Journal of Education and Practice
ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X (Online)
Vol.6, No.10, 2015

Institutional Efficiency in Selected Universities in Uganda

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Abstract
Universities are accountable This study looked into Institutional Efficiency in selected Universities in Central Uganda. The study was guided by the following objectives; Determine the level of institutional efficiency of the universities in terms of ;educational efficiency; research efficiency and community service efficiency. The study employed ex-post facto, descriptive, comparative and correlation survey research design. Two hundred and twenty (220) administrators from the two selected institutions of Makerere University and Kampala International University were selected through purposive and systematic random sampling. The study adopted a standardized questionnaire. Data analysis was done using frequencies and percentages, means, t-test, PLCC and regression analysis. The study discovered that there are more male than female administrators in the two selected institutions. Majority were; youths (61.0%), Ugandans (67.3%), heads of departments (46.4%) and had masters degrees (54.1%) The study also discovered that the extent of Administrative Behaviors is very good and that the level of Institutional Efficiency in the selected universities is high. The study finally found out that there was significance difference in the extent of administrative behavior between males and females although the extent of administrative behaviors among females was slightly higher than in males. It was therefore concluded that research is crucial for Africa and African universities should be in the forefront in undertaking research. African governments should allocate funds to their universities specifically for research and also set up a research council to encourage, coordinate and fund research nationally. It was further recommended that university managers should take leadership courses to boost their managerial skills as a significant step towards improving institutional efficiency. The skills acquired should be sufficient to respond to the challenges of quality education bedevilling the universities. There is need to educate the society to stop stereotyping roles according to gender, the great need of university administrators to together to effectively deal with enormous challenges facing higher education today in Uganda and the world over, the need for strong research policy for the university faculty and students if the community and the world at large is to benefit from the university values.

Introduction

University education in Uganda is experiencing changes in the form of expansion of the sector, diversification of provision, more heterogeneous student bodies, new funding arrangements, increasing focus on accountability and performance, globalization, mobility and collaboration. These changes have challenged institutional management that, more than ever before, need to revise and specify institutional mission statements, assess impact of new sources of funding, meet requirements for accountability, consider participation in globalization and international competition and the requirements for national, regional and international integration (Lemaitre, 2009). The terms leadership and administration are often used interchangeably. Attempt to separate the two reveals that administration is concerned with the daily running of an organization ensuring that the employees perform the tasks expected of them (Owino, Oanda and Olel, 2011). Leadership on the other hand is a complex multifaceted process conceived as a set of values, qualities and behaviours exhibited by the leader that encourage the participation, development, and commitment of followers. Leadership is also considered as the art of influencing an individual or individuals in a particular direction which involves casting vision, goal setting and motivating people (Spendlove, 2007).

Institutional efficiency is a continuous process by which an institution can guarantee that standards and quality of its educational provisions are being maintained or enhanced (Standa, 2008). A study that examined the problems of leadership within a university concluded that one of the most difficult challenges that leaders within universities face is that they must take responsibility for systems that provide assurance of quality teaching, research and services within rapidly changing environment, despite bureaucratic structural context dominated by process mentality (QUT, 1994). As Ndeithu (2007) noted, learning outcomes for any institution are shaped by the determination of the university authorities more than the values of students, lecturers and availability of resources.

When universities operate in an inefficient manner, the impact is felt, not only internally, but also in long-term consequences to the larger society as well, because higher education provides the workforce and generates the knowledge and new information that sustains a community. Higher institutions of learning in Uganda require better-quality, accountable and ethical administrative approaches in order to enhance efficiency

and effectiveness. Improved efficiency is needed and can be achieved through management reforms, increasing administrators' time on task and improving accountability (Nsubuga, 2008). Through inefficiency much learning time is lost in many Sub-Saharan African higher education systems (Lewin, 2001). A commendable education system requires efficiency. The need for an efficient education system in today's education system cannot be questioned (Standa, 2008). Already there is evidence that the flow of students in most African universities had been identified with gaps accounted to the nature of administrative behaviors. One can look across education systems in several countries and find a growing repository of empirical studies that shed new light on our understanding of higher education efficiency. Remarkably though, within any given country especially on the African continent, it is not possible to identify more than a handful of empirical studies. Hence this study set out to determine the level of institutional efficiency of the selected universities in the following constructs; educational efficiency, research efficiency and community service efficiency.

Literature Review

Institutional Efficiency

Efficiency is the economic criterion which reveals the administrative capacity for producing maximum results with minimum resources, energy, and time (Hassard, 1991). In the history of administrative thought, the idea of efficiency is associated with the concepts of economic rationality and material productivity, independently of their human and political content and of their ethical nature (Sirotnik & Oakes, 1986; Hassard, 1991). The supreme value of efficiency is productivity: efficiency implies proven capability based on productiveness and especially stresses ability to perform well and economically (American Heritage Dictionary, 1975).

Efficiency refers to the level and quality of service which is obtained from the given amount of resources (Epstein, 2002). If an institution can produce a greater quantity and/or higher quality of output with the same amount of resources, it has improved its efficiency. Efficient administration in academics can be viewed as being the biggest advantage a university can have in a resource-hungry, competitive higher education environment (Ramsden, 1998).

In order to put the theoretical definitions of efficiency into the context of an institution, it is necessary to come up with some measures of contextual institutional efficiency. Several features of the higher education sector create difficulties for efficiency measurement. The most obvious is higher education's status as a type of service industry. The problems associated with efficiency measurement in service industries have been well documented (Sherwood, 2004; Dean & Kunze, 2002). These problems include identifying the basic output unit (is it the service transaction or outcome?), determining the value added, isolating the "customer's" contribution to the outcome (as this should not be included in a productivity measure), and accounting for the many aspects of quality.

The concept of productivity was born in the field of economics to minimize the costs and maximize the outputs. In its simplest form, productivity can be defined as achieving the maximum output of a process with the use of minimum inputs. Organizations are in continuous search of the best technology and methods of using minimum inputs to produce maximum outputs to become competitive and survive in the market. Productivity can be applied to the field of education the same way in which economists analyze the relationships between inputs and outputs (Duyar, McNeal, & Kara, 2006). Although becoming competitive to survive may not be their main motivation, public education institutions are also expected to be productive to minimize costs and maximize the utilization of resources to meet increased and diversified needs, as well as to become accountable to the public for the expenditure of resources. In this sense educational productivity can be defined as the efficient production of educational outcomes (Rolle, 2004).

The need for institutional efficiency in higher education has been felt all over the world. The UK Further and Higher Education Act (1992) brought with it increasing concerns about how universities perform and the level of their efficiency. In response to the report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (The Dearing report, 1997), indicators and benchmarks of performance for the Higher Education (HE) sector were developed. The performance indicators focused on six broad aspects of institutional performance, namely; participation of under-represented groups; student progression; learning outcomes; efficiency of learning and teaching; research output and employment (Breakwell & Tytherleigh, 2010). These performance indictors reflected the political concerns of the time, which were with social equity, value for money, economic impact and international standing. However, in 2006 the Committee of University Chairmen (CUC 2006) pointed out that the choice that an institution makes concerning the performance indicators on which it wishes to be evaluated will depend on its mission and objectives.

Since top university administrators are chosen to deliver against performance indicators, the question arises as to whether institutional performance can be shown to be related in any way to the characteristics of the Vice Chancellors. Goodall (2009) argued that top research universities are led by top researchers and her data showed that the heads of major research universities internationally tend to have previously had highly successful careers as academic researchers. The existence of this relationship raises the issue of causation. Are

university administrators chosen because their characteristics match the profile of the university?

A study by Sifuna (1998), found out that for all the public universities, the President of the Republic of Kenya was the chancellor. The chancellor appointed and dismissed vice-chancellors, who in majority of cases were not the most able administratively and academically, but politically loyal to the establishment from within the ranks of academic staff. The chancellor's powers extended to the appointment of other key university administrators often in violation of the University Acts and statutes. The government nominated most members of the university council. This system, he noted, seriously undermined public universities' autonomy and academic freedom and tended to diminish democratization of decision making in the universities. Besides, Kabaji (2010) confirmed that management is one of major challenges facing universities today and thus asked for the rethinking strategies on university education. He noted the existence of negative ethnicity and intolerance from university administrators. His view was that university administrators have to create conducive environment for the generation of knowledge. Several stakeholders have accused administrators of intolerance. A case where a faculty member of a private university, was sacked for holding a different view on the draft constitution from that of the church associated with the university (Orido 2010), is an example.

Chacha (2004) observed that globally, the environment of higher education is facing persistent and swift change. The circumstances highlight the crucial role of management in maintaining morale, enhancing quality and efficiency, and helping staff at all levels cope with momentous and swift change. Those in higher education management and administrative positions are finding it essential that they understand shifting demographics, new technologies, the commercialization of higher education, the changing relationships between institutions and governments and the move from an industrial to an information society. Current university administrators must be trained, new leaders prepared and students identified who will both lead and study for the future.

Kinyanjui (2007) stated that visionary and creative leadership is critical to the transformation of higher education. He recommended that administrative and management structures of the public universities should be analyzed and streamlined to create efficient, effective, responsive and lean structures to avoid wastage of resources, duplicated responsibilities and overlapping mandates where members of different levels are members at next level and to institute checks and balances. With regard to providing students with an enabling academic and learning environment Kinayanjui (2007), noted that the critical issue was to facilitate building capacities of students and make them succeed as intellectuals, leaders, professionals, researchers and creative human resource.

Methodology

The ex-post facto design was utilized to retrieve data based on recall by the respondents on the level of institutional efficiency. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient test indicated that the questionnaire was reliable since the coefficient was above 0.5 (α=0.994). Using the Slovin's formula, a minimum sample size of 315 was recommended, but 300 questionnaires were sent out to respondent. 73.3% (220) of the questionnaires where returned. Data was collected using a combination of purposive and systematic random sampling, from a sample of 220 selected administrators in two selected institutions of higher learning in Uganda (one public and one private) and analysed using summary statistics; means and ranks.

Findings

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Out of the 220 university administrators, 68.2 percent where male and 31.8 percent were female; the majority of university administrators were between the age range of 20 to 39 (early adulthoods, 61.0 percent); Ugandan and Catholic administrators were the majority (67.3% and 40.5% respectively); Senior university administrators made up a majority (30.5%) of the responding administrators; Most administrators supervised between 31-40 staff (28.6%); the majority were holders of Masters degrees and had spent between 3-5 years of experience in their present administrative positions with 54.1 percent and 48.6 percent respectively.

Levels of Institutional Efficiency

Three items of; educational efficiency, research efficiency and community efficiency were studied under institutional efficiency. Using range scale: 3.26-4.00 - High level, 2.51-3.25 -Moderate, 1.76-2.50 –Low, and 1.00-1.75 -Very Low. The respondents were asked to rate questions basing on a four-point Likert scale relating to the level of efficiency: 1 (Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) table 1, 2 and 3 displays the main descriptive summary details:

1.1 Levels of Educational Efficiency

Table 1: Level of Educational Efficiency in Terms of

Items	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Your institution……			
has various modes of delivery of instruction	3.51	Very high	1
has staffing vacancies to accommodate more experts	3.42	Very high	2
has more full time lectures than part time	3.40	Very high	3
remits lectures to beef up some gaps	3.32	Very high	4
brought changes in the delivery of courses taught	3.29	Very high	5
advocates innovative teaching	3.28	Very high	6
reorganizes some departments for reasons of improving	3.27	Very high	7
consolidates academic programmes for cost effectiveness	3.23	High	8
has student support services	3.21	High	9
budgets for teaching are manipulated to the level of cost	3.18	High	10
created positions for other positions to improve academic	3.15	High	11
has audio- visual aids, computers and other learning facilities	3.11	High	12
establishes capacity building to come up with sustainable	3.10	High	13
advocates development of staff through trainings & workshop	2.99	High	14
has comfortable space for lectures and other facilities	2.87	High	15
expands the semester credit hour to satisfy students	2.75	High	16
has increased class size with more lecture spaces created	2.72	High	17
establishes network to develop staff	2.52	High	18
has well structured training practicum sites	2.39	Low	19
has an integrated library system, digital library	2.36	Low	20
has well structured terms, conditions, salary scale,	2.33	Low	21
has web enhancement instruction	2.27	Low	22
has on line student advisement	2.25	Low	23
establishes its own income generating business in house	2.25	Low	24
has budgetary provisions for manpower and facilities	2.22	Low	25
eliminates under enrolled courses	2.11	Low	26
has provisions to deliver instruction to the rural areas	2.08	Low	27
Average Mean	**2.84**	High	

Source: Primary Data 2012

Legend:

Mean Range	Response Mode	Interpretation
3.26-4.00	Strongly agree	Very High
2.51-3.25	Agree	High
1.76-2.50	Disagree	Low
1.00-1.75	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

Table 1 indicates that the items of; the institution reorganizes some departments for reasons of improving, advocates innovative teaching, brings changes in the delivery of courses taught, recruits part time lectures are recruited to beef up some gaps, has more full time lecturers than part time, has staffing vacancies to accommodate more experts and has various modes of delivery of instruction were rated very high. These results imply that efficient administration in academics can be viewed as being the biggest advantage a university can have in a resource-hungry, competitive higher education environment (Kinayanjui, 2007). Masrur and colleagues (2005) view the acquisition of skills as a life-cycle process where skills acquired during life are complementary. If the education attained at higher education is of low quality, then the efficiency with which investments in education at tertiary level are translated into valuable skills will be negatively affected. Items such as; the institution has well structured training practicum sites, has an integrated library system, has digital library, has well structured terms, conditions, salary scale, has web enhancement instruction, has on line student advisement, established its own income generating business in house, has budgetary provisions for manpower and facilities, eliminates under enrolled courses and were rated low. The implication for these results is that, the institutions under study cannot fully be effective with these crucial elements still wanting.

2.1 Levels of Research Efficiency

Table 2: Level of Research Efficiency

Items	Mean	Interpretation	Rank	Overall Rank
Your institution…….				
engages the students in research	3.30	Very high	1	3
has a research policy to guide all students	3.27	Very high	2	4
has partnership with research foundation, centers	3.07	High	3	6
has a very strong thesis	3.00	High	4	9
requires all staff to engage in research	2.92	High	5	11
has established a research center	2.91	High	6	12
requires all staff to publish in journals	2.36	Low	7	13
assists students and staff to get research grants	2.24	Low	8	17
laboratories available for research purposes	2.15	Low	9	19
has budgetary provisions as grants for student staff	2.14	Low	10	20
has free services such as statistical assistance	2.11	Low	11	21
sponsor regular international conferences or research forum	2.09	Low	12	22
has enough space to cater to research activities	2.09	Low	13	23
technology enhanced for purposes of research	2.09	Low	14	24
has a website for on line publications	2.08	Low	15	25
has its own journal that publishes the students	2.05	Low	16	26
sponsors staff to attend in local conferences	2.04	Low	17	27
utilized spaces and converted them into research centers	1.84	Low	18	28
Average Mean	**2.43**	Low		

Mean Range	**Response Mode**	**Interpretation**
3.26-4.00	Strongly agree	Very High
2.51-3.25	Agree	High
1.76-2.50	Disagree	Low
1.00-1.75	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

The rudiments of research were ranked averagely low in the two educational institutions under study. The results therefore imply that there is still a lot of inefficiencies with low research programmes in universities in Uganda. Aruasa (2009) in his study confirmed that university performance in research is positively correlated with University efficiency. The results are further confirmed by earlier studies of Makerere University (2008), INSEAD (2010) and; Musisi and Nakayiwa - Mayega (2010) which indicated that while there are incentives for academics to engage in research, there do not appear to be any specific incentives or arrangements to encourage university staff to get involved in engagement or development - related work. Also, these finding revealed that there is low government support for research while universities are operating within tight budget constraints and thus, cannot considerably increase research related to development activities. And finally, it was revealed that, research related to development in Ugandan universities is not significantly rewarded through incentives beyond the traditional academic promotion system.

3.1 Levels of Community Service Efficiency

Table 3: Level of *Community Service* Efficiency

Items **Your institution……**	Mean	Interpretation	Rank	Overall Rank
participates in sport activity	3.43	Very high	1	1
sponsor scholarship program	3.38	Very high	2	2
encourages membership in community organizations	3.19	High	3	5
advocates social consciousness in the classroom	3.04	High	4	7
encourages staff to serve the community	3.04	High	5	7
has a community outreach unit to coordinate	3.00	High	6	9
has other facilities like charity hospitals	2.31	Low	7	14
has budgetary provisions for the community	2.29	Low	8	15
has a well structured year round plan	2.25	Low	9	16
all members of university are involved in community	2.22	Low	10	18
Average Mean	**2.82**			

Source: Primary Data 2012

Legend:

Mean Range	Response Mode	Interpretation
3.26-4.00	Strongly agree	Very High
2.51-3.25	Agree	High
1.76-2.50	Disagree	Low
1.00-1.75	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

Table 3 above indicates that the elements of community service efficiency were rated 'high' on average. These results imply that the two institutions are to some extent efficient as far as the nation and community is concerned. These results agree with Aruasa (2009) who stressed the role of higher education in fostering economy-wide growth. Moreover, as noted by Ladd et al. (2002), measuring effectiveness is intrinsically difficult as it is closely tied to what the public or the policy makers think that the 'mission' of the institutions should be. For example, a school might serve a disadvantaged community and regard itself as increasing social mobility by reducing inequality and improving children's prospects of employment. Alternatively, schools might be seen as better serving the community by obtaining high educational outcomes (usually measured by test scores) which also favours children by fostering future income growth. Education also has an indirect effect on efficiency and employment through the quality of institutions that may be considered a component of social capital and well-being of individuals and societies (de la Fuente and Ciccone, 2002). Tertiary education is generally associated with higher earnings and employability. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, there was a strong shift in labour demand towards highly-skilled workers in the majority of industrialized countries. This was mostly driven by a technological change bias towards highly skilled tasks and by employers seeming to be increasingly demanding workers with graduate qualifications (Woessmann 2006).

It is obvious from the findings above that; the institutions under study were ranked high in the aspects of educational efficiency and community service efficiency and thus are presumed to be efficient under these aspects. However, it was indicated that the level of research was ranked low in both institutions. The low levels of research in higher institutions of learning surveyed is confirmed by Egwang (2010), who wrote that Africa's institutions of higher learning rank the lowest in terms of research and development. The tertiary tier of the education system operates under very specific mechanisms, especially due to the diverse missions of institutions: teaching, research and knowledge transfer. A fourth mission is the contribution to the local economy. From the findings that incentives are in place for faculty members to overvalue research at the expense of teaching, it means that the teaching quality does not improve or may deteriorate (Egwang, 2010). However, it is important to note that research and teaching are mutually sustaining.

Conclusions

It is evident that from the context of higher education in Uganda that research and publications have not been given much focus and this is explained by the lack of enough publications from the higher institutions of learning in Uganda.

Since the overarching challenges of increasing quality and efficiency remain the same, it would furthermore be idle to think that things will become easier. Administrators at the university are expected to promote excellence in all spheres of higher education and academic excellence in particular. Therefore, one important function remains to motivate staff towards scholarly productivity.

Recommendations

As a way of enhancing efficiency in institutions of higher learning, university administrators can work together to effectively deal with some of the challenges facing higher education today. A great deal more needs to be

done; otherwise some frightening possibilities may well become realities. For example, a fundamental decision facing university administrators at the nonprofit institutions like (Makerere University) is the extent to which they will adopt the practices and contingencies that characterize the for profit institutions (Ruch, 2001). Many nonprofits may adopt some, but not all, of the for-profits' practices. In general, one can easily envision the evolution of an even greater variation among Ugandan institutions of higher education than presently exists.
A strong research policy should be put in place for the university faculty and students to carry out research and publish if the community and the world at large is to benefit from the university values.

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