

PASCAL SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Public Sector Interface

Theme: Competitiveness and the Economy

Issue One: March 2016

Introduction:

The purpose of this PASCAL Special Interest Group (SIG) is to examine the interface between PASCAL and the public policy sectors. While this topic is a very broad, it cuts across sectors and issues, including innovative resource sharing and the role of institutions of higher education, and those organizations that develop policy. It includes the development of intercultural activity.

In this first issue, the theme of Competitiveness and the Economy and the role of the University and the public sector regarding the development of a city/region, including social capital, are explored.

[**Iipo Laitinen**](#), of the city of Helsinki (Finland) and Chair of the SIG, reexamines social capital, social cohesion and economic development of a region. He reminds us that the activities of a knowledge economy differ fundamentally from those of an industrial period. Universities play a vital role in its local economy and its community. Universities are an anchor urban institution and he poses the question: “how do cities/regions engage with universities newly called to be engines for regeneration and city/region development – including economic development and social capital?”

[**Peter Welsh, \(United Kingdom\)**](#) tackles interface, dynamics and application of university research for the benefit of the public sector. He examines the relationship between local government and the Higher Education Research Community. His case initiatives provide valuable insight into the relationship between the research communities.

[**Dermot Coughlan**](#) (Ireland) focuses on the Higher Education Sector in the development of Intercultural Society. He examines what might be viewed as contributing to “The Public Sector” and at times perhaps to take an alternative view of what it is and how it is attained. He showcases the University of Limerick and how it represents a collective commitment to creating and sustaining an outstanding and distinctive learning environment for students.

Dr Leone Wheeler
Content Editor

Social Capital

Ilpo Laitinen

According to Hans Westlund (2006) the theories that (national and regional) innovation systems, clusters, industrial districts and triple helix have in common is the focus of the interaction between a number of key actors. Thus the economy should be understood from a broader perspective and include the dimensions of social cohesion.

The activities of the knowledge society differ fundamentally from those of the industrial period. According to Westlund, the regions have different prerequisites and local capacities to deal with this circumstance. On a macro level that capacity may be developed by a collective process in which people and organizations cooperate for delivering better public services. On a micro level, the knowledge society seems to require constant flows of information and knowledge. That refers to the social capital knowledge and information sharing in the innumerable processes of the everyday. (Westlund 2006).

Pierre Bourdieu defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu 1986, p 243). Thus social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. In financial terms, social capital comprises the value of social relationships and networks that complement the economic capital for economic growth of an organization.

The OECD defined social capital as “*networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups*”. (OECD 2001, p 41)

Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together. Robert Putnam jump-started the research on social capital especially in 1995 (2000) by publishing the bestseller, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Putnam argued that the very fabric of our connections with each other, has plummeted, and the decline of the community networks that once made Americans bowl together is now impoverishing our communities and thus represents a loss of social capital. He noted:

“Researchers in such fields as education, urban poverty, unemployment, the control of crime and drug abuse, and even health have discovered that successful outcomes are more likely in civically engaged communities.”

The norms and networks of civic engagement also powerfully affect the performance of representative government. That, at least, was the central conclusion of my own 20-year, quasi-experimental study of subnational governments in different regions of Italy. Although all these regional governments seemed identical on paper, their levels of effectiveness varied dramatically. Systematic inquiry showed that the quality of governance was determined by longstanding traditions of civic engagement (or its absence). Voter turnout, newspaper readership, membership in choral societies and football clubs--these were the hallmarks of a successful region. In fact, historical analysis suggested that these networks of organized reciprocity and civic solidarity, far from being an epiphenomenon of socioeconomic modernization, were a precondition for it.

No doubt the mechanisms through which civic engagement and social connectedness produce such results--better schools, faster economic development, lower crime, and more effective government--are multiple and complex.

Social scientists in several fields have recently suggested a common framework for understanding these phenomena, a framework that rests on the concept of social capital". (Putnam, 1995, pp 66-67; Putnam, 2000, p 224)

Universities as urban ‘anchor’ institutions

As Hans Westlund noted (2006; also 2009 New Directions in Regional Economic Development), organisations can suffer from having the wrong sort of social capital that limits the knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer. Conversely, “right” social capital facilitates organisations and contributes to the diffusion of knowledge.

In *Bowling Alone* Putnam attributes a large part of the success of Silicon Valley in the United States to formal and informal co-operation between start-up companies in the area.

What is to be done? Putnam himself suggested the structure of networks, arguing that "horizontal" ties represented more productive social capital than vertical ties. *And perhaps most urgently, we need to explore creatively how public policy impinges on social-capital formation.* And he concludes that *high on our scholarly agenda should be the question of whether a comparable erosion of social capital may be under way in other advanced democracies, perhaps in different institutional and behavioral guises.* (Putnam, 1995, pp 76-77).

Thus Universities of all sorts play a vital role in their local economy and its community. HE plays an important role in for example, job creation in local economies, but especially in those that are highly developed. (Jacob, Sutin, Weidman and Yeager, 2015; Community Engagement in Higher Education, In Community Engagement in Higher Education, pp. 1-28.)

Shift from mode 1 (linear) to mode 2 (co-production) knowledge creation and innovation raises the question of the distinctive role of the university. Charles (2006) identified three forms of value: knowledge that is directly commodified through licensing of intellectual property; human capital that upgrades skills and knowledge in the regional labour market; and social capital that builds trust and cooperative norms in local economic governance networks. (Goddard & Vallance, 2013; The university and the city).

Those mentioned above refer to the new developmental as well as the generative role of universities. Thus University influence on the city based political, institutional and network factors that shape innovation processes beyond input of knowledge capital.

There are emerging policies and demands to Universities like need to support and enhance holistic views of development embracing social equality and cohesion, environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing and cultural vitality. Also, social innovation as a new norm even combined with technological innovation in the economy with the city as a constitutive element in the innovation process is primarily based on the values of civil society.

Anchor institutions' are large locally embedded systems, typically non-governmental public sector, cultural or other civic institutions that are of significant importance to the economy and the wider community life of the cities in which they are based. They generate positive externalities and relationships that can support or 'anchor' wider economic activity in the locality.

"In tomorrow's Europe, science institutions and scientists engage with society, while citizens and civil society organisations engage with science; thereby contributing to a European society which is smart, sustainable and inclusive. There is a need for a new narrative drawing on a broad-based innovation strategy encompassing both technological and non-technological innovation at all levels of European society, and with a stronger focus on the citizen and responsible and sustainable business - a quadruple helix and place-based approach to science, research and innovation". (Horizon 2020 Advisory Group p 6 & p 8)

Our present time we live in might be called the new global urban age. That refers to the dominant trend how cities are increasingly integrated globally and are becoming key how nations will be competitive and successful. The city simultaneously is becoming the object of study, the setting or field for research and the site for collaboration and inter-disciplinary experimentation and intervention. One example of that development is the Future Cities Catapult. It aims to be a place where cities, businesses and universities come together to develop solutions to the future needs of cities. The Catapult aims to get people working together to solve challenges faced by cities. (Clark & Clark, 2014; Nations and the Wealth of Cities: a new phase in public policy).

The Future Cities Catapult does three things:

- It demonstrates the opportunity for urban innovation and proves what works.
- It enables innovation through collaboration.
- It removes barriers to scaling-up innovations that work.

How do cities/regions engage with universities newly called to be engines for regeneration and city/region development – including economic development and social capital?

References:

- Bourdieu, P. 1986. 'The Forms of Capital.' Pp. 241-58 in *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*, edited by John G Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press
- Charles, D.R. (2006) 'Universities as key knowledge infrastructures in regional innovation systems', *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 19(1), 117-130
- Clark, G., & Clark, G. (2014). Nations and the Wealth of Cities: A New Phase in Public Policy Retrieved from http://centreforlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CFLGCI_Nations_and_the_Wealth_of_Cities.pdf
- Goddard, J., & Vallance, P. (2013). *The university and the city*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Horizon 2020 Advisory Group, (2014). Strategic Opinion for Research and Innovation in the Horizon 2020 – 2016 – 2017 Work Programme. "Science with and for Society' Advisory Group.
- Jacob, W. James, Stewart E. Sutin, John C. Weidman, & John L. Yeager (2015). [*Community Engagement in Higher Education: International and local perspectives*](#)." Pp. 1-28 in Jacob, W. James, Stewart E. Sutin, John
- OECD (2001), *The Well-Being of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital*, OECD, Paris.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone*: Touchstone.
- Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of democracy*, 6(1), 65-78.
- C. Weidman, & John L. Yeager (Eds.), *Community engagement in higher education: Policy reforms and practice*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Westlund, H. (2006). *Social Capital in the Knowledge Economy Theory and Empirics*. Berlin Heidelberg Springer-Verlag

Think Piece:

The Interface, Dynamics and Application of University Research for the Benefit of the Public Sector.

Dr Peter Welsh – Evident Consulting

Introduction

This 'think piece' draws upon very recent practitioner and academic interest and research findings examining the relationship between Local Government and the Higher Education Research Community. It seeks to provide the PASCAL International Observatory with insights into the ways in which the research community both:

- engage with local government, and
- could enhance local government utilisation of research.

In this way, it sits firmly with the establish interests of PASCAL, notably that of turning knowledge into action. This think piece draws primarily upon the latest findings (October 2015) of the Local Government Research Facilitator initiative and the Local Government Knowledge Navigators (LGKN) work of 2014. These were sponsored by the Local Government Association (LGA), the Society Of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and undertaken by INLOGOV (University of Birmingham). In addition, this paper draws upon the professional experience insights of the author gained during his tenure as 'Head of Research and Intelligence' at Kent County Council 2004-11 and subsequent research commissions for a range of local authorities.

In this way, this think piece seeks to inform debate within the PASCAL community and provide further practical insight into the ways in which PASCAL can support its partners through applied research and policy advice to achieve their organisational aims across the guiding themes of Place Management, Social Capital and Learning Regions.

Local Government Austerity and the Knowledge Navigator

Following the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, Local government in the UK continues to be challenged both by the impact of austerity, pressures such as demographic change, and a shifting relationship between state and citizen. Robust knowledge and evidence are vital if the changes needed are to be well-informed both in the short and longer term. Building on a history of engagement between the UK research councils and the local government sector, in 2013 the LGA, SOLACE and ESRC came together to fund the Local Government

Knowledge Navigators (LGKN) project which created a strategic agenda for maximising the relevance and impact of publicly funded research for local authorities.

The LGKN consulted widely within the local government sector to produce a report for the partners - *Analysis to Action*¹ and coordinated a set of evidence reviews around topics of interest to local authorities, identified and promoted examples of successful local authority-research interaction and created opportunities through events and media coverage to make the case for more collaborations.

Key findings of *Analysis to Action* included:

- diverse and compelling knowledge and evidence needs across local government;
- a rich diversity of research-derived knowledge and evidence that is **barely tapped** by local government; but
- significant dysfunctions in the system that prevent the two from coming together;
- a need for practical action to tackle these issues.

Analysis to Action concluded that this vision of coming together can be achieved and that there are no insuperable barriers to achieving this, provided local government, the research community and research funders are prepared to engage with an open mind.

Following the publication of the *Analysis to Action* report, the ESRC invested funding in 24 research organisations (see Appendix 1) via Impact Acceleration Accounts (IAAs), to initiate and support knowledge exchange activities with public, private and civil society organisations, including local authorities. IAAs offer substantial opportunities for local government engagement with social science in general.

The A2A report identified four strategic recommendations to grow interaction between local government and the academic research community:

- building relationships and networks with potential users of research to facilitate co-production of knowledge and maximise impact;
- movement and secondment of people between Research Organisations and user stakeholders;
- support for researchers to build networks with potential users of the products of their research, and further work to establish 'proof of concept' for their innovations;
- drive culture change in Research Organisations to promote knowledge exchange and improve related skill sets and capabilities;
- improve engagement with the public sector, civil society, industry (including SMEs, local business and Innovate UK) and publics.

Additional activities of the LGKN include:

¹ Tim Allen, Clive Grace and Steve Martin, *From Analysis to Action: Connecting Research and Local Government in an Age of Austerity*, June 2014.

- specification for a web-based platform to enable interaction between academic researchers and local authorities see www.lgkn.org;
- outlining what a network of local authority-research engagement champions based on English regions could offer and look like;
- publicising the opportunities available to local authorities for engagement with academic research through the 24 research organisations recently awarded Impact Acceleration Accounts.

Local Government Research Facilitator

The three partners of LGA, SOLACE and ESRC, took forward the recommendations of *Analysis to Action* through the creation of the role of Local Government Research Facilitator (LGRF) which sought to promote the benefits of interaction between academic researchers and local authorities, to encourage strategic and operational collaborations between the two sectors. The LGRS would:

- use a range of mechanisms to promote opportunities for local authority-research engagement, including direct links with individual local authorities;
- provide advice to individual local authorities on working with academic researchers and signpost to appropriate expertise;
- find and promote examples of effective academic-local government collaboration to extend the portfolio exemplars of good practice brought together by the Local Government Knowledge Navigators (2013-2014);
- make links and collaborate with initiatives established to promote the use of evidence-informed policy and practice in local government (e.g. the Alliance for Useful Evidence and its Evidence Exchange project, What Works initiatives) and ESRC Impact Acceleration Accounts.

On Friday 1st May 2015, Catherine Staite, (Director of the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV) at the University of Birmingham) was appointed at the first Local Government Research Facilitator.

LGRF Local Government Research Survey 2015

During the summer of 2015, the LGRF undertook an on-line survey which was distributed to those individuals, university departments/research centres and independent research organisations across England that INLOGOV had identified as potentially conducting local government-related research that would generally come within the remit of ESRC. For resource reason this was limited to local government politics and management, social policy, urban studies, and related fields, although is clear that Local Government covers a much wider range of service/ research needs including engineering, public health, and transportation. The findings were publishing in the report *Enhancing Interaction Between the Research Community and Local Government: Insights from the Research Community*²

² Catherine Staite, Chris Skelcher and Eleanor Mackillop, *Enhancing Interaction Between the Research Community and Local Government: Insights from the Research Community*, INLOGOV, October 2015.

The survey received 30 responses to the following seven key lines of inquiry which are summarised below (the full report and findings can be downloaded [here](#))

1. The kinds of research relationships they had with local government

The most frequently mentioned relationships were commissioned research, providing research-based policy advice and sharing research findings through workshops or briefings, mentioned by approximately three-quarters of respondents. Long-term research relationships were mentioned by 50% of respondents. Secondment, placements and collaborative PhDs were less frequently mentioned. Additionally, respondents reported that they were more likely to be the initiator of the research relationship rather than requests coming from local government.

2. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that particular methods were useful in stimulating local authority interest in their research.

Talks at local government events gained the highest net agreement (76%), followed by use of local government/professional bodies' press/web sites and research reports (62% each) and social media (59%). The lowest scores were for academic articles and university web pages. These results demonstrate the need to tailor the way of disseminating results to the local government audience.

3. **The factors the research community thought supported and hindered their relationship with local government**

Existing relationships – individual and organisational – were seen as the factors that most strongly supported effective research relationships. Overall the research reputation of the individual and organisation with particular local authorities or the local government community at large is important. It is also important to note that having masters or PhD students who work for or have local government experience is seen as a moderately supportive factor. Staite *et al* suggest that the latter probably relates to the capacity of the research organisation to evidence its understanding of local government but also the use of masters and PhD research to support solutions to problems local government is facing. In addition, there may be factors of organisational culture as highlighted in *Analysis to Action*, by having personnel experienced in working in both types of organisation, questions of culture may be identified and overcome more smoothly.

4. Which job roles within local government were thought to be most receptive to research

Senior management was identified as being the most receptive to research, but local politicians and trade unions are frequently seen as less receptive. This may be because researchers have less engagement with them regarding commissioning,

reporting and translating their research. This may indicate that more effort should be put into developing the awareness of the value of research on the part of these groups, notably politicians who make up the decision making executive of local government and may wield most influence over policy and budget.

5. Ways in which the research community it thought it could develop its capacity to deliver the vision

Three main sets of views were expressed – improved knowledge and understanding of local government, capacity and skills in translational research, and the development of stronger relationships.

6. How the research community thought local government could develop and change in order to make better use of research resources

Again three main areas were identified – improving local government’s knowledge of the research community, developing a shared agenda, and managing the effects of change within local authorities on research relationships.

7. Finally. respondents were asked to identify other changes that could assist in building sustainable research relationships

These were numerous but can be grouped as follows: institutional factors in the research community, flexibility of approach from the research community, and developing sustainable relationships.

Based on the survey findings, Staite *et al* propose the following recommendations to increase greater working between research organisations and local government:

- a. The research community could be even more proactive in initiating research contacts with local authorities.
- b. The development of collaborative events offers an important way of building and enhancing research relationships that are sustainable and effective.
- c. Greater emphasis could be given to research-based secondments and PhD/DBA collaborative research and to secondment of local government staff into research organisations.
- d. It is important to understand the extent of knowledge and use of on-line resources within local government so that potentially useful research is identified and contact with the researchers can be initiated.
- e. Consideration should be given to the need to make local politicians and trade unions more aware of the value of research.
- f. Local authorities need to identify ways to sustain research relationships in a time of significant organisational change and staff movement.
- g. There remain considerable potential for consortium-style research relationships.

- h. Small-scale funding opportunities from ESRC and other sources remain an important resource for building relationships and demonstration projects.

However, it is clear that the emphasis of both the survey and its findings is on the *supply* side of the relationship. The survey report does not state whether or the extent to which there is scope to undertake detailed *demand* side work to provide a greater insight into the needs of Local Government in terms of research, its ability to access this, preferred suppliers (internal teams, local HEIs, the wider academic community or private sector research consultants). Equally, Local Government will require specific skills in terms of its ability to design research briefs and commission their delivery.

Ultimately, the LGKN and LGRF initiatives provide significant insight into and support for increased and improved collaboration between Local Government and HEIs.

Both the LGKN and LGRF initiatives provide PASCAL with new and valuable insight into the relationship between the research community and local government and support the need for increased and improved collaboration between Local Government and HEIs.

Appendix 1: Research Organisations that have been awarded IAAs

- Bangor University
- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- University of Cambridge
- Cardiff University
- Durham University
- University of East Anglia
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Essex
- University of Exeter
- University of Glasgow
- Institute for Fiscal Studies
- Imperial College London
- King's College London
- London School of Economics and Political Science
- University of Manchester
- Newcastle University
- University of Nottingham
- University of Oxford
- University of Sheffield
- University of Southampton
- University of Sussex
- University of Warwick
- University of York

Public Sector Interface

Dermot Coughlan.

The “terms of reference” for this SIG is to examine the interface between PASCAL and the public policy sectors which is a very wide brief indeed. For the purpose of my work within this SIG, it is my intention to concentrate on the interface between the university and policy makers. These bodies are generic in nature and should be taken to read all sectors of the Higher Education Sector (HE). On the other hand “public bodies” is so wide that it would be nigh impossible to cover all of them. So for this exercise, I will limit the remit to public bodies with whom the HE sector connects and within the city within which it operates, with city taken as an expression of not just a city by boundary but perhaps as the centre of a region. The definition of interface is also important and from my perspective, I am taking it to mean as wide an interpretation as possible.

The first issue I would like to address is, in fact, the concept of “interface”. The reason for this is that I am of the view that many HE institutions will claim that they interface with the public sector but the question is whether they “engage” with it. In other words, does the interaction have a real and genuine societal impact – does it make a difference. Are institutes of higher education becoming or have they become totally utilitarian? Have they forgotten the ideals of people such as Newman and William Rainey Harper who defined the university as;

“It is the university that must guide democracy into the new fields of arts, literature and science. It is the university that fights the battle of democracy, its war-cry being: “Come let us reason together”. It is the university that ... goes forth with buoyant spirit to comfort and give help to those who are downcast, taking up its dwelling in the midst of squalor and distress”.

An interesting social engagement indicator that was identified in an EU project – E3M - <http://www.e3mproject.eu/> was the amount of research that was undertaken in the community. The issue for me in this regard is the how researchers view local communities especially those that are deemed – disadvantaged communities. Far too often these communities are seen as readymade laboratories where we research but do not engage. They do not require another study “on them” but want the HE sector to work “with them”.

PASCAL is not without issues in a related regard. We espouse the view that universities should strive to harness local, regional and global talents through intensive collaboration with external partners from business, industry, civil and voluntary services and the community. Through such collaborations and partnerships will emerge innovative and cost effective solutions and co-produce successful systemic deliverables resulting in real and tangible improvement, renaissance and regeneration.

There is, however, a fine line between the above sentiments and the trap of being driven by the economic prerogative. Here I will refer to Prof. Kathleen Lynch's address at the University of Limerick in March 2010. In her paper she stressed that in meeting their public interest commitments universities and individual academics need to be cognisant of the following:

- Education markets driven by competitive advantage encourage privatisation of academic voices and development of the actuarial self, e.g. Unintended outcome of exclusively rewarding peer-reviewed work – privatisation of academic voice, a form of social control that discourages public intellectual work.
- We need to build dialogical relationships or Research Coalitions between the academy and civil society especially with groups who are not in power.
- Researchers need to build a bridge between experiential and theoretical knowledge to resolve the great problems of humanity (Mode 1 and Mode 2 epistemologies). Propositional or theoretical knowledge is but one way of knowing the world.
- We need to democratise the relations of research production and exchange at the time that we are becoming more privatised and commercialised.

One of the key points to be examined from my perspective is the fundamental issue of a quality based approach to identifying good practice and from my own research this will demonstrate that many institutes of higher education who have and continue to interface and engage with the public sector have clear strategies to ensure that the engagement is attained and fruitful.

Not all will or should they have a universal view as to how they can declare that they have met their responsibilities. Those that will genuinely have met the goal will have outlined clear targets by which their engagement can be assessed and evaluated. The key, however, is to remember that engagement is like life itself. It is not a destination. To paraphrase the late Noble Laureate, Seamus Heaney, life has no destination, it is just a series of stepping stones.

Universities cannot say that they have achieved engagement. It is a continuous process and will change just as society's needs change. The three tentacles of a dynamic learning environment, research commercialisation and knowledge dissemination to the wider community are elements which will guide institutes of higher education in defining when and how engagement takes place. These will lead to developments such as translational research, research commercialisation, technology transfer to business and establishment of campus companies. Equally, it must engage with its local and regional communities. The acid test will be when institutes of higher education become lifelong learning institutes and not just institutes which offer lifelong learning opportunities. It will be achieved when universities become open systems, accessible to all where learning in all its forms especially that which is extra mural, is valued.

I deliberately omitted some forms or methods of engagement not because I do not think them to be important but rather that they are too important to be just detailed or mentioned. Here again, the founding principle must be not what we can do, to you, but what we can do for and with you. In this regard, it is my view that one of an institute's greatest asset is the human resource that is the student body. This should not be just about short or even long term projects but rather a fundamental tenet of the development of the graduate as an engaged citizen.

Having a vision stating that it is your institution's aim to provide an outstanding student experience, to actively serve your communities and to contribute to the civil, social and cultural life of your region is relatively easy. To ensure that it is not just a nice brochure but a set of actions that genuinely make a difference requires hard work and commitment. None of us will have all of the answers when it comes to ensuring that civic engagement will be both worthwhile and sustainable and thus we need to learn from each other.

What we need to concentrate upon is the output and not the input. I am certain that students might not like to be referred to as "output" but I mean it in the best possible way. It is, of course, essential that our graduates will be educated in a manner that will ensure that they gain employment but not in a totally utilitarian manner. The fundamental question I suppose in a way is not what we want of our students but what is a university and how does it serve society? In addition to our students being employable, they must also be the drivers of social change. The problem is that we do not prepare our students for this most important aspect of their contribution to society. As we are driven by the plethora of reports that we must produce more and more STEM graduates we have totally lost the need to ensure that they are aware of the impact of their work in society.

Returning therefore to the concept of the "output" and here I will suggest that a starting point is to attempt to identify a set of attributes which graduates of all disciplines should possess. At the University of Limerick we have undertaken some work in this field, and I put them forward here as a suggested starting point for PASCAL.

By ensuring a strong, well-designed and dynamically-delivered curricular base and by providing a distinctive pedagogical climate, we aim to ensure that UL graduates are knowledgeable, proactive, creative, responsible, collaborative, articulate. These are the six key graduate attributes that will continue to guide our institutional policies, our learning environment and our commitment to broadening the curriculum.

This University of Limerick's graduate attributes document is an important statement. It represents our collective commitment to creating and sustaining an outstanding and distinctive learning environment for all our students. It articulates the range of educational priorities that we focus on: educating people for their professional and personal lives, ensuring that our students take responsibility for themselves and learn to be responsible in their communities, delivering a curriculum that embraces the rigours of each discipline but one that also steps beyond disciplinary boundaries so that students learn to interact effectively with people from other backgrounds, cultures and specialisms.

KNOWLEDGEABLE

High levels of competence within their own areas of expertise; a developed capacity for critical thinking within their discipline; a demonstrated capacity to bring their discipline knowledge to bear on real-world problems and challenges; confidence in applying disciplinary knowledge.

PROACTIVE

Confidence to take action and initiative across a range of domains; a commitment to active, lifelong development of their own skills and learning; the ambition to make a positive difference; active use of data and research to drive improvements and positive change.

CREATIVE

A drive to discover, to develop, to invent, to create and to innovate; an orientation towards innovation; a capacity to see new possibilities and opportunities, and to act on them; resilience and inventiveness.

RESPONSIBLE

Adopting a responsible, civically aware and engaged approach to their actions and decisions at work and in society; exploring issues of corporate and social responsibility, ethical practice and sustainability; adopting a global perspective, recognising both the local and global impact of decisions and actions; being personally and professionally responsible, orientated towards making substantial and positive contributions to society.

COLLABORATIVE

Commitment to collaboration or to achieving collaboration among others; proficiency in working with others; a demonstrated capacity to operate effectively as valuable members of networks, groups and teams; a capacity for working with non-experts in order to maximise the contribution of their own discipline.

ARTICULATE

Competence in conveying ideas clearly, effectively and professionally to a range of different stakeholders and audiences, and within different cultural frameworks and settings; skill, versatility and influential effect in written, verbal and digital communication; a recognition of the value of communicating in more than one language.

Outside the formal environment, we also need to ensure that our students understand that the pursuit of a career following graduation does not need to be a singular objective. They must be encouraged to combine the pursuit of excellence with an awareness of society

and the contribution they can and should make to the concept of a better society. To develop this culture we must encourage our students to engage in activities while at university which contributes to developing the concept of volunteering. In other words, students must be encouraged to engage with the wider community. If this philosophy takes hold as they study the likelihood is that it will stay with them through life.

As an example of this, I will again refer to my home university and its programme entitled the President's Volunteer Award (PVA). The PVA has been established to harness, acknowledge and support the contribution that students at the University of Limerick make to their communities.

The PVA draws on a strong tradition of student volunteering both on and off campus. The primary goals of the PVA are:

1. Sustain and foster a culture of volunteering, active citizenship and civic engagement amongst the student population.
2. Develop collaborative projects as well as furthering existing initiatives between UL and our communities.
3. Formally acknowledge and support the contribution that UL student volunteers make to our communities.
4. Promote the development of civic and leadership skills amongst students.

The primary purpose of this short piece was to examine what we view as "contributing to The Public Sector" and at times perhaps to take an alternative view of what it is and how it is attained. In a recent letter to the "Irish Times" newspaper a colleague of mine, Prof. Peadar Kirby wrote;

"If we ask broader questions about how our students conceive of the good society and what we in Ireland need to do to get there, most students in my experience are left tongue-tied and lacking anything worthwhile to say.

The real challenge to assess the quality of our higher education system is to find ways of capturing how well it challenges students to grapple with competing paradigms of social change and the values that underline them".

This is not meant to be an academic paper and consequently, is not fully referenced.