ORIGINAL PAPER

Higher education and social responsibility: a proposal for internationalization of university—community engagements; perspectives from Uganda

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Abstract

One of the traditional missions for universities was community service which was updated to entail community engagement. Community engagement is a component of the internationalization of higher education which aspires to improve service delivery within society. Though universities in Uganda have always engaged with communities, they have always done so disregarding the international dimension of higher education. Simultaneously, contemporary approaches to internationalization are primarily concerned with scholarly debate and discussion of societal challenges. However, merging internationalization with community engagement would better serve local and global communities. This is now more relevant considering global challenges such as COVID-19, terrorism, and climate change. Universities should now work more closely with communities to enrich scholarship, contribute to public good aims, and address the current critical social issues. Therefore, university–community engagement should go beyond institutional and disciplinary boundaries that restrict possibilities for fruitful engagement with local and global communities in today's rapidly changing world. This paper explores the international dimension of community engagement in Uganda's universities. Using a narrative literature review, the paper highlights how to merge internationalization with community engagement without reproducing inequalities but emphasizing fairness and social justice. The paper holds that community engagement should be integrated into the broader internationalization agenda of universities for better service delivery.

Keywords Higher education · University · Community engagement · Internationalization · Social responsibility

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Introduction

Universities were primarily conceived to teach, but in the mid-Nineteenth Century, the research role was adopted under the influence of Alexander von Humboldt's academic revolution (Altbach 2008). The third role (or mission), i.e., community service, was adopted towards the end of the Twentieth Century (Keerberg et al. 2014). With the expectation that universities should establish intimate links with their communities, the third university mission was expanded and called community engagement. This entailed shifting from a narrow focus on service provision and outreach university programs to a multiplicity of activities meant to solve social challenges (Silka et al. 2013). Thus, community engagement is "the sum of all activities concerned with the generation, use, application, and exploitation of university knowledge, capabilities, and resources, outside of the academic environment" (Compagnucci and Spigarelli 2020, p. 5). With this mission, higher education institutions (HEIs) must respond to societal needs by providing public and private benefits for local and international beneficiaries (Wallace and Resch 2015). Moreover, this should be cognizant of today's ever-changing world (Jones et al. 2021).

Research has been considered the most important of the three university missions highlighted since it provides a foundation for teaching (Keerberg et al. 2014) while marginalizing the third mission. This explains the 'publish or perish' imperative and the significance given to institutional visibility and global rankings (see Amutuhaire 2022). Further, research and publications (not community engagement) determine whether one gets hired or promoted (van Dalen 2021). Consequently, university staff engage more in research activities than community service to progress along the academic ladder. Such criteria are defective (Marshall et al. 2022) and contradict the ideals of internationalization of higher education (IHE) depicted in the definition by de Wit et al. (2015). These authors define IHE as 'the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff and to make a meaningful contribution to society' (p. 29). A meaningful contribution to society is possible when community engagement is on the agenda.

Further, the world is currently faced with several difficulties that affect both academia and society. Xenophobia, negative climate change, radicalism, ongoing global disparities, anti-intellectualism, hate speech, trade conflicts, populism, and labor market globalization (Brandenburg et al. 2019) and the challenges posed by COVID-19 are only a few examples of such difficulties. IHE can contribute to establishing a safe world for all through engagement with such issues. Surprisingly, the current internationalization methods primarily focus on scholarly debate and discussion of these concerns. At the same time, scholars and researchers (e.g., Leask and Carroll 2011; Mittelmeier and Yang 2022) mainly focus on internationalization in the form of student mobility without linking it to community engagement. While universities worldwide engage in community outreach, social responsibility, social engagement, and service learning, Brandenburg et al.

(2019) argue that internationalization efforts primarily focus on the institutional community rather than the wider one. This is a similar situation in Uganda's context. Therefore, in line with the arguments of Jones et al. (2021), universities in Uganda should closely align their international dimension with their social responsibilities. Universities currently operate within local and global communities; they should therefore engage at the same levels. We also acknowledge that IHE has often been criticized for propagating capitalist, competitive, and neoliberal agendas over social, human, and public benefits (Bamberger et al. 2019). Incorporating IHE in community engagements would improve the relevance of universities in society and disprove such criticisms.

This paper explores the extent to which universities in Uganda have incorporated internationalization in pursuance of community engagement. It highlights the weaknesses characterizing the existing university–community engagement practices in Uganda. It also points out activities through which different members of universities, such as staff and students, can exploit IHE to engage with their communities, i.e., the paper highlights the different avenues for internationalizing Uganda's university community engagements. This will contribute to a better understanding of how universities can serve the world better. Through improved university–community engagements, universities can remain relevant while evolving to meet new challenges. This is what Jones et al. (2021) meant by suggesting that "universities have a critical role to play in our rapidly changing, fractured, and fragile world" (p. 1). They must evolve as much as the values and expectations of their communities without failing to perform their primary roles (Bortagaray 2009).

The paper invites scholars to envision internationalization and university–community engagements from new perspectives. This is important for us to imagine the future of this ever-changing world (Green et al. 2020). We reviewed relevant publications to obtain a generalized picture of universities and community engagements in Uganda. The paper conceptualizes university–community–engagements and then discusses the theory of change as applied. The methodology used to collect the data is then explained, followed by the findings. Essentials for merging university–community engagement with internationalization and conclusions are also presented.

Literature review

Universities and other HEIs must respond to social needs by providing several public and private benefits and engaging with the broader community of external stakeholders (Wallace and Resch 2015). To perform this role excellently, these institutions must align their internationalization agenda with community engagement (Jones et al. 2021). Thus, merging community engagement with internationalization can enable Uganda's HEIs to perform their national and international public roles better. Contrary to this view, the internationalization of university–community engagement in many parts of the world is yet to receive the desired scholarly attention (Brandenburg et al. 2019). This represents a knowledge gap the paper intends to narrow by proposing possibilities for internationalizing university–community

engagements. The absence of systemic thought and conceptualization of community engagement as a component of IHE must be addressed because HEIs have contractual obligations with their local and international communities (ibid.).

In advancing this idea, we also acknowledge that IHE has been blamed for being Eurocentric (Jones and de Wit 2012) and a form of neocolonialism (Zuchowski et al. 2017). Therefore, universities must remain locally relevant in attempting the internationalization of community engagements. Societies or communities must be understood as widely as possible not to promote the dominant Eurocentric social realities that would otherwise widen the inequalities between the global North and the global South (Stein 2017). This is particularly relevant for Africa, a continent struggling to decolonize its HE (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021). The idea also conforms to Teferra's (2020) suggestions that as universities in the global South internationalize, they should remain local, as enshrined in his idea of 'smart internationalization.'

Further, IHE activities must be structured and carried out in a way that contributes to resolving local and global social challenges (Jones et al. 2021). However, according to Brandenburg et al. (2020), there are indications that the current strategies that target internationalizing community engagements still need to be explored. What is evident are the neoliberal tendencies that characterize today's IHE (Bamberger et al. 2019). These tendencies have made competition rather than collaboration and cooperation common in HE. As Jones et al. (2021) have advanced, the commercial aspects of the global knowledge economy, entrepreneurialism, and income generation rather than the benefits for society are the main drivers for IHE today. This is the case almost everywhere else. For example, much university research rarely focuses on solving social problems but on generating institutional revenues. From this perspective, the paper holds that African researchers should not only conduct research to accumulate publications for promotional and economic gains, but also aim to obtain practical solutions to societal challenges (Silka et al. 2013). Furthermore, the research function of universities is dominated by Eurocentric views (Thondhlana et al. 2021), which perpetuates and normalizes global inequalities while minimizing the importance of alternative ways of knowing and indigenous knowledge (Jones et al. 2021). Ideally, the research conducted should solve broader social issues without furthering global inequalities.

Universities should engage internal and external stakeholders and transfer their research findings into better practice and service delivery. In pursuance of this idea, Uganda's university Quality Assurance Framework requires universities to engage with their local communities. Academic units (department or faculty) in universities must identify a community segment to serve and draw up an implementable linkage program (Kasozi 2017). This is because the universities in the present day must lead all activities aimed at achieving socio-economic development. With globalization and internationalization, however, university communities are open to more than just the immediate location but extend far beyond. Jones et al. (2021) explain that the world has become 'super-complex,' such that the local and the global are twisted together, and perspectives on social responsibility and the public good aims of higher education (HE) are now local and global. This forms a basis for the internationalization of Uganda's current university–community engagements, which are focused on the local community.

Some universities in Uganda have mission and vision statements that reflect community service as a core component of their roles, while others claim to pursue an international dimension. The mission of Uganda's Mbarara University of Science and Technology, for example, is "to provide quality and relevant education at the national and international levels with particular emphasis on science and technology and its application to community development" (Mbarara University of Science and Technology 2020, p. 19). The stated mission depicts this university's intentions regarding internationalization and community engagement. However, expectation does not necessarily translate into real situations, and policy statements are not always exhibited through practice. The state of affairs regarding IHE and university–community engagement in Uganda is explored in this paper.

Conceptual and theoretical considerations of university–community engagements

Internationalization of university–community engagement can help align the different institutional efforts, making them locally and globally relevant regarding social and intercultural engagement (Jones et al. 2021). This section provides the conceptual and theoretical aspects of university–community engagements.

Conceptualizing university–community engagements

There is a conceptual gap concerning university–community engagement (Bhagwan 2018) since several activities pass for university engagement with the community. For Simmons (2010), university–community engagement ranges "from involvement in public issues, concerns, and debates to more activist praxis that dissolves the theory–practice divide, to participatory action research, built on cooperative co-citizenship, co-activism, and co-understandings of co-operative projects rooted in local contexts" (p. 644). While this conception emphasizes universities working with communities, it does not bring out the purpose and influence of the working relationship between universities and communities. Moreover, the definition only considers the local context while disregarding the global one. Compagnucci and Spigarelli (2020) elaborated on the same idea and advanced that university–community engagement is the third mission of universities and defined it as "the sum of all activities concerned with the generation, use, application, and exploitation of university knowledge, capabilities, and resources, outside of the academic environment" (p. 5). Like the case was with Simmons' definition, no reference was made to the global communities, which this paper holds essential, especially in today's globalized world.

Therefore, we adopt the Carnegie Foundation's (2011) definition that university–community engagement is "the collaboration between HEIs and their larger communities (local, regional/state, and global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity." University–community engagement entails working with the community rather than for

the community (Frank and Sieh 2016). Universities collaborate with the public and private sectors through community engagement to enrich scholarship, research, creativity, activity, and curriculum enhancement. The engagement also contributes to student instruction; prepares educated and engaged citizens; strengthens democratic values and civic responsibility; solves societal challenges; and contributes to the public good (Bhagwan 2018). This is generally based on the principle of reciprocity between the university and internal and external stakeholders (Nanyanzi et al. 2021).

Community engagement enables universities to remain relevant to their communities by mitigating social, economic, educational, and cultural challenges (van Schalkwyk and de Lange 2018) such that they can rise to the expectation of solving challenges in the community (Paleari et al. 2015). Further, community engagement provides a pathway through which universities empower communities. Therefore, community engagement should be incorporated within the university's mission and vision, connected to teaching, research, and practice, and updated continuously to assume broader societal responsibilities (Nowotny et al. 2001). It is appropriate that universities closely collaborate with external entities; they should continuously pursue practical solutions to local, national, and global challenges (Mugabi 2015).

According to Shephard et al. (2017), an overlap exists between community engagement, research, and teaching roles in university education. To these authors, research is usually conducted with and for the wider society, and cases in which universities teach the community, e.g., adult and continuing classes and university extension activities are known. Further, community engagement sometimes involves the role of 'critic and conscience of society'; additionally, universities provide services to the community, such as consultancies and volunteer services. Harman (2010) argues that university–community engagement often includes 'technology transfer,' 'research commercialization,' and 'innovation.' Thus, through community engagement, universities contribute toward the private and public elements of national 'good' (Marginson 2016).

Internationalization of university–community engagement

The definition of IHE has been updated several times, and the current definition was provided by de Wit et al. (2015). As pointed out earlier ("Introduction" section), the last segment of this definition, 'meaningful contribution to society,' points to the community engagement role of the university. There should be a close link between the purpose of internationalization and the third mission of universities, i.e., through internationalization, institutions should be positioned to serve their communities in a better way. The role of internationalization in making HEIs responsive to social challenges has been documented (see Bamberger et al. 2019). At the same time, criticisms of internationalization have also been reported (Jones et al. 2021). To some people, the IHE propagates Eurocentric worldviews (Jones and de Wit 2012), and to others, IHE leads to academic colonialism (de Wit 2002). With similar views, Stein (2016) asserts that IHE benefits the Western world's research and teaching while perpetuating and normalizing inequalities. Such views challenge the possibilities of merging internationalization with community engagement. That may explain why

Uganda's universities are yet to develop the international dimension of community engagement fully.

University–community engagements can involve all parts of the institution (research, teaching, and learning) as well as all players (academics, staff, leadership, students, and alums) (Brandenburg et al. 2019). However, without 'marketable inputs,' university–community engagement remains unattractive to university staff (Jones et al. 2021). This has made the third mission of universities less visible in Uganda. Thus, fruitful university–community engagements require that universities rethink their internationalization strategies. Internationalization can open spaces and allow universities to engage with local and international communities instead of the common practice in which community engagement focuses on national and regional levels while ignoring the international one (Jones et al. 2021).

The preceding notwithstanding, for resource-limited countries such as Uganda, engagement with the local and international community is vital for resource mobilization to improve research and teaching. In such countries, therefore, universities must go beyond local community engagement and include the global community for improved service delivery (Alzyoud and Bani-Hani 2015). They should extend beyond institutional and disciplinary boundaries, which have limited possibilities for fruitful community engagement.

Jones et al. (2021) assert that internationalization makes universities globally inclusive, relevant, and accessible. In such a case, universities can achieve national goals and create global communities (Escrigas et al. 2014). They should aim at improving people's lives in local and global communities. In support of this view, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, ACU (2015) asserts that universities have a critical role in achieving Sustainable Development Goals. By contributing to achieving such goals, universities contribute toward a better world. However, the interaction between the internationalization agenda and better communities, locally and globally, needs to be more emphasized. This is a lost opportunity that should be reclaimed, as suggested by Jones and his coauthors.

Furthermore, internationalization involves abroad and at home perspectives Knight (2004). This shows that internationalization is both locally and internationally oriented. Hudzik (2011) defines the two orientations as 'comprehensive internationalization' and emphasizes that the two internationalization perspectives should be incorporated into all HE missions. Establishing local and global partnerships to improve local and global community engagement is also essential, further clarified Hudzik. However, without a clear internationalization policy, efforts toward an international dimension in community engagement are not evident in Uganda.

Theory of change and the internationalization of university–community engagement

The Theory of Change; ToC (Weiss 1995) is used in this paper to examine how HEIs may incorporate community engagement practices into the broader internationalization strategy. The ToC explains how and why the desired change is anticipated in a specific setting (Vogel 2012). It also illustrates how short-term organizational goals

can be attained through early and intermediate successes (Rogers 2014). With this theory, the assumptions about the method by which the intended change can be realized are crucial (Stern et al. 2012). Consequently, this paper holds that combining community engagement with internationalization enables HEIs to serve their communities better. Since institutions now operate in an international environment due to globalization and internationalization, the communities considered are local and global.

The ToC also outlines the methods for achieving the early and intermediate results necessary for the intended long-term transformation (Taplin et al. 2013). In light of this perception, universities' internationalization agenda and community engagement purpose are the foundation for the long-term goals of institutional contribution to global human development. This paper suggests that community engagement can be combined with or integrated into the internationalization agenda of universities to improve service delivery since most universities are already pursuing an international dimension. Expanding services outside the national borders would be the long-term objective and conforms to the idea of 'working together for social change' advanced by Mbah (2016), who holds that universities should be interconnected with the broader community to facilitate development.

For instance, the university's failure to consider serving larger areas hindered progress in addressing the COVID-19 difficulties. Due to the current global interconnection, challenges quickly spread throughout the entire planet. Therefore, greater cooperation in searching for and disseminating appropriate solutions is essential. Considering the central role of universities in development, we need to rethink how such institutions conduct their business. For example, research and collaboration between institutions and academics can be stepped up. However, there is a need to move from the extractive collaborative research tendencies that usually characterize university relationships between the South and the North (Kouritzin and Nakagawa 2018). Therefore, this paper suggests that Uganda's universities should consider institutionalizing change from local to international regarding community engagement. The change should address the university's mission and be all-inclusive.

Methodology

A narrative review methodology was adopted for this paper. This is a method of reviewing available literature to qualitatively interpret the knowledge it contains (Sylvester et al. 2013). The approach is flexible and could thus be used to account for the contextual characteristics of internationalization (Bourhis 2017) and how such can supplement university–community engagement in Uganda. As advanced by Yildirim et al. (2021), such an approach allows for a deeper comprehension of understudied topics, like the global dimension of university–community engagement.

Thus, the narrative review methodology was chosen for this paper because it was complementary to achieving its purpose and it has several advantages. According to Green et al. (2001), narrative review methodology helps the writer condense information from different sources into a readable format. Because of this attribute,

the researcher was able to present a broader perspective on the international dimension of university–community engagements. The method also describes the evolution and management of issues under consideration. For example, the approach was used to illustrate the state of affairs regarding the change of university–community engagement from a local to a global focus. In addition, Green and coauthors explain that a narrative review provides an excellent avenue to present philosophical perspectives in a balanced manner to stimulate scholarly debate amongst readers, which this paper intended to achieve. Further, as the case for this paper, a narrative review can be adapted to inform practice by updating it with the latest evidence obtained through analysis of past studies (Gehlbach 1993).

This paper's narrative review was conducted by first carrying out an electronic literature search (Demris et al. 2019) using the terms internationalization, higher education, Uganda, and community service or engagement. Six hundred nineteen thousand information sources were found. The number of sources was reduced to 4210 by repeating the search specifying that the terms internationalization, university education, community engagement, and Uganda had to be part of the text. The abstract content for each piece was scrutinized for relevance, and this process continued until the content repeatedly proved irrelevant or repetitive. Only 23 literary sources proved to be pertinent. As guided by Paré and Kitsiou (2016), the information from these literature sources was compiled and then synthesized. The data synthesis was conducted in light of literature from diverse contexts to contextualize this paper in the broader discussions regarding internationalization and community engagement.

Findings and discussion

This section reports on the state of affairs regarding the international dimension of university–community engagements in Uganda. The section is specific about Uganda's HEIs though it is discussed in line with the broader internationalization literature to contextualize it. Therefore, this section differs from the literature review section, which is a general review of internationalization and community engagements.

The internationalization process remains a formidable force that has moderated the function and operation of HEIs worldwide since the 1990s (Knight 2008). Under its influence, institutions have been forced to develop adaptation strategies, significantly influencing their societal roles (Brandenburg 2020). Similarly, universities in Uganda have responded to internationalization by adopting strategies such as internationalization at home by academic staff and inculcation of global citizenship among graduate students (Bisaso and Nakamanya 2020). As this happens, universities are still expected to respond to social needs by providing public and private benefits and engaging with internal and external stakeholders (Wallace and Resch 2015). Because of this, universities in Uganda reportedly engage with their communities (see Barifaijo et al. 2016; Mbalinda et al. 2011; Mugabi 2015). However, analysis of the available literature indicated that efforts to link such community engagement practices with the internationalization agenda are still less prominent in Uganda.

Contrary to this, Keerberg et al. (2014) explain that university–community engagements provide avenues for adapting and enhancing knowledge transfer in universities to an internationalized environment. Additionally, locally developed solutions find their way to the international scene through the same avenue. This is important for knowledge exchanges and dismantling the knowledge creation divide (i.e., centers and peripheries). Thus, as Brandenburg et al. (2019) explained, failing to link IHE to the external community (as in the case of Uganda) makes nations miss its tremendous opportunities. As advanced in this paper, such a situation should be redressed.

Every university's legal requirement in Uganda is a commitment to community engagement as stipulated in the country's University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act. Article 127 of this Act requires that universities include in their *teaching and research programs solutions to social and economic problems in the community* (Republic of Uganda 2001). Therefore, universities must develop local and system-wide mechanisms to achieve this purpose. The universities must design programs that link with the community, the market, and the general society (Kasozi 2017). While these are the standards set by Uganda's National Council for Higher Education, the quantity and effectiveness of such programs differ from one institution to another. Like elsewhere, the design of academic programs is under the neoliberal practices that currently characterize HE (Bamberger et al. 2019). Kasozi (2017) explains that some academic programs at Makerere University have been duplicated in other universities and the different academic units of the same university. This is done because of competition for students as a source of revenue (Muriisa and Rwabyoma 2019). Greater competition is even experienced as institutions attempt to attract many high-fee-paying international students (ICEF Monitor 2017). However, an internationalization founded on the neoliberal agenda with profit maximization as the primary goal limits the benefits (Ramaswamy and Kumar 2022). Further, Jones et al. (2021) and Silka (2013) advised that internationalization should solve societal problems. Therefore, rather than the neoliberal intentions of IHE, universities should align their internationalization activities with community engagement.

The study data indicated that Uganda's university–community engagement activities can involve the whole university, an academic unit, students, or individual university members. For example, different academic units at Makerere University provide career guidance in secondary schools, carry out agricultural extension services with farmers and carry out outreach programs with communities in Uganda (Makerere University 2013). Mbarara University of Science and Technology offers a Students Community Twinning Project for all undergraduates (Mbarara University of Science and Technology 2020). These community engagement exercises promote student learning, development, and civic responsibility through co-curricular and curricular service opportunities. Other universities in Uganda have comparable engagements with the community, but the information explaining how such universities have institutionalized and merged internationalization with community engagement remains scanty (Musinguzi et al. 2015).

In another case of university–community engagement, Uganda's public universities partnered with the local community to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. The best example was seen with Makerere University, which developed

COVID-19-related responses, primarily through community engagement and research. According to Nawangwe et al. (2021), Makerere University established a Coronavirus Resource Center. The resource center managed a website that educated the community about COVID-19 and provided COVID-related information. The website also briefed policymakers on COVID-19-related responses (Makerere University 2020a). On the other hand, private universities which rely on students for their financial support could not afford to provide similar services since students had been sent home in response to the country lockdown. However, from the postulations of the Theory of Change (Mbah 2016) and the views held by Brandenburg et al. (2019), the benefits of the public university–community engagement would have benefited communities beyond the Ugandan borders had such an intervention been merged with internationalization.

University–community engagement activities run by students

Mugabi (2015) explains that students are the most significant component of the university population and originate from different backgrounds. Therefore, through these students, the university can reach those external communities with which the university has no direct contact. Students share knowledge and experiences with the external communities as they teach and learn from each other. The universities may formally institute the interactions though informal ones can also be formed as the students go with their daily life experiences. Students' informal community engagements are channeled through various associations (based on profession, clans, or place of origin). The students organize activities through these associations to engage with communities to promote professionalism, culture, aid, almsgiving, or any other activity deemed necessary for the concerned association. The challenge is that these associations never get financial support from their universities, so students only organize those engagement activities they can afford to support (Mugabi 2014).

Further, Mugabi (2015) indicates that the everyday formal community engagement experiences in Ugandan universities include;

(i) School practice placement for student teachers
(ii) Community placements for medical students
(iii) Field trips and camps
(iv) Field attachment and internships experiences

Peculiar to Makerere University, some academic units (e.g., College of Engineering, Design, Art, and Technology; College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences) organize open days in which students display their innovations (Makerere University 2020b). In the same way, other academic units (e.g., the School of Languages) organize and participate in public debates, initiating or facilitating policy debates and formulation (Mugabi 2014). However, not all academic units and universities can conduct community engagement exercises. Additionally, less emphasis is given to field-based learning (see Kiguli-Malwadde et al. 2006). Notably, while these are opportunities for students to learn from communities outside the

university, they offer opportunities to the community to participate in developing the required professionals. Therefore, the community partners with the university to produce professionals with the required skills and competencies. Recalling that universities in Uganda are already implementing internationalization strategies (Ayebare et al. 2019; Bisaso and Nakamanya 2020; Nakitto 2018), the experience would be different if such engagements incorporated an international dimension.

Staff community engagement activities

Academic staff in universities can also contribute to community engagements. They involve in research, consultancy, and continuing education for the benefit of society. According to Mugabi (2015), the staff at Makerere University administers continuing education programs at the university. The staff is also involved in action research and provides consultancy services. In this case, the community benefits from the skills and expertise of the staff to develop their competencies. The university staff and the community work together to create their desired community. Even with formal community engagements with students, university staff always directs and guides the engagement. The benefits would be immense if, for example, foreign staff members, a common aspect of IHE, were exploited for community engagement. Brandenburg et al. (2019) hold that this remains an unexploited potential in most countries. Brandenburg and coauthors further explain that international staff members may not only internationalize and 'inter-culturalize' universities but also have the potential to engage with the broader public in the country or region.

During the COVID-19, staff from Makerere University mobilized COVID-19 relief items for the Ugandan community. According to Nawangwe et al. (2021), the university's vice-chancellor and Makerere University Academic Staff Association mobilized staff to donate to the Ugandan government's COVID-19 community fund. In response, the university collected UGX 85 million (approximately US$24,000) worth of items to mitigate the effects and spread of COVID-19. However, only a few universities could afford such a donation. Many other universities, especially private ones, had been impoverished. The staff were not being paid and could not make substantial donations then.

Research, especially in medical-related fields and social sciences, always involves subjects providing samples or responses. Therefore research is usually carried out with and for the people. With 'the publish or perish' imperative, staff must research and publish to progress along the academic ladder (Amutuhaire 2022). At the same time, the community benefits from action and applied research conducted by the university staff. Therefore, the university staff always engages with their community for personal and community benefits. This study asserts that embedding such intentions in the university internationalization agenda would benefit a more significant proportion of the world's population.

However, this area is associated with limited funding for staff (Mugabi 2014). The costs associated with carrying out research and disseminating the findings through publications and conferences are usually beyond what most academic staff in the resource-limited countries in Sub-Saharan Africa can afford. Other challenges

related to access to quality publications, laboratory equipment, internet, and software all limit the progress of academic staff in this area. Collaborations with scholars and research institutions in resource-rich nations can enable scholars to make headway, though provisions to avoid exploitative relationships (Kouritzin and Nakagawa 2018) should be in place. This underscores the importance of internationalization in strengthening community engagement.

Other avenues for community engagement

There are options for university–community engagement that only partially pass as student or staff engagement. Such may be termed 'other' community engagement avenues. A case in point is where the university incorporates community members in its activities. At Kyambogo University, for example, students must have a host supervisor during their internships. In addition to the university staff supervising the student's field activities, the university co-opts staff members from the organization where the student conducts the field activities. The co-opted member performs a supervisory role in the absence of the university staff (Kalanda 2013). This shows that the community supports the university in producing the best graduates to serve the community after graduation. Besides this, Mugabi (2015) highlights the community's involvement in Makerere University's curriculum design and review processes, ensuring that the curriculum offers desirable experiences among learners, especially concerning the desired competencies in the world of work.

Related to the preceding is the involvement of the community members in decision-making. Universities often hold consultative meetings with community members (e.g., the involvement of members external to the university in the University Council meetings and the University Senate) who guide the decision-making processes (Mugabi 2015). These members' involvement ensures that the university remains part of the community. Such members allow the community's interests to be incorporated into decision-making. As indicated earlier, the community external to an institution nowadays extends beyond national borders. Involving the international community through benchmarking in foreign lands would enrich educational service quality. However, care must be taken not to promote foreign expectations at the expense of national ones.

Merging university–community engagement with internationalization

The previous section has indicated that university–community engagements in Uganda focus more on the local community than the global community. This explains the absence of literature supporting such a position. An example that examined the role played by universities in fighting HIV/AIDS was conducted in 2013 (see Amutuhaire 2013). The study reports how Makerere University was engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS, both a global and national problem. Though the

author's purpose was not to relate internationalization to community engagement per se, the interaction between these two variables is depicted.

Additionally, Makerere University signed over 200 memorandums of understanding with local and international partners to conduct joint research on COVID-19 interventions and pedagogy (Nawangwe et al. 2021). The university mobilized local and international partners to serve the community by mitigating the global pandemic. Disregarding these few examples, the community engagements in Uganda have been mainly with a local focus. It is, therefore, essential that such community engagements be aligned with internationalization.

According to Debowski (2022), academics, researchers, and universities should not be complacent about their academic identity but should establish a narrative about the impact of their work. This signifies what researchers or academics ought to do in society, and internationalization remains one avenue yet to be fully exploited. Avenues for aligning internationalization and community engagement include research initiatives and curriculum internationalization at home (Jones et al. 2021). These approaches can bring about equity, inclusivity, and equality and contribute to internationalization's decolonization. Nevertheless, universities must focus on local and socially responsible international engagements in all attempts. This can be achieved by adopting strategic approaches characterized by Brandenburg et al. (2020), exemplified as follows;

Higher education for a global common good

A common good is one that humans share intrinsically in common (Deneulin and Townsend 2007). Therefore, as explained by UNESCO (2015), considering that 'the creation of knowledge, its control, acquisition, validation, and use, are common to all people as a collective social endeavor' (p. 80), HE is a common good. The world has increasingly become interdependent, with knowledge and education playing a central role. Given the role of HE in knowledge creation, universities are essential players in sustainable development. They should therefore play a more responsive and supportive role with leaders and development agencies enabling academics and researchers to prevail over new expectations (Debowski 2022).

Jones et al. (2021) assert that positioning community engagement within the internationalization agenda should be approached with a value system that aims to achieve HE for the global common good. The value system should contribute to and learn from local and global societies. Universities in Uganda must therefore form partnerships with local and global communities. They have always been regarded as global institutions (Scott 2011); and should therefore engage with their global communities while addressing local challenges. The value system should also endeavor to promote a future orientation for society involving enhanced resilience, sustainability, and equality of opportunity (Brandenburg et al. 2020). This underscores the desire for sustainable development, to which universities should contribute. Considering the critical role of education in achieving sustainable development and that universities are the sites for administering the most advanced levels of education, their role should be more significant.

Furthermore, the values should support democratic values, social justice, equity, development, conservation, social integration, and community relations. Thus, such values should aim to denaturalize the enduring inequalities and provide avenues for solving the challenges brought about by past systems, including colonialism, i.e., the value system should not reproduce the same inequalities in the present situation.

The people involved

Uganda's universities should involve a wide range of people within and outside universities to deliver on local and global community engagements, i.e., universities should aim to engage with the broader society. Brandenburg et al. (2020) suggest that engagement with broader society should be a central focus. Resources for initiatives focusing on internationalization at home, abroad, and global citizenship should also be mobilized. University–community engagements depend on people and are for the service of people. Therefore, the different groups meant to participate in or benefit from the process should be represented such that their needs are well addressed for equity and social justice purposes.

In line with the above intention, Jones et al. (2021) suggest that community engagements should be led and enacted by people in various academic units across the university. Depending on the nature of the engagement, such people may be staff or students. Additionally, the engagement should create partnerships with intercultural communities at home and abroad to involve people with various backgrounds. Lastly, the partnership should maximize the different people compositions by bringing the global to the local or the local to the global.

Involvement of stakeholders

Successful engagement depends on the diversity and involvement of stakeholders. Brandenburg et al. (2020) state that diverse and deep local and international partnerships are central to planning, delivering, and evaluating university–community engagements. The diversity of the stakeholders creates room for accommodating multiple perspectives in the engagement. This is essential since community engagements serve local and global communities. Diversity concerning the stakeholders is only enough if such stakeholders are taking part in running engagement affairs. The activities relevant to the engagement should be cautiously planned and evaluated regularly by stakeholders at home and abroad. The strategies that do not deliver the desired benefits can be understood, modified, or substituted as appropriate from such activities.

Community engagement should mutually benefit all the stakeholders, and the impacts of such engagements should be evaluated based on mutually agreed measures. The benefits of the engagement should accrue to the university and the communities at both levels. This should be well clarified, and the standards clarified from the start of the engagement to avoid future disagreements. The engagement should be beneficial to all parties involved. Otherwise, it reinforces inequalities, yet the intention should be to overcome them. University–community engagement can

reduce the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge (see Bullen and Flavell 2022), contributing to decolonization if well integrated into the international dimension of HE.

Conclusion

The paper explored the concept of university–community engagement in light of internationalization in Uganda. While the focus was on Uganda, the paper has lessons for the rest of the world, especially those countries that operate in a context similar to that of Uganda. A strong link exists between the role of universities in community engagement and the updated definition of internationalization suggested by de Wit et al. (2015). However, there is a challenge to limited literature regarding internationalization and community engagement in developing countries, particularly Uganda. The review of the available literature proved that universities in Uganda have community engagement initiatives but do not constitute the internationalization agenda. Most engagements focus on working with the local communities, with a narrow focus on the global community. However, as their nature suggests, universities are global institutions that should influence local and global communities.

The paper also suggests how internationalization can be incorporated into university–community engagements. The central tenet in these suggestions is that community engagements should address local and global communities, but social justice and fairness remain the core values. They form the basic standards of operation as the world strives to meet sustainable development goals and reduce inequalities. While with this view, the author acknowledges the possibility of limited generalizability of the results, which is associated with the methodology used in this study. Studies could be conducted using qualitative and quantitative methods or systematic reviews to obtain more generalizable results. This paper was based on secondary data and used the Theory of Change. To obtain further insights and fill the literature gap in theory and context, conceiving primary studies based on the critical perspectives of internationalization, for example, and including other contexts, especially those in the global South, is necessary. As shown in the paper, studies about internationalization have focused on the global north, primarily by analyzing the mobility of students from the South to the north. Others have explored the benefits of internationalization for students and institutions regarding research collaborations and teaching. Extending the studies to explore the contribution of internationalization of the third mission of universities is highly recommended by this paper.

Author contributions   The corresponding author is the only author that was involved in writing this paper.

Data availability   Data sharing not applicable to this paper since no new data were created in this paper.

Declarations

Conflict of interest   The corresponding author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

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