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Under the Invisible Hand?

Market influences on Community-Engaged
Scholarship in Malawian Higher Education

Nelson Masanche Nkhoma

Under the Invisible Hand?¹

Market Influences on Community Engaged Scholarship in Malawian Higher Education

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Abstract: Market-based practices have turned African faculty members into entrepreneurs. This has resulted in faculty members selling their knowledge and skills through consultancies and research related projects in a bid to raise enough money for their universities and themselves. While university culture has shaped this conundrum, dwindling local government support and competitive international donor funding mechanism have compounded the challenges for community-engaged scholarship (CES). This paper explores faculty motivations and barriers of market-based approaches to community-engaged scholarship. It explores implications of the increasing pressure of the entrepreneurial university in shaping faculty motivations to conduct community-engaged scholarship in Africa using a case of Malawian faculty in public higher education.

Key words: Market-based approaches; community-engaged scholarship (CES); higher education; entrepreneurship; Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

¹The concept of the invisible hand was drawn from the work of Adam Smith. For an interesting debate around this metaphor and how it has been used see Kennedy (2009)

² The picture was taken by the researcher at a CES project site in Malawi that involves working with local cassava farmers to produce cassava for baking flour, fish feed and more.

Introduction

The modern university, through community-engaged scholarship (CES), is directly and indirectly at the center of development. This is primarily via the creation, preservation, dissemination and utilization of national and global knowledge systems encompassing commerce, technology, communication and culture. Higher education is therefore widely viewed as a critical driver of economic growth, competitiveness and development for the common good (Bloom, Canning, & Chan, 2006; Douglass, 2010; Mazzoleni, 2008; UNESCO et al., 2002). As governments and aid agencies refocus attention on higher education as a tool for development, public and private sectors are jointly investing in academic research in order to support innovation-led economic growth (Bloom, Canning, & Chan, 2006; Mazzoleni, 2008). Across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), this is generally positive as the private sector can provide much needed support to its many institutions of higher learning struggling to compete in a knowledge-based global economy. But these universities face a multitude of challenges, and limited resources is just one of many.

In Malawi, and in many other SSA countries, universities are held back by high levels of attrition, poor student performance, low levels of funding for research and development (R&D), dilapidated infrastructure, brain drain, and dwindling motivations for faculty to conduct research and engage with local community and industry partners (Kerr & Mapanje, 2002; Holland, 2010; Sharra, 2014). According to the World Bank Knowledge Economy Index (KEI), a measure of national preparedness for the knowledge economy based on knowledge, innovation, and technology measures, Malawi ranks as the lowest in the Sub-Saharan African region (World Bank, 2014). Furthermore, until Malawi's institutions of higher education are fully prepared to capitalize on the creation and use of knowledge, Malawi is at risk of being further marginalized in a highly competitive world economy.

Faced with this reality, many development organizations and private partners attempt to build institutional capacity by equipping faculty and staff with the skills and know-how to create their own income generating opportunities. Generally captured in the notion of 'entrepreneurial universities,' such programs and initiatives typically aim to strengthen research, provide technical and capacity support and, in some cases, supply grants for faculty and their universities to access much needed financial resources. While these market-based approaches have laudable goals, they also threaten the development of faculty community engagement, especially in resource-poor institutions in transitioning nations such as Malawi.

CES is scholarly work that is conducted for or in partnership with community members to advance knowledge in order to address issues of societal relevance. Additionally, CES refers to work that engages a faculty member's professional expertise to solve real-world problems in ways that fulfill institutional missions and are public, not proprietary (Boyer, 1990; Bloomfield, 2006; O'Meara, 2008). This essay examines the impact of market-based approaches on faculty CES. It asks, what motivates faculty to conduct CES amidst an influx of market-based approaches to development? Answers to this question help us understand how market approaches are influencing development in general and CES in particular.

Historical debates on the financing of higher education in Malawi

This essay fits within the larger debate on public versus private financing of higher education, a very popular topic in higher education across Africa. Before examining the impact of private sector support on CES within Malawi, it is worth reviewing the ways in which the financing debate has influenced higher education policies in Malawi more broadly.

Policies on the financing of Malawian universities offer strong evidence of market influences. During the precolonial and colonial times, missionaries and colonial governments primarily supported institutions of higher learning across SSA. However, as African states gained independence from their colonial masters (Malawi gained full independence in 1964), most religiously supported institutions were taken over by the nationalist governments and new public institutions were also established. During this era, governments were the primary sources of funding for faculty and institutions of higher learning. Public expenditure on higher education increased, in part, because of the expectation that universities would play a significant role in national development.

In the 1980s and 1990s studies on the returns to higher education and different education financing policies (see Bennell, 1996) sparked a big debate in higher education financing around the world. The main concern was how to finance higher education expansion during an era of declining government education budgets. Partially inspired by the popular rate of return argument, the World Bank pushed for greater privatization of higher education in much of the developing world. Other reasons for the privatization of higher education included: the global rise of neoliberalism which calls for a reduced role of the state for purposes of equity and efficiency; limited government budgets stemming from economic and political crises; a loss of faith in universities as public service institutions; the dominance of the "Education for All" (EFA) agenda, which favored spending on basic education over higher education; and a proliferation of studies showing greater private and social rates of return to primary education (Zezeza, 2002; Samoff and Carrol, 2004; Holland, 2010). All of these arguments have been used to justify a reduction of public funding to higher education, in other words, privatization of higher education. The World Bank has been particularly outspoken on this issue, requiring student tuition fees as a pre-condition for higher education lending in several countries (Samoff & Carrol, 2004).

In Malawi, three major forms of privatization altered higher education financing. The first form of privatization involved detaching higher education from the public national development agenda. This was a popular approach across many transitioning economies. A second approach to privatization involved the introduction of student fees. Traditionally, higher education in Malawi was viewed as a public good and the public treasury supported the few students who reached tertiary education. With the shift towards privatization, the Malawian government reduced subsidies to students and began charging tuition.

A third approach to privatization called for universities to be entrepreneurial and adopt a more market-based orientation. This approach represents a dramatic shift in the underlying philosophy of faculty responsibility to academic, social, and economic development. Poverty reduction strategies have traditionally been seen as the responsibility of national governments, often assisted by bilateral and multilateral aid organizations. As many SSA governments have failed to reform higher education, entrepreneurial universities are gaining traction under the

assumption that the free market will succeed where governments have previously failed. In this approach, which emphasizes individual responsibility within a market system, it is the faculty and individual institutions that bear the main responsibility for solving their own problems.

Market influences on Malawian higher education

Globally, market-based approaches to education are expanding. Mohanty (2003) points out that higher education systems have been undergoing restructuring subject to government deregulation and increasing privatization in the name of efficiency and cost cutting. This restructuring has taken the form of “academic capitalism” where universities are forced to operate more like businesses, establishing industry connections, selling education as a commodity, and restructuring campuses for global economic competition. Academic capitalism, she maintains, is entirely commensurate with the ideology and politics of privatization, and it laid the groundwork for a market-based capitalist citizenship (Mohanty, 2003; Rosalind, 2010).

As development policies place more emphasis on building the capacity of individuals to compete effectively in a market environment, there is a risk that such policies fail to fully appreciate the larger constellation of forces that may constrain the success of even the best-prepared faculty in a knowledge-driven economy. For public policy is impacted by large and myriad forces well beyond the control of individual faculty members. Considine (2005) cautions that, despite these limitations, funders, donors, and international as well as local partners often drive public policy agendas with limited knowledge of the context and rules that shape them. This happens when development actors concentrate narrowly on those aspects most directly under their control (ignoring the broader contextual issues) or which are driven by their own self-interest (e.g. research and policy areas that are important to their own development needs).

Another reason why development policies place more emphasis on building the capacity of individuals to compete effectively in a market environment may be that development partners do not fully understand the myriad challenges faculty members face in developing country contexts. A related danger of market-based approaches to higher education stems from their unproblematization of what Bagilhole & Goode (2001) calls the myth of meritocracy or the objectiveness of the market. The myth of meritocracy is the myth that the individual is the only unit of citizenship in society, and that whatever a person ends up with must be what he or she individually wanted, worked for, earned and deserved. In light of these trends surrounding the privatization of Malawian higher education, this paper examines what drives Malawian faculty members’ to intersect and bridge market influences and higher education goals to advance socioeconomic development as their broad mission in national development.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify Malawian faculty perceptions of incentives and barriers to conducting CES in Malawi. This paper pays particular attention to how market-based development practices shape faculty incentives and barriers towards CES. Data for this paper is based on qualitative interviews with 15 faculty members at two public universities in Malawi between 2013 and 2014. While the study did not primarily investigate market approaches in higher education, market influences in higher education and CES emerged strongly from interviews about CES in general and warranted specific attention and deeper analysis. Interviews were all conducted in English and transcribed using Express Scribe for

analysis in NVivo. A grounded theory approach was used to identify themes and codes from the interview data. Patterns were identified among those initial groupings and transcripts were coded a second time to further identify and study emergent theme of market influence on CES.

This qualitative research project, like all kinds of research, inherently had ethical and research design concerns. According to the most recent World Bank data, the total number of faculty at the two public universities under this study in 2010 was 877 (World Bank, 2010). This study focused only on faculty members in these institutions who conduct CES. This allowed more detailed information from participants who actually have CES knowledge and experience. Since this is a new area of study in Malawian higher education there was no data on the total number of faculty conducting CES at the two institutions. College registrars and heads of department at each university thus helped to select a total of 15 faculty members based on their involvement in CES. While the total number of interviewed faculty may appear small, the objective and target of the sample selection was met in two ways. First, the sample was not too big or too small but representative enough of the participants of interest. Second, the number of participants offered in- depth experiences rather than generalizable insights to a broader context.

Furthermore, as a researcher doing research in my home country, I dealt with the complexity and messiness of language, politics, and cultural differences which are present in all qualitative research. I was actively present, and always critical of the limitation of my interviewing and data analysis process. Much as there is no one best way to deal with such limitations, my approach involved intense contextual and methodological reflexivity. On several occasions questions or themes were added, changed or dropped or adapted to the local context and emerging themes. This led to explicit questioning of data and the conclusiveness of the findings (Ryen, 2011). The interviews sought to identify incentives that motivate and influence CES among Malawian faculty members. I explore their ambivalent perceptions of incentives and barriers to conducting CES, focusing on the influence of the market as they relate to faculty member' abilities to aspire, reject, negotiate, and even hope for multiple practices of scholarship.

Discussion of Findings

Malawian faculty indicated that incentives for public engagement fall under three broad categories: personal, institutional, and external community incentives. While faculty members acknowledge the importance of making the CES relevant to social, political and economic demands, they harbor nuanced opinions of their work. In mostly subtle ways, they alluded to the ways in which the market influences their CES. This is not altogether surprising, as previous studies have indicated that faculty members are reluctant to call out the power of the market even though they indirectly acknowledge its heavy influence on the work they do (Holland, 2010; Olukosha & Zeleza, 2004). The following section on findings is organized around the three main incentives faculty gave for conducting CES. The first section discusses the personal aspirations that drove faculty to conduct CES, namely the desire to help others and meet community needs. The second section explores institutional incentives and the influence of institutional missions and disciplines on faculty CES. The third and final section on external community incentives discusses how limited institutional and community resources often drives faculty to seek support beyond their own community (e.g. international donor funds) to conduct CES that benefits their institutions and communities.

Personal incentives for community-engaged scholarship

This research showed that faculty members were motivated to engage with communities for personal reasons. All 15 interviewed faculty members mentioned their social responsibility to deal with social, political and economic issues affecting their societies. They consider their broad mandate to use African higher education in support of local needs. Faculty often referenced their personal identities and backgrounds as reasons for engagement. As one female faculty member pointed out, “when I see fellow women who can’t even have time to feed their child... I interact with them and see their needs in finding best nutrition for babies. That motivates me personally even in my own village, I try to make a difference in someone’s life.” Some faculty discussed how their religious beliefs as well as cultural values lit a burning torch in their personal lives to serve, help and change their personal lives and those of others. One unique perspective came from a faculty member who specialized in aquaculture but had other special projects unrelated to his discipline. He stated, “As an atheist, what bothers me is the issue of religion and witchcraft law. Mostly our laws are not effective in protecting children and the elderly who are mostly accused of practicing witchcraft because they are defenseless.” While faculty members acknowledge the opportunities CES gives to earn extra money and further their professional careers, they are also highly motivated to engage in CES because they see it as their personal mission and the right thing to do.

For many, their fundamental drive was fulfilling their personal aspirations that drove them to join the university profession in the first place. One of the faculty members linked the connection between use of external funds and his vision of CES. “Money and material benefits are not an end in themselves; they are just a means for social and societal transformation³.” Faculty pointed out that they needed external financial support to conduct various projects such transportation, communication and buying project materials. Similarly, another professor said, “no one would be happy to be a full professor who has not touched the lives of people.” This perspective of incentives as a means rather than an end of CES was echoed by faculty across differences in gender, academic status, age and academic discipline. For example, the faculty member quoted below joined the university due to a strong desire to reform Malawian society and fight for social justice. This was during the one party system of government under which Malawians, especially those who were well educated, faced serious human rights abuses such as property grabbing, demotions, denigration without trial, murders and forced exiles. The system of government changed in 1993 to embrace a more democratic system of government.⁴ It was this dark historical period that drove many faculty members to take up CES as an approach to bring change.

“I am an advocate for democracy per se, I worked for the state Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation during the one party system of government and when we were changing to the multi-party democracy liberalized system, I thought things were going to change. I fell victim and was actually sacked and suspended from work for no apparent reason... And so I took advantage of that and joined the university and I said to myself we need to fight for social justice.”

³Money and material benefits in this essay are primarily considered as personal incentives, however, issues of money, which are at the center of market-based approaches, permeate all sections of the faculty’s aspirations and institutional mandates.

⁴ More information can be found in Carver, R. (1990). *Where silence rules: The suppression of dissent in Malawi*. Human Rights Watch.

Faculty members' aspirations to achieve social justice and economically empower local communities were fundamental motivators for CES. These principles to a larger extent reflect the principle of 'Ubuntu' - "I am because we are"⁵ - which is a strong personal value among African communities, including universities. Among other things, looking after one another and helping each other at all times to attain justice is emblematic of what drives Malawian faculty to conduct CES.

CES was also influenced by faculty members' philosophical beliefs about knowledge, ontology and axiology. Community-based research and action research, for example, provided a major direction for their CES. A total of 13 faculty mentioned that they were motivated by the fact that they personally believe that learning is a two-way process. There was understanding that "*best teachers are also best learners.*" In addition to fighting for social justice, faculty members tended to exhibit resistance to a unidirectional approach where university faculty were seen as experts. As one faculty member pointed out:

"The community has a lot to be taught but also faculty members have a lot to learn from the community. As such community-engaged scholarship hinges on the two way process of exchange of experiences and knowledge and perspectives."

Faculty showed that they believe that as much as universities are considered sources of knowledge, this knowledge does not come from the university alone. It comes from communities and it is the communities where knowledge is used to its full potential. Almost all interviewed faculty reported that they were driven to work with communities not only as a way of improving their students' knowledge but also personally improving their own ways of knowing. This was also a way of personally giving back to communities from where they draw their knowledge and practices. Faculty members bridged communities and universities as way of making higher education relevant to the various community needs.

Furthermore, faculty members acknowledged the importance of the market in making their scholarship relevant to the industries and the communities in general. However, what was profound in their statements was their emphasis on personally contributing to uplifting the lives of local communities and development as opposed to aiming at a prestigious financially successful university or faculty position for themselves.

"...We in Africa are interested in contributing to improved welfare at household level. Either nutrition i.e. are the people getting better food products? Are these products safe? If these are good quality products can they be able to sale in the market in order to get cash income on the market which can be plowed back into their households."

Community development, as the above quote exemplifies, was a major incentive for faculty engaging in CES. In a nutshell, these faculty members presented antithetical evidence to numerous criticisms of faculty research as esoteric, abstract and mostly geared towards personal self-interest, curiosities and the need to meet personal financial gains due to limited salaries and benefits. Faculty shared that they even used personal funds to conduct CES in

⁵ There is a strong belief among Malawian faculty that both, 'ubuntu' and principles of democratic good governance are compatible and complementary. This is not to preclude that the idea of Ubuntu and its various interpretations is inherently and purely African as knowledge and philosophies are hybrid and change over time as shown by Swanson, D. (2012). Ubuntu, African epistemology and development: Contributions, contradictions, tensions, and possibilities.

order to fulfill community needs and alleviate various problems. Sustainable and impactful projects were above all other incentives, as one faculty member summarized so well.

“I would say that the benefits you see in terms of changes in people’s lives is priceless... when I go out there and see something that we introduced maybe ten years ago still going on it pays me more; more than say the kwacha or the dollar.”

As the above quote illustrates, the visible impact of CES on communities is priceless. Faculty aspirations for social transformation and meeting the needs of communities through their work reflect their activeness and agency in dealing with various personal and institutional barriers. However, faculty were quick to point out that there is a gap between the ideal and the practical, between the proclamation of the goodness of CES and the ability of faculty to achieve it. For example, although faculty members primarily acknowledge the need to perform CES, they also showed that there were limited institutional and external community incentives. What this meant was that despite limited financial and material support, and at times a lack of community interest in CES, they persisted by negotiating various funding mechanisms, approaches and projects. As the following sections show, faculty negotiated the institutional and academic incentives and barriers as they conducted CES.

Institutional incentives for CES

The primary goals for institutions of higher learning are threefold: teaching, research and outreach (Boyer, 1990). When a faculty joins the university ranks, they agree to serve under these broad goals. In exploring what motivates faculty to conduct CES, faculty members showed that institutional requirements, disciplinary frameworks, and promotion in higher education were major incentives.⁶ For instance, one faculty member offered the following perspective.

“...for us it is a career. One of my responsibilities and duties of my post for my appointment is that I should demonstrate community service through outreach... so we do it because it’s part of our duty and it weighs heavily on promotion.”

In addition to personal career incentives, faculty saw community engagement as an advancement of their discipline and institutions in general. Although money, promotion and academic prestige were motivations for conducting community-engaged scholarship, faculty were clear and systematic in stressing that their main incentive was the impact of their work on communities.

“Promotion and publications can be achieved even when faculty conduct lab based research. All they need to do is to carry out research and publish the results through journal papers and presentations at conferences. The financial reward you gain is very decimal. Of course we need money and cars and resources to do the work we do but the value of money does not match the nature of the outcomes of engaged-scholarship.”

⁶ The Chancellor College, one of the public colleges in Malawi, has the following as its mission statement: “To advance knowledge and to promote wisdom and understanding by engaging in teaching, research, consultancy, outreach and by making provision for the dissemination, promotion and preservation of learning responsive to the needs of Malawi and the world.”

These thoughts were in line with what other faculty members thought about the role of institutional financial incentives in motivating faculty to conduct CES. Faculty overwhelmingly reported that money was not an end but just a means to conduct the work they did and achieve social change and development. Most importantly, their academic discipline mandated them to do so and this in itself was a strong incentive for CES, as supported by the following quote:

“The financial part is indeed one of the incentives that motivates faculty that we cannot deny. [On] the other side of the pendulum there are scholars who believe that there is a problem here that needs to be engaged with, I will go out and deal with this problem. The question of funding comes second. For such category of scholars what motivates them is the disciplinary satisfaction. That is engaging with a problem in their discipline to a point where they can feel satisfied that they are dealing with the proper problems in their discipline...”

The influence of the academic discipline in motivating faculty to work on CES was also driven by the university ideals and the understanding of deconstruction and post-structural thought. Such thoughts were espoused in the following quote:

“Derrida has a paper on the university which he calls: The principle of reason: The university in the eyes of its pupils...What he said here is very fascinating. He uses the idea of the pupils with a double meaning both as a learner and as well as the focus point of vision in the eye. So when he talks about the university in the eyes of its pupils he is trying to reverse the position of the university to not only be a teaching or a professing institution, but also one that can learn from its pupils that it teaches. One major point he is making is precisely that we are not always there to view, map out, observe, others and construct knowledge systems about them, we must also create an atmosphere or position to be viewed by others at that point then we take a point of listening and learning from communities.”

Such understanding exposes what motivates faculty to practice CES. Faculty members are motivated to reverse the contemporary as well as the historical socially unjust structure and mode of operation of the university. The essence here is not only to make universities directly relevant to their communities or make money, as the market-based approaches would expect, but also to meet the philosophical belief of justice and the ideals of their disciplines. For example, a faculty member in the humanities had the following to say:

“The implicit mandate of the humanities is culture and community. As faculty of humanities there is obligation to deal with humanity and community. Issues of culture are at the center of the discipline. The discipline occurs to be culturally sensitive...We are post-colonial scholars let’s admit that. So there is the need to be sensitive and the realization that people are not blank slates. So a major motivation was the historical developments, the disciplinary avenue and the need for sensitivity to our culture and communities as driven by the need to avoid the colonial mistakes and experiences.”

Even in hard science and medicine fields some faculty reflected that CES was motivated by more nuanced issues that go beyond the influences of the market. For many, they feel they are building upon the indigenization of African higher education by bridging local traditional knowledge and modern scientific knowledge. This was evidenced by faculty who gave examples of blending local knowledge and laboratory tested procedures to improve the processing of cassava and create nutritious cooking recipes. In this case, faculty were engaging in cross-

cultural medicine, marrying the local and modern. In Africa and Malawi in particular, debates over the influence of epistemology, discipline and departmental contexts has been shaped by a process called Africanization or endogenization. Africanization according to Adésínà (2005) denotes a process of contextualization and adaptation of tertiary education to its African context both in terms of structure and curricula. Faculty community engagement among Malawian faculty had taken these initiatives seriously in a bid to bridge the old and new as the following vignette of a professor at a college of medicine demonstrates the need to bridge various ways of knowing:

“I am a reproductive physiologist and my work is mostly focused on male infertility and recently my research has been trying to develop male contraception. I have worked in the past two year with traditional healers trying to find the medicines that are used as male contraception to find a scientific backing on those medicines. I also do research in male aphrodisiacs trying to see whether the claimed properties of these herbal aphrodisiacs really work or not. And recently we have embarked on a study to look at medicinal plants that are used by pregnant women to induce labor. So that is also involving communities and talking to these birth attendances in the communities and finding out what medicine they use to induce labor and finding out if these medicines are contributing to maternal mortality or not and we also test them in the lab to see if they really have got some effects.”

The need to link intergenerational knowledge and preserve multiple forms of knowledge, old and new, makes CES a sometimes messy and meandering process, much like a river. However, what is fascinating is that although faculty reference personal incentives and the need to help others, there was clear reluctance to express their approval or disavowal of the influence of the market in pressuring them to make their CES marketable and competitive in order to secure funds and support both within the institution and outside. They hardly presented their colleges as factories or markets for knowledge production. However, when faculty faced limited support for CES within their institutions, they looked outwards and elsewhere for resources and alternative incentives. The following section illustrates how faculty use their personal and community resources to leverage various kinds of support for CES when universities fall short of providing support for CES.

External incentives for community-engaged scholarship

As illuminated by Zeleza (2002), the institutional culture, politics and visions, as well as financial challenges, impact faculty CES. Although the university institutions provided incentives for faculty to engage with communities, they were also a source of multiple disincentives that eventually forced faculty to seek and imagine alternative incentives for their work. Faculty overwhelmingly mentioned that their work was mostly funded through external agencies such as international organizations from Britain, Germany, Norway and USA. As noted below, these international research organizations drove faculty work in multiple ways. This reality creates both opportunities and challenges for faculty in resource-poor institutions of higher education. The quote below from a Malawian faculty member draws attention to the difficult role of faculty caught between university and donor interests.

“...Mostly we are involved with communities through international and privately funded projects so sometimes the problem with these community projects is that you are employed by the university and you have a project which will give you the money and

the university is giving you salary so it's like you have two masters. So the questions becomes, should we allow people to conduct projects [when] the university will get nothing and so they say no. So what happens is that we want members of faculty to declare their projects and we urge members of faculty to do projects and outreach activities through the college..."

As the above quote suggests, faculty incentives for CES appear to have arisen from the reconceptualization of the concept of community that includes greater connections to industries and institutions. Where the initial understanding of community engagement was work performed for or with local (often rural and poverty stricken) communities, community has become a broad and boundless concept. Accordingly faculty face greater pressure to engage with the broader public in order to contribute to technology transfer, human resource development, public health, and other community development issues, broadly defined.

Faculty say they often align their CES work with donor calls for proposals and research projects or consultancies from external funding agencies. They use these opportunities as a framework for improving student outcomes and leveraging public, private, and international donor funds. Since donors and business entities have their own motivations for putting out calls for proposals and providing financial support for research and scholarship, this complicates the whole question of whose motivations drives faculty to conduct their scholarship. For many faculty members, the link to external communities was not just an incentive for conducting CES but a necessary change, as articulated by the following faculty member:

"...researchers on communities, what they mostly think is that the community is a small-scale farmer. This is where universities and tertiary education in Malawi has failed bitterly. Because with that 1964 orientation of agriculture and that 90% of the population being smallholder farmers, all our community engagement has been with the small-scale local people ... That has meant that our graduates cannot work properly in industry, they perform miserably because they are not prepared to engage with the broader community and industry. Secondly, our innovation system has lapsed or lacked because we always have been made to deal with those small-scale enterprises. The way we want to do is that we don't want to necessary move out of that but to have a framework that would allow innovation at a large scale."

Despite its obvious benefits, the alignment of faculty work with private sector and external donor interests has powerful consequences for higher education in Africa. As faculty realign their efforts and work in aid-dependent, market-pressured settings they are encouraged to discard their earlier mentioned aspirations of higher education as the vehicle for national liberation, reduced inequality, and stronger civil society in favor of building stronger industry and international connections. Drawbacks of externally commissioned CES is that engagement becomes part of either the local industry or the international research agenda and Malawian faculty members become the occasional and perhaps continuing employees of the external funding agencies.

Samoff and Carrol (2004) draw attention to the vicious cycle that is created by faculty entrepreneurship in response to the allure of international funding and the promise of international partnership. Consulting partnerships usually meet the best of three sides. On one side, faculty are motivated to do external consultancies because they gain better honorariums. On the other side, universities accept their faculty to do so because they cannot pay them

higher wages. Most importantly, international agencies incorporate local faculty to accomplish local participation and ownership.

Nonetheless, faculty perspectives obtained in this study suggest that external and market influences on CES is not a simple binary case of good versus bad. Faculty members admitted that this was a complex process. This was reflected in their articulation of barriers they face to conducting CES and how they struggle to rise above them, as detailed in the following section.

Barriers to community-engaged scholarship

In exploring the question of how the institutional and community contexts influence CES, it was discovered that the institutional and community contexts were motivating and demotivating factors for CES. Universities provide various incentives through promotion and other awards, but on a limited scale. At the same time, the university creates obstacles to CES because they cannot provide sufficient funds and mentorship, especially to junior faculty. The majority of faculty cited obstacles of limited time due to heavy teaching loads, a lack of institutional policy and procedures, and limited government funding for higher education. Although some faculty see CES as a source of income for the university and college, they bemoaned the high rates they paid to the university on grants or funds they brought from external sources through projects. Above all, faculty were disgruntled by the competitiveness and lengthiness of the bidding and proposal writing process required to obtain project funding. As one professor put it: “one of the disincentives is that when you put up an application it does not guarantee that it is going to get funded.” With limited resources and heavy workloads, pursuing these time-intensive proposals can be risky. The competitive process for funding appears to be similar at both the institutional and international levels.

In addition to the competitiveness and uncertainty of securing research and project funding, faculty members pointed out that institutional policies that require faculty to contribute funds they raised from consultancies to the universities and colleges serves as a big disincentive. This sometimes results in faculty choosing to conduct CES outside the confines of the university. The faculty member below shares a similar frustration.

“...If you are going to conduct consultancies through the university, the university charges 10% percent through everything that you are going to collect and what you are going to be paid. And then when it comes to the department, the department will again draw 10% from all the proceeds and then there will be tax. The Malawi Revenue Authority will come and get some deductions and at the end of the day you find that almost 60% of the money you made and are supposed to be paid is going away and so what you will find is that majority of faculty run away and conduct research and consultancies on their own outside the institutions.”

There is, however, an alternative explanation for the disillusionment faculty face with regards to monetary contributions to their universities. Suffice it to say that faculty financial contributions from grants is an expected way of putting some funds back into the university for CES, especially CES on topics that are not popular with external donors but which are important to local communities. Perhaps some of the cageyness regarding the faculty contribution has to do with a lack of transparency and not seeing how that money is directly going to fund other CES projects, since much of it gets swallowed up by the university bureaucracy in general.

The politics of institutional control where faculty are expected to contribute money from grants or consultancies is therefore paradoxically a disincentive as well as an incentive for CES. Faculty resistance to these institutional requirements leads them to practice a form of concealed CES. As much as faculty acknowledge that institutional frameworks, university missions, disciplinary and departmental requirements motivated them to practice CES, faculty resistance to those same entities may also drive them to conceal their CES. University administrators report not knowing whether faculty are conducting externally-funded CES because “faculty do not want to reveal their projects to the university”. Indeed, for some faculty members, the opportunity to operate in secrecy, with no institutional supervision and control “excited them to indulge in more politically challenging, interesting and better rewarding scholarship.”

Moreover, it was apparent from the interviews that faculty clearly understood the various incentives and disincentives, as well as the forceful influences of market oriented funding mechanisms, to CES. Faculty members emphasized that this was not a simple process. They acknowledged that it was complex and daunting circumstance having to negotiate across various barriers in order to perform CES. Faculty members are therefore not merely passive victims or agents of market influences. They are active players negotiating across complex and sometimes clashing personal, institutional and external community incentives. One faculty member’s synopsis of the negotiating process to manage personal incentives, institutional needs, and donor requirements describes this situation in terms of intersecting circles.

“Somewhere I presented this in three circles and these circles intersect and one circle is your research domain, another circle is the funders’ domain, and another would be your institutional and community needs domain and what you always have to do is to strike the center where these interests converge.”

Perhaps the process of CES can best be described as a search for a *community-engaged scholarship intersection* where various stakeholders’ needs, motivations and aspirations converge. Faculty in Malawi, through their CES, can be considered as “intersectors”—bridging the needs of community and aligning them to their personal agendas, academic discipline and external funders’ goals. How successful they are in intersecting these various interests is beyond the scope of this essay. However, what is clear is that Malawian faculty members, through their CES, have knowingly or unknowingly upheld or transgressed the founding cornerstones of Malawian public higher education: loyalty, unity, obedience and discipline. Faculty were loyal to their personal aspirations to help and meet community needs; they showed obedience to or defiance of institutional requirements; they pursued unity as they sought to find the intersection of various stakeholders interests; and, above all, they exhorted strict discipline to their work. Despite the many disincentives, faculty resilience beyond these challenges capitulated to the core values they agreed to uphold in the first place⁷.

Conclusions

The central finding of this paper is that Malawian faculty motivation for CES is driven by personal incentives and community needs. While most faculty recognize that CES is an important institutional mission, they do not receive high levels of support or funding for CES

⁷ One of UNIMA’s stated core values is client responsiveness: “In today’s fast-paced and ever-changing world of higher education UNIMA must become a network that links students, faculty, business, industry, government and community. UNIMA will think globally to shape actions, in order to better serve constituencies in its quest to realize the promises of a better world.” Available at <http://www.chanco.unima.mw/administration/>

from their institutions or national governments. Therefore, private sector and international aid funding can provide important opportunities for faculty to develop the necessary skills and capacity to address personal goals and community needs. However, this also puts faculty in a situation where much of their efforts may be directed towards external funder goals rather than community needs. Nonetheless, faculty members indicate numerous ways in which they navigate this reality and try to benefit the community through their participation in externally funded projects. Whereas external approaches provide opportunities, faculty work to ensure they benefit communities. The connection between external agendas and community needs is not always direct and it is often the faculty who are tasked with holding this tension in balance.

When humanity's very freedom and reason are at stake, markets, science, and technology, unrestrained by moral considerations, threaten those basic human values on which democracy and equitable development must be founded. The invisible hand of the market is never simply a neutral assemblage of products or knowledge for economic growth, somehow appearing in the national or international higher education markets. It is always part of a selective tradition, someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge products worth marketing. It is produced out of historical, cultural, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and disorganize; benefitting and most of the times hurting people. This is supported by Gallie (1956), who points out that how we conceive of things like the market and higher education is important because our conceptions and ways of reasoning about them reflect and shape how we see, think about, study and act on practices made available to the public. These scholars serve as a reminder that our conceptions of the market and its influences on education and CES cannot be value free or neutral. Our judgments reflect our assumptions about the world, even if those assumptions remain implicit and unexamined.

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