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Assessment of Quality Assurance Practices on Performance of Graduates of Selected Private Universities in Western Uganda

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Quality Assurance, Regulatory Standards, Graduates, Performance, Fit for Purpose, Monitoring and Evaluation.

This study investigated the influence of quality assurance systems, practices and regulatory standards on the performance of graduates of selected universities in Western Uganda. The core question of this research was, is the teaching and learning provided in higher institutions of learning fit for purpose, does it prepare graduates with appropriate skills that employers need to meet the needs of society? To address this largely unresolved topic of discussion, this research aligned with a transformative research approach with qualitative methodologies. The study targeted 16 members of the university management team through purposive sampling; 19 employers and 17 graduates through snowball sampling. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and document reviews analysed thematically. Findings revealed that universities tried to meet stipulated regulatory standards for the minimum entry requirements, study programs always defined student learning outcomes, and monitoring and evaluation procedures were in place. Withal, it was reported that some accreditation requirements were not adhered to and some gaps in monitoring and evaluation practices were earmarked. It's recommended that universities enhance quality assurance procedures and standards to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery and the teaching-learning environment to cater for the labour market needs.

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INTRODUCTION

Universities exist to fulfil certain mandates. These mandates include; training, research and innovation, technology transfer, maximizing the stakeholders’ interest, social responsibility, ethics and market leadership (Obwogi, 2011). Ifeoma (2013) has highlighted many activities that higher educational institutions engage in to deliver quality education for instance; delivering teaching services, research and innovations, community outreach services, employing quality staff, admitting students that qualify for different programs, infrastructure and quality educational facilities, suitable and sufficient equipment and a conducive academic environment among others.

According to Bunoti (2012), Private Universities (PU) have existed in Uganda since 1992 when higher education was privatized due to the high demand for higher education with the hope of improving the provision of services, quality and accessibility of higher education. This is the time when the government liberalized the education system thereby making a major shift from the decade’s old colonial approach. Ten times the usual number of students were admitted, with only a small percentage being government-sponsored (Rwaboni, 2010).

This raised eyebrows concerning the quality of higher education in many ways because issues like the quality of teaching and learning hinder the quality-of-service delivery in these Universities (Alemiga et al., 2019; Neema, 2016; Briggs et al., 2012). Relatedly, the quality of teaching staff in any university as one of the quality assurance practices is increasingly becoming important in the delivery of any form of education, hence the performance of their outputs (graduates).

The NCHE Quality Assurance framework (2014) Section 119 clearly states that “a university or tertiary institution shall not employ a lecturer, instructor or other person recruited for teaching (instruction) whose qualifications do not conform to the NCHE standards”. It authoritatively commands that all universities in Uganda employ staff that meet the standards set by the NCHE; this is a mandate for all universities (Alemiga et al., 2019). The quality of university education is defined as an improvement of all aspects of teaching and learning and ensuring excellence so that recognizable and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all university learners (Kagoda, & Ezati, 2013) as cited in (Bagonza, et al., 2018).

Quality assurance practices involve policies, strategies, standards and procedures used to measure the level of compliance to improve the quality of education in higher institutions of learning for students’ lifelong self-directed learning (Haruni, 2014). Many existing definitions describe the concept of quality assurance practices as setting guidelines or standards externally by quality assurance agencies and accrediting bodies or the process of monitoring and evaluation carried out internally within the institution; these definitions include aspects of quality that pertain to accountability and continuous improvement (Nicholson, 2011; Singh, 2010).

Universities in Uganda have experienced an upsurge in student numbers and programs amidst scarce resources. The body of students has diverged and expanded considerably, both geographically and socially. Massification has been undertaken by many nations including Uganda with the notion that if you educate a person, you have developed a nation (Min, 2004). Such a predicament of massification,

according to Ruland (2013), can be seen as an opportunity and as a tremendous challenge, leading to the quality of university education increasingly becoming a subject of concern. The job market is becoming tighter and even a degree from a reputable university no longer guarantees employment despite the graduate's expertise in a given area.

Performance of Graduates in this study was conceptualized as the ability of learners to perform assigned tasks after undergoing training within a specified period; with competence and proficiency development throughout the working career. It is important to note that Higher education is gaining in importance due to the growing need for knowledge and skills in this globalized and knowledge-based economy (Peter Neema, 2016). For, a university education is expected to produce the highest level of human resources in the country and to ensure the continuation of research programs and the flow of ideas for economic and social development (Kasule, & Neema-Aboki, 2009).

This study explored the perceptions of school administrators, graduates and respective employers on the effect of quality assurance practices on the performance of graduates of western Uganda. Studies carried out on graduate performance were scanty. However, a few studies identified including Dicker, R., et al. (2019) investigated what 'quality' in higher education meant, from the perceptions of university administrators, graduates and respective employers. Results revealed that universities needed to comply with NCHE standards for quality performance of outputs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory

Total Quality Management (TQM) theory advanced by W. Edwards Deming (1986) who is a quality figure informs this study. He is famously known for his great service to the economic growth of developing the quality of Japanese management and products. TQM theory focuses on increased

involvement of employees in activities of the organization, continuous improvement and team-based problem solving as some of the ways of improving quality (Deming, 1986).

TQM theory has deeply influenced how universities approach the 'business' of education (Slensaker et al., 2011). The theory helps university managers to encourage teamwork, focus on customer satisfaction, improve performance and image building. TQM has a holistic approach to teaching, where teachers attempt to improve the quality of instruction in such a way that the needs of the students and those of the prospective employers in the labour market are best served (fitness for purpose of university system output [graduates]).

The TQM theory also helps to understand the quality of teaching and learning processes in Private Universities in Uganda. According to NCHE (2012) and NCHE (2014), the quality of teaching and learning is measured by such factors as how best the university is implementing the NCHE regulatory standards, continuous adherence to the improvement of study courses focused on: the design, content, duration, objectives of the course, expected student learning outcomes and assessment of what is taught; relevance of subject matter being taught; methods of student assessment; quality of graduates measured against the quality of admitted students and ensuring access of information to all students through library, laboratory, computer and internet access, space and books in both hard and soft copies. These factors also affect the quality of graduates (Ajit, & Jayanta 2012).

However, one limitation of the theory is it takes a lot of time, cost and effort; yet the organization may still not attain the desired quality. Its application and success differ from organization to organization due to changes in methods, processes, and changes in attitudes and behaviour of people. This may affect the completion of the organizational goals and objectives.

Philosophical Underpinning

The transformative approach shaped the researcher's view of improved linkages across key stakeholders of an institution; it is related to action research emphasizing anticipated outcomes, adaptability, and flexibility for change and redesign, Antunes, D. (2009). This paradigm is useful for integrating different stakeholders; it takes a deeper and broader view integrated with reflection (Elden, & Chishlm, 1993 as cited in Antunes, D., 2009). This study investigates the performance of university graduates in their various placements after acquiring life-long learning and how the process complied with quality assurance regulatory standards and procedures, employing a transformative research paradigm.

This research endeavours to understand university administrators, lecturers, graduates and employers' perceptions of quality assurance procedures recognizing the fact that quality is a multifaceted notion with a variety of meanings interpreted in terms of context and purpose; hitherto, academic quality is defined in terms of the process of teaching and learning that produces a complete person that is holistically empowered in terms of intellectual, moral, physical, social and emotional development (Ifeoma, 2013). Other scholars have defined academic quality in comparison to academic standards related to student learning outcomes, which depict specific levels of adequate skills, knowledge, and attitudes expected to be achieved by students after going through a certain program. Through qualitative methodologies including in-depth interviews, observations and documentary review, this research aims to unveil how quality assurance standards, procedures, processes and guidelines affect the performance of graduates and how these graduates are prepared for their different placements.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach rooted in transformism to gather results utilizing a narrative study design to examine how quality assurance

practices affect the performance of graduates. The study targeted 2 chartered universities from western Uganda to represent private higher institutions of learning from the region. The choice of chartered universities in this study was based on the premise that they have all the minimum requirements needed to offer quality education before being accredited. The target population that was purposively selected included 10 members of the management team, 4 Heads of department, and 2 quality assurance officers as key informants; snowball sampling was used to collect data from 19 employers and 17 graduates. Data was collected using in-depth interviews, observation and documentary review. This was organized using code development and thematic analysis to make sub-themes and themes.

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Complying with Quality Assurance Standards for the Performance of Graduates of Western Uganda

Quality assurance practices become a benchmark for quality teaching and learning; the Uganda National Council for Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework [NCHE]-2014 defines quality practice at the university level as the process of transmitting adequate knowledge, skills and attitudes based on the prescribed pedagogical techniques, in a conducive learning environment that will equip learners to acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable them to be productive in the working environment. Nabaho et al. (2016) ascertains that it is pertinent to unpack 'good teaching', quality assurance aims at improving teaching; teaching is 'fit for purpose' if it promotes learning. This is associated with the NCHE setting minimum academic standards and essentially involves some external control measures in the form of regulatory standards and internal mechanisms put in place at the institutional level to adhere to these standards (Alabi *et al.*, 2018; Alemiga et al., 2019). There are various standards used to measure this, they include, guidelines and procedures for

accreditation of academic programs, standards on teaching-learning procedures, teaching staff welfare procedures, competencies and performance, internal quality assurance control mechanisms and National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) external assessment procedures.

Adherence to Teaching-learning Standards

Findings revealed that because these universities mainly depend on tuition fees as a source of funding, they tend to aggressively look for money from the students by enrolling many of them to 'survive' and this has compromised the adherence to teaching-learning standards. Staff/Student ratio was wanting; this was expressed by participant RT-3 M. Similarly, another participant RM-2 F re-echoes a similar argument of lack of adequate physical infrastructure and facilities in the universities to cater for the large numbers. Facilities mentioned included digital library facilities, internet connectivity in lecture rooms and everywhere on campus, adequate lecture rooms and computer laboratories, qualified technicians and specialists, safety requirements, facilities and services accessible by those with special needs among others. Relatedly, this was evidenced by findings from observation. The researcher's visits to the lecture rooms and the library revealed that they were inadequate, safety facilities and accessibility of services for students with special needs left a lot to be desired. This assertion resonates with one of the quotes by Ajit, & Jayanta that "...these factors affect the quality of graduates". Another participant (RT-5 M) re-echoed a similar observation that the lecture rooms at the universities were inadequate compared to the large enrolment of students and were always overcrowded. He revealed;

"During the time for lectures, some students miss seats because sometimes the seats are not enough for the big numbers; some stay standing throughout the lecture sessions. In addition to this, there is no internet connectivity in the lecture rooms; yet this is a requirement from NCHE to facilitate Open Distance and e-

learning (ODEL). This scenario affects how students learn and depicts the wanting teaching-learning environment".

Teaching Staff Recruitment Process

Participant RM-2M reflected that the staff recruitment process was in place about advertising, shortlisting, selection and interviewing. However, according to the respondents, who preferred anonymity, the recruitment process had attracted some inexperienced staff in related subjects depending on recommendations from the higher authorities; this is controversial with the NCHE standard for required qualifications to teach. Participant RT-3M, RM-4F added their voice to the same argument that there were no quality selection criteria for the best, most qualified and brightest academic staff; these universities sometimes lacked an operational/standing committee to search and vet academic staff. This aligns with Ahimbisibwe's quote which states that "Some teaching staff members who were recruited lacked minimum required qualification to teach at a university, professionalism and experience in related subjects..." Lack of commitment to work by the academic staff is one of those emerging issues that were highlighted by some participants as a result of unclear staff recruitment process.

Teaching Staff Promotion and Retention Processes

Findings reflected that procedures for academic staff promotion were in place. Participant RT-1M on the contrary with the previous findings considers that for most of the staff, some promotions were based on factors like loyalty to the university management not on recommended standards like academic qualification, number of publications experience in teaching etc. When asked about retention procedures, participant RM-5F explained that firing (termination) of academic staff was known to be done at any time; still, they added that any newly appointed staff was looked at by their colleagues as a spy for the top management. Worse

still, participant RT-3M reported that the Faculty Dean or Departmental Heads had no power to identify or recruit any academic staff with all the required NCHE teaching standards. This still caused a gap in commitment to mastery and quality delivery of content by the teaching staff; it was reported. Similarly, another participant had this to say,

“The Faculty Deans and Departmental Heads have no powers to identify or recommend any academic staff for recruitment, even if he/she has all the requirements. Sometimes members of the top management bring in staff that lacks mastery and specialization of relevant teaching subjects. This compromises quality content delivery. Sometimes this newcomer is looked at by their colleagues as a spy for the top management. Worse still, firing (termination) of academic staff is known to be at any time; this greatly affects the commitment of the teaching staff to their work”. (RT-2 M).

Gaps in Quality Delivery in the Teaching and Learning Process

Gaps in quality delivery in the teaching and learning process were commonly reported across participants. Participant RQ-1 M revealed that the available full-time academic staff spent most of their time moonlighting in several other institutions. Student’ lecture attendance assessment records revealed that many lecturers did not keep time for lectures while others would be absent from duty without reason. Similarly, another graduate Respondent indicated that,

“During our time of study, some of our university lecturers were quite often involved in unbecoming behaviours like giving free marks to our fellow students in exchange for sex or money, sometimes they would be absent without any feedback when we expected them to come and teach, some lecturers would use abusive language, others would come just a few minutes towards the end of lectures, at times there was a delay or non-feedback about our course works,

and most of these would go unidentified. (RG-4 F).

Program Evaluation and Reviews

Concerning the internal monitoring and evaluation, participants from non-teaching management staff revealed that policy guidelines on academic program evaluation and reviews were in place. However, contrary to the previous participants, participants (RT-4 M, RQ-2) highlighted that there was some little progress with academic program evaluation and reviews, a requirement by NCHE to annually evaluate whether the programs have achieved their goals or not. In addition, results revealed that these universities had not been fully involved in making a five-year comprehensive review to submit to the National Council for Higher Education. The faculty members had spent quite a longer period before reviewing the programs.

Admission Guidelines and Procedures

Participant RM-3F illustrated that admissions guidelines and procedures were in place and the researcher was permitted to peruse through the stipulated guidelines for application, applicant’s minimum requirements concerning relevant courses, admitting students to different programs guidelines for registration and details of students admitted to various programs. However, several participants (RN-4 F, RT-9 M, RQ-1M) revealed that sometimes because of the great need for an increased student intake to generate more income, they would end up admitting applicants with the lowest grades of minimum requirements. Similarly, other participants from graduates revealed that some of their fellow applicants who had the lowest minimal grades were admitted and this would always affect their performance in class.

Field-Based Learning Exposure

Participant RT-4 M indicated that there was scanty field-based learning exposure. This was one of those emerging issues that were reported as needing an urgent action plan since universities were

transitioning into receiving students of the new curriculum that was effected at the lower secondary level in February 2020. Similarly, this argument resonates with one of the participants RT-4 M who highlighted a need for the faculties to plan for more exposure of the students beyond the lecture rooms to acquire relevant skills and lifelong field-based learning experiences so that they can be well-prepared for the world of work. Another participant 2 re-echoes a similar argument. He asserted that;

“There is a need to develop a mechanism for lecturers to always evaluate student learning experiences against the stated learning outcomes in the curricular as stipulated by NCHE regulatory standards” (RQ-2 M).

Assessment of Teaching Staff

Participants from the graduates who were engaged in in-depth interviews revealed that they would be involved in assessing their lecturers once in a while at the end of a module or course unit. When asked about how these assessments were usually administered, participants RG-2 M, RG-6 F, RG-14 M, and RG-16 highlighted that they would fill out assessment forms about teaching and learning procedures and departmental activities. Later, no feedback would be given to them. This aligns with Altbach, Reisberg & De Wit's quote that “despite the growing number of students in higher education, there are minimal efforts to put in place measures for quality checks”. Relatedly, respondents RQ-1 M, and RQ-2 M indicated that members of staff were not involved in self-evaluation and peer evaluation at a satisfactory level. This included evaluation procedures for both administrative and teaching staff. On minimal engagements of assessing the teaching staff, responses from the graduates who were interviewed revealed that while the lecturers were doing their best with limited resources, they were knowledgeable and to some extent, they had good relationships with students. In contrast with the previous responses, participant RG-12 M reflected that a number of the lecturers exhibited tendencies of absenteeism, sluggishness, inability to

give valuable time and lack of concern for students' challenges. He highlighted that;

“Some lecturers did not prepare notes; instead, they would download articles and use them during lectures. They would assign textbook chapters for us to make copies and revise, with scanty explanation; which was very costly. We also had limited opportunities when we wanted to meet these lecturers for consultation; we would meet them only during lecture time and therefore could not get the mentorship, guidance, counselling or other forms of support that we needed (RG-12 M).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The themes identified across the data, program accreditation guidelines and procedures, teaching-learning standards and procedures, teaching staff welfare procedures, teaching staff competencies and performance, institutional internal quality assurance control mechanisms, teaching and learning internal control mechanisms and compliance to NCHE external assessment procedures represent the key findings related to quality assurance practices effect on performance of graduates. For example, findings from the study revealed that there was evidence of some impact of quality assurance practices on the performance of graduates.

Results indicated that for each program to be accredited, there are stipulated standards for minimum requirements of relevant subjects for the students to be admitted to that particular program according to NCHE requirements, guidelines and procedures (NCHE, 2014) and NCHE statutory instrument number 34 of 2008 section 9.

Findings revealed that these universities mainly depended on tuition fees as a source of funding, this left them with no option but to look for money by admitting many students with low/minimal grades to different programs to ‘survive’ and this has compromised the quality of education these universities offered to the students. This has led some universities to produce ‘half-baked’ graduates.

This is in agreement with (Alemiga et al., 2019; Neema, 2016; Briggs et al., 2012). However, these findings were contrary to those (Sharaf, & Helal, 2020) who stressed that it is the institutions' responsibility to comply with the admission policy to ensure fairness and equal opportunities "to guarantee a high level of higher education and the quality of its outputs and harmony with the labour market" (p. 152).

Student numbers overwhelmed the facilities on the ground; this upsurge of student numbers amidst scarce resources compromised the quality of service delivery to the students. These findings are consistent with the previous literature (Ruland, 2013; Martin, 2016). Program accreditation standards about teacher/student ratios; were found wanting. Concerning NCHE (2012) and NCHE (2014), prior studies have indicated that the quality of teaching and learning is measured by such factors as how best the university is implementing the NCHE regulatory standards, continuous adherence to the improvement of study courses focused on: the design, content, duration, contact hours and assessment of what is taught; relevance of subject matter being taught; methods of student assessment; ensuring access of information to all students through the library, laboratory, computer and internet access, space and books in both hard and soft copies and quality of graduates measured against the quality of admitted students. These factors also affect the quality of graduates (Ajit, & Jayanta 2012). Yet, previous studies have mentioned that a lot is wanting (Matovu, 2018; Markus et al., 2019).

Teaching staff welfare procedures focused on their recruitment, promotion, retention, rewards and the role of staff associations having an impact on the performance of graduates. This is in agreement with (Okae, 2016; Okwakol, 2008; NCHE Quality Assurance Framework 2014; Section 119) where teaching staff academic qualifications were stipulated, as a requirement to be employed to teach at a higher institution of learning; for instance, it is

an NCHE standard that only applicants who hold a minimum of a master's degree with adequate research training are employed as assistant lecturers. Further studies (Ninette *et al.*, 2015) concurred with the results that indicate that quality teaching demands teaching staff with appropriate qualifications, professional competencies, motivation and commitment that is relevant to the level of programs assigned to them. This had a positive impact on graduate performance.

Results indicated that some teaching staff in these private Universities were taken up to teach students without thorough training on exposing students to more stretching areas such as critical thinking, creativity, synthesis etc. They were not exposed to enough orientation and training and most of them lacked pedagogical training; this reveals a strong similarity with the findings of (Neema, 2016; Mamdani, 2007). Yet Okae (2016) urges that lecturers' competencies should be improved through regular training and workshops to reflect current issues on outcomes of quality assurance practices on higher learning institutions' output (graduates). This too agrees with Ssekamwa (2007); and Materu (2007) who highlighted that poor-quality teaching of academic staff greatly contributes to the graduating of half-baked students who lack practical, analytical, problem-solving and job-creating skills. These skills are required in today's competitive world, as the relevancy of what is taught for the job market and the nation is stipulated in the Quality Assurance Framework (NCHE, 2011).

Some teaching staff members that were recruited lacked the minimum required qualification to teach at a university, professionalism and experience in related subjects; a requirement by NCHE standard. These members of the academic staff lacked research and publication skills too. These standards have been set in Statutory Instrument No. 50 Of 2010 for academic and research positions targeted at ensuring effective university teaching and learning processes. This was supported by (Ahimbisibwe,

2016; Neema, 2016; Bunoti, 2012; Alemiga et al., 2019).

The above findings were contrary to the NCHE (2014) recruitment policy of the academic staff at Higher Institutions of learning and the University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (2011). Section 119 of the Act states that; “A University or tertiary institution shall not employ a lecturer, instructor or other person recruited for teaching (instruction) whose qualifications do not conform to the NCHE by regulation”.

There was a lack of a properly established and known appeals committee to handle conflicts that arose from promotional disagreements and dissatisfactions. These results therefore support the observations made by (Gonzalez et al., 2017). This contravened the standard for NCHE Statutory Instrument 2005 no.80 section 11 that required the institution of an Academic Staff Review Committee at departmental, faculty and university levels composed of senior members of the academic staff to be in charge of reviewing the welfare and performance of staff members under the institutional rules and regulations (NCHE, 2005).

The staff/student ratio was a great challenge. The academic staff was understaffed in most of the departments. There was a high staff/student ratio of 1:100, and even the available full-time academic staff spent most of the time moonlighting in several other institutions; these impact negatively on the delivery of quality education and commitment to the realization of the university’s *Vision* and *Mission* of producing competent graduates. These findings contradict the NCHE standards in the statutory instrument No. 80 of 2005 that stipulate the required general staff/student ratio as 1:15 (ideal), 1:20 (good), 1:25 (acceptable), 1:40 (can be improved) and 1:50 or more (unacceptable). These findings are in agreement with the studies of (Ochwa-Echel, 2016; Juliet Atwebembeire et al., 2018). Ifeoma (2013) seems to concur with the above when he notes that for quality teaching and learning, the class size must be small for effective student/teacher

interaction; unfortunately, for most institutions of higher learning, the lecture halls are overcrowded.

The quality assurance procedure of internal monitoring and evaluation was accused of being a bureaucratic burden and holding too much managerial power in its hands and seemed to ‘regulate and discipline academics’; the university community associated quality assurance with evaluation and judgments. This concurs with previous researchers (Anderson, 2006, 2008 as cited in Markus *et al.*, 2019 Reisberg, 2010; Lucas 2016). Kelly (2016) observed that there are problems associated with criteria concerns over the validity and reliability of evaluation methods and perceptions toward the appraisal system. Ramsden *et al* (2007) as cited by Obwogi (2011) argue that the quality assurance systems in most countries lead to a culture of compliance and not commitment amongst the academic staff. This view is incongruent with Knight, & Yorke (2006) as cited by Obwogi (2011) who warned that attempts to improve the practice of teaching in universities by approaches that seem to be judgmental may fail. However, members strongly pointed out a need to involve more people in the university community for greater impact. This result concurs with (Tavares et al., 2017), who noticed that “the higher the involvement of teaching staff in the development of internal quality assurance, the more [QA practice] impacts positively on teaching and learning.

The time allocated to students in the assessment of the internal QA practices of the universities was not sufficient. Graduates revealed that students needed to be highly involved, their involvement in the assessment of the educational process is connected with the search for ways of improving education quality; and if higher education institutions were to sustain quality service provision, students were to participate in internal M & E practices as much as possible. NCHE statutory instrument No. 34 of 2008 states that “student” involvement in internal assessment is useful in improving teaching performance in the quality assurance regulations”.

In addition, Zuo, & Ratsoy (1999), ascertain that students as clients of the university have a right to participate in making decisions that influence them. This is in agreement with the findings of (Nikanorov, & Volkava, 2017). Similarly, (O'Neill et al., 2020) state that sufficient engagement of students in assessment and feedback shifts the emphasis from “assessment ‘of’ learning towards assessment ‘for’ and ‘as’ learning” (p.4). However, with the above, the views of other scholars (Kwan, 1999 as cited in Atwebembeire et al., 2018) observed that academics are antagonistic towards student evaluations despite the fact that many kinds of research conducted have established their validity and reliability.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study highlights the critical role of quality assurance standards and procedures on the performance of graduates. Improvement in academic program accreditation standards and procedures would lead to tangible gains in the quality of higher education and the performance of their graduates. Universities have been encouraged to implement these standards to make sure that the knowledge and skills that students gain from these programs are valuable, both to the student and to society. However, this process has met some challenges in adhering to the quality assurance standards and procedures set by the accrediting body (NCHE); and there are still many chances for the quality of university education in Uganda to be turned around hence causing a positive effect on the performance of its graduates.

Teaching staff professional development initiatives were inadequate in imparting lecturers with relevant knowledge, innovativeness, skills and positive attitudes which are required to have a high-quality education. Also, some guidelines and practices for the teaching staff seemed to be dictatorial and unsustainable in enhancing the quality of teaching and performance of graduates. Policies and procedures that relate to staff welfare were in place; for instance, staff recruitment policy, staff

promotion policy, and staff development policy among others. However, their enforcement may not be adequate to cause significant change in the teaching and learning process yet, university lecturers should possess rich practices to equip students with relevant skills so that highly skilled graduates are produced concerning employers' expectations; these graduates need to be prepared for a life beyond their lecture rooms as pointed out by (Matei et al., 2016).

Internal monitoring and evaluation planning is an important aspect towards the performance of graduates of higher institutions of learning. This process ensures that the teaching and learning resources, processes and other aspects of the system are effectively monitored to realize greater output and continuous improvement. These standards and procedures leave a lot to be desired which is a requirement to empower graduates to perform effectively in their various placements after campus. These standards which include the involvement of stakeholders while undertaking monitoring and evaluation activities, and promoting and supporting Total Quality Management (TQM) practices, among others, need critical attention for the performance of graduates to improve.

Study New Knowledge and Policy Proposition

Issues of performance of graduates of higher institutions of learning have acquired a major focus of attention in most spheres of the work environment. This is gaining in importance due to the growing need for knowledge and skills in this globalized and knowledge-based economy.

In establishing a strong engagement between universities and the productive sectors, universities must begin to transform their academic curricula and programs to reflect the needs and practices of the productive sector. There is a growing need for African universities to understand the dynamics and needs of the evolving African society and adjust their curricula, research priorities and operations to meet the needs of the productive sector in the 21st

century (Ozor et al., 2016). Relatedly, World Bank (2013) asserts that Higher Education institutions and policymakers must ensure that their students and graduates acquire the needed skills for lifelong self-directed learning that will enable them to compete favourably and become innovative to face incomprehensible social, environmental and economic situations.

With a proper university quality assurance system in place, universities should identify developmental needs, equip students with appropriate skills relevant to emerging societal needs, adequate, transferable knowledge and skills aiming at producing graduates who are competitive amidst changing work practices as pointed out by (IUCEA, 2011; Henard, & Roseveare, 2012). About this, universities need to establish a well-developed assessment plan of what students will be able to do for their life-long self-directed learning.

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