Questioning private good driven university-community engagement: a Tanzanian case study

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Abstract

This study examined the motives underpinning involvement in community engagement by academics. The broader context of the study is the idea of universities as actors for and contributors to the public good, especially through community engagement. Engaging with communities is associated with the historical social mandate of universities, and is generally framed as a way through which universities participate in addressing pressing social, economic, and moral challenges that confront communities and society at large. However, as illustrated in this study, university-community engagement is also being framed in ways which, though not necessarily antithetical to the pursuit of the public good, treat it as an occasional, peripheral, 'add on' activity, geared towards advancing the private interests and benefits of academics. The study illustrates this framing and practice using a case study of community engagement in an African university. The study highlights transactional forms of community engagement, which are at odds with its transformative potential with respect to the public good. We argue that for university-community engagement to become an effective mechanism for advancing the public good, there is a need for universities, and individual academics, to rethink the undergirding principles and values of community engagement and put in place the requisite institutional support to drive community engagement as an institutionalised practice, towards genuine engagement with communities.

Keywords

- Community engagement
- Communities
- Public good
- Private good
- Universities

Introduction

When Ernest Boyer articulated the idea of 'scholarship of engagement' in higher education in the 1990s, his vision was founded on higher education institutions advancing what is commonly known as the public good. Public good is a complex, slippery and fluid concept that falls within the realms of philosophical, sociological and classical economic thought. In the recent past, the debate about the purposes of higher education has witnessed the concept of public good becoming a key lexicon in the higher education literature. Higher education for the, and as a, public good entails promoting dimensions that are central to creating a just and humane society (Collini, 2012). Such role requires a closer identification of the different ways in which activities of teaching, research and community engagement (CE) could yield public good benefits (Singh, 2014).

The idea of CE has many conceptualisations and for the purpose of this paper, we draw on Fitzgerald et al. (2016; 229), who understand CE as:

> […] the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors 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.

This conceptualisation encapsulates dimensions of transformative CE as it emphasises the centrality of partners coming together to pursue common purpose, create the possibility of generative growth and change through mutual interaction, and apply resources to address complex problems (Strier, 2014). It captures some of the core elements that are central to advancing the public good in, and through, CE. These include principles, norms and values of reciprocity, equality, inclusion, participatory parity, mutuality, rationality and ethic of care, which are core to describing higher education for and as a public good. CE that takes a transformative approach provides possibilities for multiple partners to collectively define the values of CE in a mutual and reciprocal way.

The origin of CE is associated with the historical social mandate of universities and calls for the renewal of their public purposes. Boyer[Footnote 1] (1996) identified a number of pressing social, economic and moral challenges that continue to confront the world today, and called upon higher education to actively participate in addressing them. Boyer was critical of what Cloete et al. (2011) refer to as an excessive inward orientation, which results in the university becoming an 'ivory tower', divorced from critical societal issues. As such, Boyer (1996) argued:

> … the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems-and must reaffirm its historical commitment to the scholarship of engagement (p. 18).

Central to Boyer's call is the critical contribution of CE in enabling universities to achieve the fundamental mandate of advancing the public good. As Brukardt et al. (2004; 6) underscore, 'engagement is… […] central to and supportive of the historic goals of education, discovery and serving the public good'. Similarly, McCowan (2019: 96) argues that 'community engagement […] does provide a precious opportunity for universities to involve in the social justice and natural environment dimensions of the Sustainable

Development Goals (SGDs)'. Whilst CE's inherent orientation is the advancement of the public good, some CE practices cannot be said to be aligned with this outcome. These practices do not reflect the principles of reciprocity, equality, inclusion, empowerment, transformation of lives and communities (Silbert, 2019) amongst others, which underpin the public good driven CE. This approach to CE is the focus of the paper. Using a case study of an African University, we highlight various forms of CE, mainly transactional, which, we argue, are at odds with its transformative potential with respect to the public good. We specifically respond to the question 'Are universities and academics' orientation, conceptions and motives toward CE obscuring the promotion of public good outcomes?'.

The paper has six sections: following the introduction, we interrogate the idea of the public good in relation to CE. The third section engages with the question of private-good driven CE and its implications, while the research methodology is presented in section four. The fifth section discusses findings of the study and the last section is the conclusion.

Interrogating the idea of the public good from the standpoint of community engagement

The concept of the public good emanated from classical economics and was popularised by economist Paul Samuelson in the 1950s. Related to higher education, some authors define it in economic terms, while some conceive it using competing ideas of private versus public benefits (McMahon, 2009), and others have approached it from a human development standpoint (Nixon, 2011). For Chambers and Gopaul (2008), also Mtawa (2019), higher education for the public good reflects research and pedagogy that promote active engagement of citizens for the betterment of the community and society. While these scholarly works provide a useful starting point in understanding the complexities and multidimensionality of the notion of the public good, in this paper, the definition of public good is influenced by the idea of the "developmental university" that dominated debates about the role of African universities during the 1960/1970s. Driven by the developmental university idea, African universities were required to assist postcolonial governments to modernise, expedite person-power formation and also address basic existential challenges faced by the local populations, such as supporting farmers, providing informal traders with skills and helping villagers to improve their life conditions (Wangenge-Ouma & Fongwa, 2012).

The notion of the public good and the ways in which universities can contribute to advancing it cuts across various functions of these institutions. Central to this framing, is the question of how universities through their core functions, namely research, teaching and CE can reflect upon who they are for, who they can serve and how (Leibowitz, 2012). At issue is the call for universities to aim at promoting social justice, inclusion and care for others (Mtawa, 2019). This thinking has witnessed CE being regarded as one of the mechanisms through which universities can promote the public good. As such, many scholars have embarked on exploring and understanding CE from the public good perspective (Mtawa, 2019; Gordon da Cruz, 2017). Such CE would require a true and meaningful university-community partnership based on reciprocal and mutual benefit with deliberate intention to focus on addressing a wide range of societal challenges (Fitzgerald et al., 2016).

Discussions of CE in relation to the public good are centred on two key models of the university. The first is the *developmental model*, whose roots goes back to the US land grant university model in the nineteenth century (McCowan, 2019) and later underpinned by the idea of the university in Africa, especially in the 1970s, as an important actor in the transformation and development of the post-colonial African society. The second model is

the *extension model* in Latin America, inspired by the Cordoba Movement in 1918. These models share four main features. As described by McCowan (2019), they are oriented towards service to society with an attempt to address societal needs and promote the benefits of surrounding communities; they are expected to operate in an egalitarian way by supporting disadvantaged populations; and they deliver non-academic benefits of an economic, social and political nature to communities. The final feature is that of application of knowledge, turning of the theoretical and abstract toward the practical and immediate ends. However, the conditions under which contemporary universities operate have, to various extents, resulted in a drift away from these important features. This has had implications for the development of mutually beneficial interactions with communities, social responsiveness, the transformation of lives, and even responsiveness to global challenges.

A private good agenda of community engagement?

CE faces a number of challenges that obscure its ability to enable universities to contribute to the public good. Some of these challenges, however, are not new and can be traced back to several decades ago. Holland (2005) argues that by the 1990s, there was a sharp decline of public belief in the idea of higher education as a force for the public good. "The idea that higher education has a responsibility, through the deployment of its research and teaching, to contribute to the quality of community life, democratic capacity, and connecting knowledge to public needs and opportunities, was largely lost" (Holland, 2005:11). These challenges are influenced by factors such as the history of the university, its strategic frameworks, culture, leadership and governance; the nature of surrounding communities; national priorities; local, national and international pressures and the complex, at times, contradictory relationship between universities, the state and society. In addition to these factors, neoliberalism has established itself as a major impediment to fostering the public good through CE. Authors such as McCowan (2019), Mtawa (2019) and Brackmann (2015), underline that neoliberalism is influencing and constraining the nature of public benefits as it has replaced ideals of public interest and democratic responsibility with ideals of individual responsibility, competition and efficiency. As such, various forms of CE, which are central to advancing public good outcomes, receive less priority in terms of funding and recognition. For example, in her study of land-grant universities, Brackmann (2015) indicates that CE programmes are asked to demonstrate their value to the university and state through income generation or measurable impact or face a risk of being eliminated and/or reduced.

Although relatively little is highlighted in the literature in relation to CE advancing private interests, it is tempting to argue that the conditions under which CE operates and the instrumental motivation for CE (Hickey, 2015) carry elements that point toward the direction of private good outcomes. A critical analysis of the literature indicates that CE initiatives that carry private good motivations provide, amongst others, an alternative means of generating income for both the university and individual academics. Arguably, this is one of the areas that continues to proliferate as universities, as well as academics, respond to funding cuts and, in some contexts, low or lack of financial incentives (Mtawa et al., 2016). In this context 'community engagement becomes another source of revenue for the public institutions' (Brackmann, 2015: 121), as well as for individual academics. In addition to financial incentives, CE becomes a convenient horse upon which academics pursue private advantage, such as occupational success and academic visibility.

It is argued that an overemphasis on economic and personal outcomes is likely to impair the public good dimensions of CE, amongst them transformative aims such as social justice,

solidarity, epistemic justice[Footnote 2] and democratic ethos. Such trends may also limit academics from playing the 'role of public intellectuals, community activists and other forms of participation in work, research, and creative endeavours, both inside and outside the academic sphere' (Luka et al., 2015: 177).

Research methodology

Research setting

The research reported here focuses on the views of academics involved in CE activities at a public university in Tanzania. The history of higher education and the debate about the role of universities post-independence in Tanzania is associated with the country's political and ideological position that steered educational reforms toward societal transformation. This was enshrined in the ideologies of *Ujamaa* (socialism) and Education for Self-Reliance, which were efforts aimed at breaking the colonial system of education (Campbell, 1991). The aim of the Arusha Declaration of 1967 was to lay the foundation for building a new, egalitarian society with a different pathway to development. In this context, universities were regarded as apparatuses for advancing socialism. While political leadership envisaged that universities would be instrumental in fighting poverty, disease and ignorance, which were described as the three enemies of development, fear began to rise that universities remained aloof from the affairs of public life and operated as 'ivory towers'. The founders of the nation, led by Julius Nyerere, were concerned that:

> "[…] the campus design set the university apart as an elite institution, luxurious, high standard, high quality of campus facilities but typical of an 'ivory tower' distancing itself from the ordinary communities" (Ivaska, 2005; 87).

It was argued that the 'education system was not imbuing students [and staff/academics] with egalitarian attitudes. Rather, it was sharpening the sense of indispensability, exclusiveness, power, prestige and [privilege] in the selected few' (Block, 1984: 99). The educational reforms that were implemented to tie the university to the national development ideology involved a number of measures and programmes which included (Ivaska, 2005):

(i) ensuring the direct involvement of academics and students in development projects and sharing the life of the manual worker in the agricultural villages or factories during long vacations;

(ii) altering the admission requirements and demanding that, apart from performance in the School Certificate, students should have other prerequisites such as community involvement mainly through the national service scheme; and

(iii) introduction of compulsory subjects like 'East African Society and Environment' and 'Development Studies'

The above concerns mirror closely the land-grant (practicality) and developmental models of universities described by McCowan (2019). However, in the late 1980s to mid-1990s, the government and political leadership paid little attention regarding the public agenda of universities. One of the major reasons for the decline in the universities' involvement in communities was the government's shift of priority from higher education to primary and secondary education. Coincidently, this shift happened when socialism in Tanzania was at its

demise. Due to this shift, Kamando and Doyle (2013) reveal that a massive gap started to emerge between the universities and communities, not only in Tanzania but also in other African countries.

The choice of the case study university was informed by the need to establish an in-depth understanding of the emerging drift of CE towards a private-good orientation. This university has a history of engaging with communities dating back to the 1970s. The university was established with the main purpose of promoting, inter alia, the agricultural sector, which remains the backbone of the Tanzanian economy. In his inaugural address following the case study university's attainment of fully-fledged university status in 1984, Julius Nyerere, then president of Tanzania and chancellor of the university, pronounced as follows:

> … the main objective of [this university] is not abstract research or training of academicians who can write learned treaties. Certainly, we hope that it will do all these things, for we expect – and we demand from both staff and students – rigorous scholarship and scientific research. But they are not what the university will be judged by during the next twenty years or more. This university must be answering the needs and solving the problems of Tanzanian agriculture and rural life. Its aim must be, firstly, to contribute towards improved production and therefore improve standards of living for the people who live on the land or in connection with the land… (The African Institute for Capacity Development—AICAD 2011; 5).

Although this founding statement seems to focus more on the economic aspect of development, it also provides an indication that advancing public interests in a public good fashion was deemed as one of the main reasons for establishing the university. The university has since been using outreach education, extension education and altruistic acts as the main strategies to address the development problems (University X Outreach Policy 2017). Nevertheless, it is worth asking, given the context in which universities in low-income countries such as Tanzania operate, to what extent academics think and practice CE in the direction of advancing the public good.

Data collection

Data for this paper emanates from a broader qualitative study that looked at the linkages between CE and teaching and research. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which took place in two phases. The first phase was conducted between October 2012 and January 2013. This phase constituted 16 (5 women and 11 men) academics[Footnote 3] involved in CE activities. These academics were identified from the university CE database and recruited through face to face meetings, emails and telephonic communications. The interviewed academics were purposely sampled across different disciplines and by considering their longevity of involvement in CE, which spanned two years and above.

The first phase of interviews was guided by three main questions:

1.What constitutes CE at this university?

2.What are the main approaches to CE at this university?

3.Who are the main communities and partners in CE?

The initial aim of the study was to explore how academics are linking teaching and research to CE practices. Following the analysis of the first set of interviews, there were elements that pointed toward individual gains as one of the main reasons for the involvement of academics in different forms of CE. This was one of the key emerging trends which warranted further exploration. In addition, during the first set of interviews, most academics were involved in several ongoing internally and externally funded CE projects. To reaffirm our observation that academics were engaging in CE largely for private benefits, we decided to undertake follow up interviews after five years. Hoping that most of the CE projects would have been finished or be in their completion stages, the second phase of follow-up interviews was conducted in June 2018 and involved two main questions:

1.What motivates and drives academics to engage in CE activities?

2. What opportunities do CE activities offer to academics?

The follow-up interviews involved the same cohort of academics who participated in the first phase of the study but only 12 (2 women and 10 male) of them. Four academics in the initial cohort were not available to participate in the study. In all cases, data collection followed standard ethical procedures. The table below provides a summary of the profiles of the participants (see Table 1):

Table 1 Profile of participants

Participants	Gender	Stage of career	Disciplinary focus
Academic 2	Female	Senior lecturer	Food technology
Academic 3	Female	Associate professor	Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness
Academic 6	Male	Associate Professor	Policy Planning and Management
Academic 7	Male	Senior lecturer	Language and Communication
Academic 8	Male	Associate Professor	Agricultural Education and Extension
Academic 9	Male	Junior lecturer	Information and Communication Technology
Academic 10	Male	Professor	Agricultural Education and Extension
Academic 11	Male	Associate professor	Agricultural extension and Community Development
Academic 12	Male	Junior lecturer	Agricultural extension and Community Development
Academic 13	Male	Lecturer	Continuing Education
Academic 14	Male	Associate professor	Development Studies
Academic 16	Male	Associate professor	Soil and Geological Sciences

The data was transcribed verbatim and coded manually in order to allow the views and language of participants to dictate the analysis (Saldana, 2009). The study relied on thematic analysis using both deductive and inductive approaches through which some themes emerged from the data while others were generated through juxtaposing the data against the conceptual framework underpinning the paper. In reporting the data, we have identified participants using the generic pseudonym 'University Academic'. Individual interviewees are distinguished by assigning them numerals; inter alia, University Academic 1 or University Academic 6.

The main limitation of the study is its focus on one group of CE actors (academics) at a single institution, rather than a diversity of CE actors (students, university administrators and community members) at multiple institutions, with different orientations to CE. We acknowledge that, by focusing only on academics, the study misses out on the perspectives of

other CE actors such as university administrators, students and community members, which could potentially have enriched the analysis. However, the focus on academics only was deliberate given the increasing calls for them to participate in public issues through fusion of thought (scholarship) and action (engagement) (Hartelius & Cherwitz, 2010). In addition, we are cognizant of the critical role academics play in designing and implementing CE activities and how these bear on yielding public good outcomes. More importantly, the focus on academics only was informed by the two research questions, viz. 'what motivates and drives academics to engage in CE activities?' and 'what opportunities do CE activities offer to academics?'.

A drift towards private good community engagement

At the case study university, CE is referred to as an outreach, which "means a community service using knowledge, technology, products or services by the university […], outreach increases availability and utilisation of services and knowledge through intervention and interaction with society" (University X Outreach Policy 2017; 5). Outreach at the case study university constitutes elements of continuing education, community education and services, and extension work. In addition, the university participates in outreach activities through involvement in agricultural shows where it demonstrates new technologies, innovations and crop demonstration; and displays prototypes, printed materials including books, posters, leaflets and brochures on various topics. The displays also include research outputs and training activities. The broader trend in the ways in which outreach is articulated and reported at the university has elements of both the entrepreneurial and developmental university. The entrepreneurial elements include commercialisation of research output, consultancy, knowledge transfer and generation of income. We also see developmental dimensions where outreach activities target small-scale, self-employed, informal entrepreneurs and subsistence farmers in rural areas. Drawing on the perspectives that surfaced from the interviews, three key findings pointing towards private good driven CE emerged.

A case for transactional forms of community engagement

At the core of CE is the long-term and bidirectional CE partnerships that are transformative to the university's core functions as well as to communities' aspirations and expectations. This transformative partnership emphasises the centrality of deliberation, dialogue, mutual understanding, agency, non-hierarchical, epistemic justice, diversity, solidarity and sustainable partnerships (Mtawa, 2019; Strier, 2014). Yet the transformative CE, which is central to advancing public good outcomes, is often undermined in practice. The analysis of the data indicates that CE activities at the case study university are undertaken within the realm of transactional[Footnote 4] relationships, which focus on meeting immediate needs, involving periodic and short-term relationships that lead to ameliorative changes (Strier, 2014). Although transactional CE may have some public good elements, it is limited to the extent that it does not address the root causes of social ills (Strier, 2014). In addition, CE activities take what Cloete et al. (2011) termed as a 'projectisation' approach, which is characterised by CE projects that are shorter, one-off activities, driven by funders and financial imperatives, and have limited impact on the university's core functions as well as greater public good outcomes.

The lack of funding for CE was cited by academics as one of the main reasons behind what can be described as the transactional and projectisation approach and forms of CE:

One of the root causes is lack of adequate finance to do outreach. The government is always constrained; the priority always goes to training undergraduates. When it comes to research and outreach, we are depending on donors and sustainability and consistency is a problem. Therefore, we see consultancy and commissioned research projects as a solution (University Academic 3).

With CE given less priority, it appears that academics are compelled to seek external funds to undertake CE activities or projects disguised as the former. Nevertheless, as indicated in the excerpt above, this approach cannot sustain CE projects and has limited contribution to outcomes that endure over time. This is in line with the views of the majority of the academics who pointed toward CE activities that revolve around transactional relationships and projectisation, and have a low scope of shared aspirations, exchange and limited transformative capacity.

The upshot of reliance on external funds is that CE is undertaken partially, sporadically and with minimal or no meaningful benefits to the communities:

Relying on external funds has made us to do outreach at a very superficial level because you want to meet the funders' goal in a very short period. We have seen that it has become very much impossible to do a proper research and outreach projects with some benefit going down to the communities and linking students to these activities (University Academic 6).

I would say we depend too much on projects and remember projects only exist for a short period, thus when a project ends that is the end of outreach activities. Hence, I would say we are limited in terms of funding and external funds is the main reliable source of funding to my knowledge (University Academic 1).

From the above excerpts, three key issues are likely to impede academics from defining and utilising CE as a platform to co-produce and apply knowledge for the public good, as well as engage with communities to address critical challenges. These are over-dependency on external sources of funds; the pressure on completion of the project's outcomes, which often have limited impact on communities; and the private gains motive of engaging in CE projects.

However, the question the above excerpts beg is that, if academics are aware that externally funded CE projects lead to transactional forms of engagement and constrain the realisation of transformative aims of CE, why do they continue to engage in those activities and what are they doing to address the limitations? It seems that private gains, related to career enhancement and income generation rather than positive and long-term change in communities, motivate the academics' involvement in CE projects. The role of international agencies and their relationship with universities in CE, particularly in developing countries, cannot be underestimated. While we might be critical of academics for their involvement in transactional forms of CE, we need to be mindful of the conditions under which the university in question and the majority of African universities operate. As such, it is plausible to argue that the externally funded CE projects are not as negative as they seem to be and African universities can only ignore them at their own peril. However, given the circumstances, what is required is for universities to be conscious of the danger and limitations of externally funded CE projects to their core functions and social values. For academics, they should reflect on their obligations and moral responsibilities as citizens and

scholars—engaging with communities for the pursuit of the public good. This leads us to the two findings that speak specifically about private-driven CE.

Academics' economic and financial survival

The majority of the interviewed academics identified income generation as one of the principal drivers for involvement in CE. The focus on income generation was attributed to inadequate government funding and the need to supplement their salaries, which they regard as low. The academics therefore perceived CE as essential for individual economic and financial sustainability as illustrated in the excerpts below:

> The teaching profession in higher learning institutions is not a high paying job here. This is comparing with other professions/sectors in the country; I am referring to staff in government, other public and private organisations, so we have to do consultancy or any other outreach activities that can help you earn something (University Academic 14).

> We are squeezed into a financial syndrome, professors need money, what we get here surely is too small. So I have seen cases of staff changing from one commissioned research and outreach to another depending on where they get more money (University Academic 8).

The notion that academics are likely to move from one CE activity to another with the sole purpose of securing financial gains as indicated in the second excerpt suggests that the collective and social value of CE is given secondary importance. Nevertheless, these kinds of engagement and the motives thereof provide a means for what is referred to by academics in the study as 'survival'. Seen as a way of surviving in a hostile neo-liberal context of higher education, dominated by stiff competition, inadequate funding support and stringent financial regulations, some academics commented as follows:

> … doing commissioned research I see it as a way of survival, you know, you get your money and you survive knowing that if you just rely on teaching salary alone it is difficult to make it in 30 days, and you know we get very small amount of money through teaching (University Academic 11).

> Because the government makes very little financial contribution to the university, you have to do outreach to mobilise funds from different avenues where you can get funds for projects. It is a pro-active nature of the scientists and that is why individuals have been very aggressive to look for projects and funds from outside (University Academic 5).

Engaging in lucrative consultancy work, often for international and multinational organisations and government, as a mechanism for generating income, was the common thread across the academics' voices. Although through consultancy forms of CE academics may contribute to promoting some public good elements, the language used by the academics in the study points exclusively to personal enrichment:

> In consultancy, we do not necessarily engage directly with the community, it depends on the assignment. You can be working with certain NGOs, government or agencies

to try to solve a certain problem within your expertise. All academics are involved in consultancy here and the main reason is to make extra cash (University Academic 8).

Outreach or extension depend on the kind of money you have, source and for what purpose, thus the title or theme of the research you want to do in outreach will depend on the money that you can be given or find from the external people (University Academic 2).

What is peculiar in the forgoing excerpts is the comment that 'all academics (at the case study university) are involved in consultancy' mainly to make money, which also influences the nature of outreach activities and the outcomes. It also appears that these consultancies are not institutionally structured and coordinated. This kind of engagement, other than adding little value to communities, also erodes the academic core functions of universities: the consultancies do not result in the generation of new knowledge and they undermine university teaching and postgraduate supervision. Arguing from a publishing point of view, one academic stated that, in some cases, academics are pre-occupied with CE activities at the expense of producing publications. This has pernicious implications for the generation of new knowledge as captured in the excerpt below:

You find a person is deeply involved in consultancy and the research contract's intensity is such that you cannot even get time to publish. Therefore, you might be using a lot of time but at the end of the day you produce nothing, but you have your money (University Academic 10).

From the interviews, one gets a sense that perhaps CE activities, such as consultancies, that come through university channels may come with demands that are public-orientated and limited individual financial benefits. Thus, securing consultancies without the university's involvement maximises financial gains. This, perhaps, speaks to the historical and recent financial crises and deterioration of working conditions that have tilted academics towards fragmented and sporadic consultancies. These consultancies harbour vital rationales, such as falling value of basic salary, limited capacity by universities to provide competitive research funds and failure of national research councils (King, 2009).

From the academics' voices, we see that the financial motive has obscured their ability to define and utilise consultancies as a form of CE in its broader sense. Similarly, the academics do not see CE as a space to enhance traditional activities of research and teaching, responding to societal needs and cultivating civic dispositions among students in the direction of promoting the public good. In their study, Bond and Paterson (2005) find similar kinds of views where CE was sometimes rationalised in largely instrumental terms.

Promotion and related incentives

A number of respondents leaned quite heavily towards doing CE because it contributes to generating outcomes that are essential for academic promotion and related incentives. Traditionally, CE and its products have often played little value or low relevance in academic promotion and tenure and this is still the case, particularly in the African context. Notwithstanding the debate about the role of CE in promotion and tenure (Gelmon et al., 2013), the views of our interviewees indicate contrasting interpretations of CE outcomes in relation to promotion and associated incentives.

Some see CE activities as a platform through which publications can be generated even though, as discussed in the preceding section, consultancy work hardly results in publications. Whilst the publication of new knowledge has undeniable public benefits, the language used by academics in the study to describe its pursuit and related benefits locates it within the realm of private gains:

> When you are not established as a full or senior professor, you have to try to be involved more in outreach and related activities such as research and consultancy hoping that you will earn some publications out of them and get promoted. That is how it works here and, of course, without exaggerating this promotion comes with money (University Academic 12).

However, other academics indicated that CE activities and related outputs such as publications do not count for academic promotion. In their view, only publications that emerge from other research endeavours are considered for promotion:

> We do not get credit and promoted because of outreach activities. You can only get promoted if you produce publications from other research. So you have to go an extra mile to come up with the publications focusing on some other activities that will earn you some points for your promotion (University Academic 4).

> They don't promote you because you are doing outreach or publishing papers from outreach, we have even been questioning ourselves whether the university should also think of incentives for those people actively writing papers from outreach or doing outreach activities. As for now, we do not get anything from outreach activities (University Academic 9).

Although no specific reasons were provided by academics as to why CE outputs were undervalued when it comes to promotion at this university, the literature indicates that, this continues to be one of the longstanding debates in the CE field. Some of the reasons provided in the literature, and which may apply in this case, include the narrow conceptualisation of CE, lack of rigour in community-engaged scholarship, promotion criteria not recognising multiple forms of scholarship, and authenticity and measurements of CE products (Gelmon et al., 2013). A couple of questions might be asked in relation to the above academics' voices. For example, how can a university, which does not recognise CE as an integral component in promotion, encourage academics to use it for providing meaningful contribution to the broader society? Perhaps this explains why CE often takes a transactional approach and is undertaken within the context of projectisation, as described in the foregoing finding. One way of addressing this conundrum is for universities to ensure that their hiring and promotion policies and practices recognise and reward community-engaged scholarship.

From the foregoing, we see how the motives related to private good gains outweigh those that can enable academics to contribute to the public good outcomes in, and through, CE. Specifically, we see conditions that compel academics to focus more on being involved in CE for private gains such as income generation, personal networks, and academic promotion. These motives constrain academics from engaging in CE with the aim of generating outcomes that can benefit the wider society in terms of shared aspirations, collective agency and solidarity that can enable universities and their local milieu to transform structural inequalities and societal challenges.

Conclusion

Globally, the discussion about CE is premised on the argument that it has the potential to enable higher education institutions and communities to collectively enrich scholarship, prepare educated and engaged citizens, strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility, and address critical social issues. However, the conditions under which higher education institutions operate in Tanzania, and in other sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, impede CE from achieving goals related to promoting the public good. At issue is that CE is shifting from being a public good oriented endeavour to becoming a repertoire through which private good benefits for academics can be yielded.

This paper, using the views of academics from a public university in Tanzania, has highlighted findings that point toward the direction of academics using CE for the pursuit of private good outcomes. This is manifested through the involvement of academics in transactional forms of CE, which favour individual benefit, inter alia, financial gains, promotion and related incentives. This approach to CE takes away what Garlick and Palmer (2008) refer to as the 'moral and ethical purpose' of CE, as well as partnerships that allow people to act collectively for the greater good. In other words, the transactional forms of CE are at odds with Dorn's (2017) idea of 'ethical engagement', which is central to promoting the public good.

Although this is a study of one university in Tanzania, the results may be prevalent in universities in Tanzania and beyond. Our case study university highlights a number of conditions under which most universities in SSA operate, and how these conditions undermine the pursuit of the public good in, and through, CE. Broadly, our case study university supports earlier studies that revealed similar universities' conditions and academics' motives toward CE for private good purposes (Wight et al., 2014; Babalola, 2010). These conditions include institutional orientations that do not support public good driven CE, coupled with the institutions' limited capacity to support academics to engage in CE as an institutionalised practice. CE involves multiple stakeholders, including funders, government, industries, civil society and local communities, often with different and varying objectives and aspirations. These dynamics shape, to various extents, academics' motives for engaging in CE. Academics find themselves having to juggle the, sometimes contradictory, interests of the various role players in CE. Central to navigating multiple actors and demands in an uncoordinated fashion, is that CE tends to becomes fragmented and sporadic. There is a need for further research to unpack enabling institutional conditions that can allow academics to engage in CE in ways that advance the public good. Equally important is the need to develop clear indicators of what constitutes public good orientated CE.

Notes

[1.]In spite of his contribution to CE, Ernest Boyer can also be criticized for taking a functional approach to CE in terms of the functions CE can serve mainly in relation to the core functions of the university and for not taking into account contextual factors in his model of CE.

[2.]Epistemic justice refers to equality, freedoms and agency of all citizens to contribute to the production and sharing of information and knowledge (Fricker, 2015).

[3.]We understand that CE involved many actors such as students, university administrators and external communities. However, in this paper we only focus on academics given that their

involvement in designing and implementing CE activities has significant implications for the outcomes both for individuals and the wider community.

[4.]The transactional CE has little consideration for mutual goals or shared purposes and mainly concerned with the achievement of individual purposes (Strier, 2014).

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