

# Implementation and Impact of University Community Partnership in the Delivery of the BIFA Program at Makerere University

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In her 2008—2018 strategic plan, Makerere University decided to metamorphose its community outreach approach to the delivery of its programs into a university-community partnership (UCP) approach. The shift to the UCP approach was impelled by the University's realization that although knowledge, technology and skills may reside in universities, the *community* also commands knowledge from which the university can learn and leverage her innovative capability. Thus, adoption of the UCP approach was hoped to impact on the delivery of the university's programs in a positive way. However, hitherto, quality information on the impact of the approach was generally nonexistent. Lack of this information presented as an important problem in a way that it could lead to rigid insistence on implementation of the approach when, in fact, it does not enhance the delivery of the University's programs. Conversely, lack of information on the approach might result into failure to prioritize it when, in fact, it improves the delivery of the programs.

Thirdly, due to lack of information on the approach, inadequacies in its implementation, if any, might not be discerned, still to the detriment of quality in the delivery of the University's programs. In this case, the University's efforts to shift from the *outreach* to the UCP approach might be rendered futile. This thesis reports the findings of a study that attempted to respond to these problems, taking the case of the Bachelor of Industrial and Fine Art (BIFA) program. Informed by the propositions of Systems Theory and the Civic Engagement Model of Community Partnership, and following a mixed methods approach, the study undertook to investigate the ways in which the Margret Trowel School of Industrial and Fine Arts (MTSIFA) assesses its needs and those of the community as they relate to the UCP approach; the organisational and leadership structures within whose framework the UCP approach at the school is being implemented; and the ways in which adoption of the approach has impacted teaching, research and community engagement at the school.

The findings were that although MTSIFA's philosophy and mission emphasize partnership, delivery of the BIFA program exemplifies the 'extracted benefit' typology of UCP. Focus is put mainly on MTSIFA's needs rather than symbiotic engagement with the community. The school does not have a systematized structure for the promotion of the UCP approach and efforts to promote acceptance of the work that students and faculty do in the community are ad hoc. Implementation of the approach is foiled by financial resources constraints and involvement of faculty in community engagement activities is limited to (externally) funded projects. MTSIFA has not evolved an incentive system for promoting acceptance of the approach and there is no specialized structure, office or officer charged with promoting partnership. Besides, the school has no arrangements for promoting the uptake and sustainability of the lessons and benefits gained from the UCP approach. Notwithstanding, delivery of the BIFA program using the UCP approach has improved student

learning; exposed the BIFA students to the world of work; prompted some curricula reforms; helped lecturers on the program to build research networks; and marketed MTSIFA in the community.