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The Contributions of Community-University Engagement in Solving Societal Problems: The Case of St. Mary's University, Ethiopia

Assaye Legesse (PhD Fellow), Addis Ababa University
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Abstract

Higher education institutions (HEI) are obliged to work in collaboration with communities to solve social problems, build capacity and contribute to the economic and social development of local communities. Moreover HEIs are expected to better prepare students for work, adjust research agendas to work on solving real societal problems and provide service to the communities where they are located. The purpose of this study was to explore the role that the St Mary's University College (SMUC) is playing in solving the problem of the society through its community-university engagement programs and activities. Data were collected from coordinator of outreach and community service program, Guidance and counseling officer, faculty deans, students' affairs officers, Career and cooperative training unit officer, information and communication officer, Gender and HIV/AIDs Prevention and Control officer, Academic Associate vice president who are purposely selected as well as community organizations and members selected based on their availability and affiliations with the institutions under study. Rating scale, semi-structured interview and document and web site review were employed to collect the data. The data obtained from the rating scale were analyzed using percentage proportion while data from interview, and document & website review were analyzed qualitatively. Thus concurrent mixed method approach was used to analyze the data. The results depicted the existence of strong cultures of and leadership supporting community-university engagement program at SMUC. The institution strives to encourage community university engagement among it's (student's academic community and administrative community). Consequently SMUC is playing a vital role in addressing different problems of the society through its various community university engagement programs and activities. However, it seems that the institution employs traditional model of community university engagement where teaching and learning, research and community university engagement are conceptualized as independent component of the higher education. Thus, the actual mechanisms and programs for this purpose as well as institutional level coordination and support needed to adequately implement community university engagement efforts need to be further strengthened.

I. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The world is in a period of dramatic change with the transition from an industrial-based to a knowledge-based economy, as well as technological advances, fiscal challenges of higher education, and cultural shifts in society as a whole (Smerek, Pasque, Mallory & Holland 2005). Thus, increased community and higher education institution engagement is of paramount importance for the public good during this time of dramatic change with a view that using community engagement for the mutual benefit of higher education institutions and communities can be an effective strategy for realizing educational, community, and economic outcomes (Smerek et al 2005).

The notion of community engagement in higher education institutions (HEI) although not new, has recently received a far more intense focus as the paradigm shift (Bender 2008; McIlrath & Lyons 2009). Definitions of community engagement within higher education vary by institution, program, and individual. Different universities have used a variety of terms to describe their community engagement activities and the ways these activities link to learning. Some of the most widely used terms are service-learning, civic engagement, community-based research, civic education, community experiences, community-based learning, democratic practice, and philanthropy education (Smerek et al 2005).

According to Bender (2008) community engagement is the partnership between a HEI's knowledge and resources with those of the public so as to enrich scholarship, research and innovation; enhance teaching and be curriculum responsive, prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic (social) responsibility by addressing critical societal issues and contributing to the public good. Thus, community university engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference (Ehrlich 2000). It also describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel & Hutchings 2010).

Gelmon, Seifer, Kauper-Brown & Mikkelsen(2005) contend that community engagement is all about applying institutional resources (knowledge and expertise of students, faculty and staff, political position, buildings and land) to address and solve challenges facing communities through collaboration with them. The methods for community engagement of academic institutions include community service, service-learning, community-based participatory research, training and technical assistance, capacity-building and economic development.

In this regard, community engagement reflects social concern and interest in civic engagement (Volegesang & Astin 2000). Thus at its best, higher education community partnership promotes ways of relating to the social policy that emphasis HEI's social responsibility and the obligation to contribute to the community (Keith 1998). The concept of HEI and community partnership is, therefore, a way through which HEIs explore their social contract and their obligation to local communities (McIlrath & Lyons 2009).

Therefore, community engagement as one of the three pillars of higher education along with teaching and research is viewed as an integral and necessary part of HEI's functions. It infuses and enriches the latter two with a sense of context, relevance and application of knowledge in relation to societal needs. Thus it helps to produce graduates with a sense of civic responsibility and ability to apply the theory of their disciplines to local development issues (Bender 2008). Consequently, HEI and community partnership enlivens teaching and research by fostering interdisciplinary perspectives and demanding them of new pedagogy, new ways of discovery and new approaches to knowledge integration and application (Saltmarsh, Hartley & Clayton 2009).

According to Saltmarsh, Hartley & Clayton(2009) community and higher institutions partnerships has an explicit and intentional democratic dimension framed as inclusive, collaborative, and problem-oriented work in which academics share knowledge generating tasks with the public and involve community members as partners in public problem-solving. Ultimately, university-community research partnerships, and other engagement activities can build stronger ties between universities and communities that advance knowledge, enhance local capacity, and bring about community improvement (Mathie and Cunningham 2002).

Holand (2001) in describing the role of community engagement concludes that:

..... there are strong advocates for the role of engagement in academia who hold different views of its potential: engagement as a strategy for promoting civic and political responsibility in our students, as a pedagogy for improving learning, as a method for expanding applied research productivity, as a strategy for renewing faculty interest in active teaching, as a national strategy for enhancing community capacity and community revitalization, and as an institutional strategy for enhancing image, neighborhood environments of the campus and community relationships.

Therefore, individually and collectively, institutions of higher education possess considerable resources (-human, fiscal, organizational, and intellectual) which are critical to addressing significant social issues (Smerek et al 2005). Additionally, 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.

One of the guiding principles is that the most feasible and sustainable way of tackling underdevelopment and poverty is to start from what people know and understand and then use that knowledge at the interface of scientific knowledge(Mathie & Cunningham 2002; Smerek et al 2005). Poverty reduction and the empowerment of poor and marginalized communities come about through a successful blend of academic programmes with intensive, practical and demand-driven training. Thus the curricula of the faculties should emphasize community entry, community dialogue, extension and practical tools of inquiry. Students are required to continually discuss the importance of indigenous (local) knowledge and how that knowledge can be effectively combined with scientific knowledge; and to ensure that students appreciate that the poor need to be partners in attempts to solve societal problems.

There are multiple areas in which the collaboration between community and HEI can be established. Toof (2006) has identified four major areas of community university engagements each having its own sub indicators. They are administration, communication, service learning and outreach, and community voice. Thus colleges and universities play an integral role in the prosperity of the life of the communities in which they are located,

exhibiting a commitment to the community through their educational activities, research, outreach, and development partnerships.

Therefore, it can be concluded that a curriculum designed merely to funnel academically prepared students into specialized careers is seen as a narrow and incomplete conception of the potential that HEI has to offer. Thus, HEIs need to increasingly seek ways to be more relevant to bring their knowledge base to bear on social, cultural and economic problems, and to offer leadership in society consistent with their core values of openness, integrity and inclusion.

In this regard the Ethiopian government policy of education unequivocally states that institutions of higher education must be responsive to the needs of society and thus promote interaction with the communities through community service programs, in order to develop social responsibility and awareness among students in social and economic development. Responding to this pressure, the institutions are, therefore, required to identify one or more of the various forms of community engagement as a strategy to create an educational environment in which students can engage with their wider communities with the aim to help the local communities attain better living standards. Thus it would be imperative to conduct research on the contributions higher education institutions in general are making to solve the problem of their immediate community through their engagement and thereby produce evidence that strengthens the role that higher education institutions can play in solving the problem of the society in particular and the country's fight against poverty in general.

1.2. Statements of the Problem

There is increasing empirical evidence that a complex set of contextual factors (including social, economic and physical environmental factors, such as poverty, air pollution, and inadequate housing and income inequalities) play a significant role in determining economic and social justice status of the members of the society. These factors also contribute to the disproportionate burden of problems experienced by marginalized communities.

On the other hand there is considerable evidence suggesting that numerous resources, strengths and skills exist within communities (e.g. supportive interpersonal relationships, community-

based organizations) that can be engaged in addressing problems and promoting social improvement; and thus needs to be tapped out for the benefit of the society. In this connection colleges and universities can take a lead in fostering economic and social justice to be in place. Thus they can play a prominent role if the country is to be successful in its fight against poverty. They can become engaged civic institutions largely through efforts to improve their local environments and improve the life of disadvantaged in the communities in which they are a part.

Therefore, it is imperative that HEIs harness the potential of community higher education partnerships to inform progress through community and university partnership and networks for the common efforts to co-create knowledge, mobilize it to inform practice and policy, and enhance the social, economic and environmental conditions of the communities and the nation at large.

However, the level of community engagement and the contributions that higher education institutions are making in solving societal problems through such partnership have not yet been examined when it comes to Ethiopian higher education institutions. This study, therefore, aims at describing the status quo of the level and contributions of private higher education institutions in solving the problem of the society through their community engagement. In an endeavor to address the aforementioned issue the following leading questions are formulated to be answered in the course of the study.

Basic Questions

- What are the institutional arrangements that are working within the St. Mary's University College to sustain successful community engagements in carrying out teaching, research and knowledge mobilization on issues that are relevant to the needs of the community?
- What is/are the kind of community university engagement that is/are being practiced in St. Mary's University College demonstrating excellence and success in practices and outcomes (if any)?
- What are the perceptions of the community members or organizations about the role that the university is playing to solve societal problems?

1.3. Objectives

- To identify St. Mary's University College's institutional arrangements and areas of community university engagement for improving the life of the community.
- To assess St. Mary's University College's level of commitment to the inclusion of community engagement as its core functions
- To describe the role that St. Mary's University College is playing in solving the problem of the society through their community engagement activities
- To assess institution practices and experiences of community engagement in light of its mission statements
- To identify community's perception of the contribution that St. Mary's University College is playing to solve the societal problems of the local communities

1.4. Significance of the Study

The present study intends to gather information pertinent to community engagement practice and experiences among selected universities in Ethiopia. In doing so it will address the mission statement and institutional level commitment and practice and experience of university community engagement, community's perceptions of the roles university is playing and there by perpetuating a better understanding among policy makers, the higher education community, and the public about the distinctive roles being played by the partnership between the community and higher education institution.

More specifically the findings of the study will have the following significances.

- Provide a research-based exploration of the promising community engagement initiatives and practice of the University College in solving societal problems.
- Identify examples of programs and practices of community engagement in St. Mary's University College that can be replicated by institutions across the country.
- It provides recommendations to leaders of higher education institutions on how to create and sustain effective community engagement programs that are informed by theory, research, and best practices
- Finally, it identifies areas where further research is needed to scale up the practice of community engagement in Ethiopian context.

1.5. Delimitation

This study on the contributions of CUE in tackling societal problems is delimited only to St. Mary's University College. Moreover the study will consider evidences from the university colleges on the types of community engagement and communities' perception of the role that this higher education institution is playing in solving societal problems. Thus the aim remains just to understand universities own initiatives -what it is doing, how, and why; and how the communities perceive such partnership in addressing their felt needs. This study, therefore, cannot be generalized to other institutions.

1.6. Limitation

Getting access to information on community engagement from private university colleges required frequent and persistent deal to get a blessing from top managers and other concerned departments(particularly from UC Y). Thus data collection took longer time than expected

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A qualitative driven quantitative descriptive case study research was used to describe the role that SMUC is playing in solving societal problems. Purposeful sampling technique was used to draw the sample for the study. Data were obtained through rating scale, semi- structured interview, document and website review. Concurrent mixed method was employed to analyze the data.

2.2 Target Populations and Sampling

The target population for the current study is all private higher education institutions in Ethiopia. According to the information procured from Ethiopian Ministry of education there are 51 private higher education institutions of which St. Mary's University College was purposely selected to be involved in the study. The rationales for selecting this higher education institution to be involved in the study sample is the fact that it would be very convenient for the researcher to get the data required because of his affiliation with it. Purposeful sampling technique was used in this study. Thus the sample involved academic associate vice presidents, faculty deans, directors,

coordinators of outreach and community service program, gender and HIV/AIDs control officers, guidance and counselors, students' affairs, institution level public relation officers were purposely selected because they are in one form or another involved in initiating, planning and executing the community university engagement activities in their respective institutional unit. Thus these individuals were believed to be closest to the activities of community university engagement and can provide rich information pertinent to the research at hand. Moreover, three partnering local community organizations namely Mary Joy, DKT and Kibre Aregawian philanthropic organization were purposely selected on the bases of their close collaboration with SMU in working together for the common goal of addressing pressing societal problems.

2.3 Data Collection Instruments

The main instruments of data collection for the study included community university engagement rating survey, semi structured interview, and document and institution's website review. The community university engagement rating survey was adapted from the survey developed by Toof (2006) and Hart, Northmore, and Gerhardt, (UD) for measuring community university engagement. The survey consists of four categories-administration, communication, service learning and outreach, and community voice. Under the administration category there are four indicators: mission statement language, a named high-level administrator with community partnerships/engagement as their responsibility, promotion and tenure language, and interdisciplinary approaches such as departments or courses. The communication category has three indicators: homepage language, articles in the internal newsletter, and partnership related publications or reports. There are seven indicators in the experiential learning and outreach category: a service learning and outreach office or structure, evidence of practicum or internships, course with service-learning, other service-related activity, partnerships, and service related awards for students and academic staff. The community voice category has two indicators: community representation on university committees or boards and evidence of public dialogue.

Before using the survey for the current study, necessary changes and modifications were made on the wordings and phrasings to make it fit to the context of study site. In order to find evidence under each indicator notes were taken and documented. To maintain as much

objectivity as possible in the assignment of points, two persons (the researcher and research assistant) did the assigning task independently and discrepancies were discussed until consensus is reached on the point value.

In semi-structured interviews the questions are a mix of structured and unstructured questions that are flexibly worded. Interview guides were developed for use during interview. All interviews were conducted in face to face interaction in the university college's campus and partnering organizations' offices. Policy papers, identified as important and pertinent to CUE, and other relevant documents were examined. Documents such as community outreach and service guidelines the university strategic plan, reports, and policy papers were obtained from the relevant offices of the university college. Other documents were found on the university colleges' web-site. These documents provided descriptive information for the study and served as stable and objective sources of information. Moreover the use of more than one data sources (rating scale, interviews, documents and website reviews), has helped to form the data triangulation to check for consistency of findings.

2.4 Data Analysis

The type of analysis to be employed depends on the nature of research questions asked and the data obtained. The questions asked pertain to both quantitative and qualitative description of the status quo of institutional level existing CUE policies, commitments, practices and experiences in solving societal problems. Thus percentage and graphs were used to present and analyze the findings from the rating point values. To this end the maximum points available for each category of indicators, the points given to the university college's for each indicator, subtotals and totals were computed. The point totals were then standardized to percentages of the totals for each category. Moreover, as the data obtained through interview and document and website review are of qualitative in nature, thematic qualitative data analysis was employed. The themes are determined before hand and fit well with the themes for the rating scales. Thus concurrent mixed method approach was employed to analyze the data.

3. Findings of the Study

It is important to note that since outside benchmark of acceptable or exceptional quality in the variables examined in the study is not available, generalizations cannot be made of the findings from the institution in this study. Therefore, references to “strong” or “weak” community university engagement efforts as stated here in this study findings are only relative statements based on my own discretion as a researcher on the bases of my readings in the area.

Figure 1 shows the maximum points available for each category of community university engagement indicators ratings, the points given for each indicator, subtotals and grand totals. To maintain as much objectivity as possible during ratings, assignment of points was done independently by two raters and discrepancies were discussed until there was consensus on the point value.

Figure 1: Summary of the Community University Engagement Ratings

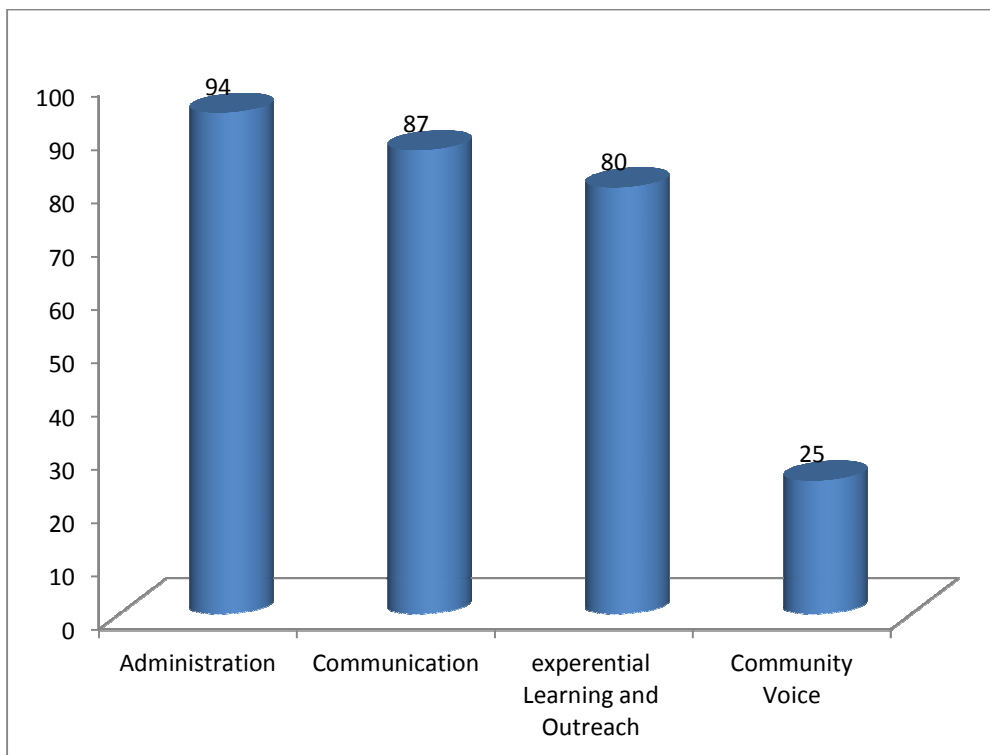


Figure 1 indicates that the total percentage point available under the administration indicator category for the institution understudy is 94%. This category includes: mission statement

language, a named high-level administrator with community partnerships/engagement as their responsibility, promotion and tenure language, and interdisciplinary approaches such as departments or courses. The score within the communication indicator category is 87%. This category includes: homepage language, articles in the internal newsletter, and partnership related publications or reports. The score for the service learning and outreach indicator category is 80%. This category includes: service learning and outreach office or structure, evidence of practicum or internships, courses with service-learning, primary to secondary school linkages, other service-related activity, partnerships, service related awards for students and faculty. The score for the community voice indicator category is 25%. This category includes: community representation on university committees or boards and evidence of public dialogue.

Figure 2: Administration Indicators

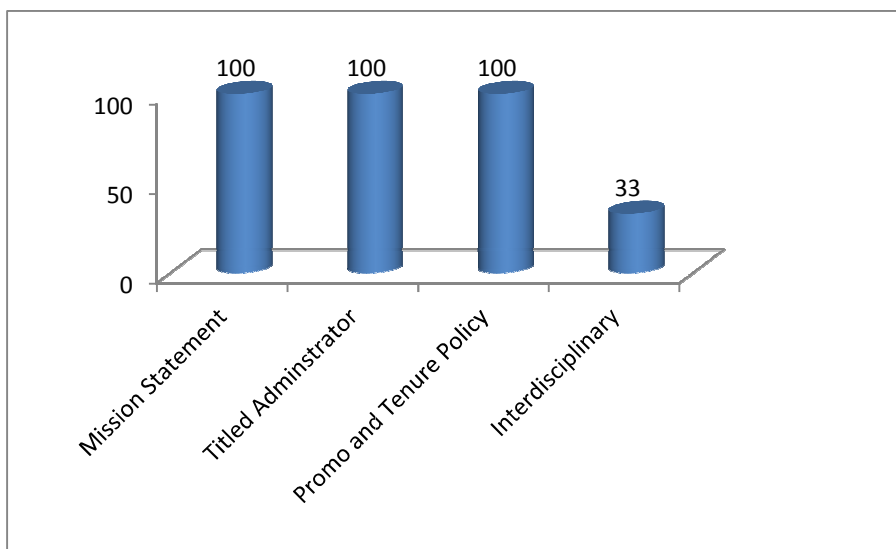


Figure 2 indicates that 100% rating score is assigned to the SMUC on the inclusion of CUE in its mission statement, the existence of titled administrator who can manage the CUE activities and promotion and tenure as indicators of the administration category of community university engagement. By the same token, data from interview, document and web site review indicated that St. Mary's university colleges has stronger cultures and leadership supporting community university engagement. The institution has put in place policy and strategic documents to CUE among its students, academic and administrative staff members. Interviewees

from various units of the institution agreed with the statement, “There is an overarching philosophy or mission related to community university engagement at this institution”. All the interviewees unanimously believed this commitment is formally stated in the mission or similar institutional policies. Review of the documents and website also reveals that explicit reference to CUE in the mission statements of the institutions, usually in the form of community service to the public good or similar statements. The Mission reads as: “The Mission of St. Mary’s University College is to offer conventional and distance education that is accessible to the larger society through reasonable tuition focusing on quality and standards in teaching, research and outreach services”.

Moreover, CUE activity is clearly articulated, integrated and prioritized as the University College's way of working in all strategies and plans. Thus, it can be concluded that the university college’s mission explicitly articulates its commitment to the public purposes of higher education and higher education’s public responsibility to solve societal problems and its leadership demonstrates a genuine willingness to implement and strengthen the public aspect of its mission

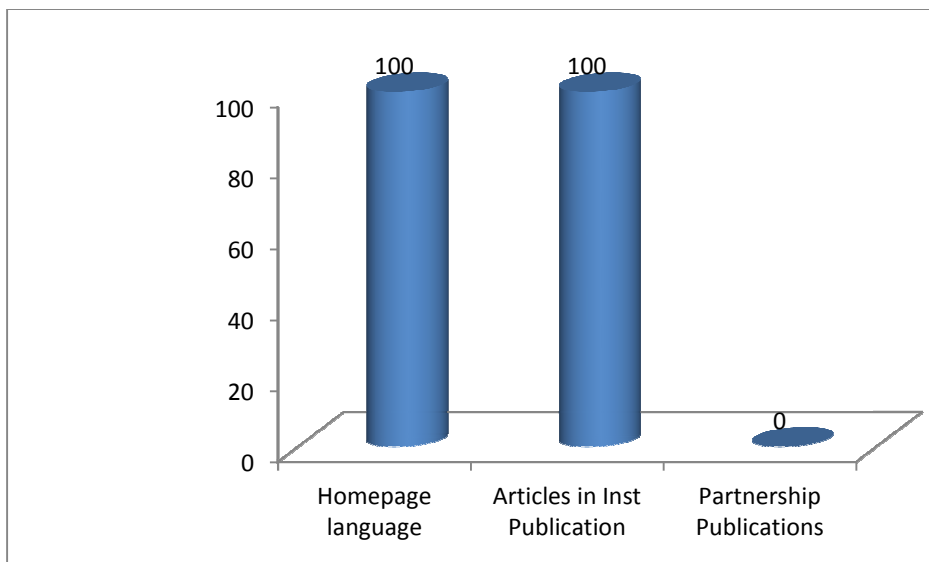
Similarly the CUE activities are headed by independent office at the directorate level under the vice president for graduate studies, research and community outreach and service. Moreover the university college maintains various centralized institutional units committed to CUE (community service and outreach office and student’s affairs office, Gender and HIV/AIDS prevention and control office, Career and cooperative training unit office, Guidance and Counseling office). These offices are provided adequate office space to do their work and have developed a full range of forms and procedures that allow them to organize and document community-based work. However, it seems that the work of community service and outreach office and students’ affairs office etc are not clearly aligned with academic affairs as such in a way that research, instruction and CUE are fused to one another.

By the same token, promotion to a higher rank and appointment with tenure is granted to faculty members who have demonstrated outstanding accomplishments in an appropriate combination of instructional, research, community engagement. The promotion and tenure guidelines included various kinds of service activities to promote CUE in the most comprehensive manner possible,

and the UC has aligned its rewards and incentives with this objective. Thus it can be conclude that tenure and promotion policies of the UC recognize the value of community university engagement through a more thorough integration of criteria that value CUE in teaching and research into the university college's overall policies and practices.

On the other hand the institution received 33% on interdisciplinary approach as indicators of the administration category of community university engagement. However, there seems to be weak and fragmented coordination of engagement and service-related activities across academic, co-curricular, and non-academic programs

Figure 3: Communication Indicators

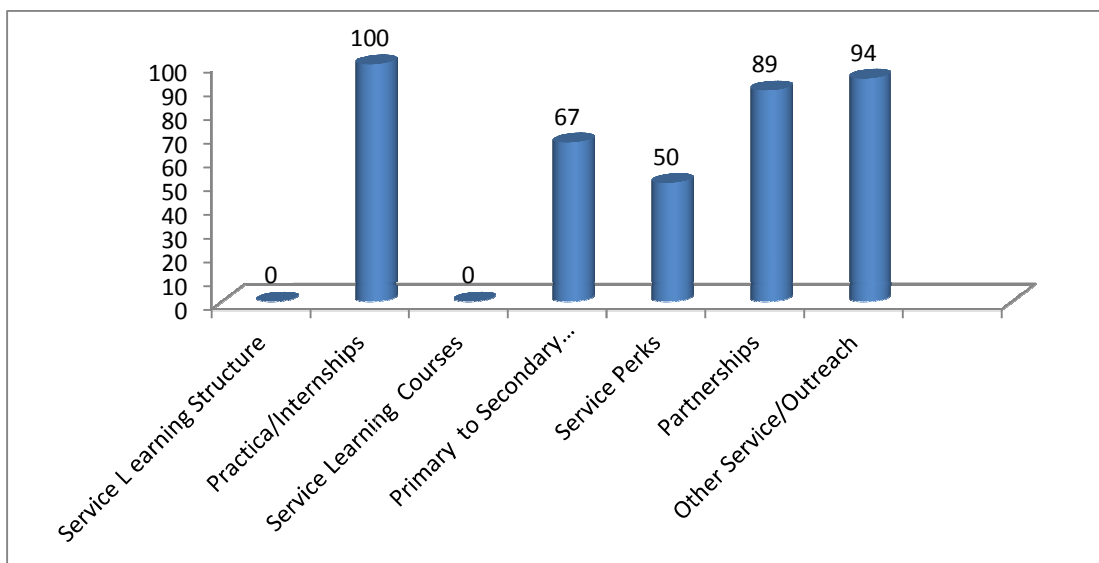


As indicated on Figure 3 the institution received 100% rating score on home page language indicators on articles in institutions publications while it received no any point on partnership publications as indicator of communications. Data from the interview and document analysis also revealed that SMUC has home page language where it posts its CUE activities and news. By the same token there are articles in institutional publications and various news papers published by a range of institutional units to disseminate news and activities pertinent to CUE and similar others.

The results further revealed that, as part of its commitment to community services, the university college has organized and sponsored national and international annual conferences focusing on problems of the society. In addition, it also publishes three bi-annual journals in three disciplines: agriculture, business, and law and all the articles in the proceedings and journals are made available in its website.

Moreover, results from interview, document and web site review revealed that there are a number established and long term mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships with key industry, community and government agencies resulting in strong cooperation, effective collaboration and evidence of financial benefit. However there is no evidence found for partnership publication. As a result, the institution received 0% on rating scale of partnership publication.

Figure 4: Experiential Learning and Outreach Indicators



As indicated on figure 4, SMUC received 100% rating score on practicum and internship as well as campus compact as experiential learning and outreach indicators. In contrast it received 0% on service learning structure and service learning courses as indicators of CUE. Findings from the semi-structured interview and document and web site review also disclosed that community based learning and course based service learning are nonexistent even as a structure. However students are exposed to experiential learning through exposure to field-based practicum, cooperative training placements in community-based and public agencies, and non-credit co-

curricular activities such as study tours, conferences and local projects. In this regard there are identified, mutually beneficial outcomes for students, the university and the community. Students are provided with opportunities for practical placements, work related projects, industry development, field trips that contribute to the development of their profession and the community at large.

Thus, it can be concluded that although there are no service learning structure and course based community service learning at SMUC, students have ample opportunities of experiential learning through such practices as

- Practical attachment with organization and industry(-internship across all the discipline)
- Use of guest lecturer from the partnering organizations and
- Panel discussions related to, for example, auditing, taxation system etc
- Public lectures
- Field visit where students have to prepare portfolio and make reflection back
- Cooperative training placements at agency(TVET)
- Experiences sharing and group reflection meetings and forums, related to community-based problems.

Figure 4 further indicate that the university college received 67% on primary to secondary schools linkages. Data from interview and document analysis disclosed similar findings SMUC has links with the nearby primary schools and secondary schools. SMUC give to professional support (HIV/AIDs and assertiveness training) and material provision (used computers, access to online educational materials) to the partnering primary and secondary schools to help them offer quality education to their students

The UC is also assigned 50% on community service perks as indicator of experiential learning and outreach dimension of community university engagement. In this regard there are some informal mechanisms that encourage students to participate in community engagement or reward them for their participation in community engagement (e.g., certified for community university

engagement participation in community service and community service stories in the campus newspaper, verbal encouragement etc). Academic staff members are also encouraged to pursue community engagement through incentives put in place for that purpose for example career development and academic promotion and tenure.

As depicted on figure 4 SMUC obtained 89% of rating score on partnerships as indicator of experiential learning. Data from interview document and web site review indicate that SMUC has links with local institutions in a bid to share experiences and carry out its outreach activities. It has signed MoU with higher education institutions, Non-governmental organizations, and establishments. The University College has also links with institutions based outside Ethiopia with the purpose that ranges from initiating joint programs to undertaking specific projects.

Consequently a wide range of established partnerships and relationships with industry, community and government stakeholders has provided mutually beneficial opportunities, delivered outcomes, and evidence of financial returns. A significant proportion of research has also been undertaken in partnership with a wide range of industry and community partners. Therefore, there are ample opportunities for community partners to facilitate student reflection, give on-campus lectures, and collaborate on research.

Figure 4 further points out that SMUC is assigned 94% rating score on other service and outreaches indicators. Outreach includes continuing education, community and economic development, cooperative training, and other programs that extend the knowledge and expertise of the community of the UC for the direct benefit of society. In this regard, findings from interview document and website review also pointed out that there is a unit at College levels that handles matters related to open and distance learning. The college is offering a total of 22 degree and vocational programs through its 154 coordinating centers situated throughout the country catering to the needs of close to 30,000 students. Moreover, the UC offers post-graduate programs of IGNOU in Ethiopia. Through this scheme, SMUC runs 9 programs of studies under its School of Graduate Studies.

Similarly, other service activities are also acknowledged and valued as an essential component of community service or practice at SMUC. In this connection volunteerism programs tend to be strongly valued and dominantly practiced at SMUC. There are several volunteer services are offered to the community by SMUC through its various CUE activities. Academic and administrative staff members and students' associations are often active as volunteers in offering training, raising funds, and donating materials to meet social needs. At SMUC, the various units mobilize a large segment of the university community to serve the wider community.

1. Professional and Technical Support Services

- Providing free scholarship to students from disadvantaged families
- Giving training to the various the nearby owners of small scale enterprises from Lideta sub city on basic accounting principles of Lideta sub city Nifas Silk Lafto sub city
- Providing training to partner organizations based on mutual agreement
- Giving training on customer service to secretaries from Lideta Sub city
- Providing education to the community through regular, continuing and distance modalities
- Giving training on the application of internal and external quality audit to the TVET institutions and colleges quality audit committee
- Provided training on gender and HIV/AIDs to girls students of the near by secondary school
- Actively taking part in talk shows, panel (round table) discussions organized by various bodies for the benefit of communities
- Proactively looking and bidding for consultancy jobs being announced by service seeking organizations or institutions dealing with social problems and services in the country
- Engage in designing outreach projects to be implemented in partnership with external stakeholders (funding agencies).
- Participate in annual campaign of planting trees(seedlings in collaboration with and cleaning the surrounding environment outside the campus
- Designing and implementing development projects in partnership with stakeholders in and outside Ethiopia. In this regard, the student exchange program it has had with Amsterdam Business School on the Ethiopian Coffee Branding Project which has been

initiated and implemented with *Meleya Foundation* of the Netherlands, and the Intent Program which was implemented with the assistance of *Meleya*; and the Supplementary Materials Development Project it had with St. Mark & St. John University in the UK under the England-Africa Partnership Program can be cited as example.

2. Social and Psychological Support Services

- Visiting patients including PLWHA and street children particularly during holydays
- Contributed money and held a luncheon event on the occasion of new year and holiday celebration and with orphans and economically disadvantaged children from Wereda 10 of Lideta sub city
- Welfare supports and visits to the orphans, the elderly and the homeless in collaboration with the pertinent organization

3. Material and Monetary Support Services

- Collecting money and clothing from the community of SMUC and donating it to PLWHA around Entoto Spring Water
- Environmental protection (cleaning or sanitation) campaign off campus
- Donating books and used computers to the near by village primary schools and secondary schools
- Material support provided to students with visual disabilities and street children
- Investing a huge amount of money material and human to undertake research to address the various social problems
- Sponsoring income generation campaign aimed at helping the poor people , and printed 31,000 tickets of no benefit to the college
- Sharing resources(- university college's building used by Ledeta sub city red cross association for meeting purpose
- Contributing money and distributed stationary to orphans and economically disadvantaged children from Wereda 10 of Lideta sub city
- Reacting to requests for support, e.g. from local charities, or staff who are fundraising

4. Services to Campus Community

- Training offered to female students on life skills, coping skills for girls in collaboration with SISTA(Sisters informing sister on topics about AIDs)
- Enriching prospective graduates with skills on self-employment (entrepreneurship) and on employment opportunities and perception by way of making use of invited employers , professionally skilled and experienced persons on related issues
- Organized panel discussion on
 - the origin, pros and cons of business process reengineering for the students and SMUC community members
 - international business in Ethiopian context and Ethiopian taxation regulation, directives and proclamation with special emphasis on VAT, TOT, and employment income tax, and the role of accounting in agricultural business
- Talking show event Prepared and sponsored within the campus
- Conducted VCT campaign among campus community
- Working on mainstreaming gender and HIV/AIDs in the curriculum

Figure 5: Community Voice Indicators

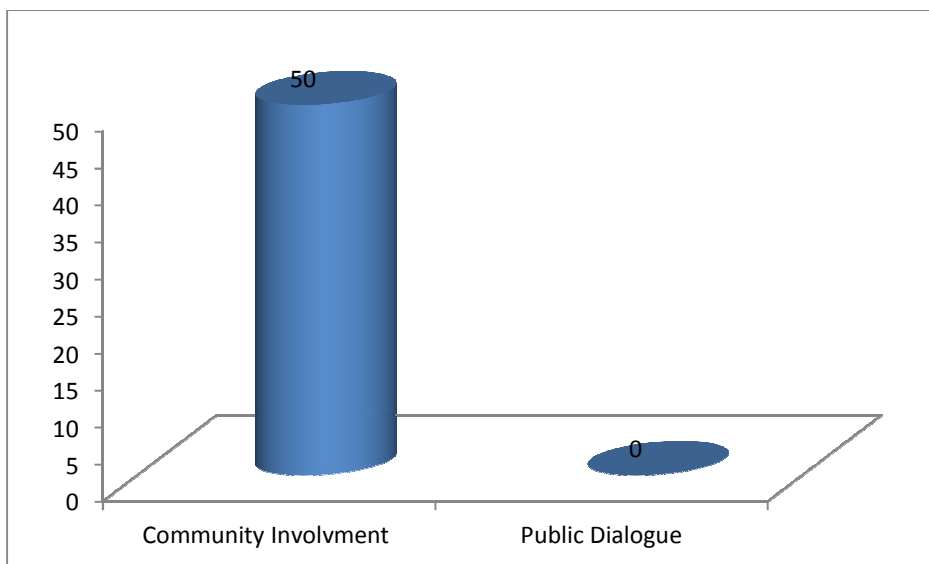


Figure 5 indicates SMUC received 50% rating on the involvement of community members or partners in institutions leadership activities as indicator of community voice. There are limited

numbers of opportunities for community partners to assume leadership roles in institutional activities (e.g., facilitate student reflection, give campus lectures, and collaborate on research).

Community partners are rarely invited or encouraged to assume leadership roles as members of the supervisory board and other similar committee members. Similarly results from interview and indicated no direct representation of community partners in any of the university college based committees/ boards, and relevant strategic planning. However, the nearby organizations or any relevant organizations are invited to contribute their part when preparing curriculum. In addition the voice of the community is heard through other government representatives such as Wereda and Kebele officers when the nearby community members are helped financially and materially.

On the other hand SMUC received lower score 33% on public dialogue as indicator of community voice. Data from interview also disclosed the university college did not play a visible and effective role in identifying and facilitating dialogue around important public issues. Similarly no mention of the kind is obtained from document and website review too.

Social and Economic Benefits of Services Offered

According to the results of the study SMUC is able to provide the following social and economic benefits to the various community members through its community university engagement.

- Make the students to be familiar with real world work environment through internship and be aware of real problems of the society
- create learning opportunities for the needy (individuals and organizations) through scholarships and sponsoring/funding important events or activities initiated by communities and/or their members
- enable students develop positive attitude and the ability to make decisions about their future career and create wider chance of employability for the graduates
- Help students build positive public image about the institutional efforts in solving societal problems and there by strengthen community institution's future relationship

- Enable students to identify the types of social economic problems that they are expected to deal with well ahead of time before formally joining the work force
- Improve the lives of women and children through skill training, education and income generating activities with sustainable self-employment, relief and sensitization on the impact HIV/ AIDS
- Able to engaged in poverty reduction through financial, material, medical, psycho-social and spiritual support to the Ethiopian elderly and orphan children
- Able to work jointly against the HIV/Aids epidemic by coordinating recourse, knowledge and materials. The assistance usually focuses on children who have lost their families due to the epidemic.
- Provide young people with professional and technical support to enable them unveil their talent and become innovative and undertake initiatives

Local Communities' Perceptions of SMUC

Local partnering community organizations described SMUC as an essential partner in addressing community concerns. All the interviewees from the participating partnering organization underlined that SMUC's strong leadership commitment and initiative to work for the public good has been one of the main factors contributing for the success of their respective organizations goal in solving societal problems. They perceived that the UC's leadership has always been ready to invest and work on community university engagement in collaboration with partnering community organizations pressing social problems. And as such SMUC is unique in its commitment and dedication when it comes to community service. It always demonstrate strong collaboration to work together with the partnering community organization to achieve the common goal of solving societal problems

All the interviewees from the partnering community organization unanimously agreed that it would be impossible for their respective organization to realize the very objective of working for the wellbeing of the community unless they collaborate with other institutions with common goals. SMUC has been an active agent as well as instrumental in collaborating with the

partnering community organization and enhancing the achievement of their common goals of solving societal problems. Thus SMUC has demonstrated its genuine commitment to and played significant role for the public good through its various community university engagement activities in collaboration with other partnering community organizations For example an interviewee from DKT stated that: “.....Fifty percent of the intended objectives of implementing higher education initiative project with private higher education institution was met mainly due to SMUC’s active involvement in the project”.

Thus, there is considerable understanding between SMUC and community partners regarding each other’s needs, goals, resources and capacity for developing and implementing community engagement activities. Relationships are well established and sustained over time. Community agencies consistently access students and/or campus community members as resources for their work through, service, volunteerism or other similar activities.

Conclusion

St. Mary’s university colleges have stronger cultures and leadership supporting community university engagement. The institution has put in place policy and strategic documents to CUE among its students, academic and administrative staff members. Thus, it can be concluded that the university college’s mission explicitly articulates its commitment to the public purposes of higher education and higher education’s public responsibility to solve societal problems and its leadership demonstrates a genuine willingness to implement and strengthen the public aspect of its mission

The University College has also links with institutions based outside Ethiopia with the purpose that ranges from initiating joint programs to undertaking specific projects. Consequently a wide range of established partnerships and relationships with industry, community and government stakeholders has provided mutually beneficial opportunities, delivered outcomes, and evidence of financial returns. A significant proportion of research has also been undertaken in partnership with a wide range of industry and community partners.

However, there seems to be weak and fragmented coordination of engagement and service-related activities across academic, co-curricular, and non-academic programs. Community partners are rarely invited or encouraged to assume leadership roles as members of the supervisory board and other similar committee members. The university college did not also play a visible and effective role in identifying and facilitating dialogue around important public issues.

Recommendations

Although SMUC's overall community university engagement appears strong in many categories, the actual mechanisms and programs for this purpose as well as institutional level coordination and support needed to adequately implement these efforts need to be further strengthened. Coordination of engagement is important for strong community university engagement to exist. Institutions that perform strongly on the indicator related to having adequate professional coordination for community university engagement perform strongly in community engagement indicators overall; and university community collaborations are more likely to sustain their efforts if they have an identified coordinator (Toof 2006). Thus through effective partnerships with community members and organizations seeking to address complex and urgent social challenges, SMUC can further create social and environmental value and solve social problems in a cost-effective and sustainable way.

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