



Middle-level Academic Leadership in Tanzania's Private Universities: Challenges in Developing Quality Academic Programmes

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Abstract

Quality middle-level academic leadership in universities is a *sine qua non* for building strong institutions with quality, competitive academic programmes and elevated levels of research productivity. This article is based on a critical documentary analysis of academic staff rank and qualifications at the oldest and largest private university in Tanzania. The article argues that emerging private universities and colleges in Tanzania lack the quality middle-level academic leadership required to make them strong, with an associated high quality of academic and research productivity. This is one of the major constraints to their institutional growth. The article recommends internal promotion of academic staff to middle-level academic positions if they meet institutional criteria or employing external ready-made senior academic staff and appointing them to middle-level academic leadership positions.

Keywords: middle-level academic leadership, private universities, quality academic programmes

Résumé

Dans les universités, un leadership académique de niveau intermédiaire de qualité est une condition *sine qua non* pour bâtir des institutions solides avec des programmes académiques de qualité et compétitifs, et des niveaux élevés de productivité dans la recherche. Cet article se base sur une analyse documentaire critique du rang et des qualifications du personnel académique de la plus ancienne et de la plus grande université privée de Tanzanie. L'article soutient que les universités et collèges privés émergents en Tanzanie n'ont pas la qualité de leadership académique de niveau intermédiaire nécessaire

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pour les rendre fortes, avec une haute qualité de productivité académique et de recherche. C'est l'une des principales contraintes à leur croissance institutionnelle. L'article recommande la promotion interne du personnel académique à des postes académiques de niveau intermédiaire s'ils répondent aux critères institutionnels, ou l'emploi de personnel académique supérieur externe prêt à l'emploi et leur nomination à des postes de direction académique de niveau intermédiaire.

Mots-clés : leadership académique de niveau intermédiaire, universités privées, programmes académiques de qualité.

Introduction

Private universities and university colleges did not exist in Tanzania until 1997. The only exception to this trend was the Roman Catholic tertiary education institution that had existed since the 1960s, the former Nyegezi Social Training Institute, now St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT). It is the largest private university in Tanzania in terms of student enrolment and number of university colleges. In 1997 the government liberalised the provision of higher education to allow private providers, by amending the Education Act No. 15 of 1978, replacing it with the Education Act No. 10 of 1995. The 1999 National Higher Education Policy also underscored the importance of encouraging private organisations, individuals, and non-governmental organisations to take an effective role in establishing private universities and colleges.

As a result of the liberalisation of the provision of university education in Tanzania, tuition-dependent, demand-absorbing and for-profit private universities (albeit disguised), mainly owned by major religious denominations – Roman Catholic, Protestant and Islam – have been proliferating at an alarming rate, and in some cases without the requisite academic and administrative leadership capacities stipulated by the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU).¹

In February 2019, there were thirty-four private universities and university colleges (twenty-two universities and twelve university colleges), compared to fifteen public universities and university colleges (twelve universities and three university colleges). Although private universities outnumbered public universities, they enrolled fewer students compared with public universities because of inadequate teaching and learning facilities² and a shortage of permanent academic staff.³ Consequently, private universities and colleges accounted for a smaller share of total student enrolment in university education in Tanzania. For example, in the 2017/18 academic year, total enrolment at private universities was only 35.1 per cent.

In my opinion (based on personal observation, experience and documentary evidence), one of the major challenges that may hamper the building, nurturing and growth of private universities and colleges in Tanzania into strong institutions⁴ is the quality of both academic and administrative leadership in terms of academic rank, academic leadership experience, research and publication experience and academic qualifications (PhD, Master's, etc.) of middle-level academic leaders at these institutions. Available documentary evidence and observation show that middle-level academic and administrative leadership positions in most private universities and colleges in Tanzania are occupied by academics of junior rank, with limited or no academic leadership experience and exposure, because of the shortage of senior academic staff, particularly at senior lecturer and professor level. This shortage has implications for the management and quality of academic programmes in private universities and colleges. Apparently, as a result of the shortage of (senior) academic staff and lack of senior academic leadership, in 2018 the Tanzania Commission for Universities revoked the accreditation of two private university colleges, barred seven private universities from admitting new students, delisted four private universities from teaching, and ordered the immediate transfer of the students from these universities to other universities. Some private universities were deregistered because of their failure to comply with the national, regional, and international provision of higher education.

Statement of the Problem

This article sought to answer the following hitherto unanswered questions about academic leadership quality in private universities in the Tanzanian context: What is the profile (in terms of academic rank and qualifications) of middle-level academic leaders (i.e. heads of department and faculty/school deans) in private universities and university colleges in Tanzania? What is the implication of the profile of middle-level academic leaders in Tanzania's private universities for building strong private universities and developing and managing quality, competitive academic programmes?

Study Objectives

This study, through documentary review and using as a case study the largest and oldest private university, St. Augustine University of Tanzania, which has several university constituent colleges spread all over the country, sought to:

1. Find out and document the profile of middle-level academic leaders,⁵ in terms of their academic rank and qualifications, as heads of department and deans of faculty and schools, and the academic rank and qualifications of the other academic staff, and

2. Find out the implications of the profile of these middle-level academic leaders (i.e. academic rank and qualifications), and the academic rank and qualifications of other academic staff, for building a strong private university, in terms of research productivity and for the development and management of quality and competitive academic programmes.

Research Design, Approach and Methodology

This research adopted a case study research design (in this case a single case study design) using a qualitative approach, drawing on my personal experiences as a researcher at a private higher education institution in Tanzania⁶ and as a one-time academician and academic leader at the level of director, at the largest private university in Tanzania. The case study design (in this study, both a methodology and a design) was primarily selected because of the desire to get an in-depth and detailed understanding of the profile of the middle-level academic leaders at the main and oldest campus of this university and of the implications of the profile for research productivity and the development and management of high-quality, competitive academic programmes. The choice of the case study research design was also necessitated by the nature of the research, which essentially addressed descriptive questions of ‘What is happening or what has happened?’ in private universities, in terms of the strength and limitations of the middle-level academic leadership, which is critical in overall university leadership.

The case study used was St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), located in the Mwanza Region of Tanzania. SAUT was strategically selected as a case study because it is the oldest (established in 1998) and largest private university in Tanzania, with several constituent colleges and centres⁷ spread all over the country. Its main campus is in Mwanza, where it was initially established, and where the data for this study was collected. In 2018, SAUT at Mwanza Main Campus enrolled a total of 10,957 students, the largest student enrolment among Tanzania’s private universities.

The university offers degree specialisations in the following disciplines, at undergraduate level:

- Accountancy
- Business Administration
- Economics
- Education
- Engineering (Civil and Electrical)
- Health Systems Administration
- Human Resources Management
- Journalism and Mass Communication

- Law
- Marketing Management
- Public Relations and Marketing
- Procurement and Logistics Management
- Sociology, and
- Tourism and Hospitality Management

These degree programmes are offered through five faculties:

1. Faculty of Business Administration, comprising three departments: Accounting and Finance, Marketing and Human Resources, and Tourism and Hospitality Management. It offers the following degree programmes and other postgraduate and advanced diplomas and certificates:
 - Bachelor of Business Administration
 - Bachelor of Science in Procurement and Supply Chain Management
 - Bachelor of Science in Tourism and Hospitality
 - Postgraduate Diploma in Accountancy, and
 - Master of Business Administration
2. Faculty of Social Sciences and Communication, comprising three departments: Public Relations and Marketing, Sociology, and Journalism and Mass Communication. It offers the following degree programmes:
 - Bachelor of Arts in Economics
 - Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication
 - Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations and Marketing
 - Bachelor of Arts in Sociology
 - Master of Arts in Economics
 - Master of Arts in Sociology
 - Master of Arts in Mass Communications
 - PhD in Mass Communication
3. Faculty of Law (currently elevated to a school) is not organised into departments (something which I consider an academic anomaly), but offers:
 - Bachelor of Law
 - Master of Law, and
 - PhD in Law
4. Faculty of Education, comprising six departments: Educational Foundations, Kiswahili, History, Languages and Linguistics, Geography and Philosophy and Ethics. These offer the following degree programmes:
 - Bachelor of Arts with Education
 - Bachelor of Philosophy with Education
 - Bachelor of Religious Studies with Education

- Master of Arts in History
 - Master of Arts in Linguistics
 - Master of Arts in Educational Management and Planning
 - Master of Higher Education Management and Development
5. The Faculty of Engineering, comprising two departments (civil and electrical), offers:
- Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering; and
 - Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering

The study used documentary review (desk review of documents), particularly of SAUT prospectuses for the years 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019, and the SAUT Five Year Rolling Strategic Plan 2014/2015-2019/2020,⁸ as the major sources of data. Data on the academic rank and qualifications of the deans of the faculties of Business Administration, Social Sciences and Communication, Law, Education and Engineering was extracted from the above prospectuses. Similar data was extracted for thirteen heads of department and all members of academic staff employed in the thirteen departments, except for the Faculty of Law, which is not organised into academic departments. The data was quantitatively analysed (i.e. simple relevant calculations were made where necessary) and presented in relevant tables, figures, and charts.

Study Limitations

The major limitation of this study was the availability of the middle-level academic leaders (heads of department and deans) for interviewing and questionnaire administration, to obtain data on other planned study variables, such as criteria for appointment to middle-level academic leadership positions and the process involved, academic leadership experiences of the middle-level academic leaders, training in academic leadership, experience in research and publication (although the study was able to get a glimpse of the status of research productivity from the SAUT Five-Year Rolling Strategic Plan 2014/2015-2019/2020), and experience in curriculum design. The reason for the unavailability of these middle-level academic leaders at SAUT was that they were on their long vacation (July to September) before the commencement of the new academic year of 2019/2020 when I visited the university for data collection. I therefore decided to focus on two critical variables of the middle-level academic leaders – academic rank and qualifications – because the data on these two variables was easily accessible from the university prospectuses.

Conceptual Framework

This study (through inference) sought to explore the association between the quality of middle-level academic leadership⁹ (in private universities) and a strong/quality university. Two proxy indicators were used to refer to quality middle-level academic leadership, i.e., academic rank and qualifications, while research/academic productivity and capacity to develop and manage quality and competitive academic programmes were identified as proxy indicators for a strong university. The assumption of the study was that strong middle-level academic leadership is lacking in some private universities in Tanzania, particularly those universities that had been deregistered or had had their academic programmes suspended or discredited by the Tanzania Commission for Universities.

In the absence of concrete theories linking or associating the quality of middle-level academic leadership in universities, research productivity and the capacity to develop and manage quality and competitive academic programmes, the conceptual framework for this study draws from (scanty) literature (some of it based on research) that attempts to link academic leadership (in general) with research productivity or general organisational performance, although Ayee (2014) laments 'the lacuna of academic leadership particularly in Africa'. 'The importance of quality academic leadership in tertiary education cannot be over-emphasised, because quality and progressive academic leadership are one of the hallmarks of a world class university. Yet the subject of academic leadership in Africa is unexplored' (Ayee 2014: 237, citing Salmi 2009).

The above quotation indirectly supports the framing of this study about the association between quality academic leadership and a strong university, although in the above case the reference is to a world-class university. This is a controversial concept in the context of African higher education, but it implies a strong, quality university characterised by: a high concentration of (quality) talent (faculty and students), abundant resources that offer a rich learning environment in which to conduct advanced research, and favourable governance features that encourage strategic vision, innovation and flexibility and enable an institution to make decisions and manage resources without being encumbered by bureaucracy (Salmi 2009: 7).

Shibru, Bibiso and Ousman (2017), referring to an African university, argue that quality leadership is critical if colleges or departments are to produce the best possible outcomes. Best outcomes, which in the context of the above research paper refers to quality/best organisational performance, may also include levated levels of research productivity. Shibru et al. generally link quality academic leadership to improved organisational performance.

Findings from a study by Damonse (2011), which generally investigated how quality leadership at individual, group and organisational levels enabled and stimulated high-quality research performance in South African universities, revealed that the leaders who were most influential in driving (high) research performance (research productivity) were (outstanding) scholars with extensive academic experience, had served in a variety of leadership roles in universities, confidently embraced the complexity of academic leadership, and created a stimulating research environment (Damonse 2011: 5 of the Abstract).

Indirectly, the above findings imply that quality academic leadership defined in terms of outstanding scholarship, extensive academic experience and extensive experience in academic leadership, is a critical factor in driving high research productivity in a university. In the context of this study, research productivity is the major proxy indicator of a quality/strong university.

Goodall, McDowell and Singell (2014) take a different approach, in associating (quality) leadership of heads of department with the research productivity of the university departments they lead. Their study linked the characteristics of incoming chairs and the later scientific productivity of their departments. The characteristics included total academic and research experience measured as years since PhD and citations in peer-reviewed journals. The findings from this study, which sought to test the hypothesis that 'academic departments led by chairs who had accomplished research careers are associated with improved research performance' (in their respective departments), revealed a concave relationship between the chairs' citations and subsequent department productivity – that is, the chairs' citations heavily influenced departmental (research) productivity. The above finding is line with the thinking of this study. The presence of chairs with accomplished research careers (in this case measured by the number of citations) implies quality academic leadership.

Okendo (2018), exploring the constraints of research productivity in Tanzania's private universities, argues that effective university leaders (implying quality academic leadership) can embed a research culture, and that research productivity in a university is, among other factors, shaped by competent leadership that results in efficient (research) performance by individuals and departments. Competent leadership in my opinion translates into quality academic leadership.

The major argument I am making about the above research literature is that quality middle-level academic leadership (an independent variable, which in the context of this study is measured by academic qualifications and

rank) is associated with a strong/quality (private) university (a dependent variable), manifested by the following proxy indicators: high levels of research productivity (research outputs) at departmental, faculty/school and institutional levels; the existence of quality and competitive academic programmes; and adequate institutional income, generated through research grants and consultancies to lessen dependence on government funding through student loans from the Higher Education Students Loans Board (HESLB). This last proxy indicator implies that a strong (private) university is also financially autonomous, capable of generating its own financial resources through an attractive and competitive academic programme, research funding and consultancies and other revenue diversification strategies. In the opinion of this study, attaining financial autonomy is an uphill task when middle-level academic leadership and the majority of academic staff are inexperienced in research, publication and consultancy functions, which has negative implications for departmental and school/faculty productivity.

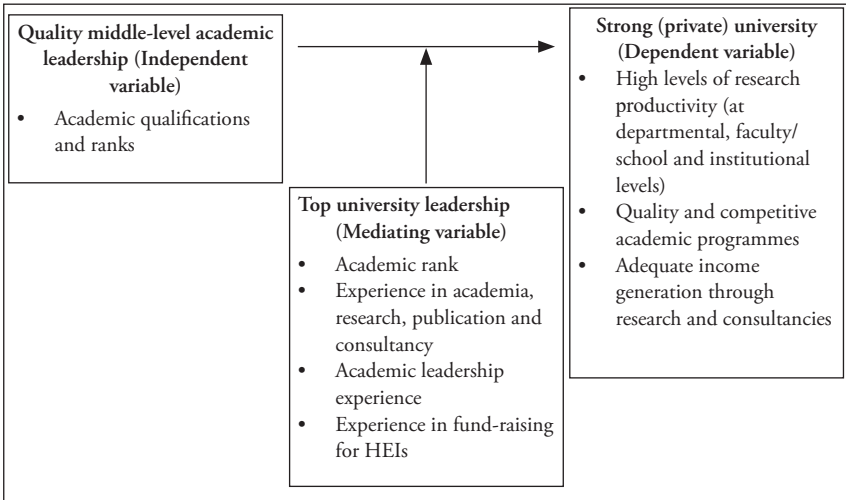


Figure 1: Conceptual framework illustrating the association between quality middle-level academic leadership and a strong university.¹⁰

While quality middle-level academic leadership is both a prerequisite and a *sine qua non* for a strong, quality (private) university, the quality of (top) university leadership also matters, although this factor is not a focus of this study. Top university leadership in this case refers to vice-chancellors and their deputies. In the context of this study this is an intervening or mediating variable. The proxy indicators for quality of top leadership are academic rank, experience in academia, research, publication and consultancy

experience, academic leadership experience and experience in fund-raising for higher education institutions. The conceptual framework for this study is summarised in Figure 1.

Private Universities and University Colleges in Tanzania: Some Basic Facts and Figures

Types and ownership of private universities and university colleges in Tanzania

With the exception of the Aga Khan University (Institute for Educational Development, East Africa) and the Kampala International University in Tanzania, all private universities and university colleges in Tanzania accredited by the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) are locally owned and affiliated to major religious denominations (Roman Catholic, Protestant and Islam). Due to the nature of ownership, some private universities have religious objectives and philosophies that are clearly enshrined in their visions and mission statements. Observation and experience¹¹ show that in the majority of private universities owned by religious denominations, religious affiliation and loyalty of the academic staff to the senior management at times determine who should be appointed to a middle-level academic or administrative leadership position. The implication of this observation is that appointment to middle-level academic leadership positions may not necessarily be based on merit, academic seniority or potential leadership ability.

Some private universities, despite their obvious religious orientations manifested in their motto, vision and mission and the 'institutional' mandatory courses they offer in all undergraduate degree programmes (e.g. Comparative Religion, Social Ethics), harbour the ambition of being centres of excellence or 'world class universities' 'by providing high-quality education, research, and public service'¹² and 'provide for and pursue original research and scholarship, innovation and advancement of knowledge and consultancy at highest level'.¹³ In practice, every private university in Tanzania proclaims teaching, research and consultancy¹⁴ to be its major academic functions and *raison d'être*, the same academic functions proclaimed by public universities. Documentary evidence also shows that private universities have an incentive to employ quality staff (because of the apparent competition among themselves), and desire middle-level academic leaders at department and school/faculty levels who have strong managerial and leadership skills in order to effectively manage the major academic functions of teaching, research and consultancy and 'design new and competitive academic programmes of the highest quality which addresses special needs for the various sectors in the current job market'.¹⁵

Given the above context, it is therefore relatively fair and in order to compare private universities (not necessarily with the same yardstick) with public universities. After all, almost all private universities offer academic programmes that are found at public universities, most of them designed by academics from public universities. The following sub-section categorises public universities and private colleges in Tanzania.

Categorisation of Tanzania’s private universities by ownership/affiliation

A simple categorisation of private universities and university colleges (which currently outnumber public universities) reveals that most of them are demand-absorbing, government-supported through student loans and disguised for profit (commercial).¹⁶ All except three private universities are owned by or affiliated to religious organisations. The type of ownership has implications for the organisational structure of private universities and the modality of appointing academic leaders at both middle level and senior university management level. Table 1 shows the ownership/affiliation of private universities in Tanzania in 2019.

Table 1: Ownership/Affiliation and Status of Tanzania’s Private Universities, 2019

Name of University	Ownership/Affiliation	Accreditation Status	Total Student Enrolment (2018)
Aga Khan University	Aga Khan Development Network	Accredited & Chartered	130
Hubert Kairuki Memorial University	Kairuki Health & Education Network	Accredited & Chartered	1,194
International Medical & Technological University ¹⁷	Vignan Education Foundation of India	Certificate of Full Registration & Chartered	619
Tumaini University Makumira	North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania	Accredited & Chartered	5,229
St. Augustine University of Tanzania	Tanzania Episcopal Conference	Accredited & Chartered	10,957 ¹⁸
Zanzibar University	Daral Iman Charitable Association of Ontario, Canada	Certificate of Full Registration & Chartered	1,995
Mount Meru University	Baptist Churches of East Africa ¹⁹	Certificate of Full Registration	857

University of Arusha	Union Mission of Adventist Churches	Certificate of Full Registration & Chartered	891
Teofilo Kisanji University	Moravian Church in Tanzania	Certificate of Full Registration & Chartered	2,606
Muslim University of Morogoro	Muslim Development Foundation	Certificate of Full Registration & Chartered	1971
Mwenge Catholic University	Tanzania Episcopal Conference	Certificate of Full Registration	4,915
St. John's University of Tanzania	Anglican Church in Tanzania	Certificate of Full Registration & Chartered	5,235
University of Bagamoyo ²⁰	Tanzania Education Trust	Certificate of Full Registration	NA
Catholic University of Health & Allied Sciences ²¹	Tanzania Episcopal Conference	Accredited	1,995
St. Joseph University in Tanzania	The Registered Trustees of the Daughter of Mary Immaculate & Collaborators	Certificate of Full Registration	3,334
The United African University of Tanzania	Korea Church Mission	Certificate of Full Registration	104
Ruaha Catholic University	Tanzania Episcopal Conference	Certificate of Full Registration	4,363
Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University ²²	North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)	Certificate of Full Registration	1,224
University of Iringa	ELCT	Accredited	2,565
Abdul Rahman Al-Sumait Memorial University (Sumait University)	Kuwait based Africa Muslims Agency	Certificate of Full Registration	1,008
Eckernforde Tanga University ²³	Privately owned by a businessman	Certificate of Full Registration	NA
Kampala International University in Tanzania	Board of Trustees of Kampala International University	Certificate of Full Registration	2,648

Source: Adapted from List of Approved University Institutions in Tanzania, 4 February 2019 (TCU 2019)

Academic/Teaching staff by rank in private and public universities in Tanzania

Table 2 shows academic staff by rank in public and private universities in 2015. The data in this table indicates that assistant lecturers constituted 51 per cent of the total academic staff in private universities and 40.6 per cent in public universities. In other words, assistant lecturers constituted more than half of all academic staff in private universities.

Table 2: Teaching Staff by Rank in Private and Public Universities, 2015

Rank	Private Universities	% Total	Public Universities	% Total
Instructors	34	1.4	67	0.98
Tutors	72	3.0	90	1.3
Tutorial assistants	438	18.3	1,616	24.0
<i>Assistant lecturers</i>	<i>1,218</i>	<i>51.0</i>	<i>2,757</i>	<i>40.6</i>
Lecturers	366	15.2	957	14.1
Senior lecturers	138	5.7	652	9.6
Associate professors	56	2.3	365	5.4
Professors	74	3.0	278	4.0
Total	2,396	100.0	6,782	100.0

Source: Adapted from Statistical data for teaching staff in higher education 2015 (TCU 2015)

In 2015, thirty-five²⁴ private universities and university colleges employed a total of 2,453 teaching staff, mainly in the rank of assistant lecturer, compared to 4,427 teaching staff employed in public universities. The teaching staff in private universities was substantially composed of retired academic staff from public universities who were working on contract basis, and part-time teaching staff, mainly from public universities. A good number of private universities depend on part-time academic staff mainly as a cost-reduction strategy to minimise operational human resources costs and maximise profit. Dependence on retired academic staff and part-time teaching staff in private universities should be understood in the broader context of their limited capacity to generate enough revenue to attract and recruit senior permanent staff with extensive leadership experience, including chaired research professors who could be appointed to middle- and senior-level academic leadership positions. Lack or shortage of senior and experienced academic staff to assume academic leadership positions at departmental and faculty level at our case study university is clearly expressed in the

university's Five-Year Rolling Strategic Plan 2014/2015–2019/2020. The plan states: 'Academic leadership, particularly at Department levels, needs to be strengthened. Therefore there is the need for training and recruitment of senior academicians with experience in faculty and department leadership' (SAUT 2014: 14).

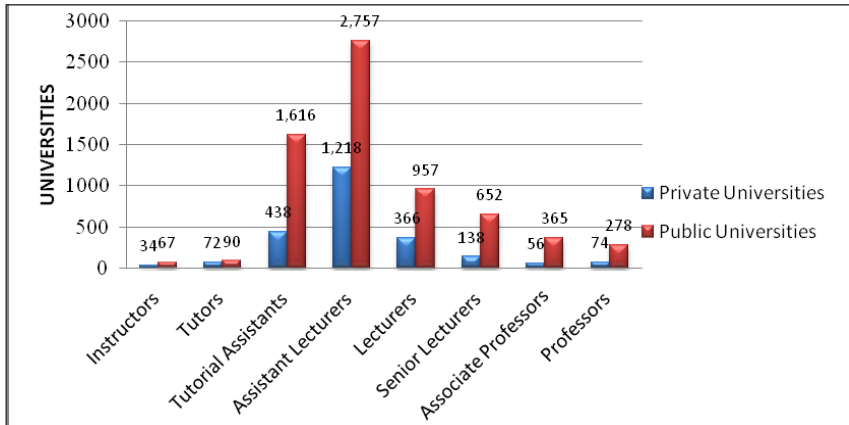


Figure 2: Teaching staff by rank in private and public universities in Tanzania, 2015

KEY: Instructors are usually laboratory/workshop technicians charged with guiding students during practicals and experiments, while tutors do not possess doctorates but they teach some classes/courses (mainly at undergraduate level), which requires practical and hands-on experience from practitioners in fields such as music, fine and performing arts, workshop technology, educational media and technology, etc.

Administration and governance of Tanzania's private universities

As Ishengoma (2007a) observed, to some extent, Tanzania's private universities have adopted the system of administration and governance used in public universities apparently because the constitutions and charters of these universities were written by experts from public universities. This is what Levy (2004: 2) refers to as 'isomorphism and convergence that yields similarities among entities'. The highest organ in the organisational structure is the Board of Trustees (in practice, this is the board of owners of a university). A Board of Trustees makes vital strategic decisions concerning the university, including appointing vice-chancellors and their deputies, principals or provosts and their deputies. The University Council is the highest decision-making organ in the organisational structure charged with the development of a university, including hiring and promotion of academic staff. For universities affiliated to or owned by the Church, the head of the Church or his representative with

the highest rank (e.g. bishop or archbishop) may be the chairperson of the University Council. University charters stipulate who should be a member of a respective University Council.

As in public universities, every private university has a ceremonial chancellor and a vice-chancellor assisted by deputy vice-chancellors. Vice-chancellors and their deputies are in practice appointed by the Boards of Trustees. Principals and deputy principals are in charge of the day-to-day administration of university colleges and university centres. Another important organ in the administration and governance of private universities is the academic Senate.

The Senate is mainly in charge of matters related to examination results, admissions and enrolments. The Senate also vets and approves new academic programmes for onward transmission to the TCU. In most private universities and university colleges, the Senate is composed of middle-level academic leaders, such as heads of department and faculty deans, and principals or provosts and their deputies. Compared to public universities, where middle-level academic leaders are appointed through a transparent competitive process of voting and later vetting led by search teams/committees and respective university management committees, my observation shows that in most private universities middle-level academic leaders are directly appointed or handpicked by the vice-chancellor or the university management.

Academic Ranks and Effective Academic Leadership

As the data in Table 2 and Figure 2 reveals, in 2015, junior academic staff (tutorial assistants and assistant lecturers) constituted 69.3 per cent of the teaching staff in private universities, compared to 64.6 per cent in public universities. What does the above distribution of academic staff in private universities imply in the broader context of effective academic leadership and in terms of building strong private universities and developing and managing academic programmes and developing new competitive academic programmes? It implies that these junior members of academic staff, because they are inexperienced (in terms of academic leadership), are unable to meaningfully and effectively participate in university leadership, even when they are appointed into middle-level academic positions. They are also unable to effectively participate in research and consultancy activities that could have generated extra income for private universities to lessen their dependence on government student loans to make them autonomous and strong academic institutions. Another implication is that junior academic staff in private universities in Tanzania, because of lack of teaching and research experience, are unable to effectively participate in curriculum design and the implementation and management of academic programmes.

As Black (2015), cited in Mgaiwa and Ishengoma (2017), argues:

academic leadership provides direction to the vision/mission, leadership and administration (of a higher education institution) and requires senior academics with specialisation in academic leadership and that administrators, managers and leaders of higher education institutions demonstrate experience in leadership, management and administration, apart from being senior academics (Mgaiwa and Ishengoma 2017: 64).

Academic Rank, Qualifications and Knowledge Production/ Research Productivity

In African universities (public and private), tutorial assistants and assistant lecturers do not possess doctorates, implying that their contribution to knowledge production through research and publications is limited. They are essentially trainee academics. This observation has another implication for curriculum design and management in a university. A study by Michelsen and Hartwich (2004) revealed that academic staff with doctorates were more productive academically through research and consultancies, and applied their expertise and experience to seek additional (research) resources through writing proposals for research grants. The implication of the above finding in the context of the role of middle-level academics in university leadership is that academics with doctorates can effectively participate in university leadership through new knowledge production and dissemination, an important factor in building a strong academic institution and developing quality and competitive academic programmes in a (private) university.

Bunting, Cloete and Van Schalkwyk (2014), cited in Cloete, Maassen and Bailey (2015), also report a close link between supervision of doctoral students and other research outputs and the higher academic qualifications and senior ranks of academic staff, and recommend that universities that aspire to be research-intensive should have in place senior academic staff who are able both to supervise doctoral students and lead research groups.

In the following sub-sections I present some research evidence from a literature review on the (possible) link between academic staff qualifications and rank, and the quality of a university, and some research evidence on the status of academic rank in Tanzania's private universities. The implications of academic qualifications and rank on the universities' research productivity and capability to become strong academic institutions offering quality, competitive academic programmes in internationalised higher education, are also discussed in the following sections.

Academic staff qualifications and rank and the quality of a university: some anecdotal and empirical evidence from the literature and world university rankings

There is generally a paucity of empirical research and literature (worldwide and in Africa in particular) on the link between academic staff qualifications and rank, and the quality of academic institutions. The available literature is scanty and anecdotal. Therefore, in this subsection I will present available literature and data from world university rankings (WURs), using some selected proxy indicators and metrics to link academic staff qualifications and rank to the quality of an academic institution.

The literature surveyed on the above subject matter indirectly links academic staff qualifications and rank to academic/research productivity and quality teaching and learning in higher education institutions (Mushemeza 2016; Luwavi 2019). Mushemeza, in particular, while linking (high) academic productivity apparently with academics with higher academic qualifications and rank, associates academic staff productivity and the development of a strong African university and further argues that a strong university balances all core university functions of teaching, research, publishing and outreach.

Indirectly linking academic staff qualifications and rank to the quality of academic institutions and academic staff in African universities, Mushemeza observes: 'A PhD should be one of the valued preconditions to be considered for employment by a university in the 21st century. When a PhD holder is eventually promoted to a professor, he or she is expected to provide academic leadership in designing teaching programmes, research, publication and dissemination of knowledge' (Mushemeza 2016: 241).

Luwavi (2019), on the other hand, argues that academic qualifications impact on graduate teacher preparations in Tanzania's universities and further observes that the quality of academic and professional qualifications that academic staff have influences the quality of the teaching and learning process in a university. For Luwavi (ibid.), the quality of academic staff (apparently referring to PhD qualifications) is a key aspect in quality teaching and learning in a higher learning institution and quality university education implies an adequate number of professors and senior lecturers. She further observes: 'A lecturer with a PhD has competence to deliver satisfactory research and teaching and universities need to have a balanced number of professors, senior lecturers and lecturers to create conducive environment for quality learning and teaching' (Luwavi 2019: 73).

Askerc (2016), referring to teaching excellence and qualifications of academic staff in the context of quality in higher education in European universities, argued that high-quality higher education equals teaching and research excellence, which in turn depends on the quality of the academic staff, and that the decisive criteria for the appointment of academic staff should remain the volume and quality of their research.

Although university ranking systems vary according to the particular definitions of academic quality adopted by the organisations involved in the rankings (Buena-Casal et al. 2007.), an almost direct link between academic staff qualifications and rank, and the quality of a university, can be gleaned from the criteria and proxy quality indicators used to rank universities worldwide (which are research-based). This is evident, for example, in the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), also known as the Shanghai Ranking, the QS World University Rankings and World University Rankings by the *Times Higher Education*, among others. Table 3 shows the university quality criteria, indicators and weights used by the Academic Ranking of World Universities, all with implications for academic qualifications and rank.

Table 3: Criteria, Indicators and Weights Used by ARWU, 2019

Criteria	Indicators	Weight (%)
Quality of education	Alumni of a university winning Nobel prizes and field medals	10
	Staff of a university winning Nobel prizes	20
Quality of faculty	Highly cited academics in 21 broad subject categories	20
	Papers published in <i>Nature</i> and <i>Science</i> journals	20
Research output	Papers indexed in Science Citation Index-Expanded and Social Science Citation	20
Per capita performance of a university	Per capita academic performance of an institution	10

Source: Adapted from <http://www.shanghairanking.com/ARWU-Methodology-2019.html>
 Accessed 15 April 2020

The *Times Higher Education (THE)* rankings use the following university quality indicators (with their weightings in brackets), which in my opinion can be directly associated with academic staff qualifications and rank:

- Teaching (the learning environment) (30 per cent)
- Research (volume, income and reputation (30 per cent)
- Citations (research influence) (30 per cent)
- International outlook of a university (staff, students and research) (7.5 per cent); and
- Industry income related to knowledge transfer (2.5 per cent)

The details of the *THE World University Rankings 2020* are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: *THE World University Rankings Quality Indicators and Weightings, 2020*

Indicators				
Teaching (30%)	Research (30%)	Research Citations (30%)	International Outlook (7.5%)	Industry Income (2.5%)
Reputation survey (15%) ²⁵	Reputation survey ²⁶ (18%)	Focus on the universities’ roles in spreading new knowledge and ideas through global citation	Proportion of international students (2.5%) Proportion of international staff (2.5%)	Focus on universities’ knowledge transfer through consultancy
Staff-to-student ratio (4.5%)	Research income (6%)		International collaboration (2.5%)	
Doctorates-to-Bachelor’s ratio (2.25%)	Research productivity ²⁷ (6%)			
Doctorates awarded to academic staff ratio (6%)				
Institutional income (2.25%)				

Source: Adapted from THE World University Rankings 2020: Methodology (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2020/world-ranking>). Accessed 15 April 2020.

The Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings (UK-based), which are credited for their consistent methodological framework in ranking universities, use six metrics²⁸ to rank universities, which are not very much different from the ones I presented earlier but they indirectly associate academic staff qualifications and rank with the perceived quality of a university. The metrics and their weightings are presented below:

- Academic reputation (40 %) ²⁹
- Employer reputation (10 %) ³⁰
- Faculty/student ratio (20 %)
- Citation per faculty (20 %)
- International faculty ratio (5 %)
- International student ratio (5 %)

In the Tanzanian context, the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) (apparently copying the QS World University Rankings and other worldwide ranking organisations) in February 2020 issued ‘acceptable’ standards and guidelines to be followed by agencies ranking universities in Tanzania.³¹ These guidelines, like other proxy indicators for a quality university, reflect the link between academic staff qualifications and rank. The guidelines are as follows:

- Employer reputation/Academic reputation – meaning a university from which employers prefer to source the most competent, innovative and effective graduates (30%)
- Academic staff-student ratio – the extent to which universities are able to provide students with meaningful access to lecturers and tutors (20%)
- Citation per academic staff across a five-year period (20%)
- Ability to attract international academic staff (5 %) and students (5 %)
- Proportion of research funds attracted by a university (10 %), and
- Graduates’ employers’ opinion surveys (10 per cent)

While university rankings are resented by universities, particularly in Africa, and have been unfairly criticised (in my opinion) as an aspect of academic imperialism, they are key measures of quality assurance, enhancement and improvement processes in universities. They directly or indirectly focus on academic qualifications and rank as key proxy quality indicators for a university in both developing and developed countries.

Therefore, in the context of the paucity of research literature on the link between academic staff qualifications and rank, and the quality of a university (particularly in Africa), the quality indicators used by university

ranking organisations will suffice to give a general idea of the relationship between academic staff qualifications and rank and a strong and academically productive (private) university in Africa, the subject matter of this study.

Findings and Discussion

Academic rank and qualifications of faculty deans at SAUT main campus: implications for building a strong university

This study, due to the limitations mentioned earlier, focused on two key variables of middle-level academic leaders in private universities: academic rank (whether a head of department or a dean is an assistant lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor or a full professor); and academic qualifications (whether a head of department or faculty/school dean possesses a Master’s degree or a doctorate), and their association to a strong quality university. These two key variables constitute the profile of the middle-level academic leaders in private universities presented and analysed in this study.

Table 3: Academic Rank and Qualifications of Faculty/School Deans at SAUT Main Campus, 2011/12, 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2018/2019

Faculty	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2018/2019
A	Lecturer + PhD	Lecturer + PhD	Senior Lecturer + PhD	Lecturer + PhD
B	Lecturer + PhD	Lecturer + PhD	Lecturer + PhD	Lecturer + PhD
C	Lecturer without PhD	Lecturer without PhD	Lecturer without PhD	Lecturer+ PhD
D	Professor + PhD	Professor +PhD	Professor + PhD	Lecturer +PhD
E	Lecturer + PhD	Lecturer + PhD	Lecturer + PhD	Lecturer +PhD
% Lecturer	80	80	60	100

Source: Adapted from SAUT Prospectuses, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/14 and 2018/2019

The data in Table 3 shows that, in all five faculties surveyed, the dominant academic rank of a dean was lecturer, albeit with doctorates, with the exception of faculty C (currently a school), which had a dean without a doctorate for three consecutive years (2011/2012, 2012/2013 and 2013/2014) The percentage of lecturers appointed as deans increased from 60 per cent (2013/2014) to 100 per cent (2018/2019).

School and faculty deans in universities (public and private) perform a number of critical leadership, management, administrative and academic functions, including developing and managing academic programmes, and are (ideally) supposed to be experienced senior academics and researchers in their respective fields of specialisation. Faculty/school deans are also supposed to be accomplished physical and human resources experts, fund-raisers, politicians and academic diplomats. Furthermore, deans are supposed to provide strong academic leadership, and formulate, implement and interpret university policies in their respective schools and faculties. The key functions of a dean in the context of a (public) university in Tanzania are summarised in Box 1. These functions, in my opinion, universally apply at all universities (whether private or public). Therefore, although the dean's functions specified are for deans in a public university, they also apply in a private university.

Box 1: Functions and Responsibilities of a Dean in a University Setting in Tanzania

- To be in charge overall of all activities of the school/faculty and answerable to the vice-chancellor through the deputy vice-chancellor (Academic) and deputy vice-chancellor (Administration).
- To work towards school/faculty development in terms of infrastructure, staff training and development as well as students' academic progress.
- To chair school/faculty meetings and ensure transmissions and implementation of decisions made by university organs.
- To maintain discipline, integrity and respect for all members of staff in the school faculty.
- To be responsible for annual appraisal of the performance of all members of staff in the school/faculty.
- To provide academic leadership in terms of co-ordination, delegation and initiation of academic programmes when the need arises, and review existing programmes and curricula when necessary to cope with changing conditions.
- To make use of resources: financial, staff time and skills, and students' time and levels of training.
- To undertake institutional representation in university management, national forums and international platforms.
- To liaise with the government and the private sector.
- To promote cross-institutional linkages in order to complement knowledge and skills among staff and students; and
- To ensure the security and maintenance of the school's/faculty's properties.

Source: Adapted from the job description for deans and directors for one dean in one public university in Tanzania

The discharge of the duties and stipulated key functions of a dean in a university, in Box 1, demands vast academic leadership and research experience and experience as a senior scholar/academician beyond a doctorate degree. The fact that most faculty and school deans at SAUT Main Campus hold the junior academic rank of lecturer (see Table 3) implies that they (may) have limited experience as academics and researchers and in particular as academic leaders, managers and administrators in a university setting. Furthermore, deans with the junior rank of lecturer may not effectively discharge the deans' functions stipulated in Box 1. From experience and observation, a faculty/school dean who holds the position of a lecturer still needs mentoring in academic leadership and research scholarship.

Apparently, the junior school/faculty deans in Table 3 were catapulted into deanship roles³² because of the critical shortage of senior academic staff in private universities and colleges in Tanzania (see Table 8 for the distribution of academic staff by rank at the case study university). The limited experience of junior deans in the above critical areas implies that they also have limited experience in the development and management of quality and competitive academic programmes. The quality and competitiveness of a university's academic programmes and senior academics and researchers are a hallmark of a strong university capable of successfully competing in a highly competitive higher education environment in Africa.

Tables 4 to 7 show the academic rank and qualifications of twenty heads of departments in four faculties at St. Augustine University's Main Campus, in 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2018/2019. It is important to note that one faculty (Faculty C)³³ is not included because it was not structured into departments, which are core academic units in a university setting. This phenomenon raises questions about how the faculty and staff develop and manage academic programmes.

In the Tanzanian context and according to our 'university academic tradition' inherited from the British university system, university faculties and schools are organised or structured into academic departments, and academic degrees and programmes are offered by respective academic departments. In our context, departmentalisation is considered a key element of an organisational structure based on (academic) specialisations, which are important for efficient academic productivity based on academic disciplines. Therefore, in Tanzania's universities, 'pigeon holing academics into silos' is an acceptable practice and one would tend to question a faculty or a school in any university that was not organised into academic departments. Apparently this 'pigeon holing' is also supported by the Tanzania Commission for Universities.

The data in Table 4 shows that most heads of department in the five faculties and one school hold the academic rank of assistant lecturer, which is usually a training position in a university setting.

Table 4: Academic Rank and Qualifications of HoDs in Faculty A, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2018/2019

Department	2011/2012		2012/2013		2013/2014		2018/2019	
	AR	AQ	AR	AQ	AR	AQ	AR	AQ
1	SLR	PhD	SLR	PhD	LR	PhD	LR	PhD
2	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	LR	PhD
3	LR	PhD	ALR	MA	LR	PhD	LR	PhD
4	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA
5	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	LR	PhD
6	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA
7	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA
% Assistant lecturer	71.4		85.7		71.4		43.0	

Source: Adapted from SAUT Prospectuses 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2018/2019

KEY: AR = Academic Rank; AQ = Academic Qualification; ALR = Assistant Lecturer; LR = Lecturer; SLR = Senior Lecturer

The data in Table 4 shows that more than 70 per cent of the heads of department in Faculty A were assistant lecturers for three consecutive years except for 2018/2019, when the percentage of assistant lecturers as heads of departments declined to 43 per cent, apparently because of the recruitment of new academic staff or because members of academic staff in this faculty who were pursuing doctoral studies returned to the institutions after the completion of their studies.

Table 5: Academic Rank and Qualifications of HoDs in Faculty B, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2018/2019

Department	2011/2012		2012/2013		2013/2014		2018/2019	
	AR	AQ	AR	AQ	AR	AQ	AR	AQ
1	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	LR	PhD
2	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	Prof.	PhD
3	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	LR	PhD
4	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	LR	PhD
5	ALR	MA	LR	PhD	ALR	MA	SLR	PhD

6	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA
% Assistant lecturer	100.0		83.3		100.0		16.6	

Source: Adapted from SAUT Prospectuses, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2018/2019

KEY: AR = Academic Rank; AQ = Academic Qualification; ALR = Assistant lecturer; LR = Lecturer; SLR = Senior lecturer; Prof = Retired foreign professor working on contract basis

In Faculty B above, the percentage of assistant lecturers as heads of departments declined from 100 per cent to 16.6 per cent, apparently for the same reasons advanced for Faculty A in Table 4.

Table 6: Academic Rank and Qualifications of HoDs in Faculty D, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2018/2019

Department	2011/2012		2012/2013		2013/2014		2018/2019	
	AR	AQ	AR	AQ	AR	AQ	AR	AQ
1	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA
2	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	LR	PhD
3	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	LR	PhD
4	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	ALR	MA	Prof.	PhD
% Assistant lecturer	100.0		100.0		100.0		25.0	

Source: Adapted from SAUT Prospectuses, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2018/2019

KEY: AR=Academic Rank; AQ=Academic Qualification; ALR=Assistant lecturer; LR=Lecturer; SLR=Senior lecturer; Prof = Retired foreign professor working on contract basis

In Faculty D, whose dean was a retired foreign professor, 100 per cent of the HoDs were assistant lecturers in all departments for three consecutive years, except for 2018/2019, during which one head of department was a professor. The same professor was also the dean of the faculty, thus playing a dual academic leadership role, apparently because of the shortage of academic staff.

As is the general case with other faculties at our case study university, in Faculty E, which was newly established, assistant lecturers as heads of department predominated over other academic ranks. Overall, assistant lecturers dominated the position of head of department at our case study university because assistant lecturer as an academic rank constituted the majority of the academic staff at St. Augustine University’s Main Campus, and perhaps in other campuses (see Table 8).

Table 7: Academic Rank and Qualifications of HoDs in Faculty E*, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2018/2019

Department	2011/2012		2012/2013		2013/2014		2018/2019	
	AR	AQ	AR	AQ	AR	AQ	AR	AQ
1	ALR	MSc	ALR	MSc	ALR	MSc.	LR	PhD
2	ALR	MSc	LR ³⁴	PhD	ALR	MSc.	ALR	MSc
3	ALR	MSc.	ALR	MSc	ALR	MSc.	ALR	MSc
% Assistant lecturer	100.0		66.6		100.0		66.6	

Source: Adaptation from SAUT Prospectuses, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014 & 2018/2019

KEY: AR=Academic Rank; AQ=Academic Qualification; ALR=Assistant Lecturer; LR=Lecturer / * This was a new faculty

In any university worldwide, an academic department is a nucleus of all academic functions of a university and the head of department or chair (whose key functions are summarised in Box 2) is an important academic leader, although the importance of this sensitive academic leadership position in a university is not widely appreciated by universities' senior management in African universities. This observation is based on my experience as head of a large academic department in a public university for six years and four months.

Box 2: Key Functions of a Head of Academic Department in a University

The head of department who is overall in charge of the academic activities in the department and is answerable to the dean serves the following key functions:

1. *Provide academic leadership, plan, direct and implement the academic programmes of the department* This is a critical function, which includes designing and managing academic programmes.
2. Participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the school's/faculty's academic policies.
3. *Guide the department with respect to teaching, research and service by setting goals and standards and by personal example.*
4. Ensure proper conduct of continuous assessments and semester examinations and submit results to the dean.
5. *Bring opportunities for research, publication, public service and conference attendance to the attention of departmental staff and assist them to take advantage of such opportunities based on transparent and objective criteria of merit.*
6. Develop performance indicators for monitoring standards and quality of teaching, learning and examination within the department, and ensure that the department's academic objectives and commitments are fulfilled.

7. Foster co-operation and unity and maintain team spirit among staff and students in the department.
8. Solicit, budget and manage departmental funds.
9. *Plan for the future of the department with regard to new programmes, new academic developments and demand for future expansion.*
10. Promote positive student relations within the department and actively seek to resolve problems raised by students and staff.
11. Ensure that staff observe university policies and procedures, take timely and appropriate action when policies and procedures have been breached and recommend disciplinary action where necessary.
12. Chair departmental meetings and ensure timely transmission of decisions to and from relevant university organs.
13. Ensure that the department is represented in relevant committees and boards.
14. Plan, prepare and execute departmental staff recruitment and development programmes.
15. Undertake annual performance appraisal of staff members in the department and submit reports to the Dean.
16. Ensure security and maintenance of the department's property.
17. Prepare and submit annual reports on departmental activities; and
18. Undertake any other responsibilities that are within the interests of the department, school/faculty and the University.

Source: Job description for Head of Department, University of Dar es Salaam. The same job description was prescribed to me when I served as HoD from 2012-2018 at the UDSM, but otherwise these are standard key functions for all academic staff appointed as HoDs at UDSM

Comparing the key functions of a dean and that of a head of department as outlined in Box 1 and Box 2, it is obvious that the position of the head of academic department is very demanding and critical in a university. It requires an accomplished and experienced senior academic staff member and a researcher who can deliver effectively according to the prescribed functions. The head of academic department occupies a pivotal and important position in any university, whether public or private.

While eleven key functions are prescribed for the faculty/school dean, eighteen functions are prescribed for the head of department. It is probably possible for assistant lecturers as heads of academic departments to manage some of the key functions prescribed in Box 2 because they are mundane and routine. But, in my opinion, it might be almost impossible for assistant

lecturers to effectively deliver on key functions 1, 3, 5 and 9, which I consider critical for a head of an academic department in a university. An assistant lecturer in a university setting is essentially an academic in transition, and requires further training to obtain a doctorate, which is a mandatory requirement of all academic staff in a university. An assistant lecturer in a university is a de facto graduate student and an inexperienced academic staff member. Although assistant lecturers dominate as heads of department at St. Augustine University of Tanzania, Mwanza Campus, and perhaps in other private universities, in my opinion they cannot effectively deliver on HoD key functions 1, 3, 5 and 9, which are:

- Provide academic leadership, plan, direct and implement the academic programme of the department. This is a critical function, which includes designing and managing academic programmes.
- Guide the department with respect to teaching, research and service by setting goals and standards and by personal example.
- Bring opportunities for research, publication, public service and conference attendance to the attention of departmental staff and assist them to take advantage of such opportunities based on transparent and objective criteria of merit.
- Plan for the future of the department with regard to new programmes, new academic developments and demand for future expansion

The above functions are crucial in building a strong university and developing quality and competitive academic programmes.

Academic rank in private universities in Tanzania and the challenge of Research productivity and quality academic programmes

Academic rank in any university has implications on academic/research productivity,³⁵ and the degree of research productivity of academic staff is an indication of how strong a particular university is in terms of developing and managing quality and competitive academic programmes. A university with adequate senior academic staff (senior lecturers and professors) is likely to have a higher level of research/academic productivity and therefore will be strong.

Table 8 shows the distribution of academic staff by rank at St. Augustine University of Tanzania Main Campus for the four years surveyed.

The data in Table 8 and Figure 3 shows that assistant lecturers predominate among the academic staff at the institution, followed by lecturers and a very negligible number of senior academic staff (senior lecturers and professors).³⁶ The high proportion of assistant lecturers as academic staff at SAUT explains the dominance of this cadre of academic staff as heads of department.

Table 8: Distribution of Academic Staff by Rank at SAUT Main Campus, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2018/2019

Rank	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2018/2019
Professors	4 (1.6%)	4 (1.4%)	3 (1.0%)	3 (1.2%)
Associate professors	0 (0)	2 (0.7)	2 (0.7)	3 (1.2)
Senior lecturers	4 (1.6%)	9 (3.2%)	9 (3.2%)	6 (2.4)
Lecturers	31 (13.0%)	29 (10.5%)	28 (9.8%)	45 (18.3%)
Assistant lecturers	164 (68.0%)	194 (71%)	188 (67.5%)	174 (71.0%)
Tutorial assistants	39 (16.0%)	38 (13.7%)	54 (19.0%)	14 (5.7%)
Total	242 (100.0)	276 (100.0)	284 (100.0)	245 (100.0)

Source: Adapted from SAUT Prospectuses, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014 and 2018/2019

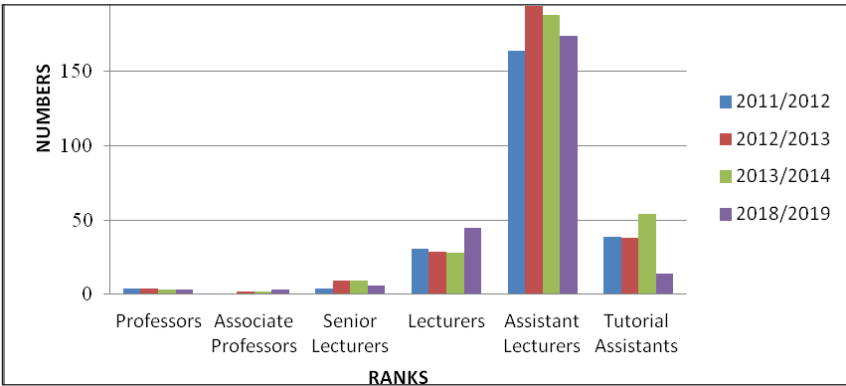


Figure 3: Distribution of Academic Staff by Rank at SAUT-Main Campus, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2018/2019

The dominance of assistant lecturers in the academic staff structure of SAUT apparently extends to other private universities and university colleges, which also generally experience a critical shortage of academic staff. Shortage of academic staff is also experienced in public universities (see Table 9 and Figure 4) although public universities in Tanzania until recently have not experienced a critical shortage of academic staff, particularly in senior academic ranks (senior lecturers and professors), which constitutes middle-level academic leaders in the context of this paper.³⁷

Table 9: Shortage of Academic Staff in Tanzania Public Universities by Discipline, 2016 (in %)

Discipline	Shortage (%)
Science and Technology	45.0
Education	34.3
Health and Allied Sciences	11.7
Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities	3.0
Engineering	3.0
Business and Economics	1.2
Law	0.7

Source: Tanzania Higher Learning Institutions Trade Union (THTU 2017)

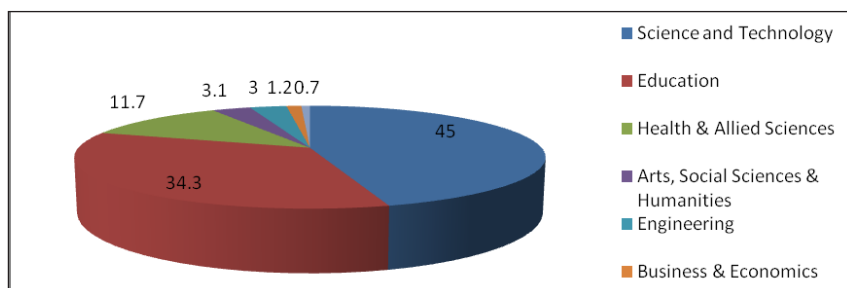


Figure 4: Shortage of Academic Staff in Tanzania's Public Universities by Discipline, 2016

In the context of building a strong university with quality and competitive academic programmes and high research productivity, the contribution of assistant lecturers who, in this case (SAUT), have been entrusted to lead academic departments, is negligible (if any) because they have limited experience in the core functions of a university – teaching, research and public service. A strong and well-functioning university is built on a strong foundation of higher research productivity. Research productivity in Tanzania universities is generally low because of many factors, including low investment in research and development (R&D) and the shortage of experienced and senior academic staff who can write research proposals to attract donor funds for research.

In Tanzania, the research productivity of private universities might be lower than in public ones³⁸ because of the fact that the majority of the academic staff (as indicated in Table 8 and Figure 4) are junior with limited experience in research and publishing and cannot attract donor

funds for research because they are also inexperienced in writing research/grant proposals. A negligible number of senior academic staff in private universities is preoccupied with teaching several courses (including evening courses) per person because private universities in Tanzania are essentially tuition-dependent teaching universities with very little investment (if any) in research and development compared with public universities. Hence research productivity is low in these nascent institutions.

Low research productivity in private universities in Tanzania is one of the challenges to building and nurturing strong private universities in Tanzania because of its implications for knowledge production and dissemination. Although I have not provided empirical evidence of the phenomenon, I am inferring this from academic staff rank and qualifications.³⁹ It applies, too, in my case study university, which admits candidly in its Five-Year Rolling Strategic Plan 2014/2015-2019/2020 (Section 4.6: Research and Publications) that its research capability is still low despite the improvement in research funding for publication.

Strong universities worldwide are leaders in knowledge production and dissemination. Even rankings of universities worldwide are based on research productivity, among other criteria. Research productivity is also closely connected to the design of quality and competitive academic programmes based on research findings and other research-related inputs. Apparently, due to low research productivity and shortage of experienced senior academic staff, very little curriculum design or review takes place in some Tanzanian private universities. Observation and anecdotal evidence show that the design of some of the new academic programmes (particularly those designed to attract student loans) is outsourced or rented, or done with the assistance of academic staff from public universities. These academics are to a large extent involved in part-time teaching in private universities in a broader context of moonlighting,⁴⁰ a widespread strategy of generating extra income to mitigate inadequate salaries paid to academic staff in public universities in Tanzania.

Conclusion

The findings – albeit limited to one university, the oldest and largest private university in Tanzania – reveal that middle-level academic leadership positions in private universities are occupied by academics of junior rank, mainly assistant lecturers who are supposed to undertake further training to obtain doctorates and still need academic mentoring and guidance. The reason for the predominance of junior academic staff in middle-level academic leadership positions in private universities in Tanzania (and

particularly at my case study university) is the shortage of senior academic staff.⁴¹ Apparently, in the absence of senior academic staff, assistant lecturers (without academic leadership and research experiences) are catapulted into critical academic leadership positions such as headships and deanships of academic departments and faculty/schools.

A shortage of senior academic staff to occupy middle-level academic leadership positions of critical academic units in private universities, such as academic departments and faculties/schools, undermines the whole process of academic growth of these institutions in terms of designing quality and competitive academic programmes and research productivity, which feeds into new academic programme design and general curricular review and reform.

The shortage of senior academic staff to manage and lead departments and faculties in Tanzania's private universities has implications for effective and efficient management and leadership of the core university units, i.e. academic departments and faculties. Given the key functions of deans and heads of department (see Box 1 and Box 2), to what extent can assistant lecturers (who perhaps have just obtained a Master's degree) and junior lecturers (who may have recently obtained their doctorates) effectively and efficiently deliver on the prescribed functions and provide strong academic leadership?⁴²

The above question is meant to be food for thought, but in my opinion the functions of a dean and head of department are too challenging to be effectively delivered by a lecturer and assistant lecturer in a private university that is expected to grow academically and in research, and compete with public universities. Most of the latter are (relatively) well resourced (financially and in terms of academic human resource bases), although currently (by accident?) the academic human resource base in public universities is being depleted through internal brain drain.

What should be done? This is an open question. Maybe private universities should internally promote junior academic staff into middle-level academic leadership positions if they meet institutional promotion criteria. Alternatively, they could employ ready-made senior academic staff and appoint them to middle-level academic leadership positions. This second option might not be feasible given the severe financial and (human) resources constraints that face many private universities, and which have led to the deregistration of some of them. The TCU stipulates academic qualifications, rank and experience for top leadership in both public and private universities. Probably it should stipulate the same for middle-level academic leadership in both public and private universities, as it has done for 'standards and guidelines for ranking of universities in Tanzania'.

Notes

1. The Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) is the statutory and regulatory authority of university education in Tanzania established by the government in July 2005 under the Universities Act 2005.
2. The majority of private universities and university colleges operate from rented premises mainly in urban areas.
3. In the context of private universities in Tanzania, permanent academic staff means academic staff employed on a full-time basis but on contracts usually lasting for three years, which can be renewed at discretion until the person reaches sixty years of age. Otherwise, most private universities rely on part-time academic staff, mainly from public universities.
4. A strong university in the context of this paper is defined in terms of quality academic programmes designed and managed by its own senior academic staff, the number of senior academic staff (senior lecturers and professors), their academic rank, qualifications and experiences (both academic and in terms of leadership) and their level of research/academic productivity.
5. The middle-level academic leaders in the context of this study refer to heads of academic departments and deans of faculties and schools.
6. I have researched and published three research papers on private higher education in Tanzania and was an affiliate of PROPHE (Program for Research on Private Higher Education) based at the State University of New York at Albany in the United States of America (USA).
7. Some of these constituent colleges have been deregistered, due to the low number of students and inadequate financial and human resources. The above reasons have implications on middle-level academic leadership in general and university leadership in particular.
8. This document does not explicitly stipulate the qualifications of academic leaders, but some sections of the SAUT Five-Year Rolling Plan, such as Chapter 4.0, SAUT Current Status and Performance, acknowledge the importance of having strong managerial and leadership skills at faculty and departmental level in order to effectively carry out teaching, research and consultancy functions. Section 4.3 recommends the need to strengthen academic leadership at department and faculty level through training and recruitment of senior academicians with experience in faculty and department leadership.
9. Middle-level academic leadership in the context of this study refers to heads of departments and school/faculty deans. This study adopts Yelder and Codling's (2004) characteristics of academic leadership to further define the concept of quality academic leadership. An academic leader is an authority based on: discipline knowledge, experience, peer and professional recognition, expertise in teaching and research, and team acceptance.
10. The conception of a strong university in this paper also borrows from Salmi's idea of a 'traditional university', where promotion to senior management positions is based on 'academic prowess', mainly referring to research capability (research productivity).

11. Observation and experience are based on the fact that this author worked in Tanzania's largest private university for eight years and had the opportunity to be appointed to a middle-level academic leadership position as a Director of Postgraduate Studies, Research, Short Programmes and Publications immediately after his return from doctoral studies.
12. This is the first mission statement of one of the private universities in Tanzania owned by one of the major religious denominations.
13. This is another mission statement from the same private university referred to above.
14. Despite these well-intentioned proclamations, available documentary evidence shows that some private universities in Tanzania have a low capacity to conduct research and consultancies mainly because the majority of their faculty (mainly junior academics) lack experience in research and consultancy functions. Another reason is that private universities in Tanzania are tuition-fee dependent, thus, their own investment in R&D is negligible, if any. Income from students' tuition fees is mainly used to pay for overhead costs, including salaries.
15. This quotation is taken from the Five-Year Rolling Strategic Plan 2014/2015-2019/2020 of one private university, which also acknowledges that academic leadership, particularly at department level, needs to be strengthened through training and recruitment of senior academicians with experience in department and faculty/school leadership.
16. The for-profit motive of many private universities in Tanzania is manifested by the high tuition fees they charge for their academic programmes. Some private universities were previously charging tuition fees in USD for both local and foreign students before the government prohibited the practice. Documentary evidence shows that all private universities and university colleges in Tanzania have established degree programmes in the so-called priority disciplines for national development, which automatically qualifies for student loans from the Higher Education Students Loans Board (HESLB), despite the fact that some private universities have inadequate qualified academic human resource to offer those programmes. Some academic programmes have been established solely to benefit from student loans.
17. This university has been deregistered by the Tanzania Commission for Universities because of its failure to comply with national, regional and international standards of higher education provision (<https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/tcu-deregisters-four-higher-learning-institutions-over-quality-compliance--2701820>). The deregistration of this private university and others because of the failure to comply with the established quality standards has an implication for academic leadership at all levels.
18. These figures are for Mwanza Main Campus only. They exclude enrolment in the university's constituent colleges and centres located in different Tanzania towns and cities. In February 2019, SAUT had 7 constituent colleges and 4 centres.
19. The Mount Meru University was formerly known as the International Baptist Theological College of East and Southern Africa (IBTCEA), founded in 1962.

20. This university was deregistered by TCU in January 2020. Its former vice-chancellor is the current vice-chancellor of the largest and oldest private university in Tanzania.
21. Formerly known as Weil Bugando University College of Health Sciences, affiliated to the Weil Medical College at Cornell University in the USA, which provided substantial financial and material support to enable Weil Bugando expand its academic programmes.
22. Barred from admitting new students in January 2020.
23. This university was deregistered by the Tanzania Commission for Universities on 21 January 2020 because it failed to meet quality criteria (including shortage of human resources) even after being placed on probation by the Commission.
24. In March 2020 there were 36 private universities, including St. Francis University of Health and Allied Sciences, a former constituent college of St. Augustine University of Tanzania, which had been elevated to a fully fledged private university.
25. This is based on a reputation of a university is based on perceived prestige in teaching.
26. Reputation survey in the context of research, as used by the WUR, focuses on the university's reputation for research excellence among its peers.
27. Research productivity is measured in terms of number of publications published in the academic journals indexed by Elsevier's Scopus database per scholar in a particular university.
28. <https://www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings-2020>. Accessed 8 April 2020.
29. Referring to teaching and research quality at a particular university. These two quality indicators are related to academic qualifications and rank.
30. This proxy quality indicator assesses how successful universities are at providing higher education that enhances graduates' employability in the competitive labour market
31. <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/new-conditions-for-varsities-ranking-in-tanzania-2704402>.
32. According to my observation and experience, the process and procedures of appointing faculty deans and heads of department in private universities are less transparent and rigorous than in public universities, where search committees appointed by respective management using certain specified criteria, for example, academic seniority, are used to appoint deans and heads of departments. In many cases, appointment of middle-level academic leaders in private universities is at the discretion of the vice-chancellor.
33. This faculty has been hitherto elevated to a school.
34. This particular HoD had academic qualifications (Bachelor's to PhD) unrelated to the degree programmes offered by the department he was heading. This is an unusual phenomenon in universities, with implications for the HoD's capacity to provide strong academic leadership in the department, as well as to design, manage and implement academic programmes outside his/her specialisation.

35. The proxy indicators for research productivity are publications (journal articles published in international peer-reviewed journal, book chapters, books, research papers presented at international conferences, etc.)
36. This distribution pattern is not peculiar to SAUT; it applies to other private universities in Tanzania.
37. My observation (as an academic staff member in a public university) is that currently Tanzania's public universities are currently experiencing an unprecedented shortage of senior academic staff through what I call *internal brain drain* (Ishengoma 2007b). A good number of experienced senior academic staff in senior lecturer and professorial ranks have left universities (particularly the University of Dar es Salaam) for other internal greener pastures, such as politics or presidential appointments into other more lucrative government positions within and outside the country, leaving a major gap in senior academic leadership positions. Some academic departments have suffered more than others. This is a subject for more research.
38. A comprehensive research survey to determine the level of research productivity in both Tanzania private and public universities might be in order.
39. As I previously observed, academic ranks and research /academic productivity are positively correlated. See Michelsen and Hartwich 2004 (op.cit) and other authors cited in this work.
40. Moonlighting by academics in public universities in Tanzania is one of the dimensions of internal brain drain advocated by Ishengoma (2007b).
41. The shortage of senior academic staff to occupy middle-level academic leadership positions (i.e. deans and heads of department) is also noticed in public universities in Tanzania where in some universities lecturers are heads of department, directors and deputy directors of university-based institutes and centres. However, the problem is more acute in private universities.
42. A study by Mgaiwa and Ishengoma (2017) in three private universities revealed that lack of strong academic leadership was a constraint to institutional quality assurance processes and concluded that academic staff with minimal qualifications and experience cannot provide academic leadership to the level of deanship or other leadership positions in a university.

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** . Year of publication is not shown for SAUT prospectuses.