

# Faculty Members' Conceptualization of Community-Engaged Scholarship: Applying Michael Burawoy's Framework

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## Abstract

Michael Burawoy (2010) suggested that scholars have an obligation to question the status quo of knowledge production and application. Using a mixed methods approach to explore a national case study of faculty members, this article explores two specific questions: For whom do faculty generate knowledge through community-engaged scholarship? What is the purpose of the knowledge produced through community-engaged scholarship? The findings, which are cognizant of insights from Burawoy's (2010) conceptual framework, reveal that faculty members conduct community engagement largely for public, professional, and policy reasons and to a lesser extent for critical reasons. Hence, the article ends with a reflection on why these faculty perspectives might be contextually the same as or different from those of faculty members elsewhere. The article also suggests why it is important for various actors in universities to understand the way faculty members view their community-engaged scholarship.

*Keywords: community engagement, public engagement, Africa, Malawi, Burawoy*



There is consensus on the importance of community engagement toward the achievement of socioeconomic and national development (Byrne, 1998; Austin, 2010; Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2019). Various actors such as the Association of African Universities (AAU) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have provided recommendations toward effecting positive transformation of Sub-Saharan African higher education in and through community engagement (Mamdani, 2008; Preece, Ntseane, Modise, & Osborne, 2012). The recognition of the importance of community engagement is based on the premise that African higher education institutions play a critical role toward the attainment of human development (Cloete, Bailey, Pillay, Bunting, & Maasen, 2011). However, this agreement over the value of community engagement faces differing and contentious perspectives regarding its application

(Bernardo, Butcher, & Howard, 2012). This is because faculty in various contexts undertake community engagement based on the needs of their universities and communities (Cloete et al., 2011). According to Holland (2010), faculty work is influenced by local and global factors through a process of institutionalization. Hence, although community engagement is an important activity in human development, it cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach, as has been predominantly the case with various higher education practices that are crafted in relation to the dictates of the neoliberal conceptualization of development (Willis, 2011).

Community engagement as an educational process has not been subjected to scrutiny in this neoliberal and postcolonial context of African higher education. Literature on community engagement has often taken for granted that we know who faculty members in universities work for—the funder. We

therefore lack a concerted theoretical understanding of the function and purpose of community engagement, especially for faculty members located in Sub-Saharan Africa. Hence, little is known about the persistence, disruptions, and transformations of hegemonic practices in this approach to knowledge production and service in universities. Community engagement programs, as part of higher educational institutions, are well suited to exploring how faculty members interpret and remake knowledge in hegemonic and counterhegemonic ways. Taking community engagement practice in Malawi as a case study, I explore how faculty members' interpretive and knowledge-making practices are shaped by the context in which they work. In other words, I explored how their scientific and cultural imaginings of others located beyond the university confines are shaped by how they interpreted and translated disciplinary knowledge and discourses to produce a sociological division of their labor.

This study contributes to the ongoing discussion on the institutionalization of community engagement by scrutinizing different purposes of community engagement in Sub-Saharan African higher education. As observed by Bernardo, Butcher, and Howard (2012) and Mtawa, Fongwa, and Wangenge-Ouma (2016), a gap exists in current literature owing to the dominance of perspectives from global North countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Perspectives from the global South are crucial to broadening our understanding of the various purposes of community engagement and for whom it is conducted. The global South perspectives are also significant in that they assist in mapping how we can understand institutionalizations and disruptions in the higher education political economy through community engagement. Consequently, this article seeks to present a case study located in a social, cultural, political, and economic context that is different from the global North. This study is guided by a sociological framework that validates the purpose and target of community engagement as conceptualized by faculty members in Africa (Burawoy, 2010). It draws from the perspectives of faculty from three public universities in Malawi, whose explicit mandate is to contribute to national development via community engagement.

## Paradigmatic Perspectives in Literature on the Purpose of Community Engagement

### Community-Engaged Scholarship Defined

Community-engaged scholarship focuses on the role of faculty in cultivating an environment in which institutions serve as citizens to their communities (Votruba, 2010). Community engagement also recognizes that faculty service roles have a place in scholarship and scholarly work (Boyer, 1996; Diamond & Adam, 1995). Boyer (1996) critiqued the then-current paradigm of scholarship, which was based on four key functions—discovery, integration, application, and teaching—and added a fifth component, community-engaged scholarship, which he postulated covers the four functions into one (Ward & Moore, 2010). Boyer's (1990) conceptualization of scholarship suggests that faculty work strives toward academically relevant work that simultaneously fulfills the campus mission and goals and the needs of the community where the institution is located (Sandmann, Williams & Abrams, 2009; Votruba, 2010). Hence, the definitions of community engagement draw from functionalist, constructivist, and emancipatory perspectives (Burawoy, 2009; Fear, Rosaen, Bawden, & Foster-Fishman, 2006; Hale, 2008; Mitchell, 2011).

A consideration of these multiple conceptualizations is of significance in this study. It helps us to determine how faculty understand their community-engaged scholarship and define its purpose. Hence, I adopt, pursuant to my discussion on these community engagement paradigms, Burawoy's conceptualization of community engagement and use it as a lens to unpack the views of faculty in Africa on why and for whom they conduct their scholarship of engagement.

### Three Perspectives on the Function of Community Engagement

Higher education and development studies frame the purpose of community engagement and for whom it is conducted into three different paradigms. The conceptualization uses different units of analysis depending on the purpose of the studies and community engagement. One set of community engagement studies draws from a *functionalist's* paradigm that focuses on the university organization as a unit of analy-

sis. These studies examine how universities institutionalize their organizational service mission and interact with communities in order to promote mutual benefits and capacity building. Functionalist studies of community engagement (Bloomfield, 2005; Furco & Holland, 2004; Sandmann & Plater, 2009) assume that economic rationalism, efficiency, and effectiveness play a critical role toward the achievement of an ideal functioning of community engagement processes and outcomes. Despite being foundational, these functionalist studies are limited because they focus on organizational structures, quality, and efficiency, and thus ignore the human element of community engagement.

The second set of studies utilizes a *constructivist* or interpretivist paradigm in their focus on faculty and community actors as the unit of analysis. These studies explore how human beings create reality and processes and demonstrate how these are shaped by different faculty institutional cultures, histories, and contexts in the community engagement systems (Glass, Doberneck & Schweitzer, 2011; Lunsford & Omae, 2011; O’Meara, 2008; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). For instance, Weerts and Sandmann (2010) conclude that faculty at research universities in the United States of America have shifted from a one-way approach to a two-way approach to increase the benefits of community engagement. These interpretivist views localize cultures and contexts as social constructions and therefore foreground language, discourse, and symbolic communication patterns in their analyses of faculty interactions in universities and their engagement with communities. Nonetheless, one limitation of interpretivist studies is that they ignore the broader communities as units of analysis and do not fully address issues of empowerment or emancipation as the purpose of community engagement.

The third set of studies draw on the *emancipatory* paradigmatic approach in their focus on the power structures inherent in the re-

lations between universities and communities as units of analysis. Studies from this perspective use various units of analysis and apply critical lenses to emphasize power relations and the need to focus on community problems in the pursuit of community empowerment (Chari & Donner, 2010; Hale, 2008; Mitchell, 2008). This approach is relevant to this study’s aim at unpacking how faculty community engagement is mediated by social, economic, and political relations of power and collective struggles in order to achieve community development in developing countries. Moreover, the use of the community as a unit of analysis mitigates the otherwise fluid boundaries between universities, faculty, and communities, which the first and second approaches assume. Hence, this broad view of the concept of community opens multiple ways of understanding the purpose of community engagement in relation to community development as perceived by faculty members.

**Burawoy’s Framing of the Function of Community Engagement**

Burawoy (2010) proposes four divisions of sociological labor and connects these divisions with community engagement. Burawoy’s conceptualization of community-engaged scholarship comprises professional, policy, public, and critical divisions, depending on what a scholar views as the function of the knowledge and whom it is produced for; see Table 1 below. The framework also highlights the importance of teaching and how teaching can be integrated with the other important functions that faculty perform in universities in relation to outreach, service, and research. Burawoy (2010) states that professional knowledge includes much more than “discovery,” a concept that Boyer (1996) uses, which implies that research occurs in a broader context. Burawoy also states that, in contrast to the broad notion of application, policy knowledge implies a specific relationship of scholars to a client or patron. This is very different from public

| Table 1. Frameworks for Community-Engaged Scholarship |                   |                         |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------|
|   | Academic audience | Extra-academic audience |
| Instrumental knowledge                                | Professional      | Policy                  |
| Reflexive knowledge                                   | Critical          | Public                  |

Note. Table adapted from Burawoy (2009).

knowledge, which involves dialogical relations between the scholar and the public. In addition, “integrative” scholarship that Boyer (1996) adds as a third aspect of his framework for community-engaged scholarship—that which brings together scholars from different disciplines—is only one aspect of critical knowledge that challenges narrow professional knowledge.

Therefore, Burawoy’s (2010) categorization of community engagement is closely related to the features of the new modes of knowledge production, which are reflexivity, transdisciplinarity, and heterogeneity (Gibbons et al., 1994). Reflexive knowledge is critical scholarly work that cuts across disciplinary boundaries. Such scholarly work is considered transdisciplinary and heterogeneous because of its association with multiple and diverse perspectives in the production of knowledge. Burawoy’s framework also resonates with Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge production based on the purpose and audience of the knowledge produced through community engagement. In Mode 1 community engagement, faculty members initiate discipline-based community projects that are driven primarily by the quest for knowledge production for its own sake. In Mode 2 community engagement, the engagement process is context-driven, problem-focused, and interdisciplinary. Mode 2 also involves multidisciplinary teams that work together for short periods of time on specific problems in a real-world setting.

### Critical Issues in Community Engagement in Africa

Many issues make community engagement in African universities specific but comparable. First, Favish, McMillan, and Ngcelwane (2012) suggested that on the basis of knowledge production and service provision, universities in Africa share knowledge through broader international discussions such as The Research University Civic Engagement Network (TRUCEN), the Talloires Network, international conferences, and exchange programs. Despite this interconnectedness, there is a dearth of texts that discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the practice of community engagement in the African context.

Second, Preece, Ntseane, Modise, and Osborne (2012) make observations similar to those by scholars from the United States such as Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, and

Swanson (2019) and show that community engagement has become a central practice, although it is very difficult to measure its impact. These scholars also highlight that universities tend to take a discipline-specific, time-bound, donor-supported, project-based approach to community engagement. This has meant that much of what is done in community engagement, especially in Africa, remains a mystery.

To demonstrate the centrality and difficulties in community engagement, Preece (2011) examines pan-African action research projects on how universities used their community service to address internationally agreed-on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Interestingly, one of the participating institutions was the University of Malawi, Chancellor College. Preece’s book is prototypical of the critical issues in literature on community engagement in that it empirically highlights the overwhelming appreciation felt by communities toward the universities’ involvement and the amount of mutual learning that was experienced by university staff, students, and community members. A consequence of this is that a very narrow picture of the functions of community engagement emerges.

The above issues draw attention to the third issue facing community engagement in Africa. When one critically examines the way community engagement is framed, it tends to appear that it is a strategy for universities to deal with problems outside the university. This does not really offer a nuanced understanding of why and for whom faculty members conduct community engagement. These underpinnings to community engagement are also reflected in Malawian universities. For example, the Malawi Growth Development Strategy (MGDS) recognizes the higher education sector as a key driver of competitiveness and growth through university-community engagement. The University of Malawi (UNIMA), the nation’s biggest and oldest higher education institution, was established in 1965 soon after independence from British colonial rule in 1964 (Mambo, Salih, Nobuyuki, & Jamil, 2016). Despite being an elite system, the university at times assumed a critical position in defense of justice and freedom. A good example is in the way the university fought for a democratic system of government in Malawi in the 1990s (Lwanda, 2002). Ostensibly, the country’s higher education consists of four



public universities. The public universities were established through Acts of Parliament. There also exist private universities, and these were established through charters accredited by the state. Taken together, public institutions currently enroll approximately 12,000 students and have a total number of faculty of up to 1,000 (Mambo et al., 2016). At the time of this study only three of the four institutions were operational, as the fourth was still under construction with the support of a loan from the government of China.

Community engagement in Malawi revolves around autonomy, accountability, and academic freedom. The Malawian public higher education institutions, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), follow the MoEST's directives regarding the strategic direction of higher education. This role of the state organs often leads to contestations regarding the purpose of community engagement. For instance, the Department of Higher Education in the Ministry liaises with universities on policy issues, yet universities are statutory organizations that operate autonomously from the Ministry (MoEST, 2008). This conflict points to how the politics of autonomy make community engagement a politically contentious endeavor owing to the contestations between government and universities over the role of the university toward the public.

The role of the university to the public is tied to funding. The Malawian public universities have three main sources of revenue: government subventions, tuition fees, and resources generated by the universities in the form of project and research grants from local or international organizations. As in most African countries, government contributions, which range from 75% to 85% of recurrent budgets, constitute the largest share of revenue for public institutions in Malawi. Tuition fees contribute between 4% and 14% of total income, with the balance accounted for by locally generated revenue. Salaries and student services take up 90% of the budget, with less than 10% of resource utilization expended on educational and research-related costs (Mambo et al., 2016). This form of distribution of expenditure highlights the financial limitations that faculty face as they conduct community engagement and research. Thus, public universities conduct consultancies and apply for grants from external

partners to supplement the limited funds available for community engagement. Often external funding comes with accountability and strict requirements that have tended to create infighting over the control and use of resources. Tied to such funding sources are the sustainability of funding and the impact of short-term community engagement projects that such partnerships entail. The country's community engagement capacity is equally undermined by years of underfunding, a legacy of inadequate infrastructure and facilities, and a relative scarcity of financial grants (Holland, 2008; LUANR, 2012; UNIMA, 2012).

Within these precarious university conditions, examples of projects of community engagement at different institutions include theater for development (Kamulongera, 2005), where performing arts such as poetry and drama are used as mechanisms for data collection in research and for providing knowledge to communities on issues such as HIV/AIDS as well as rural or urban development. Another example is community-based medicine, where students and faculty at the college of medicine spend time residing in the community to understand and generate knowledge for dealing with the burden of diseases. This approach is framed as both a research approach and community-based learning practice. Additional examples of community engagement are the legal clinic where faculty and students from the Law School provide legal knowledge and representation for communities on various legal cases as a form of service and outreach. Community engagement is not limited to the social sciences. In the chemistry department, for instance, faculty members draw on research on chemical composition of various crops to develop procedures for processing food crops, manufacturing equipment for processing farm products, and developing a market chain with local stakeholders and industries for marketing such products. It is under such governance, financing, and historical conditions that this study investigated how faculty conceptualize the purpose of community engagement and for whom they conduct it to begin to inspect the theoretical basis of such work. The following sections explicate the methods used in this study.

## Methods and Data Analysis

Data for this study were collected from three purposively selected public univer-

sities in Malawi. The selected public universities have a mission of community-engaged scholarship. The study participants consisted of both male and female faculty members from across 10 academic disciplines. A survey instrument that had 44 items, including demographics, was used to collect data. The faculty members were sampled purposefully, drawing on the university registers and directors of research records of community engagement at each university. All heads of departments were also sampled since they are active members in conducting community-engaged scholarship. Purposeful sampling ensured that study participants found the questions meaningful and that faculty were knowledgeable about the concepts under investigation. A total of 110 faculty members completed the survey. Of this number two were missing cases; however, a detailed description of the participants is provided in the Findings section.

The survey instrument included items that asked faculty to score their level of agreement with statements that asked about frameworks used to conduct community-engaged scholarship. These frameworks were influenced by both O'Meara's (2008) factors that motivate faculty to conduct community-engaged scholarship and Burawoy's framework proposed in the discussion above. O'Meara's conceptual framework proposes that the faculty members' motivation to conduct community-engaged scholarship is shaped by their individual, institutional, and departmental characteristics, which determine their work, and external factors, which influence the work conditions.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used for data analysis. The aim was to explore how participants' responses tended to cluster around certain points of agreement or disagreements on survey items (Field, 2013). Faculty conceptual frameworks examine issues that incentivize staff to conduct community-engaged scholarship. Follow-up interviews with faculty members were analyzed qualitatively. Patton (2002) points out several approaches that can be used in qualitative data analysis, and this study opted for a deductive analysis approach. This approach was best suited for this study for two major reasons. First, the approach is significant in that it transforms general theories found in the literature, such as Burawoy's conceptual framework,

which were used as background to analyze how faculty in Malawi conceptualize community-engaged scholarship. The deductive approach gave room to take the conceptual framework as a specific hypothesis suitable for testing. In this case it helped in the identification of the purpose and audience for faculty community-engagement scholarship. The research approach followed ethical practices of social science research. The protection and anonymity of research participants is assured. The study obtained ethical review from the University of Minnesota in the United States as well as the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) in Malawi.

## Findings

Before delving into the actual findings, it is important to provide a description of the study participants. Of the 108 participants, 10 participants (9.1%) had bachelor's degrees, 45 participants (40.9%) had master's degrees, and 52 (47.3%) had doctorates. Only one participant had qualification in the category of other, which when combined with the two missing cases constituted 2.7%. In terms of appointment status, 23 (21.3%) were tenured, 77 (71.3%) were permanent, 5 (4.6%) were on probation, and 3 (2.8%) were either visiting or adjunct faculty members. The data about the participants' academic rank shows that there were 4 (3.7%) staff associates, 3 (2.8%) assistant lecturers, 45 (41.7%) lecturers, 1 (0.9%) associate lecturer, 28 (25.9%) senior lecturers, 2 (1.9%) assistant professors, 11 (10.2%) associate professors, 12 (11.1%) full professors, and 2 (1.9%) classified as other. In addition, there were a total of 78 male and 30 female participants, representing 72.2% and 27.3% (these numbers total less than 100% because of the missing cases). According to recent data from Mambo et al. (2016), the gender distribution is representative of the numbers of female and male faculty in the Malawi public university system, which currently stand at 1 to 3.

The study's key findings are discussed in the following sections. The discussion responds to questions on how faculty conceptualize community-engaged scholarship, teaching, and research, and the factors that influence such perspectives. The findings of this study illustrate how community engagement is staged by faculty members as technology to produce healthy bodies, communities, and environments,

and implicitly positions university faculty as productive citizens of a modern nation. Communities were often characterized as sometimes empowered and at other times as not-yet-modern and in need of reform. However, community engagement also constitutes an alternate pedagogical site of engagement in that faculty encounters with community members disrupted their assumptions about these communities to an extent. Nevertheless, institutionalized practices of assessment, as well as epistemological and ontological understandings of the nature of science inherent in community engagement, tended to privilege the popular cultural stereotypes of producing scientific knowledge as the purpose of community engagement, thereby excluding the place-based narratives of local communities and students. Table 2 presents these complexities in greater detail, drawing from Burawoy's (2009) categorization of the professional, policy, public, and critical functions of community engagement. These four thematic concepts are further discussed in a later section, with evidence from the survey data to demonstrate how comparable faculty members work in a global South context, refusing to be pigeonholed into prevailing theoretical constructs.

### Professional Community-Engaged Scholarship

Table 3 shows means and standard deviations for each of the 14 individual items to illustrate the participant's level of agreement with the professional incentives driving their community-engaged scholarship. The results showed that the respondents agreed that they were incentivized and scored high means on 10 of the conceptual frameworks or professional incentives. However, the other four items yielded more negative results. The results indicate disagreement, with 39.8% (43) of the respondents strongly disagreeing with the view that they were driven by the need to perform charity work, 52.8% (57) disagreeing that they were incentivized to earn extra money, 70.4% (76) strongly disagreeing that they were driven to conduct community-engaged scholarship to raise their political concerns, and 67.6% (73) strongly disagreeing with the view that they were driven to gain recognition and honor in the community when conducting community-engaged scholarship. The table illustrates that faculty members were driven to conduct community-engaged scholarship due to the need to improve their personal

knowledge, transform society, use their personal skills to solve problems in society, and fulfill the desire to cocreate knowledge with community partners and improve the students' capacity to learn. This conceptualization fits into Burawoy's (2010) definition of professional community-engaged scholarship.

According to Burawoy (2010), *professional community engagement* pursues dilemmas that would have been defined by professional programs. These puzzles are pursued within a given framework. This form of community-engaged scholarship uses specifically crafted theories and takes for granted certain conditions, values, interests, and aims that shape human behavior and action. This is how teaching, research, and service are conducted by taking as given a range of assumptions that define a framework and then grappling with the inherent inconsistencies. The professional conceptualization of community-engaged scholarship is a theme that appeared in the in-depth interviews where faculty, as noted in Table 2, pointed out that they saw community engagement as a professional framework for solving community problems.

Faculty members were also asked to reflect on institutional incentives and their thoughts on how the institution drove their community-engaged work. As Table 4 demonstrates, overall, faculty tended to strongly agree with various institutional incentives as conceptual frameworks driving their motivation to conduct community-engaged scholarship. Where 65.7% (71) strongly agreed or agreed that they conducted community-engaged scholarship because it was a mission at their university, 66.7% (72) strongly agreed or agreed that they conducted community-engaged scholarship because of professional and academic disciplinary requirements. Faculty members also agreed that they were driven by the need to achieve promotion and tenure, and they mostly disagreed that they conducted community-engaged scholarship because of the financial support their university provides for such work. Only 39.8% (43) of the faculty members strongly disagreed that they were involved in community-engaged scholarship because of the possibility of getting promotion and tenure, whereas as much as 58.3% (63) strongly disagreed that they conducted community-engaged scholarship because of university financial

**Table 2. Qualitative Findings**

| <i>Conceptualization of community engagement themes</i> | <i>Community engagement purpose</i>  | <i>Qualitative data illustrative quotes</i>   |
|---|--|---|
| Professional  | To achieve university goals and aims on research, teaching, and outreach, seeking to advance the academic discipline and profession.   | <p>“Our role is that while we teach we also have to do research, so promotion is based on research and publication so that is why we have to be involved in communities but at the same time we want to be involved in solving real world problems we don't want to only work in the lab.” (Male faculty, Chemistry)</p> <p>“One aim is professional development. As academic members of staff we normally want to engage ourselves and we do a lot of research in the field and from that we collect data from which we publish. Secondly, as an institution we want to engage communities because one of the pillars of the university and polytechnic in particular is to engage in what we call research, consultancies and outreach program.” (Male professor in water and engineering science)</p> <p>“It’s something that we have been into already for some time from various perspectives. The university has always had in its vision of major activities as teaching, research and community outreach. These have always been there.” (Male professor, literature, dean of humanities)</p> <p>“Promotion is okay but if your aim is just promotion you will not progress in your career. If your aim is just money you will not progress. It's not that we don't need money. Money is not an end in itself, it's just a means.” (Male professor in aquaculture and fisheries, deputy vice chancellor of the University of Agriculture)</p> |
| Policy  | The solving of problems as defined by various clients to a scholar. These clients may be NGOs, a politician, a trade union, or any entity that has predetermined goals and the resources to obtain the service of a scholar. | <p>“If you are called a professor and you have not made an impact on people then that is worthless and I tell people . . . , if that PhD cannot be used for policy reform, policy change then it's useless.” (Female senior lecturer, in Nutrition Department)</p> <p>“The main motivation is intertwined, you want to show something (research findings), you also want to see what would impress the funders, and you also want to see how you can as I said, show results on the lives of people. So . . . showing impact, showing the available resources, where the resources are available and what touches people's lives the kinds of motivations for community engagement.” (Female Ph.D. student/staff associate, Forestry Department)</p>  |

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**Table 2. Qualitative Findings continued**

| <i>Conceptualization of community engagement themes</i> | <i>Community engagement purpose</i>  | <i>Qualitative data illustrative quotes</i>  |
|---|--|--|
| Policy  | The solving of problems as defined by various clients to a scholar. These clients may be NGOs, a politician, a trade union, or any entity that has predetermined goals and the resources to obtain the service of a scholar. | <p>"At times there are institutions outside the country that want particular information and they contact us and we conduct that kind of research, service or create knowledge and provide the information and data for them from the communities." (Male professor in Engineering/Research and Outreach Coordinator).</p> <p>"The Polytechnic strategic plan, one of the key components or pillars of the university, is to engage in what we call consultancy or extension services. It is part of the requirement that we engage in but at the same time as an individual with the expertise that I have in policy analysis and development, I have been engaged by various stakeholders to help them promote such issues. In addition, I have worked as a practicing journalist in Malawi for many years. And so, I have expertise in journalism and so from time to time when need arises people have asked me to support them either in doing or in establishing of community radios or improving skills." (Male senior lecturer, dean of journalism and media studies)</p> <p>"Working with communities in Malawi you really need to know the local leadership, so if you go to the village you have to talk to the Traditional Authorities . . . convince the chiefs about your initiative then they can communicate to their people. . . ." (Female senior lecturer and deputy head of Nutrition and Food Science Department)</p> |
| Public  | Aims at bringing change in, with, for, and through the public.   | <p>"At my career stage when you become a professor you start to begin to ask questions on how you have affected people's lives. That is a big driving factor. No one would be happy to be a full professor and have not touched the lives of people. So that is one driving factor that leads to community engagement." (Male professor in plant pathology and genetics, Vice Chancellor University of Agriculture)</p> <p>"I am an advocate for democracy. . . . And that drives my community engagement. When there are things I need to do and right now there [are] things I am working on as an advocate for gender and mitigating gender based violence. Just two hours ago I was actively involved with my students in a cyber-dialogue on sexual harassment, which is a regional based activity involving 16 days of activism." (Male senior lecturer, dean of journalism and media studies)</p>   |

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**Table 2. Qualitative Findings continued**

| <i>Conceptualization of community engagement themes</i> | <i>Community engagement purpose</i>   | <i>Qualitative data illustrative quotes</i>  |
|---|---|--|
| Public  | Aims at bringing change in, with, for, and through the public.  | <p>“It is also a requirement at the University of Malawi that you demonstrate the generation of funds for the university . . . we are offering lifelong learning. So while that is a public service mandate, it is also used in way to generate revenue for the government and the institution so that is also motivation.” (Male senior lecturer, dean of the College of Education)</p> <p>“So we involve community and do both lab-based as well as community-based research because we have resources in the community on issues of fertility. These are things that people don't talk much about and so confining ourselves to the lab would not unleash most of these taboos that people think they are. For instance, here in Malawi, rarely will you find male patients coming out to be diagnosed and find out if they are fertile or not. Our aim is to change that.” (Male professor in physiology, medical school)</p>  |
| Critical  | Aims to critique strict adherence to certain assumptions over methods, aims of community engagement, and how to perform scholarship in relation to academia and the public. | <p>“We inherited the misconception that it is the hard sciences and its innovations which is the savior of the human society and next to that is the social science. And well, the humanities is remembered last. We as African universities have inherited this problem of knowledge and disciplinary categorization. In our own context we have inherited it without critiquing it, without trying to problematize nor understand what is good to us. Mostly also because of what I described as the tragedy of the African university—that we listen to those that have the money.” (Male, senior lecturer, deputy head of History Department)</p> <p>“We are trying to change . . . the mind set with researchers because . . . 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 90% of the population being small holder farmers, all our community engagement has been with the small-scale local people and we need to change that.” (Male professor in aquaculture and fisheries, deputy vice chancellor of the University of Agriculture)</p> |

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**Table 2. Qualitative Findings continued**

| <i>Conceptualization of community engagement themes</i> | <i>Community engagement purpose</i>   | <i>Qualitative data illustrative quotes</i>  |
|---|---|--|
| Critical  | Aims to critique strict adherence to certain assumptions over methods, aims of community engagement, and how to perform scholarship in relation to academia and the public. | <p>"Of course when you compare the way universities in South Africa operate they actually recognize somebody's engagement with the community as part of their progression in their career. Ours are rigid; you only have to publish; if you don't publish you perish. You teach well nobody will actually blink and look at you and say well you are going to get a promotion." (Male senior lecturer, dean of journalism and media studies)</p> <p>"People go and work in the communities because some people think that they have a debt to the communities because it's like we almost took over all their land. So, people feel like we are close to their land so these people need to benefit from the college because the college is in their village or district." (Female lecturer, deputy dean of social sciences)</p> |

support. Table 3 shows mean scores of all items. On average, faculty tended to strongly agree with the institutional mission as a major driving force for their community-engaged scholarship ( $M = 6.26$ ,  $SD = 3.04$ ).

Faculty conceptualized community-engaged scholarship as teaching, research, and outreach that deals with communities' problems. One faculty member in the humanities department put it as follows:

It is something that we have been into already for some time from various perspectives. The university has always had teaching, research and community outreach in its vision or as major activities. These have always been there. When every member of the faculty is recruited into the system, he does understand that there are these three major activities involving their work.

This response suggests that faculty conceptualize community-engaged scholarship as fulfilling the institutional mission. In this context, faculty members work within the confines of institutional vision to conduct their various forms of scholarship. A good example of such work is noted in one faculty member's description of a "theater for development" where students are taken to communities to perform various theatrical plays to sensitize the public on voting, nutritional practices, and health practices such

as the spread of HIV/AIDS while learning about art, drama, and conducting research in this discipline with the help of faculty.

### **Policy Community-Engaged Scholarship**

Burawoy (2010) defines policy community engagement as the solving of problems that would have been identified by various clients to the scholar participating in community engagement. These clients may be nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), a politician, a trade union, or any entity that has predetermined goals and the resources to obtain the service of a scholar to conduct community-engaged scholarship. In a nutshell, faculty conceptualized community-engaged scholarship as a process of knowledge production that seeks to inform the application of important processes in society. Equally, faculty saw their scholarship labor as informing various policies. This view was not limited to specific disciplines. As a result, faculty members highlighting the solutions to various problems for their clients also suggested solutions to the challenges of working across disciplines to effect scholarship of integration as Boyer (1996) suggested. Thus, the following vignette shows how faculty conceptualized the application of knowledge. It also reveals that faculty members found it difficult to work across disciplines and hence failed to inform each other's work. This theme was raised throughout the in-depth interviews as noted here:

**Table 3. Professional Incentives (All Items), (N = 108)**

|   | <i>Min</i> | <i>Max</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|---|------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| To improve personal knowledge                     | 1          | 10         | 7.63     | 2.628     |
| Transform society                                 | 1          | 10         | 7.54     | 2.592     |
| Use my skills to solve problems in society        | 1          | 10         | 7.45     | 2.62      |
| Cocreate knowledge with community partners        | 1          | 10         | 7.3      | 2.648     |
| Improve my students' capacity to learn            | 1          | 10         | 7.25     | 2.598     |
| Go above and beyond what is academically required | 1          | 10         | 6.77     | 2.857     |
| "Do good" in my community                         | 1          | 10         | 6.29     | 2.641     |
| Empower oppressed communities                     | 1          | 10         | 6.21     | 2.802     |
| Deal with social wrongs in society                | 1          | 10         | 5.83     | 3.074     |
| Gain professional/personal connections            | 1          | 10         | 5.33     | 2.995     |
| Fulfill my commitments to charity                 | 1          | 10         | 4.7      | 3.049     |
| Earn extra money                                  | 1          | 10         | 3.7      | 2.852     |
| Gain recognition and honor in the community       | 1          | 10         | 2.67     | 2.23      |
| Raise my political concerns in the communities    | 1          | 10         | 2.52     | 2.29      |

**Table 4. Institutional Incentives (All Items), (N = 108)**

|  | <i>Min</i> | <i>Max</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|--|------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| My academic discipline/profession requires me to.            | 1          | 10         | 6.26     | 3.04      |
| It's a mission at my university.                             | 1          | 10         | 6.25     | 3.02      |
| There is professional development for such.                  | 1          | 10         | 5.59     | 2.96      |
| It's a framework for the competitiveness of the university.  | 1          | 10         | 5.38     | 2.93      |
| I could get/got promotion and tenure.                        | 1          | 10         | 4.83     | 3.17      |
| The university allocates time for it.                        | 1          | 10         | 4.42     | 3.00      |
| The university provides time and financial support for such. | 1          | 10         | 3.44     | 2.72      |

We have provided evidence that the processing method of cassava which includes the peelings and soaking, results in the higher accumulation of the toxic elements and the communities here become more highly exposed to intoxication. . . . So you find that this new knowledge has application. Government, NGO, community, including industries can now make improvements in either their program or cassava products and revise their process. Therefore, the university and faculty have a specific responsibility

to generate evidence, which should inform policy review, policy reform and formulation and program implementation and there lies our relevance of community-engaged scholarship to society.

Faculty participants also responded to the question of how state government incentives motivated and shaped the way they visualized conducting community-engaged scholarship (see Table 5). The results show that faculty members tended to strongly disagree with the view that government incentivized them to conduct community-en-



**Table 5. Government Incentives (All Items), (N = 108)**

|   | <i>Min</i> | <i>Max</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|---|------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| It is a government development agenda.            | 1          | 10         | 4.48     | 3.06      |
| Government policy requires us to do so.           | 1          | 10         | 4.05     | 2.83      |
| The government is democratic and peaceful.        | 1          | 10         | 3.88     | 2.74      |
| There is accountability to the government.        | 1          | 10         | 3.49     | 2.62      |
| Government officials support my engagement work.  | 1          | 10         | 3.16     | 2.68      |
| There is need for transparency to the government. | 1          | 10         | 3.00     | 2.19      |
| I can/will/got government public appointments.    | 1          | 8          | 2.17     | 1.83      |
| I receive government funds for engagement.        | 1          | 9          | 2.08     | 1.75      |
| The government is undemocratic and oppressive.    | 1          | 7          | 1.80     | 1.45      |

gaged scholarship. A total of 80.6% (87) of faculty members reported that they strongly disagree with the assertion that they conducted community-engaged scholarship because the government provides them funds for such. In the same way, 76.9% (83) strongly disagreed that they conduct engaged scholarship because they get or would get government public appointments. Although the mean scores on this section were very low compared to other items, they showed that faculty tended to agree that they conducted community-engaged scholarship because it was a government agenda ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 3.06$ ) and that government higher education policy required them to do so ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 2.83$ ; see Table 5).

**Public Community-Engaged Scholarship**

Burawoy’s framework presents public community-engaged scholarship as aimed at bringing change in, with, for, and through the public. As means in Table 6 indicate, faculty members were more inclined to strongly disagree on several items related to the external community as driving incentives for conducting their engagement. However, the faculty members elaborated at length in in-depth interviews how they depended on external donors for funds and worked with the public to bring social change. A total of 77% of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that they conducted community-engaged scholarship because they gained social and political support. A total of 91.5% (101) strongly disagreed or disagreed that they were driven to conduct community-engaged scholarship because the external local community provided them with financial support. On aver-

age, the mean scores showed that faculty were driven by the trust that the community had in them and due to their belief that communities were knowledgeable on the issues that concerned them (see Table 6).

Faculty believe that government funding has decreased in the past years. As a result, academics conceptualize their community engagement as a framework for working with private or external donors in support of their projects. The response below confirms this:

And at times there are institutions outside the country that want particular information and they contact us and we conduct that kind of research and provide the information and data for them from the communities.

Analysis of such views of community engagement using Burawoy’s (2010) conceptual framework reveals the problematic purposes that can underlie community engagement in ways that are often overlooked. Burawoy suggests that community-engaged scholarship is not simply the application of accumulated knowledge. Public engagement is part of the process of forming, testing, and improving knowledge. In short, community-engaged scholarship is a matter of critique, not just advocacy. It is part of a project of producing new knowledge, of integrating more abstract and universal sorts of knowledge with more concrete and local sorts of knowledge, and of keeping action and its possibilities at the center of attention.

**Table 6. External Community Incentives (All Items), (N = 108)**

|   | <i>Min</i> | <i>Max</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|---|------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| Communities trust faculty like me in my work.         | 1          | 10         | 5.94     | 2.95      |
| Communities have the knowledge and expertise.         | 1          | 10         | 4.94     | 2.83      |
| I receive/will receive international aid and grants.  | 1          | 10         | 3.95     | 2.93      |
| The community invited me to serve them.               | 1          | 10         | 3.80     | 3.08      |
| I can/have/will gain better jobs.                     | 1          | 10         | 3.52     | 2.58      |
| I gain social-political support from the community.   | 1          | 10         | 3.11     | 2.45      |
| I receive financial support from the local community. | 1          | 10         | 1.80     | 1.65      |

Indeed, community engagement discourses inform policies and programs, often being used to make “scientific” arguments to restructure material and cultural realities in incredibly powerful ways. Scholars have shown how these discourses have been shaped by historically specific cultural and political processes (Escobar, 1995; Latour, 2009). Such claims have been possible because of the deep complicity between the state and markets of academics and practitioners working from within various disciplines in the production of development discourses about communities (Parker et al., 2012). There are numerous examples, as Latour (2009) explains in an examination of how knowledge produced through community engagement for the public might be complicit in perpetuating unjust and oppressive health, educational, and political systems. This only further emphasizes the need for faculty members to constantly question why and for whom they conduct their community engagement, whatever theoretical frameworks inform the conceptualization of their work. The following section looks at how faculty in this study viewed community-engaged scholarship as a critical activity.

### Critical Community-Engaged Scholarship

Burawoy (2010) also notes that critical community-engaged scholarship ought to relate directly with professional community-engaged scholarship because both are primarily aimed at an academic audience. According to Burawoy, critical community-engaged scholars are in dialogue with other scholars and the broader public and expressing their critique in strict adherence with certain assumptions over methods, aims of the community engagement, and the performance of scholarship in relation to academia and the public. Both the quali-

tative and quantitative data in the above sections show that faculty were more inclined toward the professional, policy, and public purposes of community-engaged scholarship than the critical perspective of community-engaged scholarship. In comparison to other disciplines, faculty in the humanities and social sciences were more inclined to adopt a critical purpose for community engagement. For example, one faculty member questioned why the minister of education was pushing for a policy that promoted science subjects and not the humanities. Faculty also pointed out that disciplines in the sciences received more attention and funding to conduct community engagement. One professor expressed the lack of support for critical community engagement as follows:

We inherited the misconception that it is the hard science and its innovations, which is the savior of the human society and next to that is the social science. And well, the humanities is remembered last. We as African universities have inherited this problem of knowledge and disciplinary categorization. In our own context we have inherited it without critiquing it, without trying to problematize it and understand what is good to us. Mostly also because of what I described as the tragedy of the African university—that we listen to those that have the money.

The above quote epitomizes so many issues impacting faculty community engagement. It demonstrates the increasing neoliberal influence that favors more hard science disciplines as well as the influence from donors who support specific types of community engagement. The key essence of the

quote is that the importance of community engagement to social action is not limited by discipline. It also shows the need to look beyond the narrow use of resources and the commercialization of knowledge. Hale (2008) urges that faculty ought to allow the above-quoted way of conceptualizing community engagement to permeate all types and functions of scholarship. According to Hale, critical community-engaged scholarship is important because the world is in considerable need of improvement, and improvement comes in large part by means of social movements, struggles, and campaigns to change public agendas. This view of community engagement problematizes the production function model of scholarship with its view that problems are better solved with a single streamlined approach and a lot of resources, such as money. The following sections discuss some contextual factors that might explain why faculty in Malawi conceptualize community-engaged scholarship in ways that at times align with and at times divert from Burawoy's framework. I also draw some implications for these findings to higher education in these sections.

## Discussion

Cloete et al. (2011) suggest that there are two major ways in which higher education is conceptualized as a development tool, namely, "instrumentalist or 'service' role, and an 'engine of development' role which is based on strengthening knowledge production and the role of the universities in innovation processes" (p. 6). This conceptualization shaped the way faculty view the purpose of community-engaged scholarship and for whom they conduct it. The instrumental role of foreign donors and multilateral agencies figures significantly here. These agencies, which include the United Nations, USAID, UNESCO, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, seek to revamp the application of community-engaged knowledge production based on the assumption that faculty members and universities are experts and knowledge banks whose resources should be applied to solve development dilemmas such as reducing poverty and supporting health and education. As a result, faculty in Malawi took this role very seriously in their conceptualization of the policy and public use of community engagement.

Furthermore, the view that the university

is an engine of development is added to the perspective defining the university as a development tool. This university as engine of development perspective considers higher education a mechanism for promoting the knowledge economy, knowledge production, and technological innovation. Without a doubt, faculty members in Malawi, as elsewhere, anticipate and conceptualize community engagement as a panacea. A caution to bear in mind is that although we know the positive impact that community engagement might entail, we cannot take everything for granted and assume that this will always be the case. Hence the following sections focus on some of the key observations from the findings and implications on the need to broaden the conceptualization of the functions of community-engaged scholarship. The sections also consider the findings related to the emphasis on considering reflexive and critical views in the function of community engagement.

## Contextualizing Community-Engaged Scholarship in Malawi

A comparative analysis of the current research findings with previous studies shows the usefulness of Burawoy's division of sociological labor in understanding how faculty in different contexts view scholarship. The contextual understanding of the study's findings is established here through the discussion of two important points in relation to ideas presented by Holland (2008, 2010). Holland's two studies, which examined the institutionalization of the social sciences in public universities in Malawi, are salient to the demonstration of some of the factors that determine the way faculty in Malawi view community-engaged scholarship. Both studies uncovered several issues that are interrelated to the current findings. Thus, as in the present study, Holland (2008) showed that our understanding of the social life of faculty and how they carry out their scholarship can be made better by examining the relationship between the authority in the university and the state and the international agents involved in the process. Hence, the institutional authority, the state, and, in particular, the international agents, play a crucial role in conceptualizing, formulating, and implementing policies on community-engaged scholarship as well as in the financing and development of higher education. This finding supports the current study's observation of the significance of state government and international agents

in driving faculty work and their conceptualization of community-engaged scholarship.

In addition, Holland's study notes that the professional life of the majority of faculty in Malawi involves navigation in a bifurcated field in which academic values circulate uneasily with entrepreneurial ones. An analysis of the study's qualitative interviews resulted in the formulation of two major themes. The themes are (1) lack of funding from a government that is highly suspicious of faculty work yet seeks positive benefits of community engagement and (2) dependency on international donors. The ultimate result is that faculty conceptualized their community-engaged scholarship as aimed at the profession and policy mostly through consultancies. Although consultancy is a legitimate process for third-stream income, it poses challenges owing to the likelihood of developing a dependency, lack of critical reflection, and the complications encountered while trying to balance autonomy and accountability with the state mechanism of financing higher education (Mamdani, 2008; Preece et al., 2012).

Holland (2008) has also shown that faculty members' production of Mode 1 (basic research historically introduced and conducted for its own sake) and Mode 2 (research that came later due to international market demands) was driven by different incentives. She discovered that although "Mode 1 in Malawi had historically promoted an ethos of service and duty to the nation, Mode 2 tended instead to demand a service-to-the-client orientation and to promote monetary incentives more so than intellectual or service-oriented ones" (Holland, 2008, p. 679). Although Holland's finding might hold some truth regarding the context in which the research was conducted, it differs from the current study findings. Faculty members involved in this study openly pointed out that the absence of governmental and institutional support compelled them to seek financial support from international entrepreneurial organizations. The faculty members noted further that their attempts were not for financial incentives but were a way to solve and deal with bigger problems facing the communities and to advance knowledge in their academic disciplines. This approach suggests the applicability of Burawoy's public community-engaged scholarship. Nevertheless, the limitation of partnerships and support from the private

sector and government to community-engaged scholarship demands that we begin to honestly problematize the nature of what is considered public or private and how faculty are conceptualizing the public. Hence, it is important for universities to bridge the gap between the so-called private and public, especially within African universities, as universities from other parts of the globe have mostly succeeded in bridging this gap.

### Politics of Community Engagement and Academic Freedom

Although the history and purpose of the U.S. higher education system differ greatly from those of the Malawian system, community engagement faces a similar kind of politics in both countries (Altbach, 2004). Faculty across the globe continue to struggle against slow-transforming institutional cultures that view community-engaged scholarship as less scientific and limited in its impact. Furthermore, the financial demands of community engagement work at an institutional level compel faculty to wear multiple hats as fund raisers, political ambassadors, and marketers of their projects. Nonetheless, they continue to receive the standard admonition: "Leave your politics at the door" (Hale, 2008, p. 10). This is indeed ironic, for if we consider the full spectrum of affiliations that the word *political* entails, we find politics in academe at every turn as faculty straddle between the university and government or private sector pursuits driving various social change projects.

Faculty work is impacted by politics and lack of academic freedom (Kerr & Mapanje, 2002). This has adversely impacted the level of institutionalization of community engagement. The plague of political extremism and dictatorial tendencies on the part of governments is evident in the absence of policies that treat community engagement and higher education as central issues to national development. Universities and faculty require appropriate freedom and autonomy to shape their own community engagement programs and practices (Altbach, 2014b). The uneasy relations with the state and strong reliance on external support for consultancies and community engagement programs raise concerns regarding the balance between autonomy and accountability. Concomitantly, opposing conceptualizations of what is relevant in higher education are circulating within academic spheres and political debates, resulting in increased



pressure on higher education to achieve competing and opposing political agendas (Altbach, 2014).

The way faculty in Malawi conceptualize the function of community-engaged scholarship resonates with that of other African countries. Mtawa, Fongwa, and Wangenge-Ouma (2016) found that faculty in Tanzania considered consultancies for government and international donors to be the major function of community-engaged scholarship. Olowu (2012) argued that despite numerous attempts by South African scholars to clarify community engagement, it remains a vague concept in South African higher education institutions, resulting in misunderstanding of its functions. These observations were also highlighted by Favish et al. (2012) in their finding that South African faculty members face serious challenges with community-engaged scholarship because the system is highly segmented and operates unquestioningly under taken-for-granted ideas about scholarship and how knowledge production is applied.

### **The Trope of Critical Community-Engaged Scholarship**

Evidence has shown that, to a greater extent, faculty conducted community-engaged scholarship for professional, public, and policy purposes. Faculty in education, medicine, humanities, and agriculture were certain that their work influences policy and social change. Faculty were not necessarily driven to question but rather to support the government agenda. Thus, it is important for faculty conducting community-engaged scholarship to craft policies that benefit people. At the same time, faculty community-engaged scholarship should challenge the oppressive or unjust knowledge and ideological systems that drive development agendas (Hale, 2008). We can never easily justify the usefulness of community engagement by merely labeling it a scientific endeavor to solve society's problems when science itself can be complicit in disorganizing and disrupting what people truly value for authentic reasons.

Although community engagement should concern itself with scientific knowledge application, it should also take seriously forms of authority and injustice that may accompany development work. A critical community-engaged scholarship ought to situate social problems in historical and cultural contexts. This is where differences in the

conceptualization of community engagement arise for faculty in developed countries and those in developing ones such as Malawi. Higher education in Malawi, as in most African countries, is strictly controlled by the government. Tensions between the government and the university are common, and this leads to faculty conducting their academic work in fear. The fear also leads faculty to ignore critical components of community engagement. According to Hale (2008) and Burawoy (2010), neoliberal representations should be subjected to a critical policy analysis, formulation, and application that can lead to rejection of the idea that any policy formulation and application is an objective depiction of solutions for other people. Critical scholars in policy studies ought to adopt alternatives that encourage reflection on politics of their work and the solutions they put forward. In these accounts, the embodied, collaborative, dialogic, and improvisational aspects of policy are clarified. In addition, the potential fallibility of policies should be critically questioned and improved upon (Hale, 2008; Isaacman, 2003).

### **Transferability of the Malawian Faculty's Perspectives on Community-Engaged Scholarship**

Levitt and List (2007) remind us that "theory is the tool that permits us to take results from one environment to predict in another" (p. 170). Theory is needed to make sense of superficial and meaningful differences when the precise nature of treatments or cases varies across sites. Theory is required when the contexts differ—institutional versus national versus global interactions, private versus public—to create generalizations from one case to another. We rely on theory in the face of differently measured outcomes to predict how a causal process will express itself across sites. It is precisely in this context that Burawoy's (2005, 2009, 2010) theoretical framework comes in to demonstrate the transferability of Malawian faculty perspectives. Seen through Burawoy's theoretical framework, there are two factors that could make Malawian faculty views on community-engaged scholarship stand as isomorphic and transferable to other contexts. One of the factors is evident in the way faculty community-engaged work is shaped by government and external community relations. The history of most public universities in African, North and South American,

and European countries is critical here. Historically, the role of faculty in the university was to teach. However, the increasing predominance of the knowledge economy and significance of research have meant that faculty in Malawi, like elsewhere, have had to engage in more research and community engagement to gain promotion based on institutional incentives. Although personal and professional growth is deemed important for faculty across the globe, it is the social, economic, and political impact of their work that drives faculty initiatives in community-engaged scholarship. It is for this reason that faculty in Malawi, like those elsewhere, viewed community-engaged scholarship as a professional and public activity that is influenced by the institutional mission and demands of the public.

Globalization and internationalization shape how faculty views of community engagement in Malawi are generalizable to other contexts. Public universities tend to be similar in different contexts because they draw their mandate and support from international actors. Although the level of funding might differ in accordance with the wealth of individual countries and the prestige of the institution, faculty in Malawian universities, like those elsewhere, depend on government support and external funders such as philanthropic organizations. Most African universities receive much of their external funding from government and philanthropic organizations in the global North. In this regard, faculty in Malawi viewed and practiced public community-engaged scholarship in a way that is to a great extent similar to that in other contexts as they are driven by similar pressure to produce quality work, compete for funding, and contribute to scientific knowledge production to build an international reputation. This explains why faculty viewed the practice of consultancies in community-engaged scholarship as a mechanism to raise revenue for the university, especially within a context of declining public funding support. The art of bringing funding to the university from external sources in the global North is seen as an important component of community engagement, as the funds are used to solve problems for the community while also bringing scarce resources to the university. Qualifying for this kind of funding also contributes to raising the level of academic integrity of African faculty members to that of their counter-

parts in other parts of the world. The prestige of the university and individual faculty is enhanced with the increasing amounts of funding and numbers of community-oriented projects they undertake. Hence, bringing external funding and engagement with the public is increasingly the hallmark of productivity and quality in faculty work in Malawi and across the globe (Altbach, 2014b). Using Burawoy's (2009) theoretical lens helps to take stock and visualize the work of Malawian faculty members.

### **A Differentiated Application of Burawoy's Framework and Future Research**

There are three factors that engagement policy and practices at national and institutional levels need to take into consideration to contextualize, problematize, and entrench community engagement, as conceptualized within Burawoy's framework. First, universities ought to acknowledge and tap into the growing impact of internationalization, regionalism, and globalization of strategies for community engagement. Nonetheless, how faculty conceptualize the purpose and use of the four frameworks—professional, public, policy, and critical engagement—should be based on the specific realities of the national and institutional context. Hence, a differentiated community engagement is vital for relevant higher education (Cloete et al., 2011)

Second, what Burawoy (2010) terms *community engagement division of labor* can help us to see the need for a more critical questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions. We cannot assume that influencing policies and dealing with the public will automatically bring mutual benefits to communities. It is crucial for faculty to conceptualize community engagement as a process that is driven by power differentials that demand constant questioning and anticipate ways of improving this process.

Finally, community engagement demands autonomy, academic freedom, and ample funding for it to thrive. Research findings have shown that community engagement has multiple purposes and functions. Therefore, the conceptualization of various functions of community engagement must move beyond the problems that arise in its wake, and we have to consider community engagement as a vital source of alternative funding, a platform for fighting for academic freedom, and a space through which faculty can exercise their autonomy

in bringing about social change.

Furthermore, an understanding of faculty members' different perceptions on community-engaged scholarship is crucial for the faculty members themselves, university institutions, local and international funders, governments, and the public at large. There is a growing concern over the neoliberal impacts of universities in Africa and the world over (Breton & Lambert, 2003; Knight, 2008; Pike, 2015). Pike (2015) states:

The classic hallmarks of neoliberal thinking in education include: curricula increasingly oriented to the imperatives of a free-market global economy and the honing of skills necessary to perpetuate it; an insistence on "learning outcomes" that are closely allied to the perceived needs of employers; the prioritization of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects over the "softer" and more creative arts, humanities and social sciences; an attribution of greater value to learning that can be immediately measured; and an increasing commercialisation of education that views learning as a product to be acquired, rather than as a lifelong way of being. (pp. 13–14)

Central to this criticism is that universities and their faculty are narrowly focusing on the commercialization of training and knowledge production in accord with the neoliberalization of higher education's agenda. These criticisms and indeed the way faculty conceptualize the broad purpose of higher education impact the way faculty conduct their community-engaged scholarship. Although it is important to point out limitations in faculty work, most of the criticism lacks a deep understanding of how faculty members, especially those in the global South, conceptualize their work. The empirical evidence in the current study demonstrates how faculty view their community-engaged scholarship, the motivations of their work, and the challenges they face. These faculty members are indeed paying attention to the commercialization of knowledge, but it is not in the narrowest sense. Such an understanding is crucial for all actors in higher education seeking ways to motivate faculty and appropriately reward their work on establishing collaboration and dealing with

the various problems facing our societies. Although it was not the major focus of the study, a consideration of the broad theory of community-engaged scholarship shows to some extent how faculty members perceive community-engaged scholarship as professional, public, policy, and critical endeavors that affect their motivation, performance, work quality, and impact. Since faculty tended to see the broad positive impact of community-engaged scholarship at both private and public levels, they were then driven to continue with their projects regardless of the hindrances of the neoliberal forms of funding, suspicion from government, or mistrust from the communities and politically charged conditions of donor funding.

## Conclusion

The application of Burawoy's framework to the African context assists greatly in comparatively determining how faculty conceptualize their community-engaged scholarship in different contexts. Minor contextual issues must be considered here, however. The first is that faculty harbor different motivations and drives while conducting their community-engaged scholarship. These multiple motives suggest that, although their work may appear impartial, they usually carry out scholarship with multiple aims that are often contradictory in nature. It is hard to categorically isolate a faculty member's work in one silo, as their work might achieve various functions, planned and unplanned. These multifaceted results might suggest the need for faculty to emphasize how community-engaged scholarship can influence change in complex ways and speak truth to power.

Second, the framework critically assisted in mapping the limited conceptualization of reflexive knowledge or critical reflections on community-engaged scholarship. This is not to say that this form of community engagement does not occur among faculty in Malawi; rather, there is need for faculty to make this work more visible. Hence, as noted by Bourgois (2006, pp. x–xi), the university's repositioning of itself in a globally connected and more culturally diverse society demands that it diversify its capacity to deliver that creative consciousness and participatory citizenship and recognize the positive and liberating potential of critical emancipatory universal learning in enabling us to connect with the possibilities of an

unknown future.

This study, therefore, concludes that we cannot easily assume that interactions with local communities in community engagement and development programs democratize knowledge production as the purpose of community engagement without a simultaneous engagement with postfoundational epistemologies that set the boundaries and sociological divisions of faculty members' labor. Although faculty might conceptualize the purpose of community engagement in the broad areas of professional, public, policy, and critical functions, it behooves us to maintain scrutiny of the taken-for-granted distinction of science and culture in the various ways knowledge production is carried out in universities. This problematic aspect of the way faculty conceptualize community engagement as a scientific endeavor is not unique to universities in Africa. As the conceptualization and practice of community engagement continue to attain centrality, the need for further research on the practice grows.

Finally, one challenge is that we still know very little about how faculty members' views of community-engaged scholarship affect the quality and impact of their work. This is an area that requires more research to establish the extent to which the conceptions of faculty community-engaged scholarship affect the quality and level of engagement within society. Future research on faculty community-engaged scholarship can thus contribute to generating an understanding of processes, techniques, methodologies, infrastructures, and practices that mobilize university knowledge for the benefit of society, drawing from and generating new theoretical frameworks other than that of Burawoy (2009). It may well be that we lack knowledge about community engagement in Africa and elsewhere not because the practice is too complex; rather, the limitations lie in the concepts and constructs we use to apprehend the phenomenon. This article, therefore, contributes to the practice of community engagement by demonstrating a way to refine a theory of community engagement by testing its applicability in a dissimilar context.



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