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Kamando, A., and Doyle, L. (2013) *Universities and community-based research in developing countries: community voice and educational provision in rural Tanzania*. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 19 (1). ISSN 1477-9714

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Deposited on: 26 March 2013

Universities and community-based research in developing countries: community voice and educational provision in rural Tanzania

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Abstract

The main focus of recent research on the community engagement role of universities has been in developed countries, generally in towns and cities and usually conducted from the perspectives of universities rather than the communities with which they engage. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the community engagement role of universities in the rural areas of developing countries, and its potential for strengthening the voice of rural communities. The particular focus is on the provision of primary and secondary education. The paper is based on the assumption that in order for community members to have both the capacity and the confidence to engage in political discourse for improving educational capacity and quality, they need the opportunity to become involved and well-versed in the options available, beyond their own experience. Particular attention is given in the paper to community-based research (CBR). CBR is explored from the perspectives of community members and local leaders in the government-community partnerships which have responsibility for the provision of primary and secondary education in rural Tanzania. The historical and policy background of the partnerships, together with findings from two case studies, provide the context for the paper.

Key words: rural community voice; developing countries; universities; third mission role; community-based research; partnerships; political discourse

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the community engagement role of universities in the rural areas of developing countries and their potential for strengthening the voice of rural communities, particularly with respect to improved primary and secondary school provision. The paper is based on the assumption that in order for community members to have both the capacity and the confidence to engage in political discourse for improving education at community level, they would benefit from opportunities to become involved and well versed in the options available, beyond their own experience, through community-based research. As Stenvorth (2004, p277 cited in Sünker, 2004)) argues, people must have:

the ability to voice their political opinion; for without this ability (they) remain excluded from all decisions that affect everyone and from the framework of self-determination; thereupon lies the ability to take part in the production process in which people can create the material conditions for their existence (p599).

Although in this paper no distinction will be made, community-based research (henceforth referred to as CBR), according to Israel et al (1998), is even more effective for the community involved if it is participatory. They write:

a fundamental characteristic of (participatory) community-based research ...is the emphasis on the participation and influence of nonacademic researchers

in the process of creating knowledge. A critical distinction is the extent to which community-based research emphasizes conducting research in a community as a place or setting - in which community members are not actively involved - versus conducting research with a community as a social and cultural entity with the active engagement and influence of community members in all aspects of the research process (p.177)

A number of African countries, among them Tanzania, are confronted with a range of funding concerns for school provision related not only to a lack of resources but also to the conditionalities imposed by international agencies which provide aid (Sifuna, 2007, p10). In Tanzania, Government/Community Partnerships (GCPs) have been established in the rural areas to provide primary and secondary education as part of the government's efforts to increase opportunities for young people to gain skills and employment and to reduce poverty. The GCPs are also reflective of World Bank conditionalities (Sifuna, 2007, p10).

The paper begins with a contextual analysis of the particular economic and social conditions in sub-Saharan Africa and Tanzania and the political and economic influences behind the development of the latter's educational provision. Then, through a review of the literature, it is argued that universities in sub-Saharan Africa, have the potential to make a significant contribution, through CBR, to increasing the capacity of rural communities to engage in political discourse for improved educational provision. This has, it is further argued, been impeded by past and present economic and educational policies. Finally, the findings of two case studies are presented, through the perspectives of those living in rural areas in Tanzania, on the potential of universities becoming more closely associated with the GCPs through CBR. The case study participants were community members and local leaders closely involved in the GCPs. The findings indicate that currently the term 'partnership' between communities and the Tanzanian government may be a misnomer and provide evidence that whilst members can see the potential benefits of engaging in CBR with the universities which would strengthen their political voice, their experience indicates that there are barriers which still need to be overcome before that potential can be realised.

Poverty and education in rural communities

An analysis of the particular economic and social conditions in sub-Saharan Africa and Tanzania and the political and economic influences behind the development of the latter's educational provision serves to set the context of the problems facing many of Africa's rural communities including the development of a political voice to engage with educational change at local level. Economic growth on the African continent declined from 6.3% in 2007 to 5.9% in 2008 and the rate of output of sub-Saharan Africa declined from 6.8% in 2007 to 6.1% in 2008 (United Republic of Tanzania (URT), 2009, p40-1). Tanzania is among the poorest countries in Africa and the world in general. Out of more than an estimated 40 million people on the Tanzanian mainland, 74.3% live in rural areas and 25.6% in urban areas (URT, 2009, p94). The 2007 survey of income and expenditure of Tanzanian households showed that the overall poverty rate had declined by 2.2% (from 35.6% in 2000/1 to 33.4% in 2007). The rate of decline in poverty was significantly higher in urban (1.7%) compared to rural areas (1.3%) between 2000/1 and 2007. These figures suggest that there is still long way to go for poverty to be reduced in Africa in general and rural Tanzania in particular.

While urban-based communities have access to quality social services, including education, the majority living in poor rural-based communities are struggling to feed themselves, mainly through agricultural activities. As Woods (2008, p428) writes, poverty in Tanzania is primarily a rural phenomenon, with the vast majority of households at subsistence level. Based on economic activity, a poverty analysis of the country shows that it is particularly concentrated in communities which depend on agriculture as their main source of income (URT, 2009). While agriculture is supposed to be a dependable economic income, the contribution of crops to the country's GDP is just 0.1% per year (see URT (2009, p.127). There is also less economic security in rural communities, where the circulation of money and the flow of information are very poor and unemployment is severe.

Although they are poorer, rural communities have a stronger collective identity and are more cohesive than those in urban areas. Crow and Allan (1994 p1) noted that the shared acute poverty among these communities held them together. Beard and Gasgupta (2006) observed features of collective and community cohesion among the rural communities in a comparative study of rural and urban in Indonesia. The strong collective community spirit among these communities makes organising for development activities easier. As Delanty (2003) commented, there are examples where rural communities working together have provided important bases of mobilization for community participation and collective action, suggesting that CBR could have a valuable role in helping to strengthen community voice in these rural communities who are already used to working collectively.

In recent decades, the struggle to provide education for all has been shaped by various international conventions to which Tanzania, among other developing countries, is a signatory. For example, the Jomtien Conference of 1990 in Thailand, which advocated 'Education for All' (EFA), the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, which put emphasis on quality education for all (UNESCO, 2000), and the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (United Nations, 2011), which include universal primary education. Tanzania's national development strategies and policies are drawn up in the context of these conventions as well as being guided by the country's own Development Vision 2025, produced in 1998 (Woods, 2008, p426). The Vision's major goal is to transform Tanzania from a least developed country to a middle-income country, with a high level of human development and free from abject poverty, by 2025. One of the government's macro-economic policies is to work towards a well-educated and learning society. No evidence was found however, that local communities have been involved at any level of discussion or policy-making.

The education sector is working to meet its commitment to the EFA targets and the MDGs. One of the major education policies is the Education and Training Act (ETP) of 1995 (URT, 1995) which guides the provision of education and training in the context of a free-market economy which has displaced the socialist economy of earlier decades. The ETP was only the second major policy in the education sector introduced after the Education for Self-Reliance (ESR) Act of 1967, indicating its significance in Tanzania's development agenda. It resulted in the setting up of many privately owned and expensive fee-paying schools with serious implications for poor households, especially in rural communities. As part of an Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) (URT, 2001a) the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) (URT, 2001b) was introduced in early 2002 and school fees were abolished to allow all school age children access to education. In 2004 the Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP) was introduced at secondary level and school fees were reduced (URT, 2004). Both the PEDP and the SEDP adopted a nationwide community approach called Government-Community Partnerships (GCPs) to accomplish the intended goals for

education provision. It is not clear how much, if any, consultation there was prior to the establishment of the GCPs nor is it clear if there was a demand from rural communities to be involved in consultation processes.

Since the PEDP and SEDP development plans began there has been an increase in the number of public schools around the country - at primary level from 12,815 in 2003 to 15,727 in 2009 and at secondary level from 1,083 in 2003 to 4,102 in 2009 (URT, 2007, 2009). This success has largely been realised through the GCPs utilising the labour force and resources of local communities. However, the increase in schools and enrolment has not been accompanied by improvements in the quality of education (Omari *et al.*, 1983; Mulengeki, 2004; and Sifuna, 2007) and neither has there been a reduction in poverty, which implies that education is not making the expected impact. The situation is worse in rural areas where the majority of poor people live. Lack of research on or with GCPs including the way they function at community level means that little is understood about their dynamics, their effectiveness or their needs. As a result, this paper contends, the ability of community members to develop an informed, confident and effective voice vis-a-vis the government side of the partnership is being impeded.

Universities in the African post-colonial era: research and the ‘third mission’

A review of past and present economic and educational policies puts into context the research role and ‘third mission’ role – of which community-based research is an example - of universities, in sub-Saharan Africa. The preparedness and capacity of the universities are explored for their potential to make a significant contribution, through CBR, to strengthening the voice of rural communities to engage in political discourse related to educational provision.

In the 1960s and the post-colonial era, the purpose of the new universities in Africa was to produce what the new countries needed – well-educated, well-trained administrators to run them. Thus, the traditional liberal education provided by the European universities was not relevant to their needs. In Tanzania, Nyerere saw universities as combining ‘both liberal and useful knowledge...enhancing the ability to think critically and analytically and solve real problems in society...as well as produce skilled but cultured persons’ (Nkulu, 2005, p86). Indeed, by this time in Europe, the US and Canada too there was a demand for well-educated workers who, though lacking the traditional academic admission credentials needed high level employment skills and preparation for work and careers. As Schuetze (2010) explains ‘The rationale for the creation in the 1960s of new non-university types of higher education, for example community colleges in the US and Canada, polytechnics in the UK and *Fachhochschulen* in Germany was a mandate for regional relevance and contribution to development.’ (p14-15). Thus, for a not dissimilar purpose, the new universities of Africa and the new universities of Europe, the US and Canada had to produce workers with skills directly relevant to the needs of the regions.

Over the intervening decades, the role and purpose of universities has shifted away from their localities and regions and even away from their countries. Examples of reasons Schuetze (2010) gives for this include that the world-wide ranking of universities which has re-focused their attention on the traditional function of research and that the commercialisation of knowledge means that they have to look to much further than their localities in order to be able to compete in a global market for high research status (p15). This in turn necessitates having to compete for research funds. Universities’ other main source of income is the international student market, also highly competitive. Duke (2010) writes about the ‘three Ms’ – marketization,

massification and managerialism, the last describing the type of governance universities require to stay in the race. Any local or regional involvement of universities in community engagement might be seen to have little value in these global battles for funds and reputation (p34). There is evidence that universities in Africa are not only now being affected by these same tensions (Cloete et al, 2011) but in addition have had to operate in an environment not only inconducive to their development but even actively discouraging it (Samoff and Carrol, 2003, p.20).

Higher education and with it the research role of universities in Africa has, in the view of some commentators, not fared well in recent decades. According to Samoff and Carrol (2003, p. 20) this is because of its dependence on World Bank and IMF funding and the policies of the countries who make the biggest contributions (for this, they say, read the US). During the 1970s and 1980s higher education was considered a luxury in Africa (Sall (2001) cited in Samoff and Carrol, 2003) and the focus was on primary and then basic education. Ndong-Jatta (2002, cited by Samoff and Carrol, 2003) explained that: 'A condition for qualifying for World Bank assistance in the education sector was for African countries to divert resources from higher education and channel them instead towards primary and basic education' (p1).

Pouris's 2010 study of university research output through publications shows several African countries, including Tanzania, producing very little although Samoff and Carrol (2003) argue that Tanzania, particularly under Nyerere, had driven forward on its own education policy and was less inclined to be influenced strongly by the need to comply with World Bank conditionalities (p28). In the economic crisis of the 1980s, however, according to Lindemann and Putzel (2008) citing Costello (1996): 'bureaucrats (who) were now bolstered by their privileged ties to foreign actors (especially the IMF) – "became an increasingly coherent and dominant force within the state"' and it was the 'rising influence of the "pragmatists"' that led to Nyerere resigning as President in 1985' (Lindemann and Putzel, 2008).

Recently, there has been a number of studies on the need for, and value of, university research in developing countries (eg World Bank, 2010 cited in Kotecha, 2012) and it seems that the tide may have now turned in favour of higher education. In the report of the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA), for the Southern African Development Community (SADC), one of the four imperatives for change Kotecha (2012) outlined was the need for universities to develop their research capability (p3). Similarly, Pouris (2010) in his analysis of research activity concluded that SADC countries need to establish instruments and fund appropriately the growth of their research and innovation systems if they wish to succeed in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and uplift their populations through development (p6).

At the same time, research on the value of the 'third mission' role of universities, as distinct from their two 'core' missions of research and teaching (Schuetze, 2010, p13), has proliferated in recent years with the common finding that community engagement, in comparison with the other two main examples of outreach work, academic knowledge transfer and university continuing education is underdeveloped (Schuetze, 2010, p27). However, both the engagement and the studies on it have been largely confined to the developed countries (see for example: Charles, 2005; Goddard and Puukka, 2008; Duke, 2009; Doyle, 2010; Inman and Schuetze, 2010). The interest of researchers in universities' community engagement work in developed countries is further evidenced by the construction and testing of measurements or benchmarks for gauging the level of university involvement and partnership in both community and regional development, and its effectiveness, in a variety of social and economic domains (see Charles and Benneworth, 2002; Powell, 2010). One of the areas of community engagement where this is particularly the case is

CBR (Schuetze, 2010, p23).

Walters (2001; 2006) has written from the South African perspective about assessing the third mission role of universities in lifelong learning at local level, and in the development of 'learning regions' but she makes it clear that South Africa is a 'middle-income', rather than a 'developed' country. Other studies on the third mission work of the universities in developed countries identify that it has generally been conducted through relationships or partnerships with, for example, government supported agencies (Lall, 2010) or local and regional government (Doyle, 2010), with the research carried out by universities from the university perspective.

Although the research carried out by universities on community engagement in general and CBR in particular in developed countries does offer some useful ideas on how universities and communities can work in less developed areas (Lall, 2010, p89) the dynamics of the community role of universities differ in developing countries subject to World Bank and IMF conditionalities (Ndong-Jatta (2002, cited in Samoff and Carrol, 2003) and committed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as suggested by Pouris (2010, p6) above. Tanzania, for example, compared to other countries in the region has a very distinct political history, because of its experience of 'African Socialism'. This was firstly with TANU¹ and later the CCM² under the leadership of Nyerere who was President of the country from 1964 to 1985, the first after independence in 1962. Opinions differ as to the effects on the country's economy of the policies pursued during that time (see for example Ibhawoh and Dibua, 2003, p60) compared to others pursued elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. For Nyerere, development of the country had to include those in the rural areas and the indigenous concept of *ujamaa*, or familyhood, was used as the ideological basis for introducing collective agriculture, under a process called villagization. *Ujamaa* also called for nationalization of banks and industry, and importantly for an increased level of self-reliance at individual, community and national level (TANU, 1971).

Notwithstanding the efforts of the CCM, Tanzania has become as subject as other developing countries in the region to the competition of the 'free market', the 'democratisation' of the multi-party system, foreign investors which include South Africa (Schroeder, 2008) and of course the ever-present international aid agencies and money lenders (Moore and Stanford, 2010) and to that extent what happens there in respect of the community role of universities is likely to be of interest to other countries in the region. Particularly relevant here are the MDGs which stipulate provision of primary and secondary education with the result that other areas of education – notably adult education and universities – have become starved of funds (Samoff and Carrol, p11). Despite this changed focus, some would argue because of it (eg Lindemann and Putzel, 2008 citing Costello, 1996) the 1980s were increasingly a time of economic crisis for Tanzania and by 1998 enrolment in school had plummeted to 63%.

Thus despite universities in Tanzania under the MDGs being deprived of funds to carry out research, primary and secondary school provision and quality has not been sustained, especially in the rural areas. No evidence could be found that any consultations or evaluations were carried out with local people or that they were consulted over the decision to introduce GCPs - to the contrary, it would seem, as decisions were being made, and continue to be made, by central government beholden to international aid agencies (Moore and Stanford, 2010).

¹ Tanganyika African National Union: principal political party in the struggle for sovereignty in the [East African](#) state of [Tanganyika](#), Tanzania's pre-liberation name

² Chama cha Mapinduzi (*Party of the Revolution* in [Swahili](#)): ruling [political party](#) of [Tanzania](#).

In common with universities in developed countries, many Southern African countries include in their mission statement a reference to the 'third mission'. In Tanzania, for example, the University of Dar es Salaam aims: 'To contribute to sustainable national and regional social and economic development'. Mkude, Cooksey & Levey (2003, cited in Swartz, 2006) write about University of Dar es Salaam's Institutional Transformation Plan (2000), devised after a long period of decline in the 1980s. They explain that although: 'there have not been the same levels and scale of capital concentration as in industrialised economies. ... Nonetheless, many universities in these countries have embarked on self-driven and in some cases pioneering strategies ... in engaging with the local environment' (p25).

Three years later, Cloete *et al* (2011) were less impressed. They found that although there were references to national visions for Tanzania, they were: 'often based on "best practice" policy-borrowing from first world countries'. It was not always the case, as Swartz (2006) writes: 'In the great period of decolonisation after World War II, the new generation of independent governments in Africa looked upon universities in their countries as key to supporting post-independence development goals. In Tanzania, for example, the University of Dar es Salaam was drafted in to support ...*ujamaa*'.

In the next section, evidence from the community members of the GCPs is presented on how they see the potential for, and barriers to, research and development at community level, through university/community engagement, collaboration and partnership, strengthening their ability to engage in political discourse around educational provision in their rural communities.

The evidence from the GCPs

The qualitative research from which this paper was written was comparative and comprised two case studies carried out in different rural districts. One of these is situated in a region where the GCPs were relatively successful in terms of the number of community members involved, the depth of their involvement and the amount and quality of primary and secondary educational provision. The other district is situated in a different region where the GCPs are less effective. The purpose behind this selection of districts was to try and identify differences between a more and a less successful example of a GCP, perhaps in the way they functioned, the people involved, the way they viewed their roles or their levels of commitment. The research employed a qualitative multiple-case study (Yin, 2003), utilising semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The rationale behind this qualitative strategy was to allow participants to give voice to their ideas, interests, concerns, experiences and feelings, but recognising that, whilst it was community-based research, it was not participatory (Israel, et al, 1998, p177) and thus the researcher still stood between the researched and an interpretation of their 'voice' through analysis of the findings. As French and Swain (2000) explain:

Qualitative research is primarily concerned with meaning, interpretation and giving research participants 'a right of voice'. There is a commitment to seeing 'through the eyes' of research participants, and a belief that social behaviour cannot be grasped until the researcher has understood the symbolic world of the research participants. Researchers in the qualitative tradition accept that the research in which they are engaged cannot be independent of their own values and perspectives (p40)

Further, whilst the findings from two such case studies are not easily generalizable they

could be used to help structure a large-scale survey or further qualitative studies including community-based research which is participatory for, as Stake (1995) explained, when the purpose of the research is to provide: ‘explanation, propositional knowledge, and law ... the case study will often be at a disadvantage. When the aims are understanding, extension of experience, and increase in conviction in that which is known, the disadvantage disappears’ (p. 21). Yin (2003) argues that single cases may be used to confirm or challenge a theory. The close attention to community members and their concerns through the case study method, it can also be argued, is in keeping with McClelland’s (1975) suggestion before people can have power over their own lives, they need to gain information about themselves and their environment and be willing to identify and work with others for change. In total, 98 people were interviewed for the study, sixty individually and the rest in focus groups. They were selected through a criterion-based sampling technique (Ritchie et al., 2003, p78) and the criteria were based on their roles in the GCP education activities. The participants were leaders at ward, village, hamlet and 10-cell (a group of ten households with a representative) level, as school board or committee members, head teachers, education officers and community development workers as well as community members with no official position. Those participants seen as representing the government’s perspective were from the regions. The officers from the district levels, between regional and ward level, tended to be able to see the GCPs from both the government and the community perspectives, positioned as they were in the middle (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: The typical structure of a Government-Community Partnership

Insert here

The theoretical framework adopted for the study was social network theory informed by social capital theory. Combining social network and social capital theories can lead to a successful examination of social phenomena in real settings (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Analysis of the data was conducted using Layder’s (1998) adaptive theory which he explains as follows:

the word ‘adaptive’ is meant to convey that the theory either adapts to, or is shaped by, incoming evidence while the data itself is filtered through, and is thus adapted by, the prior theoretical materials (frameworks, concepts, ideas) that are relevant to their analysis (p5).

Adaptive theory retains certain features of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in that it relies on coding of data into themes but it also allows initial coding, which needs to be on going as each new set of data are collected, from which core codes can be identified (Layder, 1998, p56). This identification makes it possible, using extant theory in conjunction with the data, to focus on key ideas.

In both of the case studies, interestingly it was the district officers who spoke directly about the role of universities whilst others made more general reference to their role. It became clear that they hold a unique and central position in the GCP structure as indicated in Figure 1, not because they have any particular power or influence in the top-down structure, but because they have more of an opportunity to see the process of policy-making and implementation from both the government and the community perspectives. It was from the responses of the district officers that the greatest clarity

emerged on what the main themes were in respect of community-based research with the universities and its value in strengthening the voice of rural communities through access to experience outside of their own as well as the opportunity to engage in research themselves. They identified the following areas for particular attention: economic analysis and research into improving the quality of school education; CBR between universities and rural schools; partnerships; universities in the wider GCP context. However, also important was what they and other participants – mostly adults who were growing up when Nyerere was President - had to say about *ujamaa* and the skills of self-reliance they had learned then. In the responses, there was no discernible difference in perspective between the two districts, despite being in regions with varying success of GCP implementation.

Research role of universities

There were two areas of research which respondents highlighted in particular, where universities were indispensable to helping to strengthen the voices of potential, and existing members of the GCPs. The first was to fulfil the great need for economic analysis of the local economies and the other was to contribute to improving the quality of school education.

Economic analysis

I think we need to undertake a “poverty analysis” before involving community members. (Community Development Officer 1 District 2 individual interview)

This view from a community development officer (CDO) was repeated strongly and often by respondents. Poverty is high in rural areas, where the GCPs are mostly to be found. A thorough investigation of the economic circumstances of the rural area is needed, respondents said, before community members can make an informed decision, based on an understanding of the local economy, whether or not to participate in a GCP.

Community development officers, in particular, had very clear ideas about both the research they wanted carried out and its purpose towards enabling them to build effective GCPs. It was no good, they said, asking people to make a contribution when the basis on which the request was being made, was unclear. Villages were not all the same: some were better off than others so it would not work to ask each village for the same contribution. This CDO explains:

For instance, the project before us at the moment is the building of more classrooms. The contribution from the community is 20%. However, have we carried out a poverty analysis of those particular rural areas to determine their capacity to contribute? Let us say an analysis of village A, B & C shows that Villages A & C are economically well off compared to B. Now, tell me, will the contribution of 20% from each village work? It is impossible. Let us look for criteria for community development activities. (Community Development Officer 1 District 2 individual interview)

It is in the gathering and presenting of this basic information where universities have an important research role to play in helping to develop the GCPs, respondents said. Their expertise is valued and respected at local level as a means to help them improve community life:

We have experts all over our country, at universities, government both central and local. (Community Development Officer 1 District 2 individual interview)

Improving the quality of school education

Universities, through research, were also key to improving the quality of school education, which would in turn ensure that rural schools, as those in the urban areas, would be able to send students to the universities. As this Education Officer (EO) explains, there was a great need at local level for universities to bring their expertise to local communities and engage with them to improve education:

We would love it if (people from the universities) could come to schools and meet rural people. Through research, they can develop ideas that can boost community secondary school students and eventually enrol quality students. (Education Officer, 1 District 2 individual interview)

There was disappointment that although university staff came to the schools in their university teaching capacity to observe their student teachers in the schools, currently that was as far as it went. There was no work being carried out to look at the school context so they had little understanding of the reality faced by those trying to deliver education, as this EO explains:

I must say this, the problem of most universities is that they only visit schools in villages during teaching practice to assess their students and leave immediately without even knowing other problems or challenges these schools face. (Education Officer, 1 District 2 individual interview)

Community-based research and partnership

Another important role for universities was, respondents said, to work with rural schools to construct and maintain communication networks for the sharing of research findings and experiences. This would, in the opinion of this EO, maximize the benefit of research for and with local communities, regions and the country:

It will be healthy if universities could establish communication networks with both community members and education officials. If this can be done for almost every district, there will certainly be positive change in divisions, districts, regions and finally the whole country. (Education Officer 2 District 1 individual interview)

Respondents are here suggesting that provision of quality schooling should not just be left to the communities or the government. Other institutions, especially the universities, are needed for their contribution too:

I think one of the strategies is to remove the limitation, i.e. there should be no limitation that only village/community or government are responsible for public schools. We need to go beyond and involve other institutions that can contribute in one way or another for people's development within their areas. (District Education Officer 1 District 2 individual interview).

Universities, the district officers said, should work closely with groups of GCPs ('division') so that they had a responsibility to help the local people ensure the schools they were working with succeeded:

Universities may deal with people and schools from, let say, (XXXX) division. Then the successes and failures of these schools will be part and parcel of a certain university, e.g. (lists several here) to further reflect upon. (Education Officer 2 District 1 individual interview)

Whilst community members recognised the value of partnership with universities they also had reservations about the university staff's capacity to work with them in that way at present. It seemed they thought that university staff had to undertake some initial bridge-building and creation of trust and mutual understanding before advances were possible:

Remember that most of the poor people live in rural areas. These people come from the cities, to mobilise (rural) people to build a school while their own children are studying in the city or abroad and are enjoying quality education. (Community Development Officer 2 District 2 focus group at ward level)

Being much better off, the people from the city were well-dressed and looked different to those in the villages who did not take kindly to being spoken down to or 'preached' at about community participation when they were the experts as this community development officer explains:

People from the village are left far behind on low incomes compared to their urban counterparts. Look, apart from their fellow poor village leaders, people who come to villages to preach 'working together' look different. Their clothes are nice from the city, and they look well off. This puts people off participating. That is why Mwalimu (Teacher) J.K Nyerere was against the gap between rich and poor. (Community Development Officer 2 District 2 focus group at ward level)

Wider context

There was a need, some district officers thought, to situate the work of the GCP in a wider context. The GCPs had made headway at rural level but they needed support from others including universities and other organisations – especially those from outside Tanzania such as the CBOs (community-based organisations) and NGOs (non-governmental organisations) - to learn collectively and develop the work further:

We need to change and involve (specialist) CBOs, NGOs and international organisations. They can provide ideas regarding development of education in specific areas e.g. for environmental issues invite an NGO that deals with the environment rather than limiting the provision of education to only government and communities. Other institutions both private and public may also be encouraged to contribute ideas and improve quality. (Education Officer 1 District 2 focus group at ward level)

Ujamaa

At the same time as some GCP participants expressed a need to look outside of the local communities and of the country for expertise, answers and support, from others there was great concern expressed that with the focus of the GCPs on the provision of primary and secondary schools, educational provision had moved away from adult and community education through which *ujamaa* had been promoted. As this respondent explains:

After Nyerere announced the philosophy of ujamaa and self-reliance, he told people to stay in ujamaa villages in which he established the 'Adult Education Programme' around 1975. Here people were taught many issues concerning development, which included agriculture, livestock, health, education, politics etc within their villages. Adult Education became very strong and active in the country in the '70s and '80s, but now - mmhh! (Ward Education Coordinator 1 District 2 focus group at ward level)

The loss of adult and community education classes, and the lack of funds for it, was keenly felt by the older members of the GCPs not least because the classes had raised awareness of the importance of education for the future:

The government has forgotten other kinds of education, those that are not classroom based. It's vital that people are made aware that only education can pull them out of poverty. I mean community education such as seminars or workshops. (Community Member 1 District 2 focus group at ward level)

The classes ensured that people understood about the need to participate in community activities and how to do it whereas latterly this was not so clear and there was resistance from some people, which made it difficult to get full co-operation:

I think community activities during ujamaa were successful, as they went hand in hand with adult education i.e. community members learned about participation in their adult classes, so when they are told to contribute and participate in shamba (farming) work they complied willingly because of the understanding and unity they had built. (Headteacher 1 District 1 focus group at ward level)

Community members said they needed the opportunity to come together to learn about and discuss policy.

Classes would also provide the opportunity for people to become aware of the changes taking place, the causes and how they could participate in meeting the challenges. The young people were a particular concern but the GCPs' first call on funds was for the schools:

For the community there should also be seminars butwe do not have funds for that. The community needs to understand the policies, vision and mission for education and have the opportunity to air their views, which can help. (District Education Officer 1 District 2 individual interview)

If there were adult education classes, all issues concerning globalization and changes in the world could have been introduced and taught in these classes. ...

Now, instead of involving people, we are forcing them to participate.
(Headteacher 1 District 1 focus group at ward level)

I believe that if youths are sensitised they can take part in both public and private activities. (Community Member 2 District 1 focus group at ward level)

Discussion of the findings

Respondents clearly see the research capacity of universities as a resource they need to access to strengthen their voice in political discourse on the provision of education in rural communities. In particular they draw attention to the need for economic analysis of the resources available in a rural region to provide a sound basis for successful GCPs. Of immediate concern at local level is the poor income and resources in the rural areas so that it becomes particularly important that the cost of providing schooling is equitable. The local people must be involved in planning, managing and decision making because they have a vital role in conveying local issues, influencing proposals that will affect their lives (Longworth and Osborne, 2010a, p64) and to do this they have to be well-informed, they say. Carrying out basic research on the local economy will facilitate equitable, and therefore more effective, community involvement and enable the members to have control over meeting the challenges they face.

The research capabilities of the universities are needed by the communities to help them improve the quality of education. Currently, there was still some way to go with this. Those university staff with whom the community members had already had contact were not giving them the impression they were interested in engaging in research with the communities, suggesting that it is some bridge-building would need to be a precursor to any collaboration or partnership. Respondents found it unacceptable that staff from the universities came to visit the trainee teachers as part of their course but did not seem interested in the school environment or the school's concerns. They were clear that the universities should be taking more interest and conduct research on the schools to help them improve.

From the research carried out by universities, community members expected there to develop a closer relationship so that the universities could work with allocated schools in partnership. They wanted universities to engage with and between the GCPs and there is also an indication that they see this leading to wider collaborative partnerships in which they, the community members, play an important part in policy-making.. Significantly, although in relation to the local communities the universities were seen as key institutions with which to form networks, collaborations and partnerships, when it came to extending that work, the focus of the respondents turned not to their own national resources but to the NGOs and international organisations. Here is an indication that there is some dependency on the NGOs.

Embedded here are two possible tensions around self-reliance, one in respect of the relationship between the communities and the universities and the other in respect of the tendency, or so it would seem from the evidence, to look outside of Tanzania for solutions. Education for all was integral to self reliance, with Nyerere's mission to give whole generations, especially illiterate adults, access both to learning and to collective decision-making, particularly in the rural areas, in the same spirit as Dewey's (1938) concept of education tied to social action and Freire's (1989) 'problem-posing' model. The vehicle of delivery was the widely accessible adult education classes. Under Nyerere the role of education was to give individuals a sense of commitment to the whole community by inculcating the social goals of living and working together for the

common good (Nyerere, 1967). The education classes, remembered by older community members from the time of the introduction of *ujamaa* into the rural areas, had been a means of promoting Tanzanian self-reliance. Stöger-Eising (2000 p137) writes of the 'indigenous African echoes that reverberate through Nyerere's writings'. The African roots of *ujamaa*, combined with the adult education classes were, in the memory and experience of the community members, strengthening and empowering. From the evidence, these qualities, and the therefore the classes, are needed now for younger GCP members to be able to learn and demonstrate they expect to be treated as equal partners whether with 'the experts' come from the universities or from outside of Tanzania. The principle of self-reliance, emphasised by Nyerere as fundamental to collective decision-making, resonates with Stenvorth's (2004) 'framework of self-determination' (p277). Yet, as was noted earlier, one of the means of achieving this, through the adult education classes, has been greatly reduced by the funding for these being re-directed into primary and secondary schooling. Community members were very conscious of how this adversely affected their ability to engage in political discourse and were clear that they had not been consulted.

A further tension seems to be located around the disparity of income between those coming from the universities – from the towns – and those in the rural areas, resulting in distrust and a fear of being preached at. The district officers spoke of the need for 'communication networks' between rural communities and the universities which would enhance collective learning and knowledge building for the community but there is also a need to build the qualities of trust, transparency, accountability and equal power relations identified as important in developing such partnerships (Bray, 2000; Pinkus, 2005; Dhillon, 2009).

As Schuetze (2010, p24) explains, collaboration is an interactive process among communities and universities, each with diverse knowledge and resources, working together to generate solutions for complex problems. Longworth and Osborne (2010b p.2) describe how universities through their community engagement mission can contribute to the growth of communities and regions, helping them to become learning entities by providing them with research and information for developmental strategies.

Universities here have a key role to play, for example as mechanisms for action-oriented learning processes through their research – that is providing expert knowledge to society and working in partnership with communities to create more. The debate about the role of universities in developing countries centres on the idea that knowledge is a crucial tool for overcoming underdevelopment (Sutz, 2005) but also for empowering those at local level. The evidence from this study suggests that whilst there is an enthusiasm from rural community members and local leaders to access the skills and knowledge of universities there is also a reticence on the part of community members to become involved. Mohrman (2010), in her review of university community engagement case studies writes that a number of the studies 'use words like mutuality and reciprocity to describe successful partnerships' (p154) whereas some of the case study authors thought that community activities should only be based on 'shared power and reciprocal benefit'. At the same time she notes that it is: 'sometimes hard for students and faculty to move from a service model, in which experts tell community groups what would be best for them, to a true partnership in which local citizens have equal voice in the decision-making process' (p155).

The reality of partnership working is complex with success depending on the extent to which both partners are responsible for and committed to working together in harmony (Bray, 2000, p32). Wilcox (1994) argued that in some circumstances, the partners do not necessarily have to be equal in skills, funds or even confidence. The most important factors are trust and commitment towards achieving the agreed goals.

According to Dhillon (2009, p.697), trust is a necessary condition for effective partnership working. Other factors include transparency, accountability and equal power relations (Bray, 2000; Pinkus, 2005; Dhillon, 2009). Trust underpins successful relationships amongst partners or actors that constitute a partnership. Trust and other social aspects such as networks and shared values become the 'social glue', which hold the partnership together (Dhillon, 2005, p.215).

Throughout this paper, reference has been made to community-based research but the evidence from the community officers and members suggests that whilst they would be appreciative of more of this type of research as providing them with evidence-based ideas for the improvement of primary and secondary schooling, more empowering would be participatory community-based research. Research in health provision (Macauley et al, 1999; Israel et al, 1998) as well as community development (Freire, 1972; Santiago-Rivera et al, 1998) is as copious as it is convincing that participation is more effective and more empowering for the community members involved, as well as furnishing them with much-needed knowledge and understanding. Macauley et al (1999) explain the benefits of participatory community-based research nicely in their summary points from their research which include:

The knowledge, expertise, and resources of the involved community are often key to successful research

Three primary features of participatory research include collaboration, mutual education, and acting on results developed from research questions that are relevant to the community

Participatory research is based on a mutually respectful partnership between researchers and communities

Partnerships are strengthened by joint development of research agreements for the design, implementation, analysis, and dissemination of results (p1)

Conclusions

Community in rural Tanzania, as in other rural regions of Africa, has a key role in economic development, specifically in the provision of quality primary and secondary education to help address the poverty of those living in the rural areas. One of the needs of the community members, from the perspectives of those participating in them, is for more knowledge and understanding about a range of related issues to enable them to engage confidently and effectively in the political discourse related to school provision. However, listening carefully to what the community members have to say about the conditions needed for them both to enter into research partnerships with the universities, and participate in the policy-making process was instructive. The lesson from Tanzania's *ujamaa* period which could have resonance in developed and developing countries alike, is that there should be investment in adult education classes alongside primary and secondary education so that like their parents and grandparents' generations, the young adults have the same opportunities to learn the agricultural and other skills they need for Tanzanian cooperation and self-reliance. Such opportunities, the evidence suggests, is also necessary for them to be equipped with the confidence to engage in political discourse, for rural and regional development. According to the literature, the signs are that African universities will have to become better equipped to engage in community-based research, especially if it is to become more effective by being participatory (Macauley et al, 1999)

However, that universities are also making some progress in connecting with rural communities successfully is evidenced by the research study of GCPs, from which this

paper is written and which is supported by the Tanzanian government and the University of Dar es Salaam. Though funded by the World Bank rather than the Tanzanian government, the research is an example of the efforts of the university which have begun to help fill the gap in knowledge and understanding of the GCPs and their effects on education. Potentially it offers the beginnings of community-based research and an opportunity to strengthen the voice of rural communities so that as Stenvorth (2004, p277 cited in Sünger, 2004, p599) argues, people have the information they need to be able to voice their political opinion to 'create the material conditions for their existence'.

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Figure 1: The typical structure of a Government-Community Partnership

