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Mission in Proclamation but Action Ranking: A Comparative Study of Public and Private Higher Learning Institutions Community service and Engagement in Ethiopia?

Taye Alamirewu

St. Mary's University

Abstract

Under the existing education and training policy framework (1994) and higher education proclamation (2003, 2009), higher learning institutions (HLIs) in Ethiopia are born for the people by the people to accomplish three interrelated core missions of which reaching local and regional communities and address unmet social, economic, cultural problems via community service and engagement mission is one. The objective of the study was to assess the state of the art and the art of the state of serving and engaging in the community by shifting from 'knowledge transfer via graduates' to 'knowledge application to solve community problems'. The study employed qualitative approach (content analysis) and operational plan reports of higher learning institutions, MOE supervision team reports including site visits, various meeting presentations were sources of data. Nine public and three private higher learning institutions were included in the study selected randomly. Coding and thematic analyses were used to analyze data as it is a qualitative study. Findings show that higher learning institutions are at different stages of conceptualizing, formalizing and implementing community service and engagement activities via developing institutional policies, strategies or road maps and procedures. In looking patterns and areas, themes namely continuing education, applied and community based research, consultancy service, entrepreneurship and enterprising small businesses, innovation and technology transfer, capacity building activities, service learning, environmental protection activities and graduate tracer study were identified to be areas of engagement though vary from institutions to institutions in scope, scale and type. Also, public higher learning institutions seem in better practices than private higher learning institutions in engaging in multidimensional community activities. Lack of comprehensive research and community engagement institutional



policy, internal procedure, sustainability, readiness and attitude of staff and outcome evaluation were also observed as shortcomings in the majority of institutions under investigations. Finally, it is learned that, no big problem that really matters (e.g., poverty, environmental degradation, illiteracy, hunger, poor schooling, urban crises etc) can be solved and understood without academics and practitioners working closely together to solve it. Therefore; successful institution-community partnerships, including communication about procedures, goals, and priorities; the ability to adapt to external changes; a vision on both sides for positive change; support from local leaders; collective efforts should be strengthened so that institutions and communities can help one another to fulfill their priorities and, above all, institutions should be guided by developing institutional policy that dictates pre-mission institutional arrangements or preparations, in mission coordination strategies and post- mission evaluation instruments.

Key words: higher education, community service, community engagement, institutional policy

1. Introduction

1.2. Evolution and Mission of Universities

Modern universities, whose origin can be traced to the Christian cathedral schools or monastic schools which appear as early as the 6th century, were a medieval creation of the 11th and 12th centuries that gradually multiplied from Western Europe (since 11th/12th century) to Eastern Europe (since 14th/15th century) to Americas (since 16th century) to Australia (since 19th century) and finally as a colonial legacy to Asia and Africa (since 19th/20th century)⁸. Functionally, during its inception in the end of 11th to 18th centuries, universities served two original functions (Martin 2012). First, it provided teaching for priests, lawyers, public servants, doctors, school teachers and others for church and state apparatus. Second, university teachers engaged in scholarship (systematic study and critical interpretation of existing knowledge that are theological, classical and philosophical). Structurally, in the 18th and 19th centuries, two distinct higher educational

⁸ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia .www: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopedia>



'species' or governance structures emerged (Ruëgg, 2004): Classical vs Technical. In the 'classical' university, the emphasis was on the provision of a humanistic education while in the 'technical' HEIs which started to emerge in the second part of the 18th century, to provide technical training to military officers, to meet the growing needs of the state for technical civil servants and engineers in such areas as mining, bridges and roads (Pedersen, 1996, p. 469; Guagnini, 2004 in Martin, 2012) with a strong emphasis on societal need or service' or the third mission. During the 19th century, both the 'classical' university model and the 'technical' university had been transferred to other countries from Europe to Latin America, North America (USA) and Asia (e.g. Japan) (Roberts et al., 1996). In particular, the land-grant university (giving land in exchange for opening up HEIs to support the rapidly growing economy) emerged in the mid 19th century, USA, to provide low-cost higher education and to meet local technical needs, especially those relating to agriculture and the 'mechanical arts' (Bok, 1982, p. 62). In other words, these universities were created with a very explicit 'third mission or societal need or service'. 21st societies are marked by new economic, political, cultural, technological, demographic and environmental shifts that are part of a rapid and uneven wave of local and global forces (Mansilla and Jackson, 2011; UN 2013). Such changes and challenges call for the modern university to play necessary and increasingly important roles in human, social, and economic development (Sutton 1998; Escrigas 2008) for local, regional and global societies. Consequently Universities are under pressure of change (Gibb, Haskins, and Robertson 2009, 3) to respond proactively and scientifically by generating adequate, relevant & competent graduates in the sense of global citizenship; research and discovery (knowledge advancement & problem solving research) including commercialization of innovative products and services and addressing unmet community problems (application of knowledge). *In summary*, since the medieval period, the mission of university has been the preservation and dissemination of knowledge through teaching (Etzkowitz, 2004). In the 19th and 20th centuries, the research mission became a legitimate function of the University (Etzkowitz, 2004). However, the university research goal is not only to publish research papers but also to advance understanding and become the source of innovations in the economy and society, including the starting point for the development of



business ideas for new companies (Schulte, 2004). Hence, the outputs of this mission would be academic spin-offs, academic spinouts, and academic spillovers. In the 21st century, the entrepreneurial mission appear as a result of the collapse produced by the inevitable production of research results with practical implications and the external demand of greater utility from public funding (Etzkowitz, 2004). The university entrepreneurial goal is to cope with difficulties that may arise during the growth periods of new companies, and increase the subject of multidisciplinary research (Schulte, 2004). In this regards, the outputs should be related to the number of new enterprises or income from entrepreneurial activities or incubation of new enterprises, survival rates, jobs (Mian, 1996; Clarysse et al, 2005; Bollingroft and Ulhoi, 2005; Markman et al. 2005), patenting and science parks (Link and Scott, 2005) oriented both to university community and societal needs. Now a day, the issues of university-community partnership and engagement have become progressively more prominent in both national and international forums of higher education because as societal issues have grown in number and become more complex and “as higher education costs have increased, external constituents ... have begun to pressure institutions of higher education to become more accountable and to work towards the common good,” (Reinke & Walker 2005, p. 2). Harkavy (1998) argues that given this context universities are under increasing pressure to be “relevant” in solving today’s complex challenges. Many universities have responded to these increased demands by adopting a community-oriented lens toward research activities and forming partnership and engagement relationships with communities. The rhetoric alone of community-based engagement and partnership is not enough to constitute “genuine” research partnership and engagement; simply including engagement and partnership with communities as part of a university’s mission statement or mandate, or on a research proposal (Stoecker, 2009), is not sufficient. Instead, universities should increase their assertion as researchers, teachers, collaborators and active citizens in communities located locally and globally. The objectives of this involvement are both to serve and to create support from the public by connecting research, teaching and service to help solve community problems, while contributing to capacity building, sustainability, and economic, environmental and social development (Prins, 2006; Toof, 2006; Ramaley, 2002; Boyte & Kari, 2000; Kellogg, 1999; Lerner & Simon, 1998).



This study examines the state of higher education community service and community engagement in Ethiopia.

1.3. Statement of the problem

Engagement or how colleges and universities address important social issues while preparing an educated citizenry for active civic, economic and cultural participation has become a widespread concept, phenomenon, and movement (Chambers, 2005; Kellogg Commission, 1999) around the world. This current concern for the public role of higher education stems from a combination of forces, including soaring tuition costs, public distrust, perceived neoliberal tendencies, and a lack of congruency among societal expectations and institutional priorities to mention few (Chambers, 2005; Cohen, 1998; Giroux, 2003; Lynton, 1995; Thelin, 2004; Ward, 2003 cited in Amy and Ada, 2009). Universities have a significant role to play in regional development that is much greater than “simply providing local employment and purchases, or access to centrally designed courses (Garlick & Pryor, 2002: p11). The challenge for universities is to develop active partnerships and be “responsive to community identified needs, opportunities and goals in ways that are appropriate to the university’s mission and academic strengths” (Temple et al., 2005). In Ethiopia, higher education is a recent phenomena compared to the West, the first higher education institution, the University College of Addis Ababa, now Addis Ababa University, was established in 1950. In spite of the country’s need to expand the higher education sector, little progress was made in the subsequent 50 years. Until 1995, for example, there were only two public universities and sixteen affiliated and independent junior colleges in the country. Following the ratification of the 1995 constitution (FDRE Constitution, 1995), the enactment of Education and Training policy (MOE 1994), and privatization of education as a result of free market economy, several more universities were added increasing the total number of functional universities to 33 as federal public institutions; over 34 teacher training colleges under the Regional Governments, four private universities, over 90 accredited private university colleges / Colleges (MOE, 2014) striving to contribute to have socially cohesive, economically powerful, politically democratic, environmentally friendly, technologically innovative society. Mission wise, higher learning institutions in Ethiopia have similar functions like western institutions:



Teaching/learning, research/discovery, and service/engagement. But such tripartite roles of higher education institutions have been practiced with relatively different degree of emphasis possibly prioritized in the order of human resource development, disciplinary research and lastly community service or more importantly analogous to what Oliver(2001) expressed using the proverbial glass which may be “half full or half empty”.

Half full as evidenced in the trend to increasing expansion and enrollment, expanding fields of study and level of qualifications at home, and new opportunities for commercial partnerships and technology transfer. Or it may be half empty, with decreasing public support or declining funding, mission drift and growing competition from for-profit and international institutions. There is a third viewpoint, however, that suggests the glass may just need to be shaken up a bit – and community-university engagement may be the best way to do so as a result (pp.106).

With regard to service / engagement or a ‘third mission’, it can be argued here that historically, the universities were separated from their communities due to number of reasons including geographical and social boundaries ((Martin et. al., 2002). This separation is captured in the often invoked expression ‘town and gown’ acting as “ivory towers” insulated from its surrounding community rather than acting as “good community players” that facilitate local linkages and networks and create “anchors of creativity” and contribute to industry, the economy, the local region or society more generally.

In a knowledge or information economy, the role of universities is changing from the sole provision of education and specialized skills training to one of transferring knowledge and technology to industries and communities and universities are under pressure to provide educational, cultural, economic, social and recreational opportunities and facilities to local communities (Hudson et al, 2012). And also, it is often argued that universities and academic institutions cannot continue to be centre of knowledge excellence by isolating their entities from the society and community where they belong to. This is perhaps the reason why the university-community partnership has been one of the major areas of concern for the different higher education stake-holders during recent past (Tripathi et al, n.d). The trend shows that the universities are now increasingly looking for the



innovative ways to develop and strengthen partnership with the society and community in view of the continuous pressure for being purpose-oriented and relevant (Tripathi et al, n.d). That is why, a 'demand-pull' model of knowledge transfer in which universities are increasingly interacting with the wider society has largely been advised by replacing the outdated 'supply-push' model which saw universities determine research priorities, often with little or no regard for the immediate needs of society. In Ethiopia, despite higher education expansion is a recent phenomena, a preliminary view of the state of the art (mainstreaming of off campus engagement across Ethiopian universities) as a characteristic of a university's policy and practice and a two-way relationship in which the university forms partnerships with communities that yield mutually beneficial outcomes (such as productive research outcomes that are, among other things socially robust; boosting regional/national economic growth; addressing social and environmental issues in the community; boosting local/global connectivity; enhancing social capital development; development of corporate and private citizenship attributes; driving social change including helping to solve some social issues especially in areas of disadvantaged and peripherals ; and development of the cultural and intellectual fabric of the community etc) are inadequate except including engagement and partnership with communities as part of a university's mission statement or mandate. And it is against the mandate given by higher education proclamation (proclamation no 351 /2003; proclamation no 650 / 2009) that laid the foundations for making community engagement as one of the core missions of Ethiopian higher education along with teaching and research. Strengthening more, higher education proclamation calls on higher education institutions to 'demonstrate social responsibility ... and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes'. It states that higher education should 'design and provide community and consultancy services that shall cater to the developmental needs of the country' (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2009). It showed receptiveness to 'the growing interest in community service programmes for local community improvement. Therefore; the study attempts to examine institutionalization of university community engagement/partnership policies and practices integrating resources of universities (students, academic staff, facilities, knowledge,



skills, and values) with local community needs for mutual benefits in the sense of sustainability.

1.4. Research questions

The study was guided by the following basic questions:

- To what extent do public universities consider university community engagement as a core mission or business as usual?
- What functional areas of community university needs are being prioritized and implemented?
- What are the effects of intervention as a result of community university engagement?

1.5. Operationalization of terms

Community - as defined by Scott (2004), a “community” is a group of people sharing a common location, set of activities, purposes, interests or heritage. Communities can, therefore, be geographical, cultural, linguistic, religious, generational, national, social, economic or professional. While an authoritative definition of community is yet to be provided, a review of the literature reveals that two broad themes underlie the nature of community. First, community is a function of locality (Dawson, Burnett & O’Donohue, 2006). Second, community is defined in terms of common interest (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999). Thus, in relation to a particular ‘intervention or event’, the various stakeholders should have a similar shared common interest that the said event is a success. To summarize, based upon the themes identified above, the term community implies that people form relationships as a result of either common proximity or common interest for mutual benefit, shared vision and leadership.

University-community engagement is a two-way scholarly work that may be initiated/planned and coordinated by either side or in partnership, which are mutually beneficial and that cuts across the missions of teaching, research and service. It is generally conceived of as a process where there is active engagement and learning for the partners in both process and outcome; it is built on demonstrable and ongoing commitment, clear expectations, and trust and has tangible quantitative or qualitative outcomes for the community and the university.



Community-engaged service describes those activities that 1) honor principles of community engagement and 2) enable the university to carry out its mission, contribute to the function and effectiveness of the faculty member's profession and discipline, and reach out to external communities and constituencies, such as government agencies, business, and the arts (UNCG, 2011; Janke & Clayton, 2012). Faculty who use their academic knowledge, skills, methods, and paradigms to address practical affairs and problem-solving in the context of collaboration and reciprocity build their own capacity, as well as the capacity of the academy and community members, groups, and organizations to understand and collaboratively address issues of public concern.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualizing community and community Engagement / service/ partnership

The concept of community is a contentious issue that has been examined by numerous scholars from varying disciplines (Harrington, 1997). The "community" in community engagement is not defined by sector, such as private or public, for-profit or nonprofit; rather, community is broadly defined to include individuals, groups, and organizations external to campus that use collaborative processes for the purpose of contributing to the public good (Driscoll & Sandmann, 2011, Janke & Clayton, 2012). The Carnegie Foundation (2011) in Janke & Clayton (2012) define Community engagement (sometimes also referred to as civic engagement) as the "collaboration (among) institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, and national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" Through community engagement, community and university knowledge and resources are brought together to "enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good." Garlick and Langworthy (undated) propose that engagement is defined by its focus on reciprocal, mutually-beneficial



knowledge-driven relationships with community partners, and that some academic goals can only be achieved successfully through collaborative relationships with community sources of knowledge and expertise. Community engagement involves mutually beneficial collaboration characterized by: 1) reciprocal processes, or recognizing, respecting, and valuing the knowledge, perspective, and resources that each partner contributes to the collaboration among partners ... in contrast with uni-directional extension of university resources or application of university expertise, and 2) public purposes, or building the capacity of each of the individuals, groups, and organizations involved to understand and collaboratively address issues of public concern. However, while it is true that universities are characterized by their role in nurturing and extending scholarship, they cannot claim complete 'ownership' of knowledge generation and application. Holland (in Wallis 2006a, p 4) suggests that the 'engaged institution is committed to direct interaction with external constituencies and communities through the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration and application of knowledge expertise and information', while building greater public understanding of the university's role as a knowledge resource. Engagement is the purposive endeavor through which universities 'make contributions to government and civil society as well as the private sector, assisting not only with economic performance but also helping to improve quality of life and the effectiveness of public services' (Molas-Gallert et al 2002, p iv). Over all, various definitions of engagement provided in the literature share two key points. "Engagement" entails: (a) purposeful collaboration of universities with the non university world and particularly with their surrounding communities; and (b) mutual benefits from such collaboration. In Ethiopian context, there are multiple layers of communities partners beyond the campus to work with including *segments' of society* (children, youth, women, disability groups, aged groups, farmers, cattle breeders, hand crafts etc) and *miscellaneous organizations* (services for non profits and manufacturing for profits) such as governmental and non government agencies, industries, advocacy organizations, schools, health institutions, religious organizations, jails, neighbor hood leaders, artistic, religious, sporting, charitable, indigenous, professional associations, local councils, families, etc.



2.2. Goals of community-university engagement

Institutions of higher education, individually and collectively, possess considerable resources - human, fiscal, organizational, and intellectual- which are critical to addressing significant social issues. Moreover; these institutions are physically rooted in their communities. Therefore, investing in the betterment of their immediate environments is good for both the community and the institution. According the review of Kishchuk (2003) and Dragne (2007), the general goals/ objectives of the engagement between colleges /universities and society/communities include:

- promote sharing of knowledge, resources and expertise between universities and organizations in the community
- reinforce community decision-making and problem-solving capacity
- enrich research, teaching methods and curricula in universities
- enhance student's education and employability by means of diverse opportunities to build their knowledge, expertise and work skills through hands-on research and related experience
- increase a country's capacity for innovative, high-quality research, responsive to emerging social, cultural and economic needs and conditions
- improve intervention, action, program delivery and policies in areas of importance to the social, cultural or economic development of communities
- help in the development of regional economy by collaborating with business, industry and the social partners
- foster and encourage environmental awareness and the principle of sustainability, by providing models of best practice and research & training

2.3. Characteristics' and Outcomes of an Engaged Institution

The engaged institution is committed to direct interaction with external constituencies and communities through the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration and application of knowledge, expertise and information. These interactions enrich and expand the learning and discovery functions of the academic institution while also enhancing community capacity. The work of the engaged institution is responsive to community-identified needs,



opportunities and goals in ways that are appropriate to the universities mission and academic strengths. The interaction also builds greater public understanding of the role of the university as a knowledge asset and resource (Holland, 2001, p. 7 cited in Dragne, 2007). Garlick (2000) examined a number of Australian universities engagement in their regions from an economic development perspective and identified the following characteristics of an engaged university: 1) university's mission reflects the goal of engagement; 2) the community is involved in the campus in continuous, purposeful and authentic ways; 3) there is a policy environment in place that supports engagement; 4) engagement work is publicized and celebrated; 5) engagement activities are held to a high standard of excellence and evaluated; 6) people throughout the university play leadership roles in engagement; 7) the curriculum provides ways for students to engage in the community; 8) the approach to scholarship includes interdisciplinary work. Unlike outreach which implies a one-way delivery of expertise and knowledge under the 'ownership' of the university, engagement is, is a two way; collaborative, participatory; reciprocal and mutually beneficial by means of exchanging knowledge and sharing resources with mutually beneficial outcomes including : research outcomes; economic growth; increasing local-global connectivity; social and human capital development; progress towards sustainability; development of corporate and private citizenship attributes; development of cultural and intellectual assets for the community and driving social change (Lunsford, Church & Zimmerman, 2006).

3. Methods and Procedures of the study

3.1. Approaches of the study

The objective of the study was to examine the state and dimensions of community service and engagement in higher education institutions. To this effect, a qualitative content analysis defined as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1278) was employed because it involves a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on



inductive reasoning by which themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher's careful examination and constant comparison.

3.2. Data sources and participants

Data generated from institutional performance reports, group discussions with academia, high level meeting presentations and discussions and site visits during 2013/2014 to 2014/2015. Since there are currently 33 public universities, four private universities, and over ninety private university colleges/colleges whose age range from five years to over sixty years, nine public universities (Haramaya, JigJiga, Addis Ababa, Jimma, Gondar, Wollega, DebreBirhan, Aksum, Wolkite), two private universities (Admas and St.Mary) and one private College (Addis College) was selected randomly.

3.3. Procedures of Data Analysis and categorical results

Guided by the definition and conceptualization of community and engagement stated elsewhere in this paper, annual and midyear performance reports, supervision reports, meeting minutes, and field notes of the institutions were read and reread independently of each other in order to obtain an intuitive, holistic grasp of the description and to make sure that each natural meaning unit would be interpreted in context of university community engagement. A natural meaning unit (nmu) is "...a statement made by an individual/institution that is self-defining and self-delimiting in the expression of a single, recognizable aspect of the institution/ individual's experience..."(Stones, 1988, p.153). After reading and rereading the descriptions of reports with the respective institutions, each natural meaning unit in the context of off campus engagement was listed and numbered, and then emerging themes were merged first by institution and then collapsed in to general emerging patterns across the institutions finally. In other words; the following stages were employed.

- 1 individual key point summary using paragraph as a unit of analysis and numbering within the institutions
- 2 Identifying and merging similar themes within the institutions
- 3 Collapsing general emerging themes across the institutions



Following such procedures, an essential general structure which reflected the collective experiences of institutions were formulated and they include the following categories: pre-mission preparation, in mission coordination and post mission evaluation

3.4. Results and discussions

3.4.1. Pre-mission preparation

".....offering relevant and quality education and training; conducting demand driven research and rendering accessible community services....."
institutions mission statement

What is observed across all HEIs under the study is seeing "community service/ engagement" as one core mission of the institution at least in their report, web site, brusher and billboard as 'mission' statement. However; with regard to 'pre-mission preparation' that is, having a theoretical framework that will help to guide its implementation to meet community, industry and government expectations varies from university to university. Indeed, the content and priority of each university is not expected to be similar since their organizational capacities and local contexts may vary. But universities should have *institutional policy* - a policy reflecting institutional structure and appointment of accountable person along with duties and responsibilities vested up on to function, priority areas for a given discipline and period, stressing priority areas in the strategic plan, internal procedures of the university, appropriate staff recognition and reward processes , and working on the basis of a *mutual* exchange of ideas and benefits between the institution and its multiple communities, involving "the exchange of thinking across the boundary between academy and the rest of society, between thinkers and practitioners, researchers and innovators-on-the-ground [and] is essentially synergistic - it yields more than the sum of the thinking of both undertaken separately" (Wedgwood 2003, p. 126) and avoid seeing community engagement as paternalistic and uni-dimensional.

Since in most HEIs, preparation phases are fragmented and underway, to realize community engagement as a core mission, institutions are expected to develop a comprehensive institutional research and Community



engagement policy based on a situational analysis of internal institutional capacities, community needs, strategic opportunities, optimal courses of action, key players and type of power they exercise, monitoring and evaluating mechanisms etc to function actively in the social, economic, cultural and educational life of the local community.

3.4.2. In mission priority areas and coordination strategies

As society's challenges and aspirations change, so do the roles, the meaning and the civil functions of universities, whose capacity to reimagining and reinvent themselves has enabled them to persist (Shapiro, 2000, p.29). Campus engagement with local communities may take various forms; emerge from a variety of motivations, and have vastly different roots depending upon institutional culture, history, resource organization and capacities, and geography to mention few. Consequently, in an attempt to identify forms of university community engagement, the following themes and categories found to be being practiced in their community engagement mission though the scale, quality and outcomes vary among institutions.

3.4.3. Continuing education

"... Both public and private institutions are offering need driven alternative forms of education in the mode of distance, summer, and weekend education (undergraduate and post graduate) for those who didn't get the opportunity or access for post secondary education in the regular schooling (for various reason) and at the same time becoming one source of revenue generation for the institution ..." participants' performance report.

Trow described a higher education system in which half the population or more (>50%) of the relevant age group participates as a universal system, while a mass system has between 16-50% participation, and an elite system has up to 15% participation. In Ethiopia, even in the 21st century; the Gross Entry Ratio (ratio of the total number of new entrants as Year I regardless of age to population of theoretical entrance age (neglecting readmissions of year I), is about 8.9% (MOE, 2014). If we consider the undergraduate higher education enrolment for year I, II and III, the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) is about 7.8%. But if we consider the undergraduate higher education enrolment for year I, II, III, IV, V and VI, the GER is about 5.7% (Ibid) which



is under the lens of Trow (2006), is an “elite” higher education system because, according to Trow (2006), an elitist education exists whenever 15% or less of secondary school graduates people have access to higher education. And this has an implication for further expansion of higher education and make accessible for university age youth population since university degree is becoming a passport. And alternatively, expanding continuing studies through programs such as summer studies, special programs (weekends), Off-Campus centers, distance, online, border cross collaborations etc are the alternative means through which community university engagement linkages can be strengthened (Jarvis, 1995) provided that monitoring programs relevance and quality is unquestionable.

3.4.4. Capacity building activities

“... both public and private institution but few departments are providing different short term trainings for various governmental, nongovernmental and societal segments initiated by the instruction or demand from the local community ...”
supervision reports

Capacity building is an evidence-driven process of strengthening the abilities of individuals, organizations, organizational units and systems to perform core functions effectively, efficiently, sustainably, and to continue to improve and develop over time (UNDP, 1998). In today’s demographic, economic, socio-politic, ecologic (climate and biodiversity), cultural and religious and technological changing situations, updating, adapting and adopting equivalent measures in response to internal and external pressures using best practice innovative strategies is vital (Burdge and Vanclay, 1995). One way of addressing such forces is through community need based short term trainings in the form of on-job/off job trainings, varieties and series of updating workshops, orientations, seminars, conferences, forums, demonstrations etc. Therefore; capacity building is one way where community university engagement linkages can be a priority provided that trainings are based on community needs, clearly set goals, relevant contents, suitable training places and time, participatory and effective presentation skills, action oriented sessions and evaluating its effectiveness, both on training sessions and consequential impacts.



3.4.5. Applied, participatory, and community based Research (CBPR)

"...few departments of each public university are undertaking research on seed breeding, animal husbandry and fattening, disease control for domestic animals ...a shift in research culture from the mono-disciplinary model of knowledge production and dissemination to transdisciplinarity mode of distributed knowledge production and application"site visits of universities

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a collaborative approach to research that combines methods of inquiry with community capacity-building strategies to bridge the gap between knowledge produced through research and what is practiced in communities to improve emerging social, cultural and economic needs of communities (Viswanathan, et al ,2004) and enrich research, teaching capacities of researchers . More operationally

"CBR is..... research to be consumed, not to be stored on library shelves or hidden away in academic journals. It is research that can answer questions that classroom textbooks and existing research fail to address. It is research with an impact addressing community needs. It is research with a built –in constituency" (Nyden, 2003; p.580)

Few departments of Universities under study are undertaking researches in the context of application related to agricultural productivity. What this implies is that Universities are making important shifts in their community engagement mission. And this is a shift from- a predominately disciplinary model research characterized by its pure academic nature, associational dialogue, descriptive approach, homogeneous, expert-led, hierarchical, peer reviewed for quality judgments, publication (journal and proceedings) and promotional purpose, supply-driven and almost exclusively university-based (institutional consumption) to transdisciplinarity mode characterized by knowledge produced in the context of application, experimental, heterogeneity and organizational diversity, multi-sectoral, interdisciplinary linked through research groups and networks, enhanced social accountability, more broadly quality control system, participatory with concerned community(ies) such as business people, venture capitalists, patent lawyers, production engineers, as well as research scientists located outside the university, especially in research institutes (Gibbons, 1998).



3.4.6. Consultancy service

“... few departments of institutions are participating and rendering consultancy service in development forums, irrigation dams, and road designs, project works (power generation, sugar and fertilizer factories), business planning, entrepreneurship, project designing” Sample Universities performance report, supervision reports, meeting presentations

Consultancy refers to any form of professional or technical service rendered through the appropriate University channel or through links created or initiated by individual faculty with any organization or individual from outside a university while the term “consultant” or “consultants” refers to any organization or person that provides consulting services to a client under a contract (AAU, 2013). According to World Bank (2006), basic types of consulting services include *preparation services* (sectoral studies, master plans, feasibility studies, design studies etc); *implementation services* (tender documents, procurement assistance, construction supervision, quality management, project management etc) ; and *advisory services* (policy and strategy, institutional building, reorganization/privatization, training/knowledge transfer, management advice, technical/operating advice etc).

Since practice of multidisciplinary consultancy services are inadequate, universities are expected to reorganize and render consultancy service for various communities (public or private, manufacturing or service delivery) accordingly.

3.4.7. Service learning

“...institution having teaching hospitals and school of law are providing clinical services and free legal service respectively to local communities but students are graded for the academic learning aspect....” universities report, visited institutions

Service-learning is defined as a “course-based, credit bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility” (Bingle and Hatcher, 1995, p. 112). O’Grady (2000) and Stoecker and Tryon (2009) suggest that the key to service-learning



engagement is to maintain the focus on collaboration with communities for the purposes of community development and social problem-solving through the identification of community issues, along with components such as reflective activities for students and the integration of service with curriculum. When compared to other forms of experiential learning or semi professional skill development activities like internships, industrial placements, practicum, apprenticeship, and cooperative education, it is similar in that it is student-centered, hands-on and directly applicable to the curriculum. The critical difference and distinguishing characteristic of community engagement through service-learning is its reciprocal and balanced emphasis on both student learning and addressing unmet community needs (Narsavage and Lindell, 2001). Also, in service-learning, students are not only “serving to learn,” but also “learning to serve,” and hence students are graded for the academic learning they achieved and for the impact they brought on community by addressing unmet community needs. Despite institution provide clinical service for human beings and for domestic animals and free legal service across all universities under the study by using prospective graduating class students, and sometimes using faculty, evidence shows that students are graded for the academic performance or learning implies community aspects are not given emphasis.

3.4.8. Entrepreneurship and enterprising small businesses

“... few universities have established small entrepreneurial businesses (agro processing products, sport and reaction centers, fattening of animals, restaurants, swimming pools, book sale centers and publishing services) serving a means of revenue generation for the institution by commercializing to local communities on reasonable cost and serving as center of training for students and local communities..... ” sample universities report

University-community partnerships generally include an important role for small business development, since economic development is central to any sustained community development effort. The specific roles for the university coming from this side of the economic development process include technical assistance to existing and start-up businesses through the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for which universities typically provide extensive matching support; business incubators, with technical assistance and some material support for innovative initiatives; and



university-based purchasing by students, staff, and university units from local businesses (Appleseed, Inc. 2002). In participating small business set up, universities role is minimal. Therefore; Universities should strengthen entrepreneurship through academic programs, co-curricular activities, and community outreach as these methods of strengthening the small business sector represent an important model of university support for small business.

3.4.9. Innovation, partnership with industry and Technology Transfer

“... Artificial fish production using green house, chicken hatching machine, hay bee technologies innovation and dissemination to local communities is being practiced by few universities particularly Jimma, DebreBirhan and Haramaya...” Sample universities report

Today a net stock of intangible capital (e.g., education and research and development) has grown faster than that of tangible capital (e.g., buildings, transportation, roads, and machinery) implying that creating a variety of models of collaborations among universities, public research institutions, and private companies have emerged, including technology transfer, industrial extension and technical assistance, entrepreneurial development, industry education and training partnerships, and career services and placements (Tornatzky, Wagman, and Gray 2002; Green and Venkatachalam, 2005). However; Ethiopian Universities engagement in industry-based research and product development is minimal since University technology transfer activities such as research partnerships with industry; patenting and licensing university intellectual property; technical and managerial assistance programs; business incubators; research parks; and venture capital and start-up activities establishments and operations are rarely addressed in their performance report and universities should give due attention further.

3.4.10. Environmental protection

“... Environmental protection activities such recovering dried lake, dam protection, replanting cleared areas by indigenous plants by Haramaya, Arbaminch, Jimma, Admas universities are being engaged ... ” sample university performance and supervision reports



Environmental degradation, including depletion of renewable and non-renewable resources and pollution of air, water and soils, the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of wildlife occurring naturally or through human processes are becoming a significant source of stress upon societies (UNDP, 1994). To this effect, especially for a country like Ethiopia where over 84% of population is rural (engaged in either traditional farming or pastorals life), repeated famine, draught and hunger are striking, giving due attention to environmental protection activities such as through reforestation, conservation of water, soils, wild life etc should be strengthened.

3.4.11. Graduate tracer study

“...assessing program and curricula quality and relevance efforts using actual graduates work competence, employability and employers satisfaction evidence is so small except Jimma and Debre Birhan Universities.....” sample university reports

Tracer Study is an approach that enables higher education institutions to obtain information about possible deficiencies in the educational process and the learning process and can form the basis for planning activities for the improvement in the future (Schomburg, 2003). The survey also aimed to assess the contribution of the university training to graduates personal development as well as the quality of the programmers of study in terms of content, delivery and relevance to the world of work. In such cases, tracer studies could be used as a means of maintaining curriculum relevance and providing targeted benefits to graduates to enhance marketability of programs (Unwin, 2003).

3.4.12. Post mission evaluation instruments

“...benchmarks and performance indicators designed to evaluate the prgress by which higher education institutions establish community partnerships, demonstrate their socio-economic and cultural contribution at local and regional level and how to sustained them is rare...” reports and discussion consensus

The growing importance of community and public engagement activities in universities has led to an increasing emphasis on auditing and evaluating university–community partnerships (Hart and Northmore, 2010). Despite widespread acknowledgement that universities should contribute to the



development of the society of which they are a part, the problems in measuring university–community engagement include: a lack of focus on outcomes; a lack of standardized instruments and tools; and the variety of approaches currently being adopted (Hart and Northmore, 2010). Similarly, reports of universities under the study demonstrate that the development of effective audit and evaluation tools for university public engagement is still at a formative stage suggesting that a systematic approach to auditing and evaluating university–community engagement is needed.

3.4.13. Trustworthiness: issues of credibility and Transferability

To improve the credibility of research results; triangulating (university performance reports, MOE supervision reports, high level meeting presentation) and rechecking interpretations against raw data were done. Data sets and descriptions that are rich enough so that other researchers are able to make judgments about the findings' transferability to different settings or contexts are available up on request.

4. Findings and conclusions

- Expectations on universities by industry, government and the community are higher than ever to make a valuable and tangible contribution to local, regional, national and international growth and wellbeing. But practicing to realize this guided by institutional policy which consists of pre-mission preparation, in mission coordination of priorities, and post mission evaluation mechanisms of outcomes is found to be inadequate
- While numerous engagement strategies are in evidence, continuing education, applied and community based research, consultancy service, entrepreneurship and enterprising small businesses, innovation and technology transfer, capacity building activities, service learning, environmental protection activities, language development and graduate tracer study were areas of engagement though vary from institutions to institutions in scope, scale and type.
- Despite there are beginnings of university community engagement activities, designing benchmarks and performance indicators, measuring and evaluating against such instruments and reflecting



the benefits that flow from such partnerships to both universities and communities with which they engaged were found to be inadequate. Consequently; it is concluded that despite HEIs have begun to recognize the benefits of community engagement as a mission statement, it is found that HEIs are currently at different stages of conceptualizing, formalizing and implementing community engagement policies and strategies and often fall short of making a real impact in their surrounding communities. Finally, it is also suggested that national higher education community service and engagement strategies should be developed and communicated so that respective institutions further develop institutional policies or road maps clearly indicating initial institution preparations and arrangements (pre-mission preparation), priority areas selection and operations (in mission coordination strategies) and monitoring and remedial techniques (post mission evaluation instruments) and outcome celebrations which may be exhibited during graduation weeks.

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