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See table of contents

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Article abstract

The idea of the 'developmental university' was popularised on the African continent in the post- independence period, but has recently returned to view on account of the positioning of the university in the newly agreed United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The developmental model is characterised by service to society, application of knowledge, non-academic benefit and prioritising the most marginalised. Yet to what extent are these goals and characteristics coherent and viable given the nature of the university as institution? While the developmental model per seis limited to a few experiences, the implications of these questions are much broader, given the public service mission held by many if not most higher education institutions around the world. After outlining its historical emergence, this article presents a conceptual exploration of the model, highlighting three major limitations, in spite of its highly positive intentions: its positioning of the university as an 'adaptable factory', its encroachment on a distinctive space for the university in relation to society, and its particular and contested conception of development.

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The University as Engine of Development?

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Abstract: *The idea of the "developmental university" was popularised on the African continent in the post-independence period, but has recently returned to view on account of the positioning of the university in the newly agreed United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The developmental model is characterised by service to society, application of knowledge, non-academic benefit and prioritising the most marginalised. Yet to what extent are these goals and characteristics coherent and viable given the nature of the university as institution? While the developmental model* per se *is limited to a few experiences, the implications of these questions are much broader given the public service mission held by many if not most higher education institutions around the world. After outlining its historical emergence, this article presents a conceptual exploration of the model, highlighting three major limitations, in spite of its highly positive intentions: its positioning of the university as an "adaptable factory," its encroachment on a distinctive space for the university in relation to society, and its particular and contested conception of development.*

Introduction

The idea of the developmental university was in its heyday in the 1970s. In African countries, principally, there were widespread calls to do away with the fossilised colonial model of the institution and in its place establish a university that could support the newly independent governments in creating prosperous societies for all (Ajayi et al., 1996; Yesufu & AAU, 1973). Indeed, this was the only kind of institution that could be justified, given the scarce state resources and significant competing demands, including low levels of enrolment even at the primary level. But, despite the good intentions and the support of charismatic leaders like Julius Nyerere, few institutions in this mould were in fact created, and in the context of dwindling state funds and political instability in succeeding decades, the idea fell by the wayside.

It might have been tempting to consign the developmental university to the annals of history, had it not been for the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In September 2015, the United Nations agreed on a set of 17 goals to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and with it endorsed a much fuller vision of education at the international level. In contrast to the almost exclusive focus on the primary level in the MDGs, Goal 4 of the SDGs covers a wide range of areas, including higher education. In addition to an (albeit partial) goal of access to tertiary education, it places universities crucially in the role of drivers of development, facilitating the changes in society necessary to achieve the full set of goals—economic, social and environmental. This role is, in fact, the same vision put forward in the developmental university half a century before.

The time is right, therefore, for a reassessment of the notion of the developmental university. Is it desirable and viable for the university to act as an engine of development? And is this role coherent with the fundamental purposes of the institution? These questions are important not only for the low- and middle-income countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America that are grappling with extreme problems of poverty, social exclusion, environmental catastrophe and violent conflict, but also for high-income countries in which these issues may be less visible. The SDGs are demanding on all countries in fact, given the requirements for protection of the natural environment and reduction of socio-economic inequalities. Furthermore, there are increasing signs in Europe and North America that universities are being placed in the developmental role: as motors for local economies, fostering innovation and solutions to societal problems, at the hub of a thriving network of companies and government agencies.

The roots of the developmental university in fact go back to the U.S. land grant institutions in the 19th century, and the notion of *service* solidified during the 20th century to form a key part of the university's remit. Given constraints on public funding for higher education in all countries, service for society—particularly in boosting the economy—has come to be seen as essential payback for the now reluctant taxpayer contribution. Analysing the developmental model is, therefore, essential to understanding the modern university in all contexts. A number of highly relevant contemporary experiences use different terminology, and there are strong parallels between the ideas of the developmental university and those of the "engaged university" (Benneworth, 2013), the "civic university" (Goddard et al., 2016), the "service university" (Cummings, 1998; Tjeldvoll, 1998), and the "utilitarian university" (Cowen, 1971; Lauglo, 1982), as well as with the extensive literature on higher education and public good (Calhoun, 2006; Marginson, 2011; Nixon, 2011 etc.). The relevance of the arguments in this article is to all of these forms of institution that focus on service to external communities.

This article holds that, while there are some strong arguments in favour of the model—particularly in its protagonism toward forging more prosperous and just societies—it contains some fundamental contradictions. In particular, in casting the university as a kind of factory that can be refitted to serve any purpose, it fails to acknowledge the distinctive nature of the institution of university and its activities. As such, the analysis presented in this article contributes to the ongoing discussion of the nature of the university and its aims. There are continuing debates within the empirical research literature as to the kinds of developmental impact that universities have in practice (e.g., Bloom et al., 2006; Oketch et al., 2014)—for example, the "chicken and egg" question of the relationship between higher education expansion and macroeconomic growth. This account, however, will focus on the philosophical questions of the nature, purpose and coherence of the university in the context of these societal demands.

The article starts with an outline of the historical context of the developmental university, followed by its key tenets, and points of departure from other dominant models. Some critiques of the practical viability of the model are discussed. The article then moves on to assess more fundamental tensions relating to instrumental aims, unpredictability, autonomy and the underpinning conception of development. Finally, implications are drawn out for our understanding of the university, and the pressures placed on it in the contemporary age.

Historical Trajectory of the Developmental University

The 18th and 19th centuries brought a number of challenges to universities in Europe.[1] With the Industrial Revolution, new forms of livelihood and profession emerged, ones that were not represented in the offer available in the existing university curriculum (Perkin, 2006; Carpentier, in press). Empirical and experimental scientific research gathered momentum rapidly, and, although often located outside universities in scholarly societies, began to be incorporated into the emerging model of the German research university. When Cardinal Newman wrote his seminal work *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated* (1852/1947), the form of broad liberal education advocated for, unsullied by the practical concerns of the world, was already becoming a thing of the past, as universities creaked into the new age and little by little absorbed its influences.

However, it was in the New World that the next major challenge to the university would emerge in the form of the land grant universities (McDowell, 2003). While the ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt had transformed many aspects of the mediaeval institution, universities still had restricted relationships with the society outside. In 1862, the Morrill Act in the USA granted federal land to the states for the establishment of new universities, with the aim not just to expand access to new populations, but to form a new orientation and role for the institution. Instead of focusing on the conventional subject areas, they were intended to support farming and heavy industry, and developed an altogether more porous relationship with the communities around them. In many ways, this institutional form was in keeping with broader trends in U.S. society—its emphasis on community involvement in education and practical technology—but the precedent set in these institutions was to have a significant impact globally in subsequent years. In particular, the notion of service to society emerged, and in due course became one of the cornerstones of U.S. higher education generally speaking—as part of the bewildering diversity of functions of the "multiversity" (Kerr, 1963).

In Latin America, a different kind of transformation was taking place that would also provide some of the building blocks of the developmental model. The reforms that took place in the University of Córdoba, Argentina in 1918 would reverberate across the many countries of the region, and form the model that has characterised public institutions across the region for the next century (Bernasconi, 2007). In this instance, it was not so much a case of closer links with new industry and agriculture but a democratisation of the institution and broader social transformation. The new commitment of the public universities was to expand access beyond the traditional elites, but also to incorporate democratic governance.[2] One element of these reforms that was closer to the land grant model was the introduction of *extensión* (community engagement or public service) alongside teaching and research as the third fundamental pillar of the university.

The next key moment in this trajectory is the emergence of the developmental university itself in Africa in the post-war period. Institutions established in the metropolitan image were soon seen to be objectionable in principle and in practice. As Court (1980, p. 658) states, "[a]dherence to the colonial model from which they sprang was seen to be inhibiting their ability to respond to the needs of their own

[1] While there are various historical traditions of higher learning around the world, this article will focus primarily on the European university, being the institutional form that has gained dominance in contemporary times and spread in modified form across the diverse regions of the globe.

[2] To this day, Latin American universities often have direct elections for senior management, with participation of students and staff.

society and leaving them as islands of unbecoming detachment in a sea of poverty." Given the urgent and concrete needs of the populations in many countries in terms of food and healthcare, not to mention the basic infrastructure of the state, universities were tasked with converting the idealism of national independence into practical help for the outside society. The outcome document of the Association of African Universities workshop in 1972 stated that "[t]he emphasis here must be on the pursuit and inculcation of practical knowledge, not esoteric knowledge or knowledge for its own sake. It must be immediately useful for the generality of people, and, therefore, locally oriented and motivated" (Yesufu & AAU, 1973, p. 42).

"Manpower" planning was also to be a central role of these universities, taking the lead from the higher education system in the Soviet Union, with an aim to form middle-level as well as high-level professionals (Yesufu & AAU, 1973). Development agencies by the 1970s were already disillusioned with the ability of universities to fulfil the high expectations that had been laid on them at independence, and were starting to pull funds in favour of primary and vocational education, so in the context of scarce public resources the university needed to justify its significant costs (Coleman, 1986).

We can identify two broad types of developmental institution: the *developmental flagship* and the *experimental university*. The former type—of which historical examples have been Universities of Dar-es-Salaam, Mauritius and Nairobi—are prominent, national universities, usually located in capital cities, highly sought after by students and with a close relationship to government. Very often, there have been struggles over the direction of these institutions, moving between more universalist, colonial and globalised orientations and alternatively more nationalist, decolonised and locally-engaged ones (for a discussion of these historical dynamics in Makerere and Dar-es-Salaam, see Mamdani, 2018). In periods of broader emphasis on the developmental state, governments have sought to engage these flagship universities for development ends, with reforms made to curricula, departmental structures and research priorities, and by engaging academic staff for public roles. However, the model was short-lived in Africa, and only practised sporadically. Some universities such as Nairobi and Dar es Salaam that were intended to be developmental (Court, 1980) soon reverted to being traditional flagship institutions catering to the elites and with uncertain connections to the well-being of society. In more recent times, the elite higher education system in Africa, as elsewhere in the world, has largely given way to a massified one in which the public sector has expanded through cost-sharing, with a new commercialised private sector growing around it to absorb excess demand (Oanda et al., 2008).

A contemporary example of a developmental flagship, however, can be seen in the University of the Republic in Uruguay, as discussed by Arocena, Göransson, and Sutz (2014, 2015). Representing a new brand of developmental university for the age of the knowledge economy, the university through its research council has fostered applied developmental research in a range of fields, leading to new projects in areas such as health communication for disadvantaged teenagers, development of artificial skin and nutritional impact of school food.

The second type is the experimental university. In contrast to the developmental flagships, these are more peripheral institutions often located in impoverished regions of their countries and aiming to accommodate new and previously underserved populations. On account of their less prominent national position, and having been founded explicitly for this purpose, the scope for experimentation is much greater than in the flagships, and these institutions have shown evidence of more innovative practice and, in some cases, significant outcomes. The downside is the relative ease with which they can be sidelined and the greater difficulty in influencing mainstream policy and institutional norms.

One example is the University for Development Studies, created in Ghana in 1992. In contrast to the majority of institutions located in the more affluent and better educated south of the country, this institution is located in the arid and impoverished north, as a deliberate attempt to develop the region. Courses were established to foster agricultural development and environmental management, as well as train local professionals to staff education and health services. All students are required to undertake "third trimester placements" in which they spend a period in each of their first three years in a local community carrying out developmental diagnostics and supporting the community in projects of their choosing. This experience serves not only to provide support to the impoverished communities of the region, but also to foster social cohesion through intercultural dialogue: for the most part, the students of the university are not from the same regions and language groups as their host communities (Abukari, 2010).

A second example is the Federal University of Southern Bahia in Brazil, founded in 2013 (Almeida & Coutinho, in press). This was one of a number of federal universities established during the period of reinvestment and experimentation in the federal system under the Workers' Party government from 2003 to 2016 (McCowan, 2016a). It is located again in an area poorly served by higher education institutions, with deep economic and educational inequalities, and provides degree courses to local populations entirely free of charge. It runs an interdisciplinary curriculum, aiming to provide a broader personal and civic formation in addition to professional training. It also aims to involve community members in teaching activities within the university, engages in community outreach involving local schools and has developed a digital network to provide connectivity for local communities.

All of these examples of developmental universities face significant challenges in practice. First, being funded and endorsed by the state, they rely on the continuing support of the government and are vulnerable to changes. This is a particular problem in Brazil, where the institution is associated with a specific political party that has now lost power. Second, being located within the mainstream system of public universities, they are constrained by the regulatory logic of that system. FUSB's interdisciplinary curricular approach, for example, is strongly challenged within the federal system. Furthermore, broader global trends such as commercialisation and unbundling have challenged the development role of universities, and the lack of acknowledgement of developmental impact (particularly at the local level) in international university rankings acts as a further disincentive (McCowan, 2016b). The challenges will be explored in greater depth in the section that follows.

Although this brief historical review has shown that "pure" instances of developmental universities are rare, there are influences of the model in many contemporary institutions in all regions, and governments and international agencies often expect higher education systems to fulfil this role. While what is being addressed here is the *model* of the developmental university, in the sense of an ideal type which may not correspond directly to an actually existing historical instance; it is generative in terms of understanding different approaches to the institution of university present in all HE systems. The characteristics of this model will be analysed in the section that follows.

Principal Characteristics of the Developmental Model

The triad of teaching, research and community engagement manifests itself in distinct ways in the developmental model. Taught courses are offered not on the basis of disciplinary tradition, but in

response to the need to form professionals with skills relevant to local and national development. There may, therefore, be courses in ecotourism, renewable energy or community development, in addition to more traditional academic courses. They may also be taught in a way that connects students more closely to the realities in which they will be working—including contexts of hardship. Research is guided as much by national and local priorities as by the interests and curiosities of the researchers themselves. It is predominantly of an applied nature, and oriented towards providing solutions to development challenges. Finally, the third pillar of community engagement gains much greater prominence in comparison with other models. Not only are there extensive community outreach projects, but lecturers are encouraged to work widely as consultants and advisers to local and national governments. Other services provided include legal clinics, lab schools, health clinics and continuing education for adults.

We can derive four main features that characterise the developmental model of the university. The first is that it is an institution oriented towards *serving society*; it appeals to no other purpose than that of attempting to address the needs and promote the benefits of its surrounding communities. The second is that it does so in an *egalitarian* way, not confining its fruits to the elites, and aiming to support in particular the least advantaged populations. Third, it aims to bring *non-academic benefit* to the population—benefit of an economic, social and political nature. Finally, it aims to fulfil this role through the *application of knowledge*: the turning of the theoretical and abstract towards practical and immediate ends.

To take the first of these, the role of the developmental university is to serve society—not to serve the interests of the community of scholars, or even the community of students, nor to serve the quest for truth, knowledge and understanding, nor indeed simply to serve a monarch, wealthy patron or religious body. This characteristic of aiding in solving societies' problems and fostering their growth stands in marked contrast to the earliest European universities in mediaeval times, which were based on the collective study of bodies of knowledge considered to be intrinsically valid, and to the Humboldtian institution with its research professors protected by academic freedom, pursuing ever greater depth in their disciplinary areas. But equally it contrasts with the later entrepreneurial university[3] (Clark, 1998), which purports to serve society, but only as a means of generating income—income that it needs to survive. (The entrepreneurial university has no moral compass as it were, it follows whichever paymaster happens to be present.)[4]

In this point, it is important to disambiguate this use of the term "service" from that employed by Tjeldvoll (1998, p. 9) in his "service university"—which, in its emphasis on "develop[ing] products that are competitive in a knowledge market," is more akin to the entrepreneurial university than the developmental university outlined here. Thus, the usage here is of a public service that is provided on the basis of the commitment to society, rather than financial gain. (The term "service university" by Cummings [1998] is, however, used in a sense consonant with that in this article.)

If we assess these diverse models of the university over the ages, it can be seen that they differ markedly in the provenance of their foci. For the mediaeval European university, scholarship was oriented around the bodies of work inherited from classical times and produced by contemporary

[3] While the term "entrepreneurial university" is used by some proponents (e.g., Shattock, 2009) to emphasise the innovative and risk-taking nature of certain contemporary institutions without necessarily a financial orientation, in this study the term is used to designate the reorientation of the institution towards income generation, in the context of the loss of non-market revenue streams.

[4] For heuristic purposes, this article will utilise four types—mediaeval, Humboldtian, developmental and entrepreneurial, as discussed in McCowan (2016b). It is acknowledged that there are a number of other possible ways of categorising the institution.

scholars—it was internal to the academy so to speak. In the Humboldtian university, with its emphasis on academic freedom and the professor's quest for truth, the focus of research came from the curiosities of the individual and scholarly community, and the organic movements of enquiry. In the developmental university and the entrepreneurial university, on the other hand, the focus comes from outside, but in different ways. For the former, it is the needs of society, problems that need to be addressed, and aspirations for positive change; for the latter, it is the demand of consumers, whether students purchasing courses, or external bodies commissioning research and consultancy.

There are also differences in the audiences or destinations of that research and scholarship. With the mediaeval and Humboldtian universities, it was predominantly an internal affair; the consumers of the work were for the most part the academic community itself. That is not to say that these institutions had no external audiences or external impact—they had patrons, and of course students went to work outside institutions, taking the influences and ideas there, while professors also disseminated their ideas in their lives outside the institution. Nevertheless, they were not obliged to communicate their research findings publicly in the same way as the later models of the institution. In fact, with the developmental and entrepreneurial models, the primary audiences are outside the institution. With the developmental university, the state is the primary recipient of the knowledge produced: the different levels of government utilise the applied research findings, and university lecturers themselves have extensive roles as consultants on government projects. In the case of the entrepreneurial institution, there are a range of different consumers of research, including government but also commercial sponsors.

While the role of serving society is a feature of both developmental and commercialised institutions, the determination of the service in question is distinct in each case. The former is characterised by a strong supply-side control, rather than the kinds of demand-led trends dominant in today's entrepreneurial universities. Taught courses in the developmental model are established on the basis of need, and not on the ability to recruit students; research is planned on the basis of social benefit rather than commercial demand.

Another important element that distinguishes the developmental model from commodified higher education is its egalitarian, and even pro-poor nature. Instead of attending to and benefitting the intellectually gifted, the socially privileged or the economically advantaged, its duty is to distribute its benefits equally, and beyond that to gradually equalise society through disproportionately benefiting the worst off. It does this in part through expanding the range of people able to access the institution. But equally significantly, it challenges the dominance of private goods produced by higher education—the personal benefits in terms of enhanced employment prospects, increased income, *etcetera*—to focus on public goods emanating from teaching and research. In addition to the reorientation of courses and academic activities, historically this task has been realised through national service programmes, in which graduates can give back to society through dedicating their newfound skills and knowledge to disadvantaged populations, often in remote rural areas.

The third characteristic is the developmental model's focus on non-academic impact. The benefit that the developmental university is intended to bring is not that of Newman's education of the intellect, or of the Kantian (1878/1979) exercise of reason—or indeed of any academic goal. Even though they may emanate from academic pursuits, the benefits are realised outside; they include equipping individuals for gainful employment, enhancing macro-economic growth, fostering social cohesion and strengthening political institutions. In the context of the SDGs, a central role of universities is the development of clean technologies to replace forms of production and consumption that threaten the natural environment.

The fostering of non-academic benefits involves the fourth characteristic—the application of knowledge. Contemporary theorists of developmental higher education emphasise particularly its role in *innovation*. Cloete, Bailey, Pillay, Bunting, and Maassen (2011) distinguish between, on the one hand, more restricted instrumental roles of the university (human capital formation and political socialisation), and on the other, the university becoming what they call an "engine for development," involving the production of new knowledge. The role of the developmental university, however, is not just to be the engine for the knowledge economy, but to act as a vehicle for the *democratisation* of knowledge (Arocena et al., 2015). Importantly, this new knowledge is not the traditional abstract, theoretical, disciplinary type, but *applied* to the specific problems, challenges and visions of the locality.

In terms of Boyer's (1990) characterisation, therefore, the developmental university embodies a scholarship of *application* rather than of *discovery,* of *integration*, or of *teaching*. It still conceives of itself as a knowledge-based institution, but of the "Mode 2" applied knowledge rather than the "Mode 1" blue skies variety (Gibbons et al., 1994). It values the theoretical and abstract only in so far as it can be useful in real-world situations. Related to this is the idea that multidisciplinary approaches are needed to solve real-life problems (Court, 1980), with attempts to break down rigid disciplinary barriers, to collaborate across areas in research and create new cross-disciplinary areas in teaching. Another way in which the knowledge production function of universities can manifest itself is in generating evidence to support the development of policy and practice (Grobbelaar & de Wet, 2016).

These four characteristics are *necessary* conditions of the development university. Displaying some but not others would have significant implications: an institution oriented towards service, application of knowledge and non-academic benefit but lacking the egalitarian dimension is likely to be more along the lines of the training institutions set up by large corporations (take for example McDonald's Hamburger University)—aiming for practical positive impact, but confined to a select few, or generating private rather than public goods. An institution serving society with egalitarian principles, but shunning application of knowledge for non-academic benefit would have a very different nature, and be more akin to historical efforts to extend theoretical knowledge and the intellectual pursuits of the university to populations previously excluded from them. Whether these four conditions are *sufficient* is less certain—some may argue that there are additional requirements, such as being legally public, or being in receipt of substantial state funding. While there are possible examples of developmental universities in the private sector,[5] in most cases resource constraints limit the model to institutions with state funding.

The Limitations of the Developmental Model

The earliest discussions of the developmental university in the 1970s and 1980s already highlighted a number of problematic aspects of the model. Some of the critiques raised by Coleman (1986) and other early commentators were of a practical nature: funding and support for the universities was precarious in the context of changes in government; capacity amongst staff members for implementing the developmental vision was limited, given the fledgling nature of the higher education systems and institutions; many had been trained in traditional (colonial) institutions and so struggled to change their mindset; and traditional university functions of teaching and research were seen to suffer through

[5] See for example the community universities in the South of Brazil (Fioreze & McCowan, 2018).

excessive engagement of staff members with government and development agency work. This final point is seen strongly to this day, with the consultancy culture amongst academics in low-income countries being a significant distraction from teaching and research responsibilities. This issue has become more critical with the increasing commercialisation of the institution, and in the context of low academic staff salaries. Another barrier is the tenuous relationship between public engagement activities and career progression—though some universities have started to include it in their recruitment and promotion criteria.

The purpose of this article, however, is not to analyse these practical obstacles, nor the conditions in which the developmental university could thrive, but to analyse its underpinning principles, their coherence and normative implications. The question is whether, in ideal circumstances (i.e., with a supportive state, conducive political conditions, plentiful funding, sufficient capacitated staff, etc.), the model could in fact function or would be desirable. It is argued here that there is a further set of elements that show deep contradictions in the model even once those practical circumstances are in place. Three of these elements will be outlined in the sections that follow. The points are relevant not only to the developmental model as historically conceived, but for all of our universities in the contemporary age, which retain, along with other sometimes competing rationales, an orientation of service to society.

In putting forward these critical points, it is important to emphasise from the outset that many of the goals of the developmental university—reducing poverty, protecting the natural environment, ensuring livelihoods—are entirely justifiable, and that it is the responsibility of the university to contribute in any way that it can to realising these goals. In particular, given that the majority of the population has been excluded from enjoying the fruits of universities for most of their histories, there is a strong onus to ensure the broadest possible distribution of their goods, and to universalise access to higher learning. Nevertheless, the discussions below highlight ways in which this role must be tempered, and seen in the light of the fundamental *raison d'être* of the institution.

The University as Adaptable Factory

The first issue with the developmental model is that it treats universities as machines for generating desirable outcomes—whether they be nurturing local businesses, fostering macro-economic growth, ensuring social cohesion, inducting citizens into a national ideology, reducing HIV/AIDS, writing government policy documents or improving agricultural productivity. This approach is problematic firstly because it assumes that universities have no substantive purposes and nature other than those that are given to them from the outside. Because universities shape human beings, it is assumed that they can shape them in any way that they like; because they produce knowledge, it is assumed that they can produce any knowledge for any end. For the adaptable factory, if lawnmowers are no longer needed, then the machine tools can be replaced so that quad bikes can be made. Finding the essence of the university may be a forlorn task, but it is not controversial to assert, as Collini (2012) does, that for all of the other things that the institution may do, the pursuit of understanding through open-ended enquiry is a pivotal purpose. This is not to say that universities cannot justifiably engage in other functions, but that to take the institution predominantly or entirely away from this role would be to turn it into a different institution.

One problem with the university-as-adaptable-factory perspective is that it assumes the means are subordinated to the ends, that what the university does is determined purely by achieving the desired product. There are two counter-positions. In the first place, one can perceive that the process itself has

value, that there is intrinsic worth in engaging in enquiry and the pursuit of understanding, independent of its outcomes. There is a long-standing lineage in Western philosophy in support of this position—represented by the Socratic maxim that the unexamined life is not worth living—not to mention Eastern traditions such as Buddhism, and others around the world. Somewhat distinct from this is the argument that there is intrinsic worth in the *outcomes* of teaching and research: that is to say, as argued by Peters (1966), Hirst (1974), and Newman (1852/1947), that being educated is a good in itself regardless of what one does with that education. According to Newman, "the end cannot be divided from that knowledge itself. Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward" (p. 128). In relation to research and scholarship, this position would hold that scientific discoveries and other insights into ourselves and our universe are valuable whether or not we use them to make any tangible impact on the material quality of our lives.

As argued in previous studies (McCowan, 2015, 2017), there is nothing inappropriate or harmful in universities promoting instrumental ends—indeed, it would be impossible for them not to do so in practice, and all universities through history have had some instrumental intentions. The point is that the instrumental aims should not take the place of the intrinsic ones, or debilitate them. A number of the early accounts of the developmental university (e.g., Court, 1980; Coleman, 1986; Lauglo, 1982) caution in this way against the potential undermining of the academic core of the university by external engagement activities. In contemporary times, the implication of this point is that universities should not allow applied research with immediate impact to undermine basic, blue skies or curiosity driven research. But nevertheless, the research conducted can and is likely to still have a significantly positive impact on society. Likewise, in relation to the teaching and learning dimension, students may learn professional skills, but these do not supplant the central aim of the university to develop critical, imaginative, aware and knowledgeable individuals. In a previous study (McCowan, 2018), I put forward the notion of the *generative intrinsic* to describe an alternative orientation for the university through which positive impacts can be generated without undermining the core purpose of open-ended enquiry for understanding.

A further point is that enquiry, by nature, is not a straightforward linear process that can lead to predefined and predictable outcomes. As compellingly analysed by Collini (2012), we may even question the very notion of an "outcome" of enquiry: "[T]he drive towards understanding can never accept an arbitrary stopping-point, and critique may always in principle reveal that any currently accepted stopping-point *is* ultimately arbitrary" (p. 55). In relation to both teaching and research, in spite of well-defined aims and intentions, the outcomes of the process of exploration will frequently be different from those at first imagined, or at the very least take an unpredictable length of time, effort or resources. At moments, it may be disappointing if an ambitious project fails to find an answer to a problem, or if a student does not succeed in mastering a technique. But at other times it may go in the other direction, leading to a startling discovery with benefits far beyond what was initially imagined.

There are dangers then in looking for the short-term impact of universities (McCowan, 2018): in some cases the most profound and important influences may emerge only with a long time frame. The developmental university focuses on short-term practical impacts, privileging the finding of immediate solutions to society's problems. But the major breakthroughs of the less socially-engaged Humboldtian university may ironically bring deeper benefits for society in the long run.

A Room of Its Own?

Porosity between university and society has become central to discourses on how universities should reframe themselves in the contemporary age. The ivory tower has become an image of exactly what a university should not be, with academics ridiculed if they are seen to be "out of touch," and research and scholarship seen as worthless if it is only "getting dusty on a shelf." Greater integration with society has in part arisen from the commercialisation of the system and the reduction in public funding, on account of the necessity for closer engagement with potential funders. However, there is also a more purposeful side to this integration, promoted by governments and other agencies, a noteworthy example of which is the impact agenda in the UK and other countries, through which influence of research on non-academic audiences is given credit in research grant funding and institutional evaluation (Gunn & Mintrom, 2016: Oancea, 2013). The notion of "place" has also become central for some institutions in developing a local identity and connection to the surrounding community (Ransom, 2017).

There is no doubt that closer engagement with external communities is desirable for universities, and can bring benefits to both sides. Nevertheless, in some cases there are risks, particularly when what we might call "hyper-porosity" has been reached through the process of unbundling and it becomes difficult to discern a distinctive institutional sphere (McCowan, 2017). There must be some element of differentiation between the space of the university and the other spheres of society; a degree of "insulation" is needed from the vicissitudes of the outside world in order to allow for the deeper reflection and study needed to make significant breakthroughs in science and in order for transformative processes of intellectual development to occur. Of course, it is not that learning, even transformative learning, cannot occur in the outside society, in the workplace, in everyday life—indeed, some forms of valuable learning can *only* take place in those spaces. However, there is a place for a modicum of seclusion and separation from those activities in order to develop different kinds of thought and understanding.

The connected question of university autonomy has had substantial attention from theorists and practitioners over the centuries, and will not be dealt with in depth here. But clearly it is an issue of relevance for the developmental university, as was raised in the early studies by Coleman (1986) and others. Just as a degree of insulation from society is necessary, so too is independence from control by the state and the market. Processes of teaching and research must be allowed to follow the organic course of an enquiry—however opaque the connection with immediate benefits might be, however little demand there might be, or however far from current state interests. While it is natural for the state to want to harness the university for its own ends—particularly if it is supporting it financially—overly heavy control will inevitably dull its capacity and possibly undermine it altogether.

Which Conception of Development?

One positive aspect of the instrumentalism of the developmental university outlined above is that it is discerning in terms of which kinds of instrumental influence it considers legitimate. It does not proportion its services willy-nilly in relation to demand or income received, as the entrepreneurial university does, but in relation to a set of aims it considers to be socially just or beneficial for the nation. However, the question is then inevitably raised whether these conceptions of justice, the ideal society and the good life are in fact justified, how these conceptions are derived and whose vision they represent. For the most part, developmental universities have presented their work in relation to the concept of

"development" or benefit for national, or at times local, communities—neither of which takes us much closer to a firm or uncontroversial positioning.

Usage of the term "development" in this sense emerged after the Second World War to describe desirable characteristics of societies, focusing mainly on GDP levels, but also factors such as solid transport and communications infrastructure, good health and education indicators, reliable institutions and a stable political system, and contrasting these with the features of "underdeveloped," "backward" or "Third World" countries. Needless to say, there is far from consensus as to whether these are the only, the most important, or indeed justifiable goals for a society at all. Clearly, there are various aspects of the mainstream conception of development that garner a very high degree of consensus: ensuring clean water supply, preventing hunger, reducing deaths from childbirth, reducing deforestation and so forth. Yet "development" goes a long way beyond these consensual issues to involve a range of contestable ones of how we lead our lives and organise collectively. While not possible here to fully cover the extensive and complex debates around the notion of development, it is essential to sketch some of these arguments as they are so bound up with the developmental model of the university.

The first problematic element is that the conception of development in question does not emerge from the views and values of the society in question, but is predefined and assumed to be in their interests. There is only a weak participatory element in the model, and it can be seen as "assistentialist," delivering development to disadvantaged people rather than genuinely involving and empowering them. Furthermore, "development" is taken to be a largely universal trajectory, without strong contextual differentiation. In practice, some developmental universities have positioned themselves in different ways in relation to this conception, with some promoting counterhegemonic views (Almeida & Coutinho, in press) or calling for a process of indigenisation (e.g., Mazrui, 1975).

From the perspective of dependency theory (e.g., Dos Santos, 1970), the inevitable implication of adhering to this universalist conception of development—and of the university—is to lock universities and their countries into perpetual relations of subordination. Instead of the vision of free competition on a level playing field presented by the globalists, mimicry of models from the West or North can only place these institutions in the lower rungs of the ladder. It is argued by some that, more than simply entailing that some miss out on the prizes, the periphery is actually essential for the continued super-prosperity of the core, through feeding it cheap raw materials which it then converts into high-value products. Higher education systems can be seen to display dependency through their mimicry and deference to colonial models, as well as through their socialisation of elites with tastes and political views aligned with those of the metropole (Altbach, 1977). Developmental universities on the one hand appear to be delinking and reducing economic dependence by fostering local agriculture and industry and empowering their populations; yet at the same time they are buying into the global systems of higher education and capitalism, within which they start off—and probably remain—in a subordinate position.

An alternative perspective on this issue is that the developmental university is flawed not by locking countries into relations of dependency, but in its adherence to notions of modernization that underpin both capitalist and Marxist positions. From this perspective, the developmental university has a significant blind spot in its subservience to Enlightenment conceptions of progress and epistemological underpinnings. Features such as the separation of humankind from the rest of nature, the attitude of domination and exploitation of the natural environment, fragmentation and specialisation of knowledge and individualist and competitive modes of learning are seen to underpin the curriculum and institutional forms of the model. Providing access to higher education for marginalised populations may represent

not an equalisation of opportunities, but a form of cultural oppression, if we take a *recognition* rather than *redistribution* perspective (Oyarzun et al., 2017).

In response to these critiques, there have been some instances of what we might call "post-development" universities being created (for examples, see McCowan, 2016a; Teamey & Mandel, 2014). These challenge hegemonic Western academic knowledge and conventional disciplines, and in some cases do away with conventional trappings of the university—disciplinary divisions, professor–student distinction, curricula courses, diplomas and so forth—often influenced by Illich's (1971) ideas of deschooling. A number of these initiatives have been linked to claims for cultural autonomy by indigenous groups in Latin America and elsewhere, their desire for preservation and furthering of knowledge traditions, and ensuring of an "ecology of knowledges" in the terms of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2008).

Of course, the positions presented above express political and epistemological views that are not shared by all inside or outside universities. Yet there is an aspect of the institution that makes it inimical to any overly rigid conception of social organisation. Given the nature of enquiry discussed in the previous section, the unpredictability of science and evolving conceptions of self and society, the developmental university—if it is indeed a thinking and enquiring university—may in fact lead to its own undermining and possibly destruction. It is extremely hard for any university to have a fixed, definite and unitary conception of the way society should be.

In fact, one of the most valuable functions of the university is as a space for critique, whether that be of the government, of the market and transnational corporations, or of what Ignatieff (2018) terms "majoritarian thinking," and its non-conformism should be permitted, and even nurtured.

Conclusions

One of the most pernicious and sadly prevalent vices of higher education in the contemporary world is its tendency to see itself at the will and whim of global forces. Universities routinely frame what they do as "responding" to the forces of globalization, "adapting" to the contemporary world, or "delivering" on the demands placed on it by various stakeholders. It is a view that in part reflects the reality of shrinking financial autonomy, and the consequent need to please its various paymasters. But it also reflects a deeper change of self-view: from an institution that can shape society and individuals, to one that is shaped by them.

The developmental university is admirable in resisting this tendency (its dependence on the state notwithstanding), and in instead asserting its protagonism in society. It is a maker, a forger; it creates public goods and the public good, rather than running errands for whatever stakeholders happen to call on it. Furthermore, it is a protagonism strongly oriented towards social justice: the opening up of the university, a focus in particular on the most marginalised communities in society, and the most marginalised countries and regions of the world. It overcomes the university's reluctance over the centuries to incorporate new forms of knowledge and practice, diversify its sphere of interests, and move away from self-indulgent esoterism.

In the post-2015 development era, this role of the university has swung dramatically back into the spotlight, given the critical need for high-level professional skills, locally relevant research and innovation, and coordinated action between knowledge producers, the state, industry and civil society organisations.

Indeed, the university contemplated by the SDGs is nothing other than the developmental university—despite the contradictions in practice between this role and the higher education policy advocated at the international level by the same supranational organizations (McCowan, 2016b). Given the severe challenges facing the world in present times, of protracted conflict, refugee crises, enduring absolute poverty in various parts of the world, rising global temperatures, pollution, water shortage and persistent socioeconomic inequalities, a committed and resourceful higher education sector concerned with the welfare of the whole of humanity is nothing short of essential.

Nevertheless, the university cannot solve every one of society's problems any more than the judiciary, police force or health system can. While it does have a degree of adaptability, it is an institution with its own specific characteristics, and those characteristics bring opportunities but also peculiarities and limitations. As an institution focused on developing human understanding through open ended inquiry, it is highly adept at forming critical and methodical scholars who can turn their beings towards solving intractable problems of science and society. It can also—as it has on a number of occasions throughout history—generate ideas or discoveries that profoundly change human life. Yet it is not a dependable machine for creating all the kinds of value that are desired in the contemporary world. It is unpredictable what the impact of pedagogical engagements or research and scholarship might be, in terms of their outcomes and timeline. The forms of inquiry engaged in by universities need to follow their own (sometimes whimsical) course, rather than being regulated by outside interests. Finally, the critical enquiry engaged in by universities will inevitably question the very conceptions of development that underpin this instrumental role.

These points force us not to downgrade our expectations of, or value given to, the university, but to revise our understanding of the role that it can play. As frustrating as it might be for policymakers looking for quick and certain fixes to the immediate problems facing them, universities to a certain extent need to be left to follow their own course, which at times will bring substantial material benefits to society, and at others not. It may indeed mean that states and other stakeholders are less willing to provide funding for the institution; that may be a sacrifice that needs to be made in order to retain the core of the university. Instrumental benefits will normally emerge organically from the intrinsically valuable processes of enquiry aimed at deepening human understanding, but if they are in conflict, if indeed it is possible for the university to make a contribution to the economy and society through bypassing or stifling open-ended enquiry, it is the latter and not the former that must be safeguarded.

The argument put forward here is relevant not just for universities in the impoverished parts of the globe evoked when we think of the targets of minimum human wellbeing of the MDGs, but for all of them, as entailed by the demands for equality and environmental protection in the SDGs. As discussed above, the contemporary research university in high-income countries has a developmental element, alongside others. Indeed, this is the real nature of the models discussed in this article. Instead of historically existent discrete models, they are ideal types that exist in our imaginary, and in the practice of institutions they often manifest themselves in hybrid forms. The developmental model, alongside the Humboldtian, medieval, entrepreneurial and others, jostle for space within the real universities of today.

In nurturing the developmental model in our contemporary institutions, with its endearing commitment to society, its protagonism and its willingness to get its hands dirty, we must not lose sight of the more quixotic, atemporal and ethereal aspects that are just as much a part of its being, and that ironically may bring as much practical benefit to society as explicit efforts at development.

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