

**A PAPER ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN UGANDA**

**BY**

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## **1.0 Higher education in Uganda**

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) defines Higher education as the education offered to post advanced level certificate or its equivalent. This is the context within which this paper is prepared though it is generally premised on University education.

The prominence of the state in the Education Sector generally and the Higher Education Sub sector has subsisted since the colonial period when Makerere started as a technical school in 1922. The state has since continued to support, fund and control the sub sector in a number of ways including enacting laws and policies to govern the sector. In 1937, the de La Warr Commission recommended that Makerere College be turned into a University College and that secondary schools should be placed at an education level or standard required to produce candidates for entering Makerere College as an institution of higher education offering post-school certificate courses. In 1940, the Thomas Education Committee also recommended the involvement of the government in financing the schools. These recommendations were given the force of law by the Education Ordinance in 1942 (Magara, 2009).

In 1949, Makerere College by an Act of Parliament was uplifted to a constituent college of the University of London. The findings of the Binns Study Group in 1951 and the de Bunsen Education Committee in 1952, enhanced the co-ordination and supervision of the education system in the country and also contributed to the Education Ordinance of 1959 that provided for universal education. Later, in 1962, the Government set up a committee to report on the needs and priorities of education which provided guidelines that paved the way for the context of University education standards in Uganda. The committee's report gave credit to the contribution of University education to the development of education in the country. In order to meet the needs of independent Uganda, the Government appointed a commission under the chairmanship of Professor Castle in 1963 to study and advise on the required guidelines for the education system the country ought to adopt. These guidelines were adopted in the Education (Amendment) Act of 1963 to ensure for effective control of educational planning and development throughout the country. In the same vein the 1969 study by UNESCO helped to establish priorities in educational development in Uganda, which guided the drafting of the Education Act, 1970. In the same year, on 1 July 1970, Makerere University became an independent National University of the Republic

Uganda, awarding undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. The Makerere University Act, 1970 and the Education Act, 1970 were the chief legal provisions for higher education in Uganda (Magara 2009: 64).

Worth noting is that even after independence in 1962, the state continued to control, fund and determine policies of the subsector. The University of East Africa was created in 1963 to take care of all the students from the then three East African states, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania with Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the then President of Tanzania as the Chancellor. The power of the state was even more evident when Makerere became an independent University in 1970 when the University of East Africa was divided into three to create Makerere, Dar es Salaam and Nairobi Universities. The President of Uganda became the Chancellor of Makerere University with the power to appoint the Vice Chancellor. The University was run as a government department.

The first University in the region of East Africa was the University of East Africa which started in 1963. Students from Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and other neighbouring countries attended the University in those years. Before then, Makerere was a constituent college of the University of London. The University of East Africa as it was then known was based at the Makerere campus in Uganda with constituent colleges in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. In 1970, the three countries of East Africa decided to establish their own independent universities. As a consequence, Makerere University was established in Uganda as the national University.

Makerere University remained the only University in the country until 1988. Indeed, it was the sole provider of University education in Uganda. However, some students from Uganda through the inter University exchange programme studied at the University of Dar es Salaam and University of Nairobi. Through the same programme, some Tanzanian and Kenyan students studied in Makerere.

The process of transformation in universities started as far back as 1970 when Makerere University became autonomous of the former University of East Africa. However, during the regime of Amin (1971-1979), the level of dictatorship limited the capacity of the University to create policies that would transform the University, society and the economy. Most transformational attempts would be failed by the dictatorship which did not have any known progressive direction.

At the same time, the level of economic degeneration characterised by shortage of essential supplies, decline in levels of production and reduction in qualified manpower that started during this regime, did not spare Makerere as many of the highly qualified staff fled the country for their own safety. Senior staff members who were of Asian origin were dismissed with their family members when Amin decided to dismiss all the Asians from Uganda on unprincipled grounds. As a consequence, junior staff occupied positions for which they were not qualified and became puppets of the regime in order to survive. This adversely affected the capacity of the University to generate policies that would propel the University and the economy forward. The situation was such that only those policies that would favour the regime would be acceptable. Suffice it to say, that the first Vice Chancellor of Makerere University Mr. Frank Kalimuzo disappeared and is believed to have been murdered in cold blood by Amin's regime in October 1972. Professor Asavia Wandira who was appointed Vice Chancellor immediately after Kalimuzo also served for a short time before he was also replaced by Professor Lutwama. In all, during the eight years of his rule, Amin appointed four Vice Chancellors of Makerere University. The level of instability was too high to allow for easy transformational policy formulation and implementation. At the same time, the level of facilitation of the University managers was too low to allow for serious policy formulation. The situation did not change so much with the overthrow of Amin in 1979.

It was with the coming of the National Resistance Movement to power in 1986 that transformation began to emerge first in terms of debate and later in action. A Commission was instituted (1987) under the chairmanship of Professor William Senteza Kajubi to study the then situation and advise on higher education in the country. The Commission culminated into the government white paper some aspects of which have been implemented.

Syngellakis and Arudo (2006) have noted correctly how the 1992 Government White Paper on Education is the basis of official policy on the purpose and programmes of education. While some of the programmes have been revised as a result of intervening events; the White Paper's articulation of the purposes of Uganda's education system continues to be the supreme guidance for the higher education sub sector. It aims at promoting citizenship; moral, ethical and spiritual values; promote scientific, technical and cultural knowledge, skills and attitudes; eradicate illiteracy and equip individuals

with basic skills and knowledge and have the ability to “contribute to the building of an integrated, self-sustaining and independent national economy”.

However, the challenge is that Higher Education especially tertiary education is increasingly becoming liberalised, which in fact means being privatised. The financial position of the majority of Uganda’s population is generally very low given the per capita income of US dollars 1,283. (Wikipedia.org). For that matter, if higher education is liberalised and privatised, most of the deserving students will be left out on the account of their families’ lack of capacity to meet their tuition and other requirements. This is why it is a challenge for the country.

Policies on Higher Education in Uganda are mostly formulated by the government under the auspices of the Ministry of Education as a sector though the institutions concerned participate to some level. However, sometimes the views of the institutions may not be taken seriously. For example, in cases where financial related policies are concerned, universities participate fully in the process of budgeting, but they are given ceilings beyond which they cannot budget. On the part of universities, they are autonomous and therefore make their own policies under their councils as by law established.

Donors on the other hand also get involved in policy formulation and funding of public universities in the country. The challenges of the day demand that universities adjust to meet the demands of globalization. However, there has to be a paradigm shift in outlook, but the control of the state will not be eliminated. In essence, Higher Education Institutions are not autonomous of the state. Though the Universities may make policies, hire staff, both teaching and non teaching, the higher education system is regulated by the state. Even with the majority of students in public universities being privately sponsored, the universities are not private and therefore, the state has to continue to control and direct them.

According to section 40(1) of Universities and other tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA) 2001, the University Council is the supreme organ of the Public University and as such is responsible for the overall administration of the objects and functions of the University. The Council is responsible for the direction of the administrative, financial and academic affairs of the University. It also formulates the general policy of the

Public University. The council also gives general guidelines to the administration and academic staff of the University on matters relating to the operations of the University.

On the side of academic policies, the Senate is by law mandated in section 45 to draft and present academic related policies to the Council for approval. Both the Council and Senate operate through their committees.

The other tertiary institutions (other than Universities) also have Councils which are responsible for their internal policy formulation. These institutions also participate in higher level policy formulation especially during the budgeting.

Private Universities have also been established by different entities across the country since 1992. To that extent, unlike the time when Makerere was the only University in the country, more public universities have been established as well as private ones.

However, though the number of universities has increased tremendously and therefore the number of teaching staff, there is no strong common ground for them to contribute to the national development debate. There is no established forum for the professors to regularly meet and discuss matters that affect the universities and the economy. On the other hand, since the privatisation process took root both in Makerere and other universities, professors and other teaching members of staff seem to concentrate on making some extra resources for their families by teaching a little more. Some of them teach in different universities and therefore have limited time to prepare and deliver public lectures. For a long time, professors have not been giving inaugural lectures in their fields of expertise. Inaugural lectures are important because they provide a platform for the newly appointed or promoted professors to display their research results to their colleagues beyond the department. Lectures also provide an opportunity to academics to address issues of economic importance which can help in addressing national policy development.

Transformation in higher education in this paper restricts itself to changes that will increase participation, reduce inequalities in access to higher education, and enhance efficiency, effectiveness and economy in the running of universities and other tertiary institutions of higher learning. It looks at the responsiveness to societal and national needs achievement given the population increase in the country and the increased globalization and technological advancement. It also looks at how the policy is geared

towards providing research with the capacity to cause change in the outlook of the population and providing solutions to their problems and to national development. In this paper, the relationship between the state and the Higher education subsector and civil society and other stakeholders with regards to transformation is discussed.

The World Bank has also been key in influencing policy formulation in higher education in Uganda. Its role in the policy influence is seen in its stance on social services. The argument of the World Bank and its cronies in late 1980s and early 1990 was that higher education among other social services is outside the production and productivity arena. Therefore, the provision of the service should be cost shared or privatised all together. In fact, their argument was in favour of basic education at the expense of higher education. However, the counter arguments advanced by the academics and social critics especially from Makerere at that time were that higher education was responsible for the creation of wealth by building a strong science and research foundation. The counter argument did not seek to demean basic education but to emphasize that science and technology are developed at the highest level of skills, training and research which is attained at University. However, with the strong position of the World Bank on the policy direction, the government of Uganda went on and implemented the World Bank guidelines.

In addition, a number of private universities have emerged over time to supplement government's efforts in providing the much needed higher education to the growing population of Uganda.

However, there seem to have been some challenges in the endeavours which have slowed down levels of success in delivery of higher education. In fact, in most cases, the changes which have occurred seem to have been influenced more by the exogenous factors such as the market forces, the interests and agendas of development partners. To that extent, the pillars of transformation seem to have had limited influence. Mahmood Mamdani, (2007, P.108) has delved into the role played by external factors in policy making in Makerere that indicate the limits of the University to make sound policies of its own. He identified privatisation and commercialisation as critical factors in determining the policy thrust in the University. About the influence of commercialisation to policy making, Mamdani asserted, "Commercialisation ... led to a deep-seated transformation, involving not only the

external relations between the University and the market but also the internal process of knowledge production in the University and internal relations between different academic units; the University opened both its gates to fee paying private students and changed its curriculum by introducing market-driven programs.” The response to market forces as Mamdani indicates did not put into consideration the capacity of the University to handle the academic programmes they were introducing to the curriculum.

Much as it is necessary to study, appreciate and consider the requirements of the industry/market in determining academic programmes, it is important to consider the technical, professional, academic and other resource capacity of the institution before introducing new programmes. The problems of developing academic programmes without looking at the factors highlighted started from Makerere and spread to Mbarara University of Science and Technology and Kyambogo University which came later. To this extent, Mbarara University whose mandate at its inception was to teach Science, Technology and Medicine ended up introducing Development Studies as a Department and later fully fledged faculty.

There are a number of players in the education sector that have always contributed towards the transformation of higher education in the country. Some of them participate in terms of research, in debates and others in policy formulation. For example, whereas professors and other academic staff contribute to academic debates that may lead to policy change, University bodies such as senates and councils formulate policies against which to run the institutions. Managers and Administrators on the other hand participate in policy implementation. Ultimately, the goal of all of them is to cause positive change in the particular sector and the economy in general as a result. However, these efforts have sometimes been rendered fruitless by the circumstances prevailing at the time, most of which are outside the control of the sector or even the economy. In other words, some actions are influenced by factors that are exogenous to the education sector or the economy altogether.

Therefore the question how the different players should position themselves in order to meet the objective of their efforts becomes very critical. Professors and other academics should widen their scope of study to include issues that affect the sector and the economy as a whole. Their research agenda should be guided by the national



needs and requirements. They should address matters that affect the poor country and inform the national leadership of the challenges of the day and how to handle them. The narrow focus towards their own welfare should be avoided so that they are seen to work in the institutional and national interest. University and other institutional leaderships should ensure that they create policy frameworks that straighten the running of the institutions and avoid corruption that is slowly but gradually eating up the poor nation.

Education is meant to address development issues of the country, social wellbeing of the community and to foster economic development. Therefore, the pillars of education should be firm and strong so that they support it and cause the desired changes but these begin with the establishment of an ideal policy framework focusing on issues of efficiency, effectiveness and economy; social transformation, human rights protection and democracy. In addition, cultural and gender inclusion should be part and parcel of the transformation agenda.

Ordinarily, it is important for the Private sector to participate in higher education policy making processes as the business sector is one of the consumers of University products (graduates). However, it should be noted that the business (private) sector in Uganda is just developing. Therefore, they have just started to get involved in higher education. Most of the graduates of University education went to the Public Sector through the public service commission. This is one of the reasons the government was more involved in the policy making process. However, of recent, Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP) are being encouraged. Universities have started to discuss with industries issues of academic programmes and internship/attachment of their students so that they gain practical experience required by the market.

In any country, education is a key determinant of economic and social development as it creates literacy, and enhances research and skills development. However, Uganda faces numerous challenges that undermine its economic advancement among other things. For many years, the budget for higher education has not been commensurate to the demands of the subsector. The budget for the Higher Education Sub Sector has been oscillating between 9 and 15 percent of the Education Sector. For example, the education sector this financial year was allocated 1.4 trillion shillings. Of this, only 10.5% was allocated to the Higher Education sub-sector. Given the requirements of

the universities and the demands on the facilities, this is gross underfunding. Yet, there is need to increase the number of students in higher education which calls for physical space at the institutions. There is also need for more resources to facilitate research and development as well as to respond to technological advancement in response to the global changes and population growth. With the commercialization of education, access remains a serious challenge given that the costs for private study in the higher institutions of study are out of reach for many Ugandan parents and yet due to the commercialization, universities develop courses that will fetch the financial returns regardless of their relevance to the market.

## **2 Higher education reforms in Uganda**

Against the above background, the performance of the Education Sector is overseen by Parliament through its Committee of Social Services operates under rules of procedure 161.

Most of the policies that require parliamentary approval have to be considered by the Social Services Committee. Such policies are compiled in the ministerial policy statement by all the universities and presented by the minister to the committee; individual universities are represented by the Vice Chancellors and University Secretaries to the committee to defend their policy proposals. The committee has to be convinced that the proposal will be for the good of the country before approval to proceed to the plenary of parliament.

### **2.2 Regulatory bodies that govern Policy – making in higher institutions of learning in Uganda**

Higher education institutions apart from social service colleges have a number of bodies that regulate their operations, this section highlights the bodies and their mandate as stipulated in the laws that created them. The bodies include:

NCHE is by law mandated to regulate Higher Education in Uganda. The functions of the NCHE are spelt out in the Universities and other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001 as amended. Section 5 of the Act spells out the functions of the NCHE.

NCHE under its legal mandate has been regulating and supervising facilities before allowing universities to start academic programmes. For instance it dispatched a team of inspectors to Busitema before it started. In the process they inspected and measured the academic and office space to confirm adequacy. They also inspected the library and laboratory with the facilities therein. On the basis of measurement and inspection, the team recommended accreditation. On the other hand the draft academic programmes were studied, certified and accredited. On the basis of accreditation, parliament passed an instrument on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2007 establishing the University.

The council has always advised government on matters of policy regarding financing higher education in the country for example unit cost for teaching different programmes in the different public institution in the country

Other bodies that regulate the running of higher education in specific areas include:

**a) Ministry of Education and Sports:** The Department of Higher Education is responsible for coordinating Higher Education in the Country. It communicates policy guidelines from the Government to the Institutions of Higher learning. It also collects views from the institutions which are consequently used to make policies. The department is headed by a Commissioner who reports to Director of Education.

**b) National Council for Science and Technology:** The National Council for Science and Technology is responsible for regulating research in the Country. It also supports research in the country carried out by Universities.

**c) Industrial Training Council (ITC):** The mandate of ITC is provided for in Section 15 (1) of the BTVET Act. Its role is to formulate policies. Other functions of the Industrial Training Council are provided for in section 18 as follows.

**d) National Information Technology Authority (NITA-U)** The NITA-U Act 2008 spells out the functions of NITA. Some of these functions regulate the operation of higher institutions of learning. The following functions relate to higher education:

### **3 The relevancy and structure of higher education**

Uganda's development is largely determined by the status of education, environment, urbanization, oil industry, nature of governance and agriculture among other things. However, no single determinant fully elucidates the country's development destination.

On the state of higher education in Uganda (2007:19), the NCHE regarding relevance of higher education noted the following, "Most of the programmes were academic and literary of no apparent or immediate relevance to the evolving Ugandan job market. Memorisation rather than problem solving was preferred as the most widespread method of education delivery. Where the problem solving methods of pedagogy were introduced, there was resistance against the new methods. Institutions have not outgrown the civil service-driven production methodology of the 1960s. And yet there is a compelling case for re-aligning higher education provision to the rapidly changing demands of the knowledge based global and domestic markets, which are increasingly driven by the private sector. For 2006, as was the case for the 2005 survey, it is clear that there are few forward and backward reciprocal linkages between the worlds of business, industry and academia. It is imperative for higher education institutions and the economy, including Research and Development (R & D) and the market, to develop mechanisms for continuous and sustainable interface between them. Few institutions have bothered to carry out tracer studies to establish what is marketable and to adjust or even overhaul their programmes accordingly. On their part, business and industry should be proactive in higher education provision by sponsoring programmes relevant to their labour needs in the short, medium and long-run instead of importing skilled labour.

From the foregoing, one notes that if not immediately addressed, Uganda's education curriculum will gradually become irrelevant because of high enrolment at Public Universities which are riddled by inadequacy of resources. Ampwera (Unpublished) in respect of relevance of Higher Education in general, questions the availability and adequacy of classrooms, libraries, laboratories and residences; lack of small group tutoring and remedial support; outdated curricula that are not regularly reviewed to accommodate current development needs; shortage of qualified staff; pre-occupation of staff with non-academic activities; brain drain; weak research and publishing activities; poor access to latest scientific information and poor management.

Efforts should be made to make higher education not only demand driven, but also made to respond to the development needs of the country. In agreement with Ampwera, I would like to argue that citizens, government and civil society organizations need to join hands in an effort to make our higher education more relevant and to meet the social economic conditions of the country. According to Ampwera, “At a time when higher education is being transformed from a monopoly of the elite to embrace the masses and when global forces are revolutionizing the way higher education is delivered, the role of a regulatory agency is very crucial. That is why the NCHE was set up by the government of Uganda to regulate higher education and guide the country in the establishment of institutions of higher learning as well to ensure the delivery of quality and relevant education”. (Journal of the NCHE, Vol.1 October 2004)

The expansion and status of higher educational choices in the 21st century should be related to market demand. For instance in Uganda, this has spread a little more to development studies, medicine, management and computer oriented courses. These are being started in a large number of private and hurriedly set up unrecognized institutions. Informal discussions with experts in the Universities have shown that courses on development studies, computer applications and business administration among others, are registering a higher enrolment of people in Uganda. It will have to be viewed whether all people interested are joining highly specialized courses leading to upper end jobs or only training as data entrants. The burgeoning management related courses, media, advertising, mass communication and those relating to business studies and administration are the other emerging disciplines in Uganda.

The popularity of vocational courses at undergraduate level stems from their being conduits to management courses at graduate level. The specializations offered in these courses are system, finance, sales, marketing and human resource management or development. Courses in management studies and business administration are also quite popular among people in urban centres.

The private sector has become an active actor in the higher education sector because of the immediate returns from student fees and less government restrictions. Higher education, until recently was state controlled and highly subsidized to the extent of being almost free. The only exceptions were what are known as “capitation fee”

colleges set up since the 70's and 80's countrywide. The establishment of these development, medical, computer or business colleges was governed by politics and profits.

## **4 Advise on the policies in the sub-sector in Uganda**

### **4.1 Vocationalisation of education**

The Kajubi Commission noted that “education at all levels has become too academic and theoretically oriented. As a result, the students completing primary, general secondary and even higher education are hardly capable of coping with practical environments and doing things with their own hands. They look forward to white collar jobs, and are ill-prepared for earning livelihood by working or making things by hand. They have no applied knowledge and skills, which they can use to become independent productive members of the society,” (Kajubi report 1989:31). Against this background the argument for vocationalisation of education at all levels is at its peak. What needs to be done is to provide up-to-date equipment in the institutions. Conversion diploma awarding vocational institutions into universities should also be stopped as these institutions are critical for skills development for the technical level.

### **4.2 Emphasis on science education for development**

There is an emerging emphasis on the teaching of Science more than ever before. This is a result of the realisation that Industrialisation and economic development can only be borne out of scientific inquiry and development. Much as the Kajubi report with a lot of influence from the World Bank philosophy recommended emphasis on basic education; it is not clear what Science and Technology can be developed at the primary Level. Hence, there is a change in thought towards the teaching of Science and Research at higher level as well. This should be strongly supported.

The Kajubi report also recommended that “No new National teachers college should be opened in the near future and the existing ten colleges should specialize in such areas as languages, mathematics, science subjects, physical education and health education. Some of them should be transformed to train teacher educators for primary teachers colleges and teachers for special education as well as those for technical and vocational subjects,” (Kajubi Report 1989:77)

Policy formulation at higher education therefore, has emphasised the teaching of science at all levels. The argument is that for economic growth and development, most

of the resources sent to higher institutions of learning should be geared towards science oriented teaching. The number of students sponsored by government to universities is at 4000 students per annum, most of who are science students. Good as it sounds; this policy shift should have been debated so that the pros and cons are appreciated before the policy decision. The population is interested in what happens with higher education and need to be consulted in some ways whenever such policy issues arise. Giving the population the opportunity gives them satisfaction and enables them to claim ownership of the policy and its outcome.

However, imposing the policy of Science teaching and subordinating other disciplines, especially the liberal Arts and Humanities would make them seem inferior in the eyes of the public. For example, matters of good governance, accountability, policy reviews and other debates of the kind have always been championed by those in the Humanities especially from Political Science, Economics and Law. So, the question should not be whether to have more people studying sciences, but to have all areas of study properly and sufficiently supported, balanced and facilitated. On the other hand, the government of Uganda should in consultation with all education stakeholders develop a philosophy towards which higher education should be geared.

### **4.3 Decentralization**

The education policy review commission also made recommendation regarding efficiency in planning and management of education. It emphasised decentralization and devolution of authority to district and local level administrations to improve efficiency in planning. The Commission noted that “This will help in developing education to suit local needs, better implementation of educational plans and quicker decision making. Also with decentralization, mobilization of local resources can be done more effectively, which would lead to speedier rehabilitation of schools”. (Kajubi Report 1989:36)

### **4.4 Information communication technology (ICT) access and utilization policies**

The campaign for the utilisation of ICT in teaching and research in public universities which started at the beginning of the last decade should be emphasised. ICT should be made a cross cutting course for all students in all University programmes.



#### **4.5 Widening the scope of Tertiary Education to absorb the increasing numbers of learners at Universal Secondary Education (USE) level**

The government of Uganda is trying to widen the scope of tertiary education in the country partly as a response to the recommendation of the Kajubi report which recognised the “inadequacy of resources as well as lack of consumable supplies for the proper teaching of science, commercial and technical subjects” (Kajubi Report 1989:94). On the basis of this, the government enacted the Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) Act to institutionalise and strengthen the aforementioned institutions. This endeavour should continue to be strengthened.

#### **4.6 Introduction of new curricular to address technological needs**

The higher education institutions should endeavour to introduce curricular that meet the local and international technological needs. Makerere and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) started some petroleum related programmes as a response to the discovery of oil in the country. Busitema is about to introduce Mining Engineering after introducing Computer Engineering, Agro processing Engineering, Agricultural Mechanisation and Irrigation Engineering as well as Textile and Ginning Engineering. None of these programmes being introduced at Busitema are taught in any University in Uganda. It is clear from this that the introduction of these courses is a response to change national context – the discovery of oil and gold mining potential in the locality of the University.

The Kajubi report also recommended curriculum review to take care for intermediate technology at technical and vocational levels. The recognized areas of specialization are agriculture, commercial and technical education. This in essence, implies that science, technical and commercial education are inter-related and should essentially meet the needs of its surrounding locality, which is the basic function of intermediate technology. (Kajubi Report 1989:95)

In response to this recommendation which was adopted in the 1992 Government White paper, the teaching of Computer Science and ICT related courses has been emphasised. Other practical programmes have been introduced at the different public

universities as earlier indicated such as Computer Engineering, Textile and Ginning Engineering and others at Busitema University.

#### **4.7 Gender inclusion in higher education**

All public universities in the country have adopted affirmative action to include gender in their business. At the first level, gender is a factor in admissions to Universities. The government first showed its concern about gender imbalance in early 1990s. This was when it realised that female accounted for only 30% of new entrants at University Makerere. Then, affirmative action of 1.5 points for female applicants was introduced. This is still the trend for all the public universities. This has increased the percentage of females to close to 50 in the Arts and Humanities. In the science areas, Busitema University initiated a quota system in which 30% of the places are reserved for female applicants. The government is in the process of adopting it for the rest of the public universities.

However, this policy is about to be reviewed because in the Humanities, female candidates are taking all the places. For example, this year, females on the basis of 1.5 took all the 70 places available for the government sponsorship. This is explained by the fact that girls in the 'elite' schools do as well as the boys in similar schools and sometimes better. Therefore, the 1.5 gives them a clear advantage over the boys.

At the second level, universities are very conscious of the fact that there may be gender based harassment. Therefore, they have developed gender harassment policies. An example of gender related policies is the sexual harassment policy. In its introduction, the policy highlights its own benefits to the University community. "This policy on Sexual Harassment Prevention is to address acts and practices related to sexual harassment at all levels within the structures of Makerere University. It is based on the findings from the 2004 Situational Analysis of the Gender Terrain at Makerere University conducted by the Gender Mainstreaming Division. In line with the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda that guarantees all Ugandans equality, dignity and non-discrimination, Makerere University reaffirms its zero-tolerance for sexual harassment and is committed to creating an environment that respects and protects the rights of all its members, male and female. Though this policy started from

Makerere University, the rest of the public universities have developed their own in the same line.

#### **4.8 E- learning and Distance Education**

The numbers of students completing high school and qualifying for University and tertiary education are far beyond what the existing physical structures can accommodate. Therefore, some universities have introduced e learning and distance education. This was started at the University of Makerere. Other public universities have picked up this trending by introducing e-learning. This was a result of the recommendation of a visitation committee to public universities in 2007 which states that “The rapid explosion of student numbers has made distance education an attractive way of teaching and learning around the world. Many working people are interested in continuing further studies, including University education to improve their career development prospects. With the development of ICT facilities, there are no limits to the delivery of Distance Education programmes on- line. It’s now possible to send lecture notes and course work and to administer and mark exams on line. It’s also possible to get feedback and progressive reports from students. Potentially ICT facilities have increased the opportunities for constant communication and dialogue. Distance education is attractive because it does not require a lot of lecture rooms, libraries and laboratories. It also allows students to work independently at their own pace. In Uganda distance education in public universities is relatively new and still developing capacity, education facilities and internet connectivity”. (McGregor Report 2007)

However, the implementation of E-learning has faced major challenges. My most recent interaction with some of the Lecturers who administer e-learning training (Dr. Juma Kasozi and Dr. John Mango) noted the following as the notable challenges:

- Limited computers and other ICT equipment and accessories to cater for the increasing number of students and staff in the institutions.
- Lack of interest on the part of the teaching staff to change from the “traditional” method of delivery to e-learning. This is especially the case with the old teachers who have been referred to as BBC (born before computers). This affects their interest and zeal in developing and posting teaching material to the site.

- The problem of intermittent electricity supply characterized by frequent load shedding and unexpected blackouts cannot be underrated.
- Some of the time tables are so rigid that the students have no time to visit and evaluate lecturers' performance.
- There is also a real problem of limited bandwidth making the system very slow. For example, Makerere currently runs on 66 Mega bit when it actually requires 100. (Directorate of ICT, Makerere University).
- The high cost of ICT equipment especially networks is also a major challenge for the universities.

#### **4.9 Quota admissions for special needs children**

Many of the candidates who take most of the government places in public universities are those from relatively wealthy families who access elite secondary schools where they are able to get very good scores at the end of their advanced level examinations. To that extent, because direct admission is based on performance, scholarships are extended to those with the highest grades who do not necessarily need them so much, leaving behind children from poor families who need them most. In total, there are 4000 places sponsored by the government in all the Public universities (Office of the Academic Registrar, Makerere University).

The first one is called the National merit. Under this, all the candidates are considered on the basis of their performance right from high school. The second one is the district quota. This is for students who sat their Advanced level examinations in their districts. In total there are 120 districts now in the country all of which have to share the 896 positions available for them. This in essence gives about 8 places per district. The quota system works in such a way that direct admissions are done first to take those who have excelled. Then 896 places are reserved for the districts which are considered later. This system has a potential of compromising the standard of the institutions as some applicants would come in with very weak grades. Secondly it disadvantages those who performed very well but cannot be admitted on government sponsorship because they did not study in those districts. Through the quota system, candidates are considered as long as they have two principle passes. Yet, candidates with up to four principles even of "A" and "B" grades are left out. If for any reason the

district does not have students with the minimum passes, then they get them from children from the district even if they sat elsewhere.

The quota system has not yet been fully studied, but it has a potential of being abused. This system began in 2004/2005 and reports have already indicated that it is prone to abuse. For example, when some students have scored the same marks, who determines who to take? The district leaderships are required to verify the candidates to be admitted. This is based on the presumption that the district leadership is transparent and knows all the children in the district. This is a grey area that can easily be exploited. In an article by Wakabi (2010) indicated that, “in the recent past, the scheme has been abused as some students fraudulently gained admission. More than 100 students admitted in the 2006/7 academic year were discontinued because they came from the wrong districts. In 2008 over 300 students were disqualified under quota system for forging papers. Unscrupulous students opt for remote districts, which have few or no students with two principle passes to qualify for the universities.”

The good intentions of the quota system are “lost” in the problems that come with it. First, it brings into the University system students whose capacity to compete at that level may be very low because of the preparation they received from the schools they attended. In most of the remote village schools, the facilitation is so poor that students cannot get enough teaching. The facilities in question include electricity, books, adequate teaching and learning materials and teachers. This partly explains why a number of them have been discontinued. Secondly, it is an admission by government that there is a problem of imbalance in teaching which the education system has not addressed. If resources were distributed fairly well in the districts, this issue would be sorted at that level. Throughout the sixties, seventies and eighties, all schools competed favourably and candidates from all districts qualified to join institutions of higher learning without any affirmative action. This ought to be given the attention it deserves to address the imbalance. Thirdly, the quota system in its current form depends so much on trust that the district leaders will give credible information about the candidates.

Then applicants with disabilities are also considered separately. In all the public universities, there are 60 places spared for people with disabilities. They are

distributed to the various universities according to the nature of their disabilities and the availability of facilities to handle their disability. The fourth scheme is one for talented sports persons. In total, 40 places are reserved for sports persons in the various universities.

## **5 Objectives and aims of higher education**

The government white paper (1992:88) gives the following as the aims and objectives of higher education are: teaching to produce High level manpower, research, particularly applied, Publication of books, journals and research papers, Public service through a variety of extension activities, Serving as storehouses of knowledge and centres of excellence in all fields of human endeavour.

These objectives have been achieved through; Training high level technical managerial and professional personnel for all sectors of national life; Generating advanced knowledge and innovations through research and translating or adapting them to local and Ugandan situation; and, Promoting the development of an indigenous scientific and technological capacity needed for tackling the problems of development, (Government white paper 1992).

In order for the stated objectives to be achieved, the government of Uganda had to enact enabling laws. In 2001, the Universities and other tertiary institutions Act (UOTIA, 2001) was enacted. And in accordance with section 4 of UOTIA, the NCHE was established to set standards and regulations to ensure that all public, private and tertiary institutions in Uganda create, sustain and provide relevant quality higher education to meet local, national and global challenges for the future.

### **5.2 Review of policies**

As of now, the policies are not regularly reviewed. Regular review of policies helps to establish if the policy is still relevant to the population and the time. Secondly, reviews help to determine the level implementation of the policy. It also helps in appreciating problems with the implementation process and whether there should be changes in the policy. Reviews also guide in understanding the strengths and limitations in the policy process which require to be addressed. The respondents to this study were firm in proposing that the policies should be regularly reviewed. The government should conduct bi-annual reviews to enable it and all its stakeholders to assess the strengths

and weaknesses of the education sector to ensure equitable access, improved quality of education and to attain the greatest efficiency.

However, the laws and policies are amended whenever it is felt that there is need, especially from the government side. For example, there was an amendment of the UATIA in 2003 and 2006. It is about to be amended again to address the appointment of Vice Chancellors and Deputy Vice Chancellors of Public Universities among other sections.

Amendment of policies and laws without taking into consideration the views of the stakeholders such as University leadership, academics and students, undermines the principle of autonomy of universities. Regular review of policies requires full participation of all the stakeholders to avoid future disagreements, riots and strikes. Stakeholder participation creates consensus also enhances confidence in the whole process. Full participation also promotes transparency and in the long run credits the whole process.

### **5.2.1 The policies adopted have achieved the following objectives**

#### **a) Improved management and governance of the institutions**

Poor governance of the Uganda's Universities has been one of the causes of destabilisation. Both internal and external forces have adversely impacted governance of both the public and private universities. Most of these universities, if not all suffer structural problems that continuously undermine the institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Given this background, NCHE has formulated a quality assurance framework (NCHE, 2006, Quality Assurance Framework for Uganda Universities) for universities and set minimum requirements for courses of study in universities. This Quality Assurance Framework was developed in an institutional, national, regional and international but rapidly changing context. The aim of the framework is to ensure that NCHE and higher education institutions work together to achieve and enhance the quality of higher education. The Quality Assurance Framework comprises of two major components; the regulatory component at the level of the NCHE and the institutional component at each individual University level.

The Liberalisation policy and “massification” of higher education has enabled many Ugandans access to higher education. Higher education has been liberalized and privatized to the extent that more and more Ugandans have access to higher education. The only challenge with this is that in some cases universities admit more students than their facilities can handle. Makerere University for example had its intake rise from 7000 students in the early 1990s to over 30000 by 2003. The increase was not done in tandem with the capacity of the facilities. This explains the decision by the Chancellor in 2005 ordered a reduction of the students. This reduction was reported by the New Vision newspaper of 28 Oct 2005. The article read, Makerere University yesterday said it would continue cutting its intake in an effort to reduce congestion”.

The NCHE has through its structure eliminated duplication of academic programmes and courses had become a source of conflict in the public universities. Government policy on affirmative action has increased the number of female graduates, people with disabilities and sports persons.

There is increased access to higher education and hence candidates who were left out on merit are now able to access higher education by self-sponsorship or by joining private universities. There is a level of democratization and participation in institutional business since student leaders participate more in leadership and council and senate matters.

The NCHE has been established as the sector regulator. Using its mandate as contained in sec 4 of UOTIA constitute visitations to inspect and confirm readiness of institutions and academic programmes before certificates and charters are issued.

#### **b) Increased financial accountability and integrity**

The participation of the different stakeholders ensures a lot of accountability and integrity. This is positive and should be upheld. The NCHE also has the mandate to monitor matters of academic and managerial standards of an institution of higher learning. This is creating sanity in all the institutions.

Gender mainstreaming in all the activities of higher institutions has ensured that gender issues are clearly understood and appreciated. “The whole idea behind the



agenda of gender mainstreaming lay in the desire to address the historical imbalance in student enrolment, and generally, women participation in the entire business of the University. The historical imbalances extended to academic leadership, academic ranks at the faculties and even administrative staff. The following figures still stood by as late as 2004 and are intended to serve as an illustration of the imbalances across the gender terrain of the University life. Female student enrolment lay at about 42%. At professional level, men accounted for 93%, women 7%.” (Muhwezi-Murari, forthcoming). Gender related policies such as the sexual harassment policy in Makerere University have helped to reduce sexual harassment.

### **5.3 How the highlighted policies can be improved in order to transform the sector**

#### **Regular review of the policies**

The policies can be improved if they are reviewed at least every 3 years using a bottom-up approach. The argument is that the people at the lower levels in most cases are the ones who implement the policies and therefore they understand their strengths and limitations. They also understand their applicability. Therefore, in reviewing them, they should be given the opportunity to propose the necessary changes. All stakeholders should participate in the review process.

#### **Through research**

The policies should be informed by research findings before they are pronounced. Sometimes policies, laws and regulations are reviewed with a view of addressing certain political interests without any scientific inquiry. This makes the policies not only illegitimate but also inapplicable. Research therefore needs to be done in preparation for policy reviews. There are policies that affect higher education which can only have an effect if tackled from the low levels. For example, emphasis on the training in sciences can only make meaning if it is considered right at secondary school levels. This is because universities and other tertiary institutions receive their students from Secondary schools. For that matter, if students are not encouraged to study

sciences at high school, then the universities will not have the numbers required to train.

### **Amendment of the law**

The UOTIA (2001) requires amendment to address some inconsistencies, especially the relationship between the Deputy Vice Chancellor Finance and Administration and the University Secretary and the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs and the Academic Registrar.

Policies at higher education institutions can be sustained by people who have been in the system and understand it. In this regard, there should be a deliberate plan for staff retention partly through adequate remuneration and other ways of motivation.

### **Increased funding to expand physical infrastructure for the increased student numbers**

Physical infrastructure in institutions for purposes of policy implementation needs to be expanded and strengthened.

For policies to be useful, policy formulation and review should become a culture of the Ministry in charge of higher education and not a reaction to incidents. Policy formulation and review requires regular visitations to the various institutions to find out what is happening there. Policies then should be based on what has been established on the ground. The Visitor is mandated to set up Visitation Committees under Section 26 of UOTIA.

The relevance of policies should continue to be checked through increased regular monitoring and evaluation with constant stakeholder consultation. Efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of policies can also be improved through regular periodic audits by independent but interested organs such as Parliament and Auditor General. Such efforts should ensure accountability. According to the 2004 World Development Report 22, accountability should be seen as a relationship with five features, delegation, finance, performance, information about performance and enforceability.

If policies are to be useful to the sector and the nation as a whole, then they should integrate and accommodate divergent views of all the stakeholders. Even those who do not seem to be close to the sector are interested in education because education is a pillar of economic growth as manpower is the most critical factor of production.

The sector needs to adopt a public private partnership (3ps) approach in the sector planning. If this is done, it will provide the opportunity to the private practitioners such as the industry, civil society and NGOs to contribute to the quality and content of education offered by the universities.

### **Philosophy of Higher Education**

Philosophy of higher education relates with the purpose of higher education institutions, especially Universities. The philosophy of higher education in Uganda should be “Promoting HE that will create needed capacity for national development through great teaching and learning while emphasising the highest levels of quality and excellence among both teachers and learners.” The products of this education should be able to effectively function in their different fields of academic and work endeavour on graduation. It should be rewarding to great teachers, learners, parents and society. It should be inclusive and responsive to growing demand for HE in the increasingly reducing resources. Universities generally exist for three major functions, that is, teaching, research and community service. Hence, higher education should be geared towards empowering participants in order to be critical in terms of thinking, attitude and social aptitude.

Education and learning empower individual participants and in the process, the nation grows and develops. This relates to the four pillars of education as propounded by UNESCO. These include: Learning to know, learning to do, learning in order to live with others and learning to be. This therefore requires the participants to learn and understand things around them and how to live within and make some contribution. With regard to doing, people learn some skills and become professionals. On the other hand, in the process, people learn how to be good people in terms of what they can contribute to the community. One of the tasks of education is to teach students about human diversity and to instil in them an awareness of the similarities and

interdependence of all people (UNESCO). In other words, education fosters peaceful coexistence with one's neighbourhood.

## **6 Actors and roles of stakeholder in the higher education sub-sector**

Government spearheads policy formulation as its core mandate. It has so far enacted the enabling laws such as UOTIA and BTVET Act 2008. Through Ministry of Education government initiates policy formulation with other stakeholders. Cabinet and Parliament approve the formulated policies.

The Ministry prepares and presents a ministerial policy statement (MPS) to parliament which contains the sector's roadmap for the financial year. It includes all the policies, activities and the financial implications thereof. The government also supports the sector policy making process through funding. The government has also supported the sector by setting up regulatory organs and appointing visitation committees when deemed necessary. In certain situations, government has provided direct policy interventions especially whenever there is a strike or riot that the institution cannot handle on its own. The government has also continued to support by offering government scholarships to 4000 students at public universities every year.

## **7 Recommended actions and or policy options to transform the higher education sub-sector**

In order for the higher education subsector to be transformed, there is need to increase equitable access to higher education as one of the policy measures that should be introduced. As Kasozi (2009) notes, "in Uganda, class determines access to higher education as well as scholarships. University Education is accessed by children from well-to do families due to structural inequalities in the way education services are distributed. Children of the wealthy social groups attend the best nursery and kindergarten, primary and secondary institutions. These institutions have facilities needed for making their pupils/students get the good grades required for tertiary admissions to institutions and getting government financial sponsorship. As a result, the majority of students who go to University as well as those whose expenses are paid by the state come from wealth classes". This imbalance has to be addressed by the government.

The other theme that needs immediate attention is Quality assurance. This will come as a result of balancing massification and relevancy. Massification poses the potential danger of compromising the quality of the graduates and services. Quality assurance according to the NCHE “is the mechanism put in place to guarantee that the education is “fit for the purposes”. Every higher education must have appropriate and effective internal structures and mechanisms for monitoring its quality control procedures to ensure quality assurance”. These definitions together with the mechanisms of ensuring policy assurance are spelt out in the Quality Assurance Framework for Uganda Universities (2006). The ways of assuring quality include quality control. Quality control as used by the NCHE “is the process of ensuring compliance with standards and procedures set to maintain and enhance quality”. However, this mechanism has a limitation because most times it is “an end-of-process solution, the business of quality controllers rather than the responsibility of all stakeholders (ibid). Therefore, for quality control to be effective, it ought to be factored in the entire process right from inception.

The other mechanism is quality audit which is understood as the process of “checking or examining, to ensure that there is institutional compliance with quality assurance procedures, integrity, standards and outcomes”. If this mechanism is implemented, quality can be assured in higher education. Quality assessment is another means of ensuring quality in higher education. Quality assessment should involve peers continuously assessing the quality of teaching and learning.

Affordability is yet another area of policy that needs immediate attention. As shown in the available literature, most families can no longer afford to sponsor their children to institutions of higher learning. Hence, higher education remains a preserve of the well to do families. Hence, creating a situation of class reproduction where the poor reproduce the poor because they cannot access higher education and the rich reproduce the rich because they have access to higher education and therefore knowledge and skills to improve their livelihood. One of the dangers with this trend is that it widens the gap between the haves and the have-nots as education and skills are the key to a successful future.

There have been some discussions about possibility of introducing a students’ loan scheme, but the process has not been concretised. If this can be done, then it can

afford a number of students from the less privileged families to access higher education as they will be guaranteed education at a deferred payment. However, there is need to study the system carefully and ensure that all the loopholes are plugged before the scheme is introduced. Otherwise, it is liable to abuse.

Higher education subsector needs to embrace good governance in its business. Governance according to Hallak and Poisson (2007: 41) “takes into account four main parameters namely: voice and accountability, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption”. Governance is still very weak in the subsector and needs to be strengthened by putting in place a system that ensures good leadership. Students and employees as well as the other stakeholders should be accorded the opportunity to speak out their issues without fear of retribution or any repercussions.

Promotion of Science and Technology is yet another policy framework that Uganda should think of developing as soon as possible. The debates that ensued between academics and the IMF and World Bank and their allies in the late 1980s and early 1990s pointed to the fact that Uganda should concentrate on basic education for purposes of literacy and numeracy. However, academics especially at Makerere at that time challenged this argument. The rebuttal of the academics and researchers was that economies do not grow and develop on the basis of literacy and numeracy per se but through science and technology. Wherefore, since science and technology were developed at universities, the focus should be on higher education. The position of the University academics at the same time was ignored and structural adjustment programmes (SAPS) took the day. However, the ideas that were ignored ought to be reviewed and implemented for industrialisation and development of the country if Higher education is to be relevant.

Private Public Partnerships (PPP) is another issue that should be high on the transformation agenda. Government can no longer afford to operate these institutions singlehandedly because it is no longer the single employer it was in past. Therefore, it has to seek the involvement of the other prospective employers who are the private sector. Involvement of the stakeholders can be achieved through inviting them to institutional activities, requesting them to generate issues towards the development of the institution’s research agenda, calling them to take on students for internship and

attachments. This is already in progress, but the actors should be encouraged to continue and widen the base as well.

Relevance of the institutions and their programmes, both in teaching and research is another element that deserves emphasis. Products of these institutions should remain relevant to the community to which they belong. Unlike the “ivory tower” time, the current trend is that universities should go to the people, find out what they need and address it. This in turn ensures international competitiveness and responsiveness to stakeholder needs. Therefore the institutions need to put the issue of being close to their stakeholders as high as possible on their policy agenda.

Reform in Administrative structures should also be on the agenda of institutions. This should include facilities development, quality standards and improved funding through internally generated activities, fundraising and alumni involvement in University programmes.

ICT is another item that should be high on the transformation agenda. With the global trend of events and the important role communication performs in development, Ugandan higher education has to embrace it. As Nhlanhla Mlitwa (undated) argues, “access to ICT such as computers, Internet, and E-mails bridge the physical distance between student and online information. It enhances interaction and has a potential to enhance Higher Education activity”.

Ron Oliver (undated) also underscores the role of ICTs in fostering change in higher education. He asserts that, “The use of ICT in educational settings, by itself acts as a catalyst for change in this domain. ICTs by their very nature are tools that encourage and support independent learning. Students using ICTs for learning purposes become immersed in the process of learning and as more and more students use computers as information sources and cognitive as information sources and cognitive tools”.

The other important element for consideration is good and focused leadership which is very critical in the face of dwindling resources. Whatever resources receive should be utilised effectively and efficiently. Therefore, for successful utilization of the limited resources, leaders need to be frugal, organized and with a clear purpose.

Capacity building for science, research and development, teaching and community outreach programmes should also be considered in higher education policy formulation. This should be done in line with streamlining curricula for higher institutions. Factoring science, research and development into the higher education policy formation is important because higher education should foster development of the national economy through development of knowledge and skills.

The Higher education subsector should put creation of beneficial linkages on the agenda for purposes of remaining relevant and up to date with national and international developments and challenges. Beneficial collaborative efforts with other higher institutions of learning both locally and internationally enhance synergies that come with such collaboration.

Government should strengthen financing of the higher education subsector, closely supervise the sector and evaluate the policies more regularly. Efforts should also be made to provide adequate resources for research especially applied.

Quality assurance structures have been put in place in some of the institutions but they need to be strengthened. The same structure at the NCHE should also be strengthened in order to get the muscle to enforcement quality assurance and standards in the subsector. There should also be deliberate efforts of supporting graduate tracer and employers' expectation studies. This will help to establish where the institutions' products actually go and if they are still relevant to the market and economy generally

Institutions of higher learning should continue to be democratized to ensure that all the stakeholders participate in their activities and policies. At the same time, vocationalisation of academic institutions should be supported so that apart from offering academic knowledge, institutions also provide hands-on skills required by the labour market.

The statutory agencies such as NCHE should be strengthened by allocating enough resources so that they are felt on the ground. Their powers should never be usurped and they should be adequately funded and housed to ensure that they are always in



position to carry out their duties. Right now, the level of funding, staffing and housing are very inadequate.

Consultations with all stakeholders should be widened all the entities with a stake in the institutions. They include teaching and non teaching staff, the private sector and suppliers of goods and services. This will ensure that the sub sector's is always in tandem with the expectations of the population and the labour market. This should be done closely with constant review of the subsector.

Since the government is reluctant to allow universities to increase fees to meet the requirements that come with inflation, then it should fast track the students' loan scheme which it has been planning for the past two to three years. This will not only help in reducing the burden from the government but will also widen levels of access to higher education by those who deserve it.

All concerned entities should ensure that strategies developed and work plans are implemented as planned through provision of the required resources. On the other hand, monitoring, evaluation and inspection of policies should be strengthened through adequate resourcing, monitoring and implementation.

Management should endeavour to employ qualified academic, administrative and support staff who can develop and implement high quality development policies; and should try to minimize conflict of interest in their day to day operations ensuring transparency and accountability. It should also maintain a mechanism that facilitates constant consultations and feedback. It should also benchmark with international best practices so as to improve its own systems and procedures. Management should ensure responsiveness to stakeholder needs and concerns and enhance internal controls to ensure that the systems are transparent, accountable and prudent.

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