

CHALLENGES FACING UNIVERSITIES IN UGANDA

INTRODUCTION

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Current status

Makerere University, Uganda's oldest and biggest university, started in 1922 as a technical college. It was offering the curriculum of the University of London as Uganda was under British colonial rule by then. It later became a university College, then a University of East Africa and finally an independent University. It remained the only university in Uganda until 1988 when the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) was opened.

Uganda had seen a dramatic increase in universities since the government started allowing private universities to operate in 1988. As of 2010 there were five (5) Government (Public) universities and at least 23 private universities.

Student enrolment

The number of students enrolled in universities in Uganda has increased from around 3,000 in the 1970s to 107,728 in 2006/7 academic year. Overall, student enrolment into universities increases by about 16% per annum. In 2006/7 the male students in universities were 59,976 (55.7%) while the females were 47,752 (44.3%) (Kasozi, 2010). In terms of international students, there were 8,287 (5.3%) IN 2006/7 as compared to 12, 930 (9.4%) the previous year. This forced Professor Kasozi (2010) to sound a warning that *“Uganda is gradually losing its competitive edge in the region due to the inferior quality of its education.”*

Table 1 below gives the summary of students' enrolment in 2006/7 in Uganda's higher education (HE) sector.

Table 1. Student enrolment in HE in 2006/2007

Type of tertiary institution	No. of students	%
Universities	107,728	69.5
Technical colleges	1,960	1.3
Other Tertiary Institutions	44,335	29.2
Total	154,023	100

Academic Staff

Kasozi (2010) observed that in 2006/7 academic year there were 7,645 academic staff serving in tertiary institutions in Uganda. Of these, 4,022 (52.6%) were full-time, while 3,623 (47.4%) were part-time. At the same time, only 433 academic staff were reported to be on training. Generally, there are very few senior academic staff with all universities experiencing a shortage of Associate Professors and Professors.

Programmes & delivery mode

The variety of academic programmes offered in Ugandan universities has increased in the last decade. There is a fear that some of the new programmes are too shallow and narrow. Most of the programmes are in the arts and humanities.

The programmes are classified as follows depending on the delivery time of the day:

Day programmes – usually studying starts at 7 or 8 am and ends around 5 or 6 pm.

Evening – starts around 5 pm to 10 pm.

Mid-night - offered by Makerere University faculty of computing where some students start studying at mid-night and end by 6 am.

Weekend – studies take place on Saturday and Sunday.

Distance – most of the time the students study at home or their places of work using modules developed for their programmes, and only go university campuses or study centres periodically for face-to-face sessions or to do examinations.

In summary, university education in Uganda had seen a rapid expansion in the last 20 years. But what are the challenges that face the universities in Uganda? This paper attempts to high light some of the challenges faced by universities in Uganda.

Challenges

Increasing demand for university education

As stated earlier, the number of students seeking admission into universities is increasing every year. On the other hand, the capacity of universities to provide quality education to the increasing numbers of students is not growing as fast. This has led to some universities admitting more students than their facilities can reasonably afford. This is true for both public and private universities.

Tables 2 shows the growth of student numbers at Makerere and Kyambogo Universities between 2002/3 and 2010/11 academic years.

Academic year	Makerere University	Kyambogo University
2010/2011	38,542	23,966
2009/2010	34,386	18,746

2008/2009	35,092	14,161
2007/2008	35,561	10,256
2006/2007	36,084	13,971
2005/2006	30,827	10,566
2004/2005	30,705	7,618
2003/2004	27,622	7,195
2002/2003	28,869	4,901

As indicated in the table above, Kyambogo University has had a 489% increase in student enrolment between 2002 and 2011 but its physical facilities have virtually remained the same. During the same period, Makerere University experienced a 133.51% increase in students enrolment but there was a much less improvement in facilities (may be by 10%) over the same period. The situation is not any better in most private universities.

Funding challenges

Both public and private universities are facing financing challenges. This is mainly because the Government is not funding higher education adequately and the fees that students pay are much less than the realistic unit cost. Public universities depend on government subventions, private students' fees, and very much limited and restricted donor funds. The private universities depend mainly on students' fees, with all of them not receiving any funds from the Government – except for very occasional donations to a few of them.

In the case of public universities, the government subventions are usually much less than what the universities request for. For example between 1988/89 and 2005/06 academic year, the government approved an average of 44.20% of the budgets that Makerere University presented.

For Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) the government approved an average of 36.50% of the presented budgets between 1996/97 and 2005/06. To make matters worse, the government remitted only 89.3% of what was approved (i.e. 89.3% of 36.5%). Gulu University did better than Makerere and MUST having 87% of its proposed budgets between 2001/02 and 2006/07 approved, although they received an average of 84.20% of what the government approved (Kasozi, 2009: 33-35).

For Kyambogo University, the trend has remained the same in the last four years as indicated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Proposed vs approved and received budgets for Kyambogo University 2007/08 – 2010/11

Year	Proposed	Approved	Remitted	Deficit
2010/ 2011	72,834,417,011	63,498,108,883	61,868,928,688	1,629,180,195
2009/ 2010	57,174,868,327	51,826,652,437	42,344,205,038	9,482,447,399
2008/ 2009	46,740,000,000	36,724,129,417	32,209,496,820	4,514,632,597
2007/ 2008	36,060,000,000	30,400,000,000	25,410,000,000	4,990,000,000

Source: KY Vice Chancellor's Office.

As a result of the poor funding, Makerere University had a Shs. 15.4 billion deficit in 2006/07 academic year. Gulu University had a deficit of shs. 2 billion in 2007/2008 academic year, and Busitema University had a gap of Shs. 2.4 billion in 2008/09 (Kasozi, 2009: 163). Kyambogo University had a deficit of Shs. 20.6 billion between 2007/08 and 2010/11. The case of Gulu University in 2006/07 was strange especially when compared to the previous year as the data below indicates:

Table 4. Gulu University Government Funding 2005 - 2007

Year	University proposal	Gov't approved	% Approved over proposed	Received	% of Received over approved
	Shs '000	Shs '000	-	Shs '000	
2005/06	4,838,073	3,864,821	80	3,864,821	100
2006/07	6,026,714	3,150,000	52	528,000	16.76

How much does the government give public universities? The table below indicates the government's subventions to some of the public universities.

Table 5. Government subventions to some public universities

University	Amount (shs) 2009/10	Amount (shs) 2010/11
Makerere	118,151,073,461	143,642,154,492 (US\$ 51.3 m)
Kyambogo	42,344,205,038	61,868,928,688 (US\$ 22.1 m)
	Amount (shs) 2004/05	2005/06
MUST	340,000,000	410,000,000 (US\$ 146,429)
	2005/06	2006/07
Gulu	3,864,821,000	528,000,000 (US\$ 188,571)

How do we compare with other countries?

Ghana in 2000 established a Ghana Education Trust fund and capitalized it by increasing Value Added Tax (VAT) by 2.5%. By 2007, GET was

generating about US\$ 200 million per year.

“ GET funding has been used to construct educational facilities, capitalize a student loan program, provide scholarships for poor students and staff development, expand information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, and support research and teaching activities, particularly the expansion of postgraduate programs and distance education. The fund is governed by an independent board of trustees accountable to Parliament and managed by a government-appointed administrator.

Each year the fund’s allocation and its specific uses are approved by Parliament to ensure that they address the nation’s most pressing education needs.” (Atuahene 2008; Adu and Orivel 2006; World Bank Document No. 54441 2010). Tertiary education has received 45 % of the GET funds since its inception.

The recurrent budget for the University of Technology, Malaysia, for 2010/11 academic year was about the equivalent of US\$ 250 million. Of this, about US\$ 26 million was for campus maintenance. The University also receives a special research fund of about US\$ 25 million per year.

Already some universities have been closed due to financial difficulties and huge bank loans that they couldn’t pay. In one case, that of Lugazi University, the first graduation ceremony was also the last one! The question is could these universities have been saved had we had a good funding model for universities in Uganda? Or shall we say that this is not a serious problem since we are operating a free market forces model in our education system?

Demography and quality of students admitted.

Although the majority of students in universities are S.6 leavers, the demography of students in universities has drastically changed in the last 25 years. The age range in many universities is about 19 - \geq 65 years! So it is quite possible to find a father or mother studying with his/her daughter and grand-daughter in the same lecturer room. The different age groups have different reasons, goals, learning styles, abilities, attention

spans, experiences, social needs, etc. Are our lecturers trained to handle such heterogeneous classes? Many working students do not have time to study, read for assignments, go to the library, etc. they end up relying on their colleagues to “help” them.

The quality of some of the students joining universities is a challenge. Many students in universities cannot write or speak university level English, some have very poor arithmetic skills, and the majority of them have poor study and reading skills. Many students are in universities because that is where they have to be at their age but have no serious intrinsic motivation for being there. This later group tend to spend a lot of their time engaged in non-academic pursuits. Some students even decide to use the money given to them by their parents for fees to finance the appetites of their girl or boy friends; and yet many others use the fees money to do microbusinesses that usually fail to return even the capital (fees) invested in. In some universities there are students who do not attend even 50% of the lectures but somehow make it through universities! Others are dismissed but take their parents to fluked convocations and fake graduation parties where they present forged transcripts and degree certificates!

The benefits of UPE and USE are many. But the challenges raised by our UPE model are also many, especially the automatic progress from one class to another. In a nation-wide study done by Uwezo Uganda (2011: 14 & 16), it was found that 11% of the pupils in P7 could not solve numerical written division sums of P2 level difficulty correctly! The same study found out that 13% of the P7 pupils could not ready correctly a P2 level story text! This study emphasizes the need for us to pay attention to the quality of learning at all levels of the education ladder.

Competition

As the number of universities increases, the competition for students and resources also increases. The expansion of the East African Community

and the birth of a new neighbor (Southern Sudan) means expanded regional competition. But this could also be an opportunity for those well organized universities. Many international universities are also seeking to open offshore campuses and/or programmes in Uganda raising the stakes even higher. Shall we soon see Charles Darwin's "survival of the fittest" theory at play in the theatre of university education in Uganda?

Shortage of academic staff

A cocktail of factors conspire to deny universities in Uganda a critical mass of the badly needed academic staff. First, it is the poor salaries and conditions of service in our universities. The ugly face of poor salaries is made more awful by the high taxes – pay as you earn (PAYE). Then the growth of universities and GERs far out paces the rate at which new academic staffs are trained. This leads to many universities using many part-time staff many of whom end up doing partial teaching as they criss-cross the city and/or the country moonlighting. Many universities also do have resources to undertake large scale effective staff development programmes.

Brain drain has robbed this country of some of its best brains that would be critically useful at this stage of our countries HE development. Sadly, there appears to be no sign on the horizon that this problem is about to be effectively addressed or managed. We are yet to see if the recent demands for better pay by staff in some universities will yield pay packages that will stop our staff from fleeing to greener pastures.

We need taking lessons from Pakistan which, according to Prof. Atta Rahman (2010), between 2000 and 2008 increased budgets for universities by over 4,000%, increased staff salaries by over 1,000 %, and reduced the taxes on university staff to a maximum of 5%! As a result of these proactive policies, Pakistan started having a **brain gain** as many of their top class professionals in the diaspora started going back home and in some cases taking with them some experts of other nationalities.

As a result of shortage of academic staff and poor pay, many academic staffs are teaching heavy loads and have no time to engage in research, supervision of students' works and projects, and undertaking community based activities. As this "slaving" continues, the quality of the academic staff members themselves goes down as reflected in poor teaching, lack of research initiatives, low levels of publications, and stagnation at the lower levels of the academic professional ladder.

Many universities do have the funds to recruit sufficient academic staff members. Hence even for public universities, the establishments have serious gaps as indicated below.

Table 6: Kyambogo University staffing position as of September 2011

Position	Establishment	Current position	Gap	Gap %age
Professors	44	2	42	95.45
Associate Professors	73	8	65	89.04
Senior Lecturers	145	49	96	66.21
Lecturers	244	216	28	11.48
Assistant Lecturers	90	61	29	32.22
Teaching Assistants	87	49	38	43.68
Total	683	385	298	43.63

The situation in other public universities also indicated serious shortages of staff, especially at the higher levels, as of June 2006. Makerere University had a shortage of 738, Mbarara, 357, Gulu, 391, Makerere Business School, 75 (Kasozi, 2009). MUST had 2 (2.70%) out of the 74 require

professor, and only 4 (4.76%) of the 84 required Associate Professors. On the other hand, Gulu University had only 7 (16.67%) out of the 42 required professors, and only 2 (4.17%) of the 48 required Associate Professors. If the situation was that bad in public universities, there was no evidence to suggest that it was better in private universities.

Table 7: Makerere University staffing position – June 2006

Staff Category	Established	Current	Gap & Gap %
Professor	155	35	120 (77.42%)
Assoc. Professor	168	68	100 (59.52%)
Senior Lecturer	310	186	124 (40%)
Lecturer	529	360	169 (31.95%)
Asst. Lecturer	408	255	153 (37.50%)
Teaching Assist.	220	148	72 (32.73%)
Total	1,790	1,052	738 (41.23%)

The staffing position of Makerere University has slightly improved since 2006 as indicated in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Makerere University Staffing position as of September 2011

Position	Establishment	Current position	Gap	Gap %age
Professors	147	75	72	48.98
Associate Professors	174	105	69	39.66
Senior Lecturers	396	180	216	54.55
Lecturers	793	370	423	53.34
Assistant Lecturers	419	446	-27	-6.44
Teaching Assistants	209	213	-4	-1.91
Total	2,138	1,389	749	35.03

With such a serious shortage especially senior academic staff, the function of universities as knowledge creators, through research and the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, is seriously compromised. The situation tends to continue as young academic staffs have no senior ones to mentor them.

Ethical challenges

There has been allegations and cases of unprofessional conduct on the part of some academic and non-academic staff members in many of our universities. These have included the following:

- Sexual harassment
- Selling and purchasing of marks
- Examination malpractices
- Plagiarism

- Claiming money for lectures not taught
- Hiring of mercenaries to sit exams or write dissertations for students.
- Awarding marks without actually marking the scripts. This is made worse by the large numbers of students in some programmes.
- Financial fraud especially by some of those entrusted with funds. Some of the administrative wrangles in some universities are due to a struggle to control the universities' resources.

The “Kagwirawo Culture”.

In the past, university dons were distinguished by their dedication to pursue and disseminate knowledge. Nowadays, a significant proportion of the academia are dedicated to pursue money where-ever it may be. Under this new academic dispensation, many academic staff prefer to do part-time teaching in universities which promptly pay them for their services. When contacted to offer their services, they usually ask “**Kagwirawo?**” meaning, “**Shall I be paid promptly?**” If the answer is yes, then that lecturer is more likely to abandon or re-schedule the lectures at the university where he/she is full-time to first make the quick money at the other university. This culture is slowly but surely turning many academic staffs into “**knowledge hawkers**”! Such lecturers have time to engage in meaningful research. This vice can be tamed if universities were paying good salaries followed by effective performance supervision and indicators.

Poor facilities

The growth in the number of students has not been matching with a correspond increasing in the number of teaching-learning facilities. Many universities have serious shortages of:

Lecture-rooms – over crowded lecture-rooms are not uncommon. There are also many lectures conducted under trees, temporary shade, tents,

etc.

- i. Library space
- ii. Books – Some of the available books are out-dated. Usually new programmes are started without first acquiring sufficient reading materials
- iii. Computers and other ICT facilities.
- iv. Teaching and research equipment
- v. Internet connectivity.
- vi. Office space for both academic and administrative staff.
- vii. Co-curricular facilities
- viii. Journals and e-resources.
- ix. Furniture, etc

Out-dated curriculum, Teaching and evaluation methods

Most of our programmes have curriculum that is not in tandem with socio-economic development needs of our country given the challenges of living in globalized knowledge-based 21st century. Linkages between university programmes and the industries and other employers are at best rudimentary. Most of the teaching is done at the knowledge or comprehension levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Likewise, the examinations require students to just memorize information and then regurgitate it when answering questions. There is hardly any teaching at the application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation levels. Indeed, our curricular are very much short on skills as they tend to emphasis information (and not knowledge) acquisition.

Most of our academic staff have no time to make appropriate preparations for teaching. The lecture method is still the dominant delivery method. Student-centred methods are rarely used in our universities. This situation is made worse by the fact that many students also have no time or do not take time study seriously.

Lack of a national Human Resources development plan or strategy

As far as I know, there is no national human resources development plan or strategy. Like-wise a national Development Vision seems not to be in place. If it is, then many universities have not been privy to it. Under such circumstances, what is the basis of the programmes we offer and the numbers we admit into those programmes? What guides university when reviewing their curricular or deciding to establish new programmes? There is need to have a well thought-out and articulated national Vision that should guide the efforts of universities in their various strategic plans.

In Uganda's efforts to have a knowledge-based economy, the importance of having a critical mass of a well-planned **human capital** cannot be over-emphasized. We could borrow a leaf from some countries like India, Malaysia, South Korea, and Japan. Although Japan does not have a lot of natural resources, it was until recently, the second largest economy in world after USA. What was Japan's strength? Great pool of human resources. India's Vision 2020, is reported to be aiming at having 200 million graduates and 300 million technicians. *What is Uganda's Vision and what role are universities expected in achieving this Vision?*

Administrative/management challenges

Increasing funding to universities without ensuring effective and efficient management of universities cannot lead to much better university education. One of the challenges facing universities is to find effective administrators who combine the knowledge, skills and vision necessary to manage 21st century universities. Many university leaders are not trained managers and simply learn on the job the real skills necessary for their jobs. There is therefore a need to have training programmes for university leaders and administrators. The NCHE has started some programmes in that direction.

In the case of private universities, separating the roles of the owners and

the managers of the universities is sometimes not done. This could easily lead to a situation where universities are administered and managed like kiosks in a market. Certainly this is not good for quality HE.

In the case of public universities, the university leaders seem to have too many masters who sometimes may give contradicting directives. Who is the immediate boss of a Vice chancellor of a public university in Uganda? Is it the:

- a). Chancellor?
- b). Chairman of the University Council?
- c). Permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education & Sport?
- d). Minister of State for Higher Education?
- e). Minister of Education & Sports?
- f). Minister of Finance? or
- g). Visitor?

The other management issues that can be very challenging in the management of university are the following:

The role of staff associations in managing universities. In some case staff associations have been king makers. In other cases, they have been typical union associations who see the university managers as their number one enemies standing in their way of achieving union objectives – usually of better welfare.

University councils and other organs. How are the University councils formed? How effective are they in guiding the management, development and growth of universities? Do the existing university councils have the capacity to transform our public universities into truly world class universities?

Legal challenges. How are VCs & DVCs of Public universities selected? The Makerere University example: Why has Makerere University remained without a substantive VC and DVs for now about two years? Is

the method of finding VCs and DVs as provided for in the law the best? What problems does it create within and without the university?

Financial Management : Who really controls finances in public universities? Is it the Bursar, University Secretary, DVC (FA), Vice Chancellor?

Private students & “private” money in public universities

In all most all public universities, the number of private students is higher than those sponsored by the government. Also the money private students contribute to the budgets of the universities is in most cases higher than the government subventions.

Table 10. The number of Government & Privately sponsored students-2005/06

University	Gov’t Sponsored	Private	Total	Private as % of Total
Makerere	6,969	24,112	31,081	77.6
Mbarara	474	1,990	2,464	80.8
Gulu	447	898	1,345	66.8
MUBS	1,405	9,326	10,731	86.9
Kyambogo	2,491	11,480	13,971	82.2
Total	11,786	47,806	69,592	80.2

Source: Kasozi (2009).

In 2005/06 academic year, the private students contributed 59% of the total budget of Makerere University. According to Kasozi (2009), in 2005/06, “In total, Government paid fully for only 19.8% of the students in public universities, who, were not from poor but well-to-do families.”

We also know that because the number of government-sponsored students is very limited, many intelligent but poor students miss university education. This is not good for a country that is seeking to transform itself

into a modern nation state. The absence of a Students' Loan Scheme is making matters worse for the poor students.

The use and management of money generated from private students has been a challenge in some public universities especially Makerere University. Most of this money was decentralized to the units that have private students. In the end staff in the so called “wet” units benefited more financially than those with few or no private students – the so-called “dry” units. Was this over-decentralization a good thing for quality university education? Most people seem to now agree, that this was a mistake. The money should have been handled as public funds although paid by private students.

Quality assurance challenges

As already explained, maintaining quality university education is a major challenge in all universities in Uganda. **This is due to** a cocktail of problems as highlighted in different sections of this paper.

There is need for universities to build quality assurance (QA) capacity in all our universities. The NCHE and other agencies such as the IUCEA can play a critical role in this matter.

Academic freedom

One of the pillars of QA is to ensure that there is academic freedom in our universities. Staff should be able to engage their energies in pursuit of ideas and researches that interest them without fear or favour. Political interference or threats are usually not good for the emergence of free, original, creative and innovative thoughts. If our universities are going to play a catalytic role in transformation of our country, they must exercise academic freedom.

ICT challenges

With the emergence of the digital age, teaching and learning has been fundamentally transformed. The body of available easily knowledge on the internet is so vast and increasing every day that it is impossible to keep pace with it. But our universities still have serious shortages of ICT facilities and capabilities like:

- a). No. of computers,
- b). electronic resources,
- c). internet connectivity with band width challenges
(availability, costs, speed, etc),
- d). ICT compliant staff.
- e). National ICT policy

Instructional materials challenges

Almost all the instructional materials used in our universities are imported at high prices. Most of these are also still being taxed. Key facilities such as books, computers and their accessories like LCD projectors, journals, science equipment, etc are imported. What is the national strategy to produce our own?

Taxes

Taxes on salaries, buildings, books, vehicles, and other educational inputs take away vital resources that universities need to create capacity to increase access to HE at affordable rates and have quality standards that can compete on the global stage. Why should not-for-profit educational institutions pay taxes on construction of classrooms, science laboratories and equipment, students' dormitories, and other facilities used for teaching the citizens of our mother land? We appeal to the Government to review this matter with a view to removing all taxes on educational inputs and salaries and allowances of teachers at all levels of our education system.

High poverty levels of many Ugandans

Many Ugandans are poor with several millions living below the poverty lines. As a result, only a few parents can afford to pay realistic unit cost fees. In many universities, the drop-out rate of private sponsored students is about 20% per annum. This sad situation is reflected in the fact every year many students who are offered admission in various universities do not eventually register in the universities due to lack of fees. At IUIU this number accounts for about 30%.

The other problem caused by the general poor state of the economy is that there are not enough jobs created every year. So many graduates are either unemployed or under-employed. This state of affairs makes the sacrifices that parents make to education their children look like wasted investment. As the Arab spring has indicated, a lot of unemployed educated youths can be a difficult force to contain.

Globalization trends

The global trends such as GATS, where education is looked at a tradable commodity, we are likely to see more and more international universities starting off-shore programmes and campuses in Uganda. ICT capacities are expanding Open (distance) learning opportunities. All these will increase competition in and among universities.

HIV/AIDS challenges

The pandemic is reducing further the number of staff and students in the universities. This is made worse by liberalism in the socialization characteristics of most universities. In recent study on the perseverance of the HIV/AIDS disease in universities Makerere University was found to have the highest rate (1.8%) and IUIU the lowest ($\leq 1\%$). Any number above zero of HIV/AIDS case at university level is too high to accept. Universities have to address this challenge.

Drugs and other social hazards

The number students in universities using drugs and other illegal substances is on the increase. This is mainly as a result of the abuse of these substances in the general society. Research is need to establish the exact extent and devise means of dealing with this challenge before we become over-whelmed.

Government policies on education

The over government policies on education affect universities. For example Gov't priorities on UPE & USE limit the amount money to be allocated to universities. The Government expenditure on universities has stagnated at about 0.30% of GDP for over 10 years. This is lower than Kenya's (0.9%) and Tanzania (1.0%) of GDP spent on universities The other government policies that have affect universities include:

Policies on Science and Technology (S&T,) Research and Development (R&D), innovations, patents, and related matters;

- i. 1.5 points for females,
- ii. District quotas for government sponsored students,
- iii. Turning technical colleges into poorly funded & planned universities (Kyambogo & Busitema),
- iv. Lack of a Ministry of S&T and the UNCST is under MoFPED, Funding of universities, etc.
- v. Proposed Curriculum change at O level,

The knowledge society challenges

Teaching and learning in a knowledge-driven world requires lecturers and students to have new skills. We still have lecturers who do not have email addresses and cannot use power point. The cornerstones or imperatives of a knowledge economy are creativity and innovativeness.

Do our universities teach creativity and innovativeness to their students? Most of our professors and lecturers are still teaching the way they were taught – rote learning and, at best, up to comprehension level of Blooms' Taxonomy. How many patents does Uganda register annually? Can universities turn Uganda into a knowledge driven society?

The future of university education in Uganda

In terms of quality, we should not expect much improvement unless we do things differently. There following are critical if we are to improve university education in Uganda:

- a). Government must increase funding to HE
- b). The Government must create more enabling policies
- c). Enactment of better laws governing universities.
- d). Have a clear development plan for the country and HE as a sector
- e). Understand the critical role HE plays in the socio-economic development of society
- f). Totally commit ourselves to doing what it takes to have quality universities.
- g). Improve access and equity
- h). Give science and technology its rightful role in the socio-economic development and transformational equation.
- i). Create a critical mass of R&D experts in all fields.
- j). Fight brain drain and get to a level of having brain gain.

Conclusion

The World Bank advice:

“The welfare of a nation cannot be greater than the education of its people.”

“Poor nations are not only poor in wealth but are poor in knowledge,”

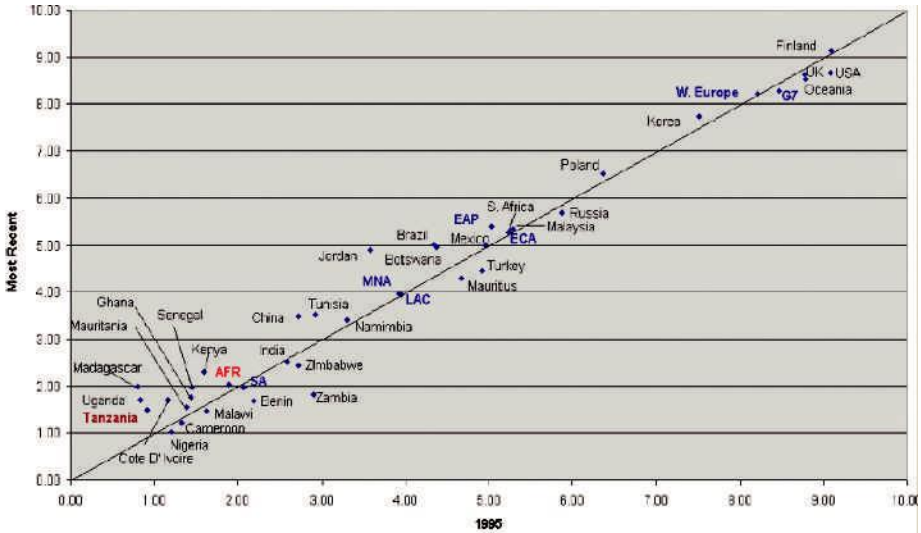
President Kennedy observed that “*The progress of our nation cannot be faster than the progress of our education system.*”

We all know that high Gross enrolment ratios (GER) in HE (to at least 10%) contribute to higher productivity and improved service delivery, it also ensures active participation in international and regional cooperation and good governance. Good governance which is based on the rule of law and respect for human rights usually leads to peace and harmony, which encourages both internal and external investment.

Example of how Tanzania is addressing the challenges of universities: Setting aside 26% of its education budget for HE, supporting staff development, providing HE student loans to both public and private institutions, engaging retired (but not tired) professors on contracts, improving staff retirement packages, setting aside 1% of its GDP for R&D, and connecting all institutions into a network. What is TZ’s goal? Transformation and well being of the society – leading to sustainable development.

Uganda is not doing well on the knowledge economy index as shown in the figure below.

Knowledge Economy Index²⁰



Note: Countries above the 45 degree line have improved their position in the KEI for the most recent period relative to their position in 1995 (or closest available date in the mid-90s), and vice versa for countries below the line.

It is no longer a debatable issue that HE contributes to a nation’s socio-economic development. Quality HE is not cheap. We have to have the commitment from all stakeholders, and especially the politicians, necessary to provide sufficient funds for HE if our country is to transform itself into a modern state. This is a calling that we can only delay at our peril. If we are to change the course of our history as we prepare for a better, peaceful, harmonious, and developed Uganda, universities must regain their rightful position of leadership in this endeavor. This we all must do, as our national motto says, For God and our country.

¹ Kasozi, A.B.K. (2009).

