

## **Adopting Strategic Interventions in Substantiating University Functions: Identifying the Components of University-Community Engagement**

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Education in Malaysia adopts a continuous process for developing physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual capacity of individuals. Such are the core components in Malaysia's National Education Philosophy, befitting the functions of university which focus on developing the intellectual, educational, and social capacity among individuals in the society. That said, a university's activities involve the participation of various levels and groups in the community. This paper reports the qualitative findings of a study which identified the components of university-community engagement (UCE) concept, being aware of the absence of its proper study despite the nation-wide UCE implementation. Input from eminent higher education leaders, school students, business community and non-governmental organization have been gathered, leading to the identification of components of university-community engagement. This has shed light on the approaches to be taken by universities in substantiating their strategic interventions to develop impactful UCE initiatives.

**Keywords:** university-community engagement, strategic intervention, university functions

A nation could achieve greater success, sustain its strength, and prepare for the future if its society is adequately empowered. One of the ways to develop the society is through the provision of good education, involving the transfer of knowledge from the community of educated people to the community at large. Being the institutions mandated to develop a nation, universities have been conducting activities to educate both the university and non-university community on various aspects that pertain to their current and future livelihood. Academic activities at universities have been designed to benefit the students, academics as well as the society, an effort which involves interventions that require the participation of university and various stakeholders. Many strategies have been implemented by universities to support academic activities, particularly in supporting research and innovation; equipping the students with job competencies; or developing good citizenship values for the society (Mathews & Hu, 2007). Such strategic interventions involve smart partnerships between universities and various levels of community.

In Malaysia, higher education sector has been entrusted to advance the competitiveness of the society. In this relation, university activities are designed with the aim to equip students with relevant competencies, and also share new inventions by researchers that would benefit the society (Nordin, 2013). These roles are in tandem with the three fundamental functions of a university, namely (a) the intellectual function, accomplished through teaching and research; (b) the educational function, delivered through the cultivation of new ideas, knowledge, and mind-set among students and community; and (c) the social functions, involving the training of new professionals, equipping them with competencies that enable them to meet the needs of various stakeholders and community (UNESCO, 1991).

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The efforts to accomplish the three functions could be effectively accomplished through the collaboration between universities and various stakeholders. Judicious interventions should be designed by taking into account the needs, expectation, information and knowledge gathered from relevant stakeholders. Such inputs are particularly integral when designing the interventions to change, develop and improve the society, namely human process, human resource management, techno-structural, and strategic interventions. The development of such interventions should be preceded by adequate information, acquired through the application of behavioral science research approaches and methods, suggested by behavioral scientists. The research would lead to the identification of objective information, essential to inform the design of suitable initiatives to improve or advance a university's abilities and functions (Cumming & Worley, 2015).

Despite the many initiatives organized by universities to change, develop or improve the society, the efforts may have been informed by the existing knowledge or readily available practices, implemented by other institutions of other places, instead of being informed by the local community where a university is located. This contradicts the good UCE practices, such as being recommended by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2012) which underscores the formation of smart collaboration between universities and their larger communities. Engaging the local community outside the university is essential in the effort to promote the exchange of knowledge and resources between the two parties (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2012), befitting the principle of strategic intervention (Cumming & Worley, 2015).

External stakeholders should hence be engaged in order to identify their needs and expectations before a university designs activities for her students, academics and community at large. In other word, the development of any programs by a university should be preceded by the establishment of good synergy between university and external communities. This merits a preliminary work to assess the understanding among UCE players in Malaysia (providers and participants) about the UCE concept. This necessitates conducting a research to answer a question on what constitutes a UCE program. Hence, this study was conducted to identify the UCE components as viewed by relevant stakeholders.

### **The Concept of University-Community Engagement in relation to University Functions**

Academic activities conducted by universities, namely teaching and learning; research; innovation; publication; consultancy; training; conferences; students' industrial training; as well as sharing of physical facilities (MOHE, 2011) could be conducted in collaboration with, or supported by, various groups in the community (e.g. professional, business, and public communities), known as university-community engagement (UCE). The concept of UCE involves several activities which are linked to university's three main functions, namely intellectual (e.g. research); social (training of professionals); and educational functions (e.g. teaching) (Slamat, 2010). Various academic activities are conducted by universities in accomplishing their intellectual functions, mainly through research to attend to various milieus faced by the society, followed by the sharing of findings. With regard to the social function, they conduct training of professionals or workforce. The inculcation of good values among students through teaching or co-curricular activities with the outside community is examples of university's effort in accomplishing their educational function (Alter, 2005). These functions require good extent of engagement with the external community in that the research, training, and education activities are driven by the needs in

the community. In the nutshell, the three functions could be accomplished by implementing community-engaged activities which are supportive of the effort to develop the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual capacities of the academics and students.

In terms of the intellectual function, universities are the centers which are mandated to develop knowledge, warranting for strong knowledge generation and dissemination activities. Critical in accomplishing such roles are the development of scientists and researchers who are instrumental in human and community development (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012; Boulton, 2009; Government of Botswana, 2008) UCE plays remarkable roles in accomplishing this function for it could widen the scope and realm of knowledge, and in turn enrich the scholarship of academics and students. The research activities could support the efforts to produce, reproduce, preserve, systematize, organize and transmit knowledge to various level and types of the community (Lucchesi, 2005). It also enables the community to inform critical societal issues to the relevant experts; hence contribute to the formulations of theories; as well as development of practical solutions.

In terms of educational functions, universities have been regarded as significant agents of change and development in the society, as well as contributor to the preservation of its culture (Boulton, 2009). The educational function merits universities to preserve the culture of a society, and promote its values by organizing cultural, intellectual and other activities that develop individuals who are capable to contribute to the society (Lucchesi, 2005). Universities are thus the place where members of the society are educated to deal with the present life issues, and face the futures. The educational function is accomplished via the design and implementation of curricula which combine knowledge and skills to be consistent with current and future trends as well as needs of the community. This function is also accomplished through the cultivation of new ideas, knowledge, and mindset among students and the community (UNESCO, 1991). In short, the educational function requires good level of engagement with various level of the community, to educate and to learn from them.

In terms of the social functions, universities are entrusted to train students and academics to become competent researchers and professionals to serve the society. Academics in universities should be able to work with the community in confronting various social problems such as extreme poverty. Humphrey (2013) stated that successful UCE is characterized by mutually beneficial activities attained by all participants, to be initiated by both individual academics and university management. Through engagement, universities assist the community to conduct specific research which identify the causes, and explain the nature, of any social milieu. The findings are then used to design interventions or offer solutions to the issues (KITE, 2010). According to the AUCEA (2006), community-engaged teaching and learning processes help the development of graduate employability; and expose industries as well as professionals to leading edge developments in specific subject areas. This depicts that the concept of university-community engagement is in line with the strategic intervention initiative which could taken by universities in enhancing their roles in human development agenda (Cumming & Worley, 2015).

Universities hence are expected to outreach the community in order to help making them competent citizens for a nation (Government of Botswana, 2008; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012). This can be done through community service projects throughout which universities educate the community with certain skills, and inculcate them with desired values.

## **The Application of Behavioral Sciences in University-community Engagement**

The objective of education is to equip individuals with desired competencies, so that they can relate to their community. The focus of university, among other things, should be on nurturing community-engaged academic activities so that knowledge is generated and disseminated in order to develop, change and improve the society. It is also to produce society-ready graduates who are able to meet the needs of their community. Stated another way, the ultimate aim of university activities is to prepare individuals to serve their community by making knowledge relevant and of use in the society.

In supporting universities to carry out their activities, systematic approaches of intervention could be introduced by adopting appropriate organization development interventions. The interventions could apply behavioral sciences knowledge and principles in developing desired work process, changing certain work processes and improving any existing work culture (Cumming & Worley, 2015). Among the interventions in organization development practices is strategic intervention which entails the involvement of various parties inside and outside a university for mutually beneficial collaboration. The social, intellectual, and educational functions of a university should engage various groups or types of community so as to attain the ultimate aim of universities in developing human competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities, and other desirable characteristics). This has been underscored by Motoyama and Mayer (2017) on the university's crucial roles in developing the society, especially in the age of knowledge economy.

Several approaches have been used in changing, developing and improving UCE. In developing the understanding of academics and students on the nature, importance, and benefits of UCE, certain practices and principles from behavioral sciences could be applied. Academics from social science disciplines can transfer behavioral science knowledge when identifying the community needs or expectations, and in turn planning development programs for the community. The programs could focus on improving the existing UCE projects, and reinforcing the strategies, structures, and processes adopted by the university when accomplishing their tasks and responsibilities with the community (Cumming & Wolley, 2015). For instance, in developing positive attitudes towards UCE among academics, psychological principles could be applied through attitude formation, reinforcement, training, and motivation. It can also be the application of communication principles in information sharing with the academic community and students.

### **This Present Research**

Among the application of behavioral sciences in UCE is the use of behavioral science research in identifying the view on UCE among the community of stakeholders, being aware that despite the importance of UCE illustrated above, little is known on the nature of university-community engagement. Bakar, Sharif, & Abdullah, (2018) stated that the practice of UCE is rather new in Malaysian universities, and the concept and its objectives are also not clear to many parties, let alone the expectations of both parties towards the engagement. To date, little has been done to assess the understanding of the community on the concept of UCE; the types of UCE practices in the Malaysian context; and the level of UCE initiatives adopted by the universities. Furthermore, most of existing studies gather information by studying the programs conducted by institutions without outreaching the community who are the stakeholder for such initiative. Given such focus limits the research scope and analyses, a study to gather a more comprehensive view on UCE is deemed important. The findings will inform university UCE leaders on the scopes or components of UCE which deserve attention.

This study has identified the main components in the UCE concept, as viewed by the selected stakeholders of universities in Malaysia. The findings are expected to enhance understanding of the concept of UCE, hence provide baseline data that inform the design of actions which support the development strategic interventions; or improve the existing structure, for UCE.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

In answering the research question, several groups of stakeholders of UCE in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Selangor Malaysia have been engaged to participate in the interview sessions and focus group discussion. They were selected due to them meeting any one of the following characteristics:

- 1) Having expertise and experience in the area of UCE. Two subject matter experts who are retired eminent higher education leaders and policy makers in Malaysia have been interviewed to obtain their idea on the concept of UCE.
- 2) Involvement as participants in UCE activities. Participants of UCE programs were interviewed to assess the way they perceived UCE when participating in UCE activities. They were five secondary school students in Selangor who participated in community service programs organized by a public university; five business leaders who have used public university services and facilities to support their businesses; and non-governmental organization representatives who have joined public universities in organizing community service programs.

### **Design**

This research adopted qualitative data collection method which consists of semi-structured interviews with the participants. The approach has been chosen as it could enable the researchers to understand the experiences of people who are involved in the engagement, and identify the different views that they have developed on the concept and practices of UCE (Jackson, Drummond & Camara, 2007). The interviews were conducted face-to-face individually, as well as through focus group discussions (FGD).

### **Interview Protocol**

An interview protocol which consists of relevant questions was used as guide during the interviews and focus group discussions. The interview protocol was validated by an expert in the field. The interviewees and FGD participants had the chance to view the interview protocol before the interviews and FGDs were conducted. The questions have been designed to ask respondents on the components of university-community engagement concept, such as “what are the activities organized in UCE programs?”, and “what are the focus in UCE programs?”

### **Procedure**

Participants from various universities, schools, and organizations in Kuala Lumpur were sent an introductory email about the research that was followed up with a telephone call or email to set the appointment for an interview or FGD. The interview sessions and FGDs

were conducted in the year 2013. The time frame between the contact and the session was about one-month.

Before the start of the interview, participants were assured on the privacy and confidentiality of information they shared during the session. They were also informed that their participation is voluntary and they could withdraw anytime during the session. The duration of FGD and interviews ranged between one and two and half hours. The sessions were audio-recorded, upon the participants' consent. The informed consent form was signed by them before the session continued.

### **Data analysis**

The recorded interviews were verbatim transcribed and summarized. The main ideas were derived using thematic analysis method, a widely used method in qualitative data analysis (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017).

### **Results**

The following section presents the findings of the research, based on the data gathered in the interviews and FGD with the respondents. The findings are presented by the themes which correspond to the research question, i.e. the component of UCE.

The participants stated that UCE involve several components, reflected in activities which support university's functions. The components are (a) UCE is an avenue that nurtures social and economic growth; (b) UCE facilitates easy access for services and facilities among community members; (c) UCE offers relevant activities to the community; and (d) UCE provides mutually beneficial engagement for university community and outside community. Details of these characteristics are described below.

#### **a. UCE as an avenue to nurture social and economic growth.**

UCE is an initiative that promotes the engagement of the community in university activities. UCE enables a university to become an effective agent of social and economic growth of the community, such that has been indicated by respondents in the study. To them, universities are community entities or centers where knowledge is developed, taught, and transferred to the community. They believe that the progress of a society depends on the contributions of universities in educating, supporting, and empowering the society. Universities, thus, are institutions that serve as center that provides direction for the society. Information or knowledge generated by universities could be used to guide the society on the way to handle life or social issues. This befits the social function of a university. A retired eminent higher education policy maker said in an interview that:

“Universities must provide appropriate education which is in congruence with the need to support the increasingly changing society. Now we know that university is changing, to be in line with the changes of the age. This warrants for the development of competencies amongst students so that they will be able to function in any organization they join after they leave university life”.

- b. UCE facilitates easy access for services and facilities among community members;

Due to the need for new information, and up-to-date technology, members of the society should at any time be allowed, and encouraged, to have access to universities' facilities, services, or resources. This can be made possible through many activities and services that a university can design and provide. To the two eminent higher education figures, universities must have perpetual engagement with the society by providing necessary services to the latter. This is essential for the development and growth of the members in the society. This, to them, justifies the relevancy of universities in a society. A retired eminent higher education leader said:

“In actual fact, academic institutions should be held responsible to serve the community, not by making university an ivory tower that is simply acquiring knowledge without giving its benefit to the society or industry”.

There is a need for university to be a community center which formulates academic activities, especially the teaching and learning; research innovation, and publication activities. The activities must be genuinely beneficial to the society, in that they are supportive of its socio-economic development agenda. In this regard, respondents among school children from urban and rural schools view UCE as a remarkably impactful effort of university academics, and students for the community. Programs that the universities conducted such as student development program in their school, village, or at university compound, have taught participants on various skills and values. In terms of the access to the programs, some universities conducted it on university campus. Nevertheless, to get a higher rate of participation, respondents suggested universities to organize it outside university compound, i.e. in the community, especially schools.

The above views indicate that the components of UCE concept, undertaken by universities, are in line with the social function of university.

- c. UCE offers relevant activities to the community;

Participants reiterated that universities should not behave as ivory tower, but should form close ties with the community. To them, a university should organize programs which are relevant with the local and time context. Besides, universities should also have the awareness about the country's direction and, in turn, provide support for the society in meeting the country's aspiration. This is sine quo non in order to make a university staying relevant in the society. A participating business leader for an FGD said:

“At present, university can no longer be an ivory tower, for we need to have a close relationship with the community in order to stay relevant as a community institution. Universities need to know of the national agenda i. e. the aspiration to turn Malaysia as an industrial country”.

The above indicates that participants expect universities to inform the industries and community on the good practices in business, directions on good livelihood and lifestyle. This merits universities to conduct research and innovation which findings could be applied in, and benefited by, the world of work and the community. This befits the intellectual function of a university.

- d. UCE provides mutually beneficial engagement for university community and outside community

One of the HE eminent figures stated that any academic activities conducted by universities must be to the benefit of the society. To him, the community must not be engaged only for the purpose of getting data for academic research without it giving any good return to the community members. The figure, who was a HE leader, said:

“Research, and teaching (are) to bridge the university with the community which I called “*pengabdian diri kepada masyarakat*” (service to the community), that’s the word use. We called it community services”.

There should be a wise involvement of academics, students, and participants of UCE activities. In many instances, there has been a direct or indirect involvement of the society in academic research, particularly when academics engage the society as participants of their research. Participants in this study pointed out that research conducted by universities should be linked to UCE agenda through which academics could transfer or return the knowledge they formulated from research data to the society. The transfer could be conducted by engaging their students who could be trained as agents for the knowledge transfer agenda. In this regard, UCE provides an avenue to form tripartite link between academics’ research, students’ competency development, and society’s empowerment. Academics are expected to conduct socially impactful research, and at the same time develop students’ holistic competencies (enhancing their knowledge, equipping skills, building abilities, and nurturing positive characteristics) by engaging them as agents who transfer knowledge to the society. Another beneficiary in this picture is the community, in that they should be informed of the research findings which could be used to improve or change their life or activities. Besides developing the competencies of university students, UCE is seen as an important way to develop new knowledge and skills among the community members, and in turn, empower them. In other words, the knowledge acquired by academics and students from university should be transferred to the society, hence inform them of the ways in developing their socio-economic conditions. This mutual initiative supports the accomplishment of university’s educational function, a view which is also echoed by a participant from a non-governmental organization who stated:

“So today, you’re so much focused on research and I’m not sure how much you focus on the student development when I say teaching is not just to teach and lecture all out but the student development. The system what I called, in the old days, the tutorial system. The other one you miss is the community and their importance. Why you missed it? You only engaged them when you need your research?”

There was a view that UCE is a program which involves external organizations which provide UCE services to university community. The engagement should involve mutual cooperation between university and external organizations in conducting community-related projects with the community, inside and outside the university. Such program does not incur any additional financial implications to both parties. In stating these social and educational functions of university, a participant stated:



“Universities in developed countries have a notice board in the middle of town in which university can post information to invite the community in joining community service projects or voluntary project with the community. Thus, the whole town will get the information on the program. Many people will join the university to participate in the project or help making it a success. On the contrary, if we were to ask our community members about university community programs, many of them will tell us that they do not know”

To summarize, the research found that there are four main components of UCE concept, all involve the initiatives to make a university an effective agent of social and economic growth; a center which provides necessary services and facilities for various community groups; an institution which conducts relevant intellectual, educational and social activities; and a center which designs, conducts and supports socially-beneficial engagement programs. A university’s UCE activities thus must continue to be substantiated by the above features so as to make UCE activities relevant at universities and beneficial to all stakeholders.

## **Discussion**

The findings in this research indicates that UCE is an initiative which supports the accomplishment of the Malaysian National Education Philosophy, focusing on the development of physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual capacity of individuals in the society (Zakaria, 2000). The education philosophy stipulates that education is a continuous process that necessitates integrated efforts of various parties in the development of holistic individuals who possess a good balance of the four characteristics. The philosophy signifies that education process happens at various levels, collaboratively provided by different parties, and for different target groups. It could also be discerned from the philosophy that the process to develop individuals is not limited to the time they spend at education institutions only (school or university), but at the time when they are with others as well.

UCE programs provide avenues for university academics and students to develop their intellectual capacity when applying knowledge they learn in university or generate from research to the real world. In this regard, teaching and learning processes as well as research activities should be conducted by engaging the community. Interaction with the community could provide the opportunities to develop intellectual capacity and productive behaviors, to the benefit of academics and students; as well as external university community (community at large, professionals, etc.). In certain cases, participation in activities that involve the transfer of knowledge to the society contributes to the physical capacity of the community, in the form of improved livelihood. This is due to the fact that knowledge generated by universities are transferred to the community in order for them to use it as guide in dealing with social issues, and in turn, enhance their well-being. For one, while the engagement a university makes with the community could enhance its intellectual function, the efforts to transfer knowledge and expertise to other groups and individuals outside the university are part of its social functions. Taken together, this initiative involves the participation of academics and students who conduct research to look for answers which can be applied to promote economic or social advancement.

For one, universities have not been originally created to prepare individuals for careers, but established to become institutions for knowledge generation and dissemination. Participants in this research stated that universities should play the roles of agent for social and economic growth that is by transferring the knowledge to its application or good use by the community. Universities are expected to equip students with knowledge, skills, and abilities which would enable them to contribute to the community before and after completing their studies. This is true to the expectation placed on university, in that it has been regarded as an institution which educates the society with knowledge, skills, and abilities; and develops other desirable characteristics among members of the society. This educational function merits universities to preserve the culture of a society, and promote good or desired values by organizing cultural, intellectual and other activities. UCE programs are hence avenues to develop values, norms, and skills that influence the ways individuals function in the society. This supports the mandate for university to produce good citizens who have strong spiritual, moral, and cultural values. Universities, hence, are expected to communicate knowledge that would lead others to value the roots of their culture and preserve it. In other words, UCE is a holistically synergized academic activity, aimed to link the community with academic activities (research, services, teaching); identify community issues and design interventions that help develop, change or improve the society.

As time passes by, the expectation of universities changed in that many want universities to become institution for workforce development; and hence treat universities as institutions that should equip students with relevant competencies that enable them to play roles in the increasingly changing world of work (O'Connell, 2016). Given the process to educate an individual is continuous and integrated in nature, the responsibility to educate them should not only be held by education institutions. Non-education institutions should be engaged to join the efforts in equipping students with the competencies they should acquire while studying at universities. Guidance from the professional community on the expected job-related competencies; and expectation from the community leaders on the desired characteristics of members in the society could be gathered through UCE programs. In this context, the roles to inform graduates of the desired characteristics of workforce can be best accomplished through the involvement of various parties, through UCE programs.

The participants also indicated that university is a knowledge center which should have easy access for services and facilities among community members; Professional community or working individuals can continue learning from universities through collaboration between universities and industries. The community at large too can enhance their knowledge, and benefit from academic research, educational facilities and services made accessible to them at universities. Taken together, the university-community link reinforces the country's aspiration in having universities to serve as key players in generating new knowledge, producing relevant innovation and solving societal problems, hence substantiate the efforts to bring about socio-economic advancement in the country.

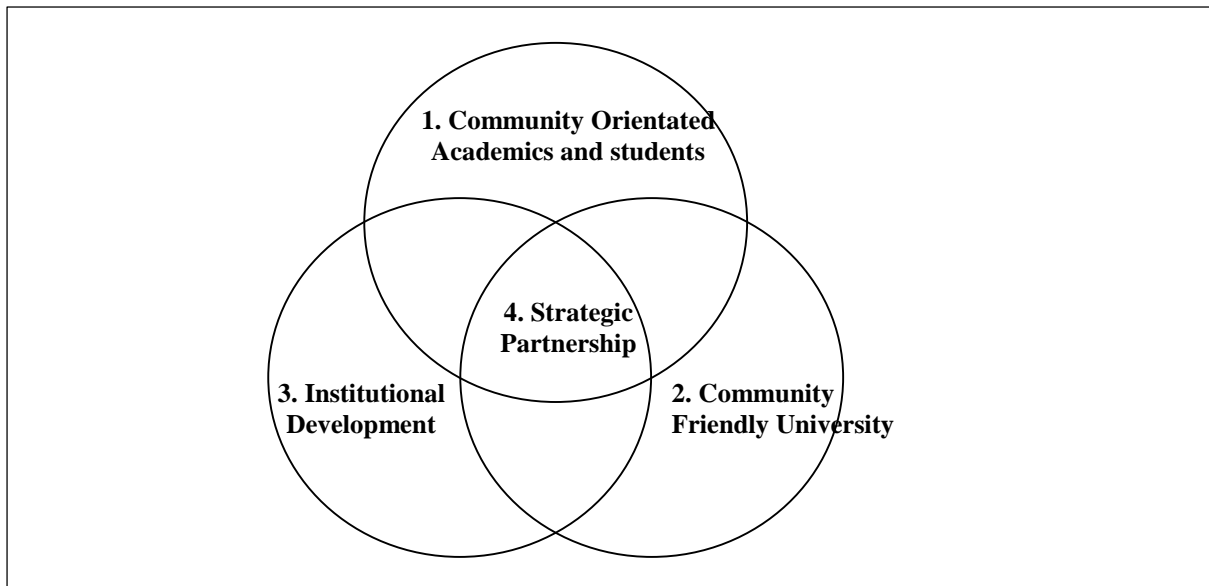
The participants view UCE as a platform for university to provide relevant activities to the community; known as service learning, UCE could nurture the combination of students' learning goals and community service which outcomes benefit both parties. It enhances students' competencies and promotes common good in the community. UCE hence is a platform to promote meaningful community service because the students who deal with the community receive instruction and reflection from the supervisors on ways to accomplish

their community-related tasks, and in turn enrich their learning experience when engaging the community (Bandy, 2018).

In a nutshell, the functions of universities in the community are significantly remarkable for they are discharging the intellectual function of the community, such as conducting research to identify causes, and explain the nature of any social milieus (UNESCO, 1991). Universities too are expected to rigorously deliver its social function in that they should be playing the leading roles in designing interventions or solutions to change, improve or develop the society. With regard to the educational roles, universities are expected to design sound curriculum in order to educate students who enroll at the institutions as well implement programs for members in the society so as to provide them with the updated knowledge, relevant skills, and right values.

Taken together, UCE provides mutually beneficial engagement for university community and outside community. A university should not be managed in silo from each of the three functions, for they require synergistic approaches that involve a good interplay across the functions. This synergy befits the principle of strategic intervention, recommended by behavioral scientists when designing interventions for institutional or system change and development (Cummings & Worley, 2015). The objective of this intervention is to improve institutional abilities in establishing effective synergy between universities and external parties or communities.

This intervention focuses on establishing smart relationships between universities and their stakeholders. The latter is engaged by the former to participate in certain academic activities while the former can be approached by the latter when they are in need of certain services. The following paragraphs discuss the way forward for a synergistic approach of UCE activities.



*Figure 1.* Synergistic approach of community-engagement activities at universities.

Figure 1 depicts the suggested engagement initiatives between academics, students, institutional agencies, and various levels of external community. The following points highlight the actions which could be taken by universities in implementing four suggested engagement strategies, developed based on the four types of interventions applicable in

organizational change and development processes.

1. It is essential for a university to involve community at all groups and levels, i.e. students, academics, and staff members. This is an important way to empower the society, being aware that through the knowledge they learn at university, they would later use it for the development of their society. This initiative which fits the human process intervention technique, will develop the awareness of students, academics, and staff so that they will know that they are expected to be the agent of societal change, improvement and development; and ready to be working with and for the community outside their university. University academics activities (teaching, research, publications) should be informed by, and in turn designed to address, the community needs.

2. An important feature of UCE initiative is that academic activities must be beneficial to the society. This merits close ties between universities and the community. Universities should be aware and supportive of the community agenda, and formulate strategies and actions to meet their aspiration. One of the identified components of UCE concept is that university should be a community center; in that members of the society should be allowed and encouraged to participate or have access to university activities and services. This indicates that they must be dedicated mechanisms to identify the services needed by different groups of community (learners /student community, professional community, community at large, etc.). The identified needs would help universities to put in place services or facilities needed by the different groups of community.

3. The notions on the salient features of UCE concept lead to a number of directions which should be taken up by universities, essential in making impactful UCE initiatives. University should give equal focus to community service and transformation programs; in addition to teaching and research activities. This requires a paradigm shift in a university, in that it has to be made the agent which supports the concept of 'knowledge for the advancement of the community and nation'. University should be able to revise the plans, policies, and action plans in order to ensure knowledge transfer activities can be adequately put in place. Besides, university must enculturate academics to participate in community development projects, such as by transferring their knowledge to the society. In strengthening the agenda, university could establish university community transformation center, based on each university respective niche. This necessitates the use of university infrastructure in the community; mobilization of academics to do community-driven research; and students to assist their lecturers in transfer of knowledge programs. In so doing, the students would be able to apply their knowledge, and acquire other competencies. The effort will, in turn, support the culture of life-long learning for both the universities and community.

4. Community engagement can offer enormous benefits for a nation's development. UCE is expected to mobilize external stakeholders to support universities through funding or incentives for research, consultancy and training. It is through these partnerships that universities are able to contribute to the economic prosperity, socio-cultural well-being and environmental sustainability of the community. UCE should promote a win-win situation for both the country and universities.

In nurturing good UCE implementation, it is imperative for universities to strengthen their delivery systems so that they are not only serving the community of academia but other groups and levels of community. It is expected that the findings of this research will be able to promote better understanding on the breadth and depth of UCE in Malaysian universities. The

findings could serve as a good fundamental to inform higher education authority on the expected features of UCE conducted by Malaysian universities; and in turn chart the UCE future directions.

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