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UNAI Hub SDG2 **University of Pretoria (South Africa)**

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Lessons learned

Applying integrated, collaborative and transdisciplinary approaches is particularly difficult, given that the higher education landscape, competition across institutions, the drive for specialisation, and approaches to reward and recognition tend to promote individualistic practices. Transcending current dynamics and barriers constraining collective efforts shifts us towards greater transformational impacts.

Mobilising talent is closely linked to building capacity. Strengthening capacities and competence is iterative, and happens through formal processes, as well as through the informal processes of working together. It reflects continuous and lifelong learning. Connecting theory to practice and translating new knowledge into new products and new ways of doing things is central to ensuring the relevance of higher education within society and driving societal impact.

Collectively, these learnings indicate that successful change for societal impact requires an intentional and transformational change programme and a cultural shift. Key dimensions which enable the shift are the levels of trust across stakeholders and constituencies, and the quality of solutions brought to bear. Their relationships within the change process are illustrated in Figure 1.

The transactional space is characterised by low levels of trust with the development and application of constrained solutions. The world is seen in a linear way and people or groups tend to work in silos with self or partisan interest. Conflict is addressed through negotiation. Where this is successful there are commonly trade-offs, and when negotiations fail there tend to be winners and losers – a zero-sum game.

On the other hand, the transformational space which is best suited to complexity is characterised by high levels of trust between stakeholders and different constituencies, along with the development and application of innovative and creative solutions. Hallmarks of the transformational space are values- and purpose-driven, collaborating with co-design and co-creation, and generating multiple streams of value through strategic and well-considered initiatives. Shifting from the transactional to the transformational space requires a two-pronged approach which strengthens the quality of relationships and levels of trust and enables the generation of innovative and creative solutions.

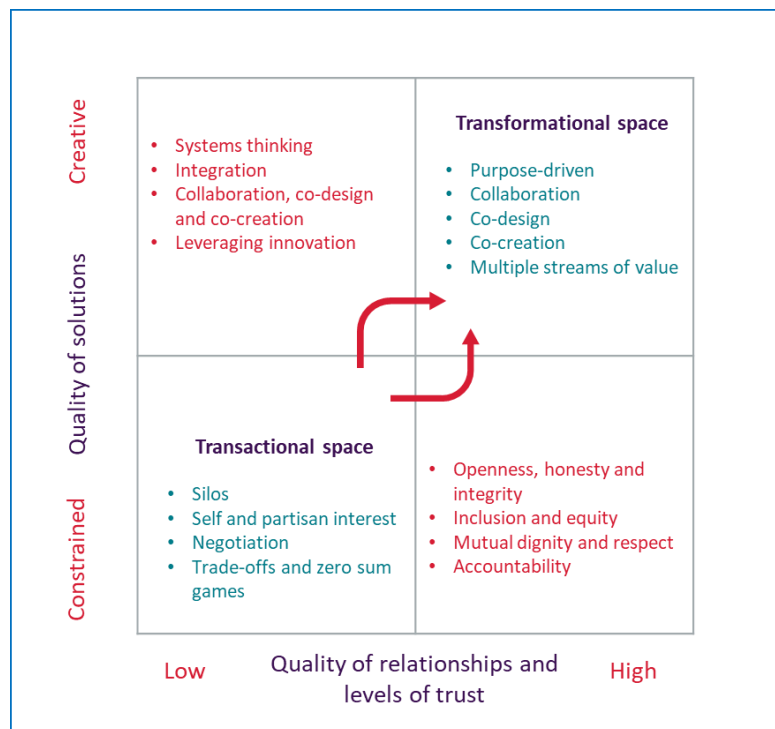


Figure 1: A two-pronged approach: moving from being transactional to transformational (Source: adapted from Chicksen et al, 2018)

Looking forward to the future

The University of Pretoria will continue to target and strengthen strategic collaborations and partnerships related to SDG 2 and other prioritised SDGs. Learning from experiences related to SDG 2 can readily be transferred to the way in which UP contributes to the accelerated achievement of the goals. Going forward it is anticipated that the raft of initiatives will continue to improve, and the successes reinforced.

Collaborations between the Department of Student Affairs and Faculties continue to strengthen and expand. Two important focus areas are the extension of satellite pantries to more faculties and stronger collaboration and integration in holistic student support. Innovative ideas generated by the student body, such as the establishment of student-managed vegetable gardens on the University property, are being explored.

Curricular transformation is an ongoing process and continually involves strengthening the integration of sustainability into programmes. In bridging the divide between theory and practice, and enhancing learning and impact at community levels, UP recently concluded the development of a framework and toolkit for curricular community engagement. This area presents a clear space to strengthen efforts and impacts related to SDG 2 at community levels, with a scale of successful initiatives.