the reality of informal business in Langa to NGOs operating in that sector.

- **Improvements in an existing policy, programme or service:**

Most of the respondents *agreed* that the project results helped improve their services; three of them *agreed strongly* with this; and one *disagreed*.

They mentioned: structural changes to improve their counselling services; health staff now double checking patients understanding of what they need to be taking as the project brought to light that they are not reading the medication labels on packaging correctly; the CP took the decision to focus on the programme aspects which they were implementing successfully – as shown by the study – and handing over other aspects to alternate service providers; those offering the programme now have a manual to guide them.

- **Increased capacity to get project funding:**

In only one case the project increased the partner's capacity to get project funding.

- **The most important impact of the project:**

CPs valued the fact that the research served as part of their needs analysis to inform their programmes; or that it provided an evaluation of their services by the beneficiaries. For another the study added to the credibility of the programme, making fundraising easier; and another appreciated findings that made their programme safer. Yet another appreciated

data to inform strategic decisions about the future of the project and the work that would be most impactful going forward.

- None of the CPs were aware of appearances in **public media**, mentions in non-academic **publications** or presentations in **conferences** resulting from the projects.
- Three CPs were aware of **new research projects** on the same or a related theme, with one mentioning having used the findings as a reference for subsequent research.
- One CP was involved in sector-wide discussions on **policy or legal issues** relating to the project topic.

## 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 seven projects completed during the course of the 2020 academic year were included in the QA process. This number was significantly lower than in the years before, when more than 20 projects were completed – sadly COVID-19 caused the delay or cancellation of many projects.

The resulting response rates were also very low; we received feedback from 3 Academics, 3 Community Partners and 1 Student, making it very difficult to report meaningfully on trends.

### a. Responses from Academics (n = 3)

OUTCOMES:

- Academics *agreed* that the outcomes of the projects represented significant academic research in the two cases where that applied.
- Academics *agreed* that outputs were consistent with overall objectives of the projects; and that overall expectations of the project partners were met.

STUDENTS:

Academics *agreed / agreed strongly* agreed that:

- the projects improved student's ability to perform research;
- that they developed students' insight into the nature of working with community partners;
- that students received appropriate supervision; and

- that the students showed satisfactory commitment to the projects.

EXPERIENCE:

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

COMMITMENT

- Academics *agreed*, most of them *strongly*, that both Knowledge Co-op staff and community partners showed satisfactory commitment to the project, but were reluctant to comment on their own commitment.

THE MOST VALUABLE ASPECT OF THE PROJECT WAS:

- Access to specific technical advice and data.
- The student's experience working with "messy" real-world situations and the compromises which are often necessary in these situations in terms of research output.

**b. Responses from Community Partners (CPs; n = 3)**

OUTCOMES:

- Most Community Partners *strongly agreed* that outputs met their needs, and that the final report received was understandable.
- They *strongly agreed* that the outcome contained significant academic research.
- All of them *agreed* that the outcome was consistent with overall objectives.

STUDENTS:

- Two community partners *strongly agreed* that the projects improved student's ability to perform research, in the other case the question *did not apply*.
- The CPs *agreed* that the students developed insights into the nature of working with CPs.

EXPERIENCE:

- All CPs *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.

INVOLVEMENT:

- Community partners *agreed* that forming a partnership was beneficial to all; and that students as well as the academic supervisors showed satisfactory commitment to the project.
- Community partners also *agreed strongly* that they themselves as well as the Knowledge Co-op staff showed satisfactory commitment.

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:

- Reflection on questions asked by the student led to recommendations for better systems development to capture data in future.
- Having a fully evaluated and documented programme theory which is in line with international programmes; and the assurance that their current M&E processes are contributing to this.
- "The dissertation will be valuable for use in funding proposals."



- The professionalism demonstrated by the student throughout this process and her observation of all agreed boundaries.
- The student showed keen understanding and patience with the realities of working in communities and NGO setting; and eagerness and dedication to complete the research.

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

- A chance to get to know the particular student involved in a study in advance of needing to make decisions of what access they could be given, especially for NGOs working with vulnerable populations.

### c. Responses from Students (n = 1)

OUTPUTS:

- The student *agreed* that outputs were of significant academic value and were consistent with the overall objectives, but did not think they met community partner needs.
- They *agreed strongly* that their research ability improved through project involvement and *agreed* that they developed knowledge into working with community partners.

EXPERIENCE:

- The student *disagreed* that participants were satisfied with how the project ran, and also *disagreed* that involvement was beneficial to all involved.
- They confirmed that they received appropriate supervision.
- The student *agreed* that there was satisfactory commitment to their project by the community partner, their academic supervisors and that the Knowledge Co-op staff.

OPEN ENDED VIEWS ON VALUABLE ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT:

- Exposure to a topic not heavily covered in my academic work

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

- Unfortunately, to state the obvious: the coronavirus really hindered this project, making it impossible to have significant engagement with the organisation and its beneficiaries. It also resulted in a shift in the aims and methods for the research.

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

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

A shorter questionnaire was sent to both students and community partners involved; no academics were directly involved in the projects. Out of six projects, involving 25 students working in teams, we received three student responses as well as six from Community partners.

Responses were more critical than usual, mainly resulting from two student teams having misunderstood the CP's needs and suggesting an unsuitable/unsatisfactory solution. It was gratifying to see that, in spite of this, overall responses were again positive.

*“Putting knowledge to work for communities”*

#### OUTPUTS:

- Most *agreed*, some *strongly agreed*, that the outputs met the Community Partners needs with three *disagreeing (strongly)*.
- 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, while two *strongly disagreed*.

#### EXPERIENCE:

- With the exception of one student, all respondents *agreed, some strongly*, that their projects ran satisfactorily; and most *agreed (two strongly)* that their expectations were met, with three *disagreeing*.
- Most *strongly agreed* that the partnership was beneficial to all with satisfactory commitment from students (with two and three respectively *disagreeing*).
- All *agreed* that both the 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:**

- Learning to work as a team, even when it includes people that don't understand you.
- Interacting with individuals outside of UCT.

##### **For the community partners:**

- Regular communication, enthusiasm and commitment of the team.
- Students' efforts to gain insight into a complex challenge and the sensitive manner with which the team explored appropriate solutions.
- Professionally presented and well worded feedback.
- Receiving interesting ideas, including the benefits, constraints and costs of each potential solution, as well as potential sponsors.

#### HOW THE INITIAL PROJECT CAN BE IMPROVED:

- More in depth analysis and enough detail for the custom app to be useful.
- The feasibility of the project will ultimately be dependent on obtaining adequate funding; this could have been further explored / better analysed.
- Ensuring that students had a proper understanding of the CP's needs at the outset. In one case failure on this part resulted in a "solution" that only addressed a very small fraction of what was required.

## In closing

Many of the comments above, as well as the poor return rate on questionnaires sent out clearly demonstrate the impact the COVID pandemic had on many of the students and projects facilitated by the Knowledge Co-op during 2020. This is true for much of our lives and the reality in which our community partners do their valuable work. 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.