Massification and Quality Management of Research, Publications and Community Engagement in Higher Education; a case of Gulu University

James Lam-Lagoro, J.P. Ocitti, Peter Neema Abooki

Abstract

Research, publication and community engagement constitute core functions in a

the management of research, publication and community engagement in the science-based faculties at Gulu University are brought to bear. This research was part of a PhD thesis where data was collected from 294 respondents using structured questionnaires, in-depth interview schedules, direct observation guides, focus group discussion guides and

community engagement have not become core University functions in Gulu University. The study recommends that the University should strengthen research and publication by enacting a comprehensive and standard research and publication policy, target adequate funding for the sub-sector and engage the community in scholarly activity as a knowledge-rich partner.

Key words: Research, Publication, Community Engagement, Massification, Quality Management and Science-Based Faculties

Introduction

In Uganda, higher education has shifted from being a preserve of the elites to a service open to the masses. This paradigm shift turned higher education into a right of all those who qualify and can afford it. This growth culminated into a boom in this sub-sector and the resultant increase in students' enrolment, with recorded progress from only one University in the 1980s to the current number of more than six established public universities and about 30 private recognized universities and over 100 other tertiary institution with over and about 200,000 students (Ministry of Education and Sports [MoES], 2015). This increase in students' numbers has resulted into a number of challenges and changes; one of which is the management of "massification" and more particularly, the management of scarce resources in the science-based units to provide quality education and enhance quality outputs and outcomes of core University functions like research, publication and community engagement which is one of the most hit sectors in the science-based faculties in Gulu University.

Tikly and Barret (2007) assert that research and publication functions are most central and integral in a University's core functions. All over the world, universities held in high regard are those with a strong research base. The Visitation Committee on Public Universities in Uganda [VCPUU] (2007) emphasised that one of the primary functions of a University is to create, produce and disseminate knowledge through research and publications. The second major function of a reputable University is to teach undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. Thirdly, public universities are expected to set, spearhead and regularly review the national

research agenda. It further asserted that a University that does not do research, publish or engage with the community is indistinguishable from a high school and is condemned to intellectual and academic obscurity.

On the other hand, the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance [AUCEA] (2008), views Community Engagement as a specific method for academic research and teaching that necessarily involves external communities; business, industry, schools, governments, non-governmental organizations, associations, indigenous and ethnic communities, and the general public in collaborative activities that address community needs and opportunities while also enriching the teaching, learning and research objectives of the University. It further explains that community engagement is a form of academic endeavour where external sources of expertise and wisdom are seen as essential to advancing knowledge and understanding. It is not a separate or distinct activity within a University but is a shared enterprise between universities and their community partners that involves an exchange of knowledge and expertise that produces mutual benefit. It further propounded that universities benefit from effective engagement with their communities; for instance student learning outcomes are enhanced through learning experiences and make knowledge relevant to community issues and priorities. Again AUCEA (ibid) while sharing the Australian situation revealed that although universities have always interacted with their communities in a range of ways; community engagement specifically encourages knowledge-driven partnerships that yield mutually beneficial outcomes for University and community.

According to the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) underpinning report of the National Council for Higher Education in Uganda (NCHE, 2011), modern universities are supposed to be leaders in the social and economic development of their communities and nations. Hall (cited in Kagisano, 2010), explicates further that the community can, and does, mean anything from a University's own staff and students and a community of practice to civic organizations, schools, townships, citizens at large and "the people" in general. Engagement on the other hand is an equally challenging concept that, when interrogated, opens up a rich vein of inquiry into the nature of knowledge itself. Furthermore, in the words of Harkavy (2000): "To make the case for University-community partnership is easy to do. The hard thing is to figure out how to do it. The hardest thing of all, of course, is to actually get it done."

Theoretical Framework

In this work, the "Human Capital Theory" was identified as most suitable to explain the concept "massification" in higher education. The theory is based upon the work of Schultz (1961), Sakamota and Powers (1995), Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1997) which rests on the assumption that formal education is highly instrumental and even necessary to improve production capacity of the population. The main point of the theory is that education, rather than being looked upon exclusively as consumption, should be looked upon as an investment for the individual as well as for society. In short, the human capital theorists argue that an educated population is a productive population. Because of this, therefore, there has been a general understanding that knowledge-intensive production is crucial for employment and welfare while knowledge-based production is dependent on a highly educated work force. The creation of an adequate supply of well-educated persons for the future therefore became

the focus, together with the attention to immediate demands, therefore raising the demand for education at all levels including higher education and consequently increasing influx into the sub-sector, resulting into blowing-up of the investment cost of education.

Significance of the Human Capital Theory

According to Babalola (2003), cited by Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008), the rationale behind investment in human capital is based on three arguments. First, that the new generation must be given the appropriate part of the knowledge which has already been accumulated by the previous generation; second, that the new generation should be taught how existing knowledge should be used to develop new products; to introduce new processes and the production methods and social services; and thirdly, that people must be encouraged to develop entirely new ideas, products, processes and methods through creative approaches. Similarly, Fagerlind and Saha (1997) cited by Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008), underscore that the human capital theory appeal was based upon the presumed economic return of investment in education both at the macro and micro levels. They noted that efforts to promote investment in human capital were seen to result in rapid economic growth for society and for individuals; such investment was seen to provide returns in the form of individual economic success and achievement.

Furthermore, according to Robert's (1991) model, education and the creation of human capital was responsible for both the differences in labour productivity and differences in overall levels of technology that are observed in the world. He notes that more than anything else, it has been the spectacular growth in East Asia that has given education and human capital their current popularity in the field of economic growth and development.

Schumpeter's (1973) postulation pointed to the direction that education is seen as an input into the intentional and entrepreneurial efforts to create new technology and new products. Van-Den-Berg (2001) further argued that countries at the forefront of technology have the most educated population. Deriving from these various postulations therefore, it became valid to conclude that investment in education invariably affects development to the extent that all individuals and nations would wish to be associated with it, thus creating an influx of investors into the sub-sector.

The human capital theory relates well to this study because it informs managers of higher education that the increasing numbers in higher education, if properly planned and well managed, can be tapped into a huge investment for the nation's development. In this study the framework provided in the NCHE quality benchmarks becomes a launch-pad to guide success in these endeavours. Conversely, if the influx into higher education and the imbalance allocation of resources (massification) is not controlled, then the ultimate outcomes are nasty and destructive to quality attainment which, in the long run, will lead to non-profitable results because the outputs (graduates) will not be competent enough to produce the outcomes expected of them, thus discouraging customers of higher education to invest in the sub-sector.

Statement of the problem

Gulu University, like any other institution of higher learning in Uganda, experienced rapid growth in students' numbers over the years. These escalating numbers and sometimes

unplanned progress led to the imbalance between students' numbers, staff numbers and the availability of education resources (massification) which impacted negatively on the University's core functions: knowledge generation through teaching and learning, research and community engagement of science disciplines at the University. The situation in the science-based departments at Gulu University depicted lack of adequate funding, shortage of high calibre academics, and inadequate relevant educational resources against high students' enrolment. It was also believed that the University had not yet attained quality standards in the management of research, publication and community engagement. This study was carried out to investigate the extent to which Gulu University managed the challenges of massification in the science-based faculties with specific reference to conducting research, publications and community engagement.

Objectives of the study

The objective of the study was to establish the extent to which massification impacted on the management of research, publications and community engagement in the Science-based faculties at Gulu University.

Scope of the Study

The study was conducted at Gulu University. Gulu University is found in Laroo division, Gulu municipality, Gulu district, in Northern Uganda, East Africa. Gulu University was selected because it is one of the fastest growing public universities in Uganda with up to about 4,000 students in only ten years of existence. The study examined various quality benchmarks developed by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) Uganda to monitor and regulate quality in Uganda's universities with specific emphasis on how the benchmarks have been utilized to manage the massification process in the Science-based faculties at Gulu University in the areas of research, publications and community engagement. The study was specifically conducted in the faculties of Agriculture, Medicine and Science.

Methodology

The study used both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. Qualitative methods enable respondents to qualify, describe or explain their views (Bell, 1933). A survey research design, single-case and parallel cross-sectional type was used to gather information in the study. The single case design was chosen because it was very useful in exploring and understanding uniqueness or exceptionality of a case. Kumar (2005) cited by Odiya (2009) noted that choice of the parallel cross-sectional survey design was owing to its ability to use different categories of respondents at a given point in time. The study design provided opportunity for the variables to be measured under the same conditions and for the categories to be given the same or similar instruments. This design was preferred, amongst others, because its findings can be generalized to a larger population.

Study Population

According to Mugo (2011), a study population is a group of individuals, persons, objects, or items from which samples are taken for measurements -- for example, a population of

presidents or professors, books or students. In this study the population included: the Corporate Management level, the Decentralized Management level, the Collegial Management level, the Students' level and other stakeholders from the public. The Corporate Management comprised: Council Chairperson, Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University Secretary and Academic Registrar. The Decentralized Managers comprised: the Deans of Faculties and Heads of Department; while the Collegial Managers comprised the Professors and Lecturers. Information was also collected from students of three Science-based faculties namely: Human Anatomy, Computer Science and Bio-system Engineering. More information was collected from the public and at least ten reputable institutions.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Plooy (2007) defines data analysis as a process of bringing order and structure to the mass of collected data. In the study, qualitative data from the various sources were sorted, summarized, analyzed and interpreted into a format from which meaningful conclusions were drawn according to how they answered the research questions. Similarly, quantitative data scores were organized and coded by assigning numbers to the responses of the items in the instruments. By use of chi-square test, results were computed and analyzed. Frequency tables and multiple response tables were also used to summarize the responses. Information derived was used to answer research questions that determined the relationships between the different quality benchmarks. In the Chi-square computation, all the objectives identified were subjected to test by SPSS version 15.0. The Pearson Chi-Square value for significance was determined between 0.00-0.05. Triangulation was finally employed to examine how the data collected from all the sources answered the research questions.

Findings and Discussions

The findings were based on analysis of respondents' viewpoints on 10 key aspects specified in Table 1.

The University research policy or agenda

The study established that there was no clear Research Agenda or Portfolio in use. This finding was confirmed by 22.37 per cent approval against 56.58 percent levels of disagreement recorded from the questionnaire respondents respectively. Similarly, responses to Q4 on the interview schedule which sought students', lecturers' and management views on the same concerns unanimously pointed to the fact that research undertaking at Gulu University was still developing and not yet prominent. It was thus important to underscore that in the absence of a Research Policy, research functions or undertakings at the University become personalized and based on the ingenuity of individual academics. To underpin the foregone statement, therefore, responses of all those interviewed clearly emphasized that policies or structures to handle Research, Publications and Community Engagement should be instituted so that emerging trends like massification and the entry of market forces in higher education can be articulated. Nonetheless, with the launch of the *Gulu University Journal* and various initiatives, few professors and young academics had expressed interest to get involved in rigorous research.

Table 1: Respondents' Opinion on Quality of Research and Publications in the Science-based Departments at Gulu University

KEY ASPECTS	Strong-ly Agree	Agree	Unde-cided	Disa-gree	Strongly Disagree	% Agreement
The University has a clear research agenda/portfolio that students are aware of	5.73	20.70	19.39	25.55	28.63	26.43
Lecturers' promotion is largely based on research and publication	3.57	1.88	49.21	29.27	16.07	5.45
Lecturers present papers in seminars	3.06	31.88	35.37	21.40	8.30	34.93
Lecturers encourage students to do Research	20.52	58.08	6.99	8.30	6.11	78.60
Lecturers in the University have published many academic papers	1.32	16.30	33.48	33.04	15.86	**17.62**
Departments publish articles in local and international journals	3.96	21.59	26.87	25.11	22.47	25.55
Students are involved in the University's research projects	3.96	21.59	17.54	33.48	26.43	25.55
The University staff publish books with ISBN/ISSN	0.88	11.45	27.32	31.28	29.07	**12.33**
The university budget al-locates funds for Research and publication	1.32	14.98	30.84	26.87	25.99	**16.30**
Some percentage of the University budget is allocated to staff and students for research and publications	2.65	17.70	14.61	23.45	41.59	**20.35**
Average	**4.70**	**23.61**	**24.87**	**24.77**	22.05	28.31

Source:

Research and publications

Furthermore, the analysis pointed to the fact that research and publication functions still lacked the attention they deserved in the science-based faculties at Gulu University. This was premised on students' information that the University lacked any formulated research agenda and portfolio. It was also confirmed through statistical analysis indicating that only 26.43 per cent of those who agreed that there were policy documents to drive research and publication functions against 54.18 per cent of those who disagreed. On the question which sought to find out whether lecturers encouraged their students to do research, there was an overwhelming response of 78.60 per cent from both the students and lecturers. On research and publication outcomes, the data indicated that there was: inadequate presentation of papers

in seminars, conferences or symposia by lecturers. To concretize the foregone statistically, only 34.93 per cent of all those interviewed agreed that research and publications outcomes were presented in seminars by lecturers, against 29.70 per cent of those who disagreed and 35.37 per cent of respondents who were undecided. On research and publication of articles in refereed journals by lecturers, only 17.62 % agreement rates were recorded against 48.90% disagreement rates and 33.48% indecision rates. On publication of books with ISBN/ISSN numbers in the department, there was a 12.33% agreement against 60.35% disagreement and 27.32% indecision. The respondents underscored that the researches that were conducted in the science-based faculties at Gulu University mostly included the following: supervised postgraduate research as part of training for the award of Master's and PhD degrees, donor-funded researches, Finance-driven Consultancy Research and very few driven by individual academic staff researches.

According to the NCHE (2006), universities are supposed to be centres of research, excellence, scholarship, knowledge generation and publications. However, for this to happen, universities must develop a very robust Research Philosophy and or Agenda. Needless to emphasize, therefore, the University should strengthen the Research Portfolio first and foremost by enacting a comprehensive and a standard Research and Publication policy as well as target adequate funding for the sub-sector. However, the only consolation that could be derived from the analysis was that the potential to develop research in the science-based faculties was great because of the great enthusiasm amongst the lecturers to participate in research and publication as manifested by their students. Secondly, the heads of department and lecturers agreed that the establishment of the Institute of Research and Graduate Studies (IR&GS) was a positive move towards strengthening the research portfolio. They revealed that the IR&GS was putting a great deal of effort to strengthen research and publication capacity in the University. They recounted initiatives like: calling for abstracts of papers for the annual conference, organization of annual conferences and departmental workshops targeting research and publications as some of the milestones being covered in the area.

Lecturers and students' involvement in research

When results from the questionnaires were corroborated with information gathered through the interview sessions with the heads of department and from the focus group discussions held with the lecturers and students, the consensus view was that though research is one of the core functions of a University, it still needed to be given its central position in the science-based faculties at Gulu University. This was attributed to the fact that it was not prioritized in terms of funding. The heads of department further revealed that they lacked basic equipment and laboratory facilities to conduct scientific research. In the department of human anatomy, for instance, the researcher physically counted 8 cadavers, 8 microscopes of which only five were in good working conditions, and a dozen of broken histology slides among other items. In the department of bio-system engineering, a newly constructed laboratory was standing, but not furnished with basic equipment. The lecturers further revealed that their greatest drawbacks in the area of promotion stemmed from the fact that their involvement in scientific research was lacking. Lecturers let slip that the few promotions some of them got were based more or less on the attainment of higher degrees other than purely as a result of scientific research-based outcomes. When they

were asked to substantiate, they attributed their lack of participation in research to the volume of work created due to the demand on timetable for lectures, tutorials, practical and course work assessment which, when coupled with the high numbers of students and lecturers' thinness on the ground, gave the lecturers very inadequate time to do research, write papers for publication, as well as concentrate on the internal research projects of their students. Lecturers further revealed that even the few research concepts they had written drew little attention by the management or had been selectively sponsored. In fact, scanning through the lists of papers and articles published in the *Gulu University Journal* in 2010, it was easy to confirm that very few of the articles were attributed to the science-based departments studied in this research.

The students, on the one hand, confirmed that the lecturers encouraged them to do research and publish, but the major drawback was inadequacy in funding. Students however expressed disappointment in the way their internal research projects were being supervised. This complaint mostly came from students in the department of computer science where they reported that because the number of students was high, the lecturer-students ratio was high resulting into shoddy assessment of their project work. Students commented that the lecturers do more of administrative rather than academic supervision. Students however contended that they had participated in many researches with the University as research assistants, translators and are sometimes deployed in the communities to conduct some studies.

To emphasise the students' concerns, most of the community members, some of whom were alumni of Gulu University and heads of institutions who participated in the study opined that the research capacity of the students was still low and needed to be revamped. The alumni further observed that the level of research supervision and research capacity in the University was low and thus needed to be supported. They claimed that the number of students assigned to an individual lecturer for in-depth attention was high and this reduced the attention given to students by their supervisors. The management strategy that was adopted to address massification was to assign manageable numbers of students to each individual lecturer for the latter's professional guidance and to improve research funding by the University.

Funding of research

When opinions of members of corporate management were sought about research, publication and community service, they postulated that the biggest challenge the University was experiencing in the area of research, publications and community service was inadequate funding from government and other sectors. Management revealed that only about 60 per cent of their budgetary expectations from the government were funded annually. Management felt that there was a huge gap which made them gamble in fund allocations to the extent that satisfying all priority areas became challenging, leading to poor performance against the set targets. However, Figure 1 indicates that 48.88 per cent of all the respondents were not sure that the University prioritizes its funding correctly, and only 2.24 per cent imagined that funding priority went towards research and publications. In view of this statistic, the University should reorganize her priorities in line with the core functions, strategic goals and objectives, with research and publication among the forefront priorities.

Prioritization of funding
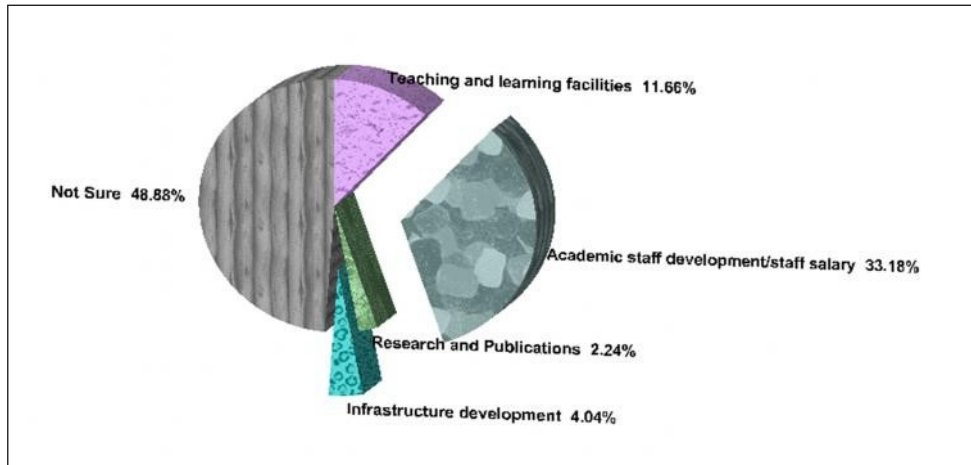
Figure 1: Pie-chart showing priority areas of funding in the Science-based faculties at Gulu University

Financial Management and Quality of Research and Publication, the Pearson Chi-Square value was found to be 145.385 with 30 degrees of freedom and an assumption significance of 0.000 which was less than 0.05. This meant the hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between Institutional Financial Management and quality of Research and Publication was rejected. Institutional Financial Management therefore had significant influence on the quality of Research and Publications at 0% level of significance (see Table 2).

Table 2: Relationship between Institutional Financial Management and Quality of Research and Publications in the Science-based departments at Gulu University

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	145.385 a	30	.000
Likelihood Ratio	62.072	30	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	23.885	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	231		

a. 34 cells (81.0%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .00.

The University's engagement with the Community

Turning to the point on outreach and community service as detailed on Table 3, it was found that the University was engaged with the community at various levels.

Table 1: Respondents' Opinion on University and Community Alliance

ITEMS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unde-cided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	% Agreement
The University runs programmes and projects that focus on the community	15.56	48.89	8.44	14.67	12.44	**64.44**
The University engages the students into a number of apprentices and outreaches	7.11	37.33	9.78	27.56	18.22	**44.44**
Community response to all University Programmes is positive	11.50	50.00	23.45	8.85	6.19	**61.50**
The University has developed a number of partnerships and collaborations	14.22	41.78	20.89	17.78	5.33	**56.00**
Average	12.10	44.50	15.64	17.21	10.55	56.60

Source: Primary data

The main activities discovered by this study included the following: Promotion of IT skills through training of community leaders: for instance, the NUFFIC project helped in training up to 250 various categories of women (Teachers, Police Officers, UPDF Officers and Local Councillors) in computer skills; the Invisible Children targeted improving ICT skills amongst secondary school teachers; and others like the TULANE project and the Uganda Fund all of which propagated empowering the community in ICT capacity building. In the department of Human Anatomy, there was no ongoing community participation mentioned apart from the deployment of student doctors for clerkships in the health centre IIIs and IVs, the Male Circumcision Project by the department of Surgery; the Enhance Research Capacity ENRECA project in Awach Sub-County; and the intervention on the Nodding disease. In the Faculty of Agriculture there were running projects helping farmers in the community in creating new crop varieties namely: the Orange-Fresh Potatoes project, the GARI project, the resistant cassava project, foodstuff preservation project and the tractor hire services.

A Chi-Square test was run to establish relationship between institutional Financial Management and Community Service (see Table 4 below). The Pearson Chi-Square value was found to be 164.374 with 25 degrees of freedom and an assumption significance of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. This means the assumption that there is no relationship between institutional financial management and outreach service is rejected. Institutional Financial Management therefore had significance on outreach service at 0% level of significance. This supports management's position expressed above that: research, publications and community service were inadequately funded in Gulu University.

Table 4: Relationship between Institutional Financial Management and Community Outreach in the Science-based Departments at Gulu University

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	164.374 **a**	25	.000
Likelihood Ratio	54.781	25	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	27.750	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	231		

a. 26 cells (72.2%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .02.

Drawing from other scholarly literature in support of the foregone, Tikly and Barret (2007) in their paper, 'Educational Quality-Research Priorities and Approaches in the Global Era', advance that there is need for critical reflections on structures and processes of programme management including the empowerment of researchers and research institutions. They further asserted that research and publications functions were one of the most central and integral parts of a University's core functions. All over the world, universities are held in high regard because of a strong research base.

Larzillière (cited in Mouton and Waast, 2009: 159) recounting experiences in higher education in Jordan, accentuates that, in Jordan: a faculty member in a University is defined first as an instructor whose main job is to teach and whose work hours are teaching hours. In spite of that, job promotions in universities are entirely dependent upon research activities and record.

Mohamedbhai (2008), while emphasizing the importance of research noted that research is an important activity of any University and most of the institutions are making a concerted attempt to keep research active in an environment grossly dominated by teaching. He further recounted that at the University of Ghana, the creation of the Annual Faculty Colloquium which gives teaching staff, post-graduate and final year students an opportunity to present their research results to the scientific community has stimulated research in the faculty and the publication of the proceedings of Faculty Colloquium contributes in some ways to the promotion of publications in the Faculty. In a related argument, Belal and Springuel (2006: 10) postulated with respect to Egypt that gaps in education exist at all undergraduate and postgraduate levels for teaching how to perform research and to write up results. Students are not trained to do research, nor taught how to write scientific papers. This essential part of education is completely neglected in both undergraduate and even postgraduate studies. Commenting on the foregone paragraph, the findings in this study interpolated that at Gulu University, research and publications functions were developing on firm ground and formed part of the curriculum at both undergraduate and graduate levels emphasizing innovation and intellectual originality of the staff and students and subject to the assessment of institutional auditors. This totally dispels Belal and Springle (2006) who contended that the research topics

for postgraduate students are proposed by supervisors who have instructed the students and do not encourage the students' personal thinking. Students are used as tools for doing practical or field work but not for research. Thus the notion with respect to Egyptian University graduates that they are capable only of waiting for orders and executing them with no thinking, no arguing, no questioning, no objecting and not even dialoguing does not in any way apply to the research training at Gulu University science-based faculties. The study results revealed that Corporate Management at Gulu University were aware that research capacity at the University was low due to inadequate funding.

The findings corroborate well the accentuation by Mohamedbhai (2008) that a couple of universities have always mentioned lack of funds as a serious constraint in enhancing research agenda at University level. He further revealed that at the University of Ouagadougou, in order to encourage research, a financial incentive is given to each academic staff that can show, in an annual report submitted to management, that s/he has been undertaking research activities during the year. Furthering this discourse, Meek et al (2009) propounded that research is not only expensive, but often carries many hidden financial burdens for individual higher education Institutions. One of the big debates in many countries is the extent to which research should be fully funded, covering not only direct costs, but also contributing to overheads and infrastructure. On a similar note, Sörlin (cited in Meek Lynn and Davis Dianne 2009:49), observed that the funds that go to universities and research institutes, have for a long time stagnated in most countries…so the fact of the matter is that those institutions that carry out the higher education work and do research have to do more and more work for less funding 'per unit', regardless of whether the unit is a student trained for three years or a scientific paper researched, written and published.

In the words of Harkavy (2000): "To make the case for University-community partnership is easy to do. The hard thing is to figure out how to do it. The hardest thing of all, of course, is to actually get it done." In this regard, Gulu University has lived to the expectations of its motto: "For community transformation". The hardest thing they have experienced is that their community engagements have not been able to comb the community to their expectations because of inadequacy of funding from government and other collaborative partners.

AUCEA (2008) expounds that community engagement is a specific method for academic research and teaching that necessarily involves external communities; business, industry, schools, governments, non-governmental organizations, associations, indigenous and ethnic communities, and the general public in collaborative activities that address community needs and opportunities while also enriching the teaching, learning and research objectives of the University. It further explains that community engagement is a form of academic endeavour where external sources of expertise and wisdom are seen as essential to advancing knowledge and understanding. It is not a separate or distinct activity within a University but is a shared enterprise between universities and their community partners that involves an exchange of knowledge and expertise that produces mutual benefit. It further propounded that universities benefit from effective engagement with their communities, for instance: student learning outcomes are enhanced through learning experiences and make knowledge relevant to community issues and priorities.

To the Australian Universities, engagements are believed to broaden the concept of knowledge transfer to reveal that knowledge generation has many possible applications of value to society in addition to commercialization. They therefore consider engagement with communities as a core activity of a University's research and teaching agenda that should not be considered a separate undertaking. University engagement is a scholarly activity and it recognises the community as a knowledge-rich partner through which the University's research capacity becomes more accessible as a resource to address community problems or aspirations. Communities gain a wide range of benefits through their productive interactions with universities. In this way, communities are recognized for their intellectual assets and empowered to contribute to knowledge generation that directly increases community capacity for action and problem-solving. Engagement makes the knowledge resources of universities accessible to communities in ways that can benefit social, economic, environmental and cultural capacity and conditions. Community engagements should be a key component in a University's staff recruitment, induction, promotion, and performance review policies.

Conclusion

While agreeing with the above postulations, it is fundamental to note that Research, Publications and University-Community Alliance whose success heavily relies on good planning and funding can experience great difficulties in a cash-strapped university like Gulu. A concerted effort to remedy this shortfall would therefore be the introduction of learning-research camps or demonstration units within the University and in the community, from where the University experts can demonstrate their skills to both the students and other community members. This Training-of-Trainers approach would help to reduce cost to certain extents and also perfect supervision of the research camps. This approach would further enlighten the community and put them into a better perspective to interact with their environment at a more productive level.

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