



Policy Perspectives on University-Community Engagement in East Africa

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Presentation Outline

1. Introduction
2. Rationale for University Community Engagement
3. University community engagement Policy frameworks in East Africa
4. Institutional community engagement frameworks, The case of Gulu University
5. Observation and conclusions



University Community Engagement

Introduction

Universities don't only have responsibility to create knowledge and to educate; But also have a civic responsibility to engage and enrich the community (**Shannon & Wang, 2010**)

Community-University engagement presents a great opportunity for Universities to excel as key players in addressing social economic transformation challenges of societies (**Millican, & Bournier, 2011**)

Therefore an increasing call for an engaged approach to the function of Universities,

Rationale for University community engagement in the current context



- Development and adaptation of new knowledge requires sufficient dialogue and collaborative action by all stakeholders
- **Universities are well positioned to engage in this process, not just as 'experts', But rather;**
 - ✓ as one player that can contribute its knowledge and resources
 - ✓ sometimes in response to community initiative or needs,
 - ✓ sometimes taking a leadership role and,
 - ✓ sometimes providing a brokerage or mediating role (E.g. Representing community interests before more powerful state or market actors)

University community engagement Policy frameworks in East Africa



In East Africa, national level higher Education policies are not explicitly clear on University-community engagement

For instance:

- In Uganda, the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001, holds universities responsible for finding solutions to social and economic problems in the community (Government of Uganda, 2001).
- Similarly, a review of other higher education policy frameworks in the region reveals that there are indeed policy references to community engagement, with **‘outreach’** being one of the three pillars of university education
- ➡ No explicit National level policies addressing the specific question of university community engagement

University community engagement Policy frameworks in East Africa



Addressing the policy gap? (How are Universities with an engaged mindset managing?)

i) Partnerships with Private organizations;

The University community engagement agenda in the region is largely promoted through private organizations and associations with special interest in higher Education,

Specific promoters of University organizations prominent in East Africa are;

i) UNESCO

ii) RUFORUM (regional Universities forum for capacity building in Agriculture

iii) The Mastercard Foundation

These largely play a role of setting up platforms and structures for University community engagement

University community engagement Policy frameworks in East Africa



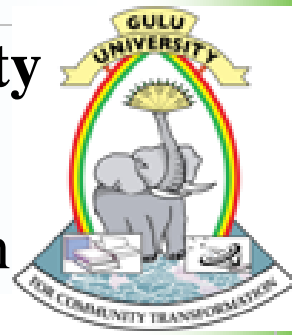
Addressing the policy gap? (How are Universities with an engaged mindset managing?)

ii) Inter-University Networks; The Global University Network for Innovation – GUNi

The network seeks institutional level focus on partnerships and relationships around community-university engagement and community-based research in East African countries

– In East Africa member Universities are drawn from Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

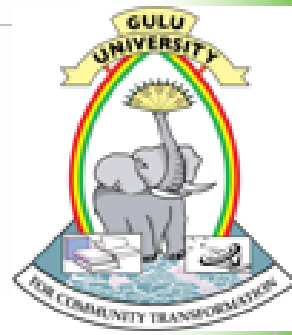
Institutional level policies, classical case of Gulu University



- Gulu University (GU) from its establishment was focused on Community Transformation
- Community engagement is operationalized through the University community outreach Policy (Institutional level)
- And through, specific engagement models for different faculties or schools,

(Specific models include community practice attachment for medical students, School practice for Education students, student centered outreach for Agriculture students, etc.)

Institutional level policies, classical case of Gulu University



- Gulu University as a community engaged a mediator

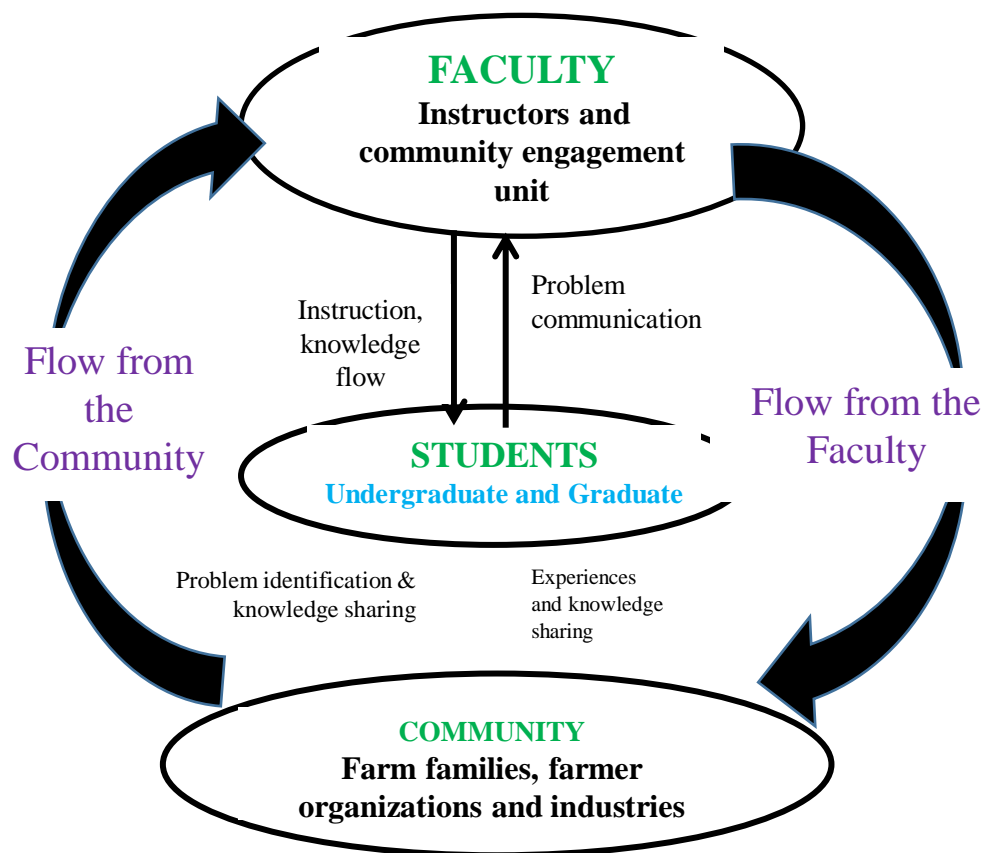
(Case of IPSS, GU in peace and conflicts resolution)-**land conflicts and peace recovery**

- Community action research programs (CARPs), Being implemented in the Faculty of Agriculture, these programs apply engaged participatory methods to conduct research at and with the community
- **The engaged model at GU is more focused around building capacity of students through experiential learning at community level**
- The student centered out reach (SCO) scheme (SCO)



Institutional level policies, classical case of Gulu University

Case example The student centered out reach (SCO) model at Gulu University



Key Highlights

- Central focus is on experiential learning
- Allows multi directional information sharing (Community & University)
- Framework for Community action Research

Kalule et al. (2016). African Journal of Rural Development 1(3), 219-227

Observations and conclusion



- National level Policy frameworks for University community engagement are largely lacking in the East African Region
 - ❖ There is need to engage higher education authorities in these policy debate
- Operationalizing efficient University-community engagement or outreach is largely constrained by inadequate resources (**It is the least funded pillar of the three roles of Universities**)
 - ❖ Universities, public investment dialogue and private sector partnership platforms could be explored to support increases funding to university community outreach and action research

Observations and conclusion



- Experience and practice in community experience have currently and often focused on enhancing outreach role of Universities
- However, future insights point towards the critical role of engaged approaches as a platform for;
 - i) Service learning
 - ii) Experiential learning
 - iii) Community led (demand driven) innovations

Universities should lead the dialogue on policies and practices on community university engagement and foster stronger regional collaboration to advance developments in the field



Thank You

For Community Transformation



Some References

- Judy Shannon & Tiffany R. Wang (2010) A Model for University–Community Engagement: Continuing Education's Role as Convener, *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 58:2, 108-112, DOI: 10.1080/07377361003661499
- Millican, J. and Bourner, T. (2011), "Student-community engagement and the changing role and context of higher education", *Education + Training*, Vol. 53 No. 2/3, pp. 89-99