Institutional Policy for Community Transformation Activities by Disciplinary Fields in Ugandan Universities: Case Study of Gulu University

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Abstract

Community transformation rhetoric by some universities is so unequivocal that one would expect such universities to have institutional policies informing disciplinary activities for the same. Studies focusing this area are glaringly sparse. We investigated how policies inform community transformation activities by disciplinary fields in Gulu University, a public university in Uganda. The study answered the question: how do policies inform community transformation activities by disciplinary fields in Gulu University? A qualitative case study using in-depth interviews and documents check was conducted. Fifteen members of academic and management staff constituted the sample. Findings reveal an institutional policy-disciplinary activity disjuncture. It is recommended that institutional policy should be developed to mainstream community transformation into activities by disciplinary fields in such a university that seeks to transform community to give the university a true community oriented stature.

Key words: Policy, Community, Transformation, Institutional, Gulu University; Uganda

1.0 Introduction

The primacy of universities in shaping the modern society needs not be over-emphasised (Altbach, 2015). Traditionally, universities were charged with three functions: teaching, research and service (Chatterton, 2000; Kellogg Commission, 1999). They are expected to apply these three functions consciously, directly and concurrently to solve societal problems and transform communities, but that has not always been the case (Boyer, 2016). Teaching tends to be theoretical, typified by heavy workloads, while both research and service have been shunned by the professoriate in most universities in favour of the teaching function for its quick and direct pecuniary gains (Kasozi, 2009). Serving societal good has been relegated to a secondary function (Raditloaneng, 2015). Whereas, there is some semblance of activities that seem to contribute to community transformation in Makerere University (Bisaso, 2013; Mugabi, 2014), for Gulu University, the situation seems oblivious. Kalule et al (2016) report the Student-Centred Outreach Model in Faculty of Agriculture in Gulu University. In terms of policies, not much is known. This study explored how institutional policies inform activities by disciplinary fields for community transformation in Gulu University.

1.1 Background

In Africa, generalisation of issues regarding universities is difficult due to the apparent diversity in major themes such as quality, orientation, financial support, it only is possible in some key thematic areas (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). Universities in Africa operate in the context of colonial legacy, economic and social distress, challenges of HIV/AIDS among others (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). Thus, a call upon universities to respond to the need for community transformation supported by requisite policies to inform disciplinary activities. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), excluding the franco-phone and luso-phone countries has relative homogeneity in the higher education terrain, partly attributed to the British colonial legacy on higher education (Assie-Lumumba, 2006) and partly to other factors (Teferra, 2016).

During colonial times, the policy was that Africans pursue university education in the metropolis (Ajayi, Lameck and Jonhson, 1996). In effect, SSA had no universities. During the decolonisation era ($\approx$1950s-1960s), university colleges proliferated, typically exuding the ivory tower disposition and implementing the western curriculum devoid of direct community policies (Ajayi et al, 1996). Such colleges were replaced by regional universities serving a number of countries within a geopolitical region, then eventually national universities were established (Kasozi, 2009).

The national universities were a creation of the post-colonial era (Teferra, 2016). Both the national universities, and regional universities essentially trained personnel with the cardinal interest of Africanising the civil service (Mohamedbhai, 2014), and had nothing to do with direct application of their expertise in solving real societal problems. Certainly, the implied policy was to use higher education including universities to cause societal change through adult education, extension classes in education, agriculture, health, public administration and African studies among (Ajayi et al, 1996). However, these aspirations did not take discernible effects despite the looming question of utilitarianism and relevance which questioned as to whether it was right for universities to be detached from societal needs (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). Later in a 1972 Association of African Universities (AAU) Conference, an explicit call was made on African Universities to be institutions

of teaching, research, knowledge dissemination and serve rural communities (Yesufu cited in Ajayi et al, 1996), which implied a departure from the policy of Africanising the civil service, to that of directly serving the community alongside training of personnel.

In Uganda, the precursor to university education was Makerere Technical College founded in 1922 (Ajayi et al, 1996). Towards the eve of independence, Makerere became a university college affiliated to the University of London, with neither explicit policy nor gesture to apply its expertise directly towards community transformation (Ajayi et al, 1996). Makerere was made a national university, expected to serve the country but not through direct service to society. Makerere, remained the only public university for long producing graduates to fill posts in the technical and political wing of government (Kasozi, 2009). When it became overstretched, the need for regional universities to transform the Ugandan societies became apparent (Kasozi, 2009). More public universities have since then been established. Among them, it is Gulu University which explicitly articulates community transformation agenda (Gulu University, 2018).

1.2 Institutional context

Gulu University is located in northern Uganda towards the border with the Republic of Southern Sudan. This region has been socio-economically marginalised relative to the south, this was made worse by the decades of the Lord Resistance Army war (Blattman, Fiala, and Martinez, 2012). As such the region is in dire need of concerted development efforts for rehabilitation as seen in Government's plan for Rehabilitation (John Paul II Pope Justice & Peace Centre, 2012). Gulu University was established with the expectation that, it would contribute in part to these efforts through activities for community transformation informed by relevant policies.

Gulu University declares community transformation explicitly in its Charter (Gulu University, 2016). This mirrors national aspirations enshrined in the Vision 2040 (Republic of Uganda, 2013). The university consistently affirm to achieve community transformation through training of highly skilled human resources, research and outreach activities (Gulu University, 2016 & 2003). Additionally, in the 2005/2006 Annual Report, the Vice-Chancellor pronounced that community transformation agenda would be achieved through the activities of the disciplinary faculties (Gulu University, 2006). However, how policies are informing disciplinary activities towards that cause remains hazy.

To achieve its vision, Gulu University developed its first strategic plan in 2005/6 with the following strategic priorities (Gulu University, 2006): infrastructural development, information and communication technology (ICT), library and information services and research and publication. Just two years after its founding and in the very first strategic plan of Gulu University, 'community transformation' was left out among the university's strategic priorities. Instead it was stipulated in the introductory part of the document that the university would lead to community transformation through training of highly skilled man power (Gulu University, 2006). This seems generic, possibly putting the university at par with medieval universities which trained students for the labour market. Much as an objective to establish a research and outreach committee was slotted in the strategic objective section of the plan (Gulu University, 2006), there was no plan to substantially streamline community transformation in Gulu University giving this agenda a shaky platform from the onset of its initial planning endeavours.   However, in 2006 the founding Vice-Chancellor in a foreword

to the annual report declared that community transformation would be achieved through disciplinary activities in the academic faculties (Gulu University, 2006). This would be done through training of field and extension workers in Agriculture, Health and Education to make them more effective in service delivery for community transformation (Gulu University, 2006). In that reporting year however, some departments reported having implemented some outreach activities, other faculties reported none (Gulu University, 2006). This led to some questions about the policy informing disciplinary activities. Thus, how do institutional policies inform activities for community transformation by disciplinary fields?

1.3 Statement of the problem
Gulu University's Strategic Plan 2009/10-2018/9, strategic issue No. 5.4 goal No. 1 stipulates that 'transformation of communities be enhanced and sustained' (Gulu University, 2014). Realisation of such a goal would call for relevant policies to inform disciplinary activities (Fusilier and Munro, 2013). However, there appears to be inconsistent evidence of activities for community transformation by disciplinary fields. For instance, Kalule et al (2016) report the Student-Centred Outreach Model as the major activity for community transformation in the Faculty of Agriculture in Gulu University. On the other hand, heads of some disciplinary departments decry dearth of activities for community transformation in their respective units implicating lack of policy and inadequate support and yet others do not report it and are consistently silent about it (Gulu University, 2014, 2013, 2006).

2.0 Literature Review
Empirical studies reveal that community transformation activities are rooted in policies which may be national, state, regional or institutional (Doyle, 2010; Wander, Hefferan, Panddenburg, 2015). A study by Doyle (2010) reveals that, a number of universities studied pursued cultural transformation influenced by the policies, contexts or aspirations of their regions. In order to achieve their strategic foci, a number of joint initiatives were made between university colleges in the regions studied and the regional governments. Some of them developed academic programmes geared towards community transformation. Others built campuses in the heart of the city with some public facilities being housed in the university complex; offered open and distance education, community cultural activities such as art, drama, music etc; while others responded by creating specialised units such as centres for indigenous knowledges. In some of the regions, university colleges pursued research based on their regional development agenda. This is supported by Wander, et al. (2015) who found that regional development needs as well as the mission of the university dictated the nature of activities for community transformation. Chung et al. (2016) found that the development of community transformation as a mission was indeed not formally nested but heavily influenced by regional policies to the extent that the school's strategic plan had to incorporate the community transformation agenda in its strategies. Although, the three studies affirm that regional policies influence community transformation agenda, it mainly remained at the institutional level, disciplinary intricacies were not exposed. The current study sought to explore how the disciplinary fields tapped into institutional policies in order to inform their activities for community transformation.

Other studies demonstrated further how institutional policies heavily and directly influence community transformation activities (Boyer 2016; Chung et al., 2016; Munk, 2010; Wander et al., 2015). Whereas, Boyer (2016) implied that institutional policies were useful in promoting service towards societal good by emphasising serviceability and practicability, the author does not explicate in concrete terms how such policies informed community transformation activities. While, Chung et al. (2016) note that activities for community transformation were initially based on individual academics, but the imperatives of national priorities later came to bear on the school and the strategic plan became the first institutional document akin to a policy for promoting community engagement endeavours at the school. The authors do not propound in succinct terms how community transformation activities by disciplinary fields within the school was informed by the strategic plan. Therefore, it is apparent that the papers indeed affirm the usefulness of institutional policies in informing community transformation activities without clarity on how the policies did so.

Although university institutional policies tended to encourage the three functions of teaching, research and service, such policies did not favour university activities that promote community transformation (Boyer, 2016; Etomaru, 2017; Fitzgerald et al., 2016). Boyer (2016) reveals that, almost every American college has teaching, research and service as priorities of the professoriate, however at the implementation level, community related activities were not given comparable weight to sheer teaching and research. The author emphasises, that at tenure and promotion, activities for community transformation were hardly considered and disciplinary members who spent more time on community oriented activities did so at the detriment of their own careers. Fitzgerald et al. (2016) do agree with the foregoing author on how institutional policy impeded community oriented activities by disciplinary fields, instead of encouraging it in a meaningful and noticeable way. A study by Etomaru (2017) revealed a disenabling institutional environment in respect to knowledge translation, specifically the study reveals that institutional policies did not inform in a vivid way efforts by the professoriate to get their knowledge out of the great gates of Makerere to the community. Although Boyer (2016) plays down to institutional tone, we note that the paper does not have a true institutional nuance, as it focused more on national issues, while that of Etomaru (2017) was rather highly specific and not focused on the broader domain of community transformation. All the three studies did not address the subject squarely. The current study focuses on institutional and disciplinary perspective of the phenomenon of community transformation in a holistic manner.

Instead, a number of universities in Africa are tapping into national policies to contribute directly to community transformation/socio-economic development through activities of their disciplinary fields. Bailey, Cloete, and Pillay, (2011) reveal that Community Based Education Service (COBES) activities in faculty of Medicine at Makerere University are informed by national policy of decentralisation. This is similar to Preece (2011) who carried out a study on the third mission in the national university of Lesotho with findings pointing towards a national policy-disciplinary activity alignment with the key areas where policy informed activities for community transformation being: agricultural training, income generation, post graduate research in community settings, HIV and AIDS education and introduction of nursing courses as a response to the MDGs were introduced. A study by Raditloaneng (2015) confirm findings by the foregoing findings.

Indeed, Raditloaneng (2015) found activities such as adult education and inclusion of community transformation in the core of the university's academic credited courses in the National University of Lesotho were nested to the national policies such as MDGs, while in Malawi, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) and the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) informed the direction that community service in the University of Malawi had to take such as poverty reduction, food security, lifelong learning, improved health and reduction of HIV/AIDS. In the University of Calabar it is clear that the university has a strategic commitment to the countries and regional development priorities articulated in the national policies evident in activities such as poverty reduction, food security, lifelong learning, improved health and reduction of HIV/AIDS, based on the MDGS. We note also that institutional policies for the third mission were not highlighted by the author, therefore as to whether they informed or not informed third mission activities remained silent. Therefore, the study left room for questions in respect to how institutional policies inform activities for community transformation.

Studies of Makerere University reveal contradicting findings, others revealing that institutional policies do not inform community transformation activities by disciplinary fields while others point to the fact that they do. Bailey, Cloete, and Pillay's (2011) study revealed that policy on rewards for teaching and research activities are in place while that for rewarding community transformation/economic development efforts by academics was not in place. This mirrors Boyer (2016) that scholars who dared pursue community oriented activities in American universities did so at the detriment of their own tenure and promotion because sheer teaching and research were by policy given more weights in promotion and tenure compared to community oriented activities, which is affirmed by Fitzgerald et al. (2016). Bailey, Cloete, and Pillay, (2011) conclude that Makerere University does not have mainstream policies for linking the university to the community although intentions are anecdotally expressed in official documents. This is not far from Etomaru (2017) who found that existing policies did not favour knowledge translation practices. Contrarily, Bisaso (2013) found some policies that promote community oriented activities such as the Makerere Research and Innovations Policy and the Intellectual Property Management Policy. The author notes that, the Makerere Research and Innovations Policy stipulates the amount of time in percentage that members of disciplinary fields are expected to spend on research out of their total working hours, how monies from research projects would be managed and how internally generated funds would be used to support research. The Intellectual Property Management Policy on the other hand pronounces itself on privileges of inventors and sharing ratios between the inventor and relevant university structures. Besides, by policy, curricula were restructured to cater for the outreach function in the science disciplinary units to include internships (student placement) that would take students to the community. It should be noted that the latter study used the interpretive framework of academic capitalism as opposed to the true community oriented lens. The current study was very particular in respect to how policies inform disciplinary activities that seek to improve socio-economic aspects of the proximate community.

3.0 Methodology

We carried out the study between November 2017 and June 2018 using the qualitative exploratory case study design. We generated in-depth account and context of the phenomenon as suggested by

Yin (2014; 2011). We chose Gulu University because it's a public university which officially declares community transformation as what it stands for. We used the Biglan (1973) classification of academic disciplines to guide our sampling. According to Biglan applied academic disciplines are more amenable to application than the pure academic disciplines (Murfo and Langstone, 1981). Therefore, we assumed that, the applied academic disciplines speak more to the community transformation agenda, and were more privy to issues of policy informing activities for community transformation.

　　　To ensure anonymity, we used alphanumeric pseudonyms with HAAD, SAAD, and TOPM codes to denote participants from the hard applied, soft applied disciplines and top management respectively and Arabic numerals to distinguish participants within the disciplinary types, thus HAAD1, SAAD2, TOPM1 etc. The academic staffs were selected from Faculty of Agriculture (FAE); Faculty of Business and Development Studies (FBDS); Faculty of Education and Humanities (FEH); Faculty of Medicine (FM); Faculty of Science (FS) and Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies (IPSS) based on seniority and perceived participation activities for community transformation.

　　　We collected data using in-depth interviews and document checks, and analysed using thematic analysis. Although, we used other related documents, annual reports were the main documents used. To keep findings rooted in participants' words and reduce biases, we used in-vivo codes to create categories, which in turn led to themes.

4.0 Results

We posed the question 'how do policies inform community transformation activities by the academic staffs in your department/in Gulu University?' We used probing questions where necessary based on the initial answers provided by the interviewee. Findings reveal that, there were no institutional policies for community transformation and therefore institutional policies did not inform activities for community transformation by disciplinary fields.

　　　Participant HAAD1 from a hard applied discipline reported not being conversant with policy for community transformation in Gulu University:

> To be very honest I am not very conversant with community transformation in terms of policy. I am a more technical person. Whatever I do I do generally for the farming community to make a difference. And whatever we teach students the major clients are normally the community. As a result we expect them to be very practical and in their being practical there has to be a two-way communication with the community. As to whether that is in line with the policy of Gulu University, I think it is. Because, if whatever we do is for the transformation of the community then we are doing the right thing. So indirectly we are. (HAAD1)

Similar views were reported by other participants to the effect that the community transformation agenda declared by Gulu University is not informed by any institutional policy. This was evident with participant HAAD2, from hard applied disciplinary field. The participant reported:

> You know, I think what is lacking in Gulu University is that the idea for community transformation is there but there is lack of communication about the policies to the faculties. So that is why I am saying that it is only the vision of the university and it is the different faculties of the university that should work out their programme towards achieving that goal. (HAAD2)

The participant added:

> What I can say is that you are doing a very useful study, you should continue but at the moment I think I am not sure of any policy that has been stipulated clearly that addresses the issue of community transformation. You see it as an objective, but something that has been written for Education to follow, Agriculture to follow or Medicine to follow, I don't see it. So for a long time it is going to have to be the initiative of the faculties to come up with programmes that address the objectives of community transformation. (HAAD2)

HAAD2 seems to be in complete agreement with HAAD1 with a comparable level of disclaimer in relation to institutional policies informing community transformation activities by disciplinary fields. Views of HAAD3 from a hard applied field seemed in line with his colleagues:

> . . . I will be very honest with you. I arrived here in 2005. In 2005, I did not find anything to guide me, honestly. There were curricula which were adapted or adopted from different institutions. So from the outset I knew that I was going to decide what is it that I want for my students and what is it that I want for myself? . . . Well, I think even if you ask The Vice-Chancellor himself, he does not know what he means by community transformation. And I am sure if you ask him that question, he will take you into the usual 1986 stories of Museveni. He will take you to some history and he will not know where it heads . . . It's not something that makes us distinct from the other universities. It is the context the situation, the circumstances within which Gulu University exists that by default makes it look like a community transformative institution but otherwise I don't think it is on any body's agenda. It is like a motto, . . . (HAAD3)

HAAD4, another participant from the hard applied domain refuted the possibility that disciplinary activities for community transformation are informed by institutional policies:

> At the level of Gulu University, I don't know. There was a time I think some staff were appointed to craft a policy on outreach. I am not sure how far they have gone. But structurally, I don't think there is any structure for outreach. I am not sure of that because I have never been made aware of it. All I know is that at the faculty level here we coordinate activities for community outreaches. We coordinate those activities at the departmental level. (HAAD4)

From the foregoing excerpt, HAAD4 affirms how activities for community transformation in Gulu University seem not to be informed by any institutional policy in any meaningful way. Another participant, argued:

> I am not aware of any policy apart from just knowing that the university stands for community transformation. Yeah, Ok all of us know that we really stand for community transformation. Our niche is actually within that area. I am not aware of any mainstream policy in that context. Maybe there are policies which are in the neighbourhood of this, for instance, there is a draft ICT policy in the university which is supposed to spell out how we use ICT because some of these community outreach activities may entail people coming to use our facilities or probably us also going to use other peoples facilities. So there is ICT Use Policy which was drafted, BSU Project funded its drafting process through workshops. Then there is also the e-learning policy which was constructed to an external consultant, Maseno University I think Dr. Obura who was contracted to draft the e-learning Policy of Gulu University. I think those are the ones that I know. (HAAD5)

HAAD5 asserts that there is no mainstream policy for community transformation, rather there are related policies but does not point succinctly how these policies inform community transformation activities by disciplinary fields. Another participant HAAD6, from a hard applied discipline said:

> Sincerely, if it is there then I have not yet come across it. Sincerely I have not come across that. Because, I have never heard the university management coming down to us that as Gulu University we have to do this in order to achieve community transformation. (HAAD6)

Similar to other participants from the hard applied category, HAAD6 disclaims knowledge of or experience with any policy that is informing community transformation activities in particular.

We triangulated the views from hard applied disciplinary fields with those of participants from the soft applied disciplinary fields. We present the views of participants from the soft applied disciplines in the subsequent paragraphs. SAAD1 indicated that the issue of institutional policy was not clear:

> . . . I am a part of this community for a while. Since I joined, I am now fourteen years old in this university. Uhm, however, the issue of policy is not very clear to me as such but I can give you some of the ideas that I have. (SAAD1)

Another participant SAAD2 said:

> Well matters of policy, I would say as the motto of Gulu University says for community transformation, policy wise, it is open because may be the way it is said for community transformation, the policy allows interaction with the community freely. As I told you, they say outreach, . . . in the name of outreach. I think that is quite available and then the fact that I see the administration facilitating any outreach opportunity I think would point to the availability of the policy. I think if it was not within the policy, it would be difficult. I see, if the guild and staff are to participate on any occasion or any gathering the district or the country has convened, I can say they have been able to fund. That to me mirrors the policy of transformation because they know the university staff or students' going to appear in public impacts community life.

The participant declared:

> I don't think I know of such but the policy reluctantly provides for community transformation. But if we say is there any policy crafted in a way that it is really for community transformation? Yes, may be in another angle but the clarity . . . I don't think I can really quote any document which provides for a policy of community transformation but as I said may be in the mission under that context of research and outreach then probably it could be the hidden curriculum there. (SAAD2)

SAAD2 indeed disclaims the existence of a mainstream institutional policy for community transformation in Gulu University and calls it a "hidden curriculum". SAAD4 instead had this to say:

> There was a year they took us to Arua to develop policies for the university. It was organised by the Planning Unit. Things like the gender policies, HIV policies, I think generally (poses) other developmental policies, very nice on paper. To me I think those policies are just on paper. To me, it is questionable (laughs). Although they talk of lack of funding (SAAD4).

To SAAD4, some policies were crafted but the participant refers to them as "other developmental policies" as if to imply lack of their relevance to community transformation activities. The next participant, SAAD5 categorically puts it that he was not aware of any institutional policy guiding activities for community transformation:

> Well, specifically I cannot refer to any document, policy document that talks of this and that but what I know is that from its inception in 2002, Gulu University had its mission, vision which are all geared towards community transformation and in our own programmes which we draw at the institute here we think we should focus on teaching research and community outreach. So community transformation becomes a very key component given that it is well spelt out in the university vision, mission and motto. (SAAD5)

SAAD5 indeed confessed that he was not aware of any policy that directly focuses on community transformation activities in Gulu University. This was supported by SAAD6 who said it even with much emphasis and repeatedly, thus:

> Hmm, I have never seen a policy although community transformation, I know is implied in our work because I know the staff you are supposed to do research, teaching and community outreach but I have never seen a policy and I think it is a problem if there is no policy because I have never seen a policy. I have never seen a policy in black and white that this is community transformation policy, I mean this is what you are supposed to do. I have never seen. This is how you engage the community, these are the limits. This is what you are expected to do, I have not seen any write up but I know we have done community outreach as part of the university work in my institute. (SAAD6)

Another participant TOPM2, laboured to explain:

> Let me see. I think that is where we have issues. Because I remember recently in council meeting, I think we were even tasked to come out with a policy of community outreach which we don't have. Because really we have outreach activities but in terms of policy, especially in Agriculture I see them doing a lot of outreach activities, this cassava what, cassava stem business and so forth but I think Council also realised that there was lack of policy in that direction which we could use to cover all these other faculties and even make it more engaging and even make it more easy to monitor these activities. (TOPM2)

TOPM2 affirmed the absence of policies informing community transformation activities by disciplinary fields. Another participant, TOPM3 from the central administration gave a similar impression. TOPM3 argued:

> As a top management person, I don't know much about any policy that aims to promote community transformation in Gulu University. However, it is related to vision and the mission of the university. Actually in whatever, the university does, it aims at community transformation. So it may not be necessarily a policy about community transformation but it is a vision and the mission that whatever, it does should aim at community transformation. Therefore community transformation is not a policy *perse* but it is the practicability of how the university helps promote community transformation . . . Well, they are there as I said, they are there in the mission and the vision therefore all the programmes in the university are related and must be related to community transformation. (TOPM3)

This corroborates the views of TOPM2. However, the participant emphasised the role of faculties and faculty guidelines for informing community transformation activities. Another participant TOPM4 had this to say:

> At the university level we have the strategic plan. In the case of Gulu University I was a member of the Outreach Committee created to develop Gulu University Outreach Policy. We developed a draft, and it was through that Committee that we were moving to develop policies to guide outreach activities which must be focused on community transformation. Unfortunately, we did not go far. The first draft came out but (silence) the committee became silent . . . At Faculty levels, I know, well I think there are certain frameworks which they are using which guide them like Agriculture they have got their programmes, they have got their curricula. Those ones can act as a policy because they guide them on what to do, because the curricula prescribes what must be done. A curriculum itself is like a policy. For instance when they go out what do they do, what do they expect students to do? What do students do? For what period? in what areas? How do they interact? then Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Education and Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies. All these have direct outreach activities which aim at changing the communities. And they have some kind of written documents which I call frame woks acting like policies. (TOPM4)

TOPM4 suggested that the curriculum served as a policy for community transformation, trying to reason that the curriculum indeed guides on what the students are expected to do, therefore it has can serve as a policy.

Indeed, no categories hence no theme emerged from all the three categories of participants in respect to how institutional policies inform activities for community transformation by

disciplinary fields in Gulu University. This implies that there are no institutional policies for community transformation and therefore no policies directly informing community transformation in any meaningful and noticeable way.

5. Discussion

There were no mainstream policy for community transformation at the institutional level, instead reference was made to the institutional motto, the vision, mission and rhetoric from which members of academic disciplines claimed to get their inspiration. In as much as they derived their inspirations informally from institutional motto, the vision and mission there was no clear cut sense of direction or focus in respect to community transformation activities by disciplinary fields. In effect, community transformation was unoperationalised and therefore lacking in specific guidelines as to who should, when and how it should be pursued. At best, it remained an implied policy that community transformation activities are allowed and not disallowed in the University. The findings of the current study is similar to that of some previous studies. For instance, Mtawa et al. (2016) found no mainstream institutional policy informing activities for community transformation at Sokoyine University of Agriculture, save for a couple of objectives in the university charter. Kalule et al. (2016) reveal that the student-centred-outreach model in Gulu University is informed by University motto, not any mainstream policy.

On the other hand, the finding is incongruent to that of other studies on universities which declare community orientation. For instance, Paton et al. (2014) report that the official policy of American University in Nigeria is to serve the community through its core functions, consequently, the university activities, both curricula and non-curricula are customised towards serving the community and mainstreamed into policy. Munk (2010) reports that in order to institutionalise and make DCU's community transformation effort systemic, two community oriented initiatives DCU Science shop and DCU in the Community were mainstreamed into the university's functions of teaching and research. Therefore, it can be observed that the situation in Gulu University deviates from the norm. Our argument therefore is that, If Gulu University leaves community transformation "open", for members of disciplinary fields to decide how best to achieve it, without mainstream or related institutional policies to guide it, then it is apparent that community transformation agenda has not gained the importance it deserves in the university as avowed. This open discretion seems rooted in the argument that community transformation is overarching and therefore there is no need to mainstream it in any policy as revealed in the data. We note that to some extent, this is typical of the ivory tower notion in which universities were expected to contribute to the good of society as and when their graduates get employed, and direct contribution was not generally thought of. Interestingly, this was largely a medieval thinking unbecoming of a 21st century university, in a day and age when the economy has become extremely knowledge based. It should be noted that, the current discourse is, not only for universities which declare community transformation but rather all universities to make direct and proactive contributions to their immediate communities owing to the dictates of the knowledge economy. Besides, Gulu University cannot afford to enjoy affluence and status while the proximate communities suffer socio-economic distress typified by psycho-trauma, disease (HIV/AIDS, nodding syndrome), poverty, hunger and education exclusion among school going population while its potentially useful expert knowledge and skills remain within the gates of

the university. Therefore, the need for institutional policies to inform disciplinary activities for community transformation still remains compelling to make community transformation activities more of an institutional rather than a disciplinary affair.

Conclusion

There is no mainstream policy for community transformation in Gulu University. Community transformation activities by disciplinary fields in Gulu University are not directly informed by institutional policies, instead the university charter and institutional rhetoric inform community transformation activities by indeed allowing activities for community transformation without explicit institutional policy. As such, how community transformation should be injected into the core functions of the university remains open to members of the disciplinary fields. No direction. The institutional policy-practice gap should be addressed. The University Council should develop a comprehensive policy for community transformation activities by disciplinary fields in Gulu University. This would give the university a true community oriented stature in tandem with what it stands for and declares. Short of that, community transformation remains a sheer rhetoric, devoid of substance.

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