Journal of Higher Education in Africa

Revue de l'Enseignement Supérieur en Afrique

Papers from CODESRIA's
Meaning-making Research Initiatives (MRI)* and *Higher Education Policy Initiative (HEPI)

Articles du CODESRIA issus
des ***Initiatives de recherche pour la construction du sens (MRI)* et *Initiative politique pour l'enseignement supérieur (HEPI)***

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Large-scale Agricultural Land Investments and Employment Creation in Africa: Qualitative Insights from University Farms in Nigeria[1]

Felicia O. Olokoyo*, Evans S. Osabuohien**, Ibukun Beecroft***, Alhassan A. Karakara**** and Uchenna Efobi*****

Abstract

There has been an increasing interest in large-scale agricultural land investments (LALIs) in many African countries. Although higher education institutions play a significant role, there remains a lack of comprehensive research on the effects that large university farms have on households in the surrounding communities across Nigeria. Given this knowledge gap, this study investigates the effects of large scale university farms on employment in the host communities. The study provides qualitative insights into the implications of LALIs on employment. It was conducted at three university farms in Nigeria, chosen for their substantial agricultural landholdings. Data were collected through field observations, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Relevant findings, including access to and acquisitions of land, diverse employment, remuneration patterns, and implications are documented for the selected farms. The study concludes that although LALIs can create employment opportunities for their host communities, focusing on other areas such as improved remuneration, processing and packaging of farm produce, and social projects will boost their employment creation abilities.

Keywords: agricultural land investments; employment; processing and packaging; university farms; value chain

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Résumé

Les investissements fonciers agricoles à grande échelle (LALIs) font l'objet d'un intérêt croissant dans de nombreux pays africains. Bien que les établissements d'enseignement supérieur jouent un rôle important, il n'existe toujours pas d'études approfondies sur les effets des grandes exploitations agricoles universitaires sur les ménages des communautés environnantes au Nigeria. Compte tenu de ce manque de connaissances, cette étude examine les effets des grandes exploitations agricoles universitaires sur l'emploi dans les communautés d'accueil. L'étude fournit des informations qualitatives sur les implications des LALIs sur l'emploi. Elle a été menée dans trois fermes universitaires nigérianes sélectionnées en fonction de leur superficie et de la taille de leurs opérations. Les données ont été recueillies à partir d'observations sur le terrain, d'entretiens avec des informateurs clés et de discussions de groupe. Les résultats pertinents sur l'accès à et l'acquisition de terres, les divers modèles d'emploi et de rémunération et leurs implications pour les exploitations sélectionnées sont documentés. L'étude conclut que, bien que les (LALIs) sont en mesure de créer des opportunités d'emploi pour leurs communautés d'accueil, des domaines tels que l'amélioration de la rémunération, la transformation et le conditionnement de produits agricoles et les projets sociaux pourraient renforcer leurs capacités de création d'emplois.

Mots clés : investissements fonciers agricoles ; emploi ; traitement et conditionnement ; fermes universitaires ; chaîne de valeur.

Introduction

There has been a rapid increase in large-scale agricultural land investments (LALIs) in many African countries (Amanor 2012). However, there is limited evidence on the implications of such LALIs on households within the communities, especially with respect to employment creation. Given this gap, this study sought to explore the implications of such LALIs on employment creation in Nigeria, which is one of the top 10 LALI destinations in Africa (LMGO 2017; Osabuohien 2014). Similar research has been undertaken in a number of countries in Africa that are LALI destinations, such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia, (Ahlerup and Tengstam 2015; Barbanente and Aisbett 2016; ElHadary and Obeng-Odoom 2012; Osabuohien et al. 2019; Schoneveld et al. 2011). However, comparatively fewer comprehensve studies in Nigeria have been undertaken, especially in the context of university farms. Recent related studies include Edafe et al. (2023a) and Edafe et al (2023b). The former focuses on female employment outcomes associated with LALIs, while the latter examines food security implications. In

contrast, this present study concentrates on employment creation dynamics within university-managed agricultural farms (LALIs), using qualitative insights that are neither central nor developed in the extant studies.

More so, there is a new policy by the government implemented by the National Universities Commission (NUC), that all universities in Nigeria should develop a curriculum that embraces entrepreneurship and agricultural programmes (Olorundare and Kayode 2014). Consequently, the knowledge gained by undergraduate students makes them potential job creators, rather than job seekers. This is believed to lead to improved employment and economic development in Nigeria.

Furthermore, most of the research efforts that have been carried out on LALIs have hitherto focused on those owned by foreign investors either in part or wholly. The reason is not far-fetched as most databases (such as LMGO, Grain, Oxfam, International Land Coalition) that report investments on LALIs report mainly foreign investors' perspectives. Foreign investors also attract media attention compared to LALIs that are fully owned and operated by domestic investors, which are also contributing to the agricultural transformation taking place in many African countries (Karakara et al. 2021). Another aspect that is not often heard is the involvement in LALIs by institutions of higher learning, especially universities.

Universities are significant actors in regional and national development. The role they play are becoming increasingly important, especially with the privately-owned universities, which are established with core mandates, vision, and missions that drive their activities (Oanda et al. 2008). Private universities in Nigeria are becoming significantly innovative in carrying out their role of knowledge transfer, research, community impact initiatives, and economic, cultural and social development.[2] It is in this light that some private universities have moved beyond owning farmlands for demonstrative (or research) purposes to commercial and industrial activities to create employment and contribute their quota to ensure food security, among others.

Some universities in Nigeria have a primary focus on agriculture. There are also faculties of agriculture in most of the conventional universities. However, with the increase in the number of private universities in the country, there has been a paradigm shift. The increase in private universities has been supported mainly by the involvement of religious organisations in the delivery of higher education. Many of these institutions are set up to tackle perceived skill gaps in society, such as agricultural expertise. Previously, universities involved in agricultural activities (farming) were primarily set up for research purposes and to provide demonstration farms for training and

research.[3] The emergence of private universities[4] has brought a new phase to tertiary agricultural education in Nigeria as some of them not only have research farms but also have commercial farms, which operate as LALIs.

This study explores how LALIs owned by these universities contributed to employment creation in host communities. The hypotheses tested in this study, stated in the alternate, are:

i. LALIs provide employment opportunities for members in their host communities;

ii. LALIs improve the welfare of the individuals in their host communities. This is achieved using a qualitative technique based on field observations, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs).

The focus of the study on the employment aspects of LALIs was intuitive. This was because employment creation is usually an important factor in the promises made by potential investors when making negotiations (Nolte 2014; Osabuohien 2014; Osabuohien et al. 2015).[5] Another reason is the issue of unemployment in Nigeria – despite the increasing number of LALIs – as well as somewhat commendable economic growth experienced by the country prior to the 2016 recession and subsequent recovery (see Figures 1 and 2).

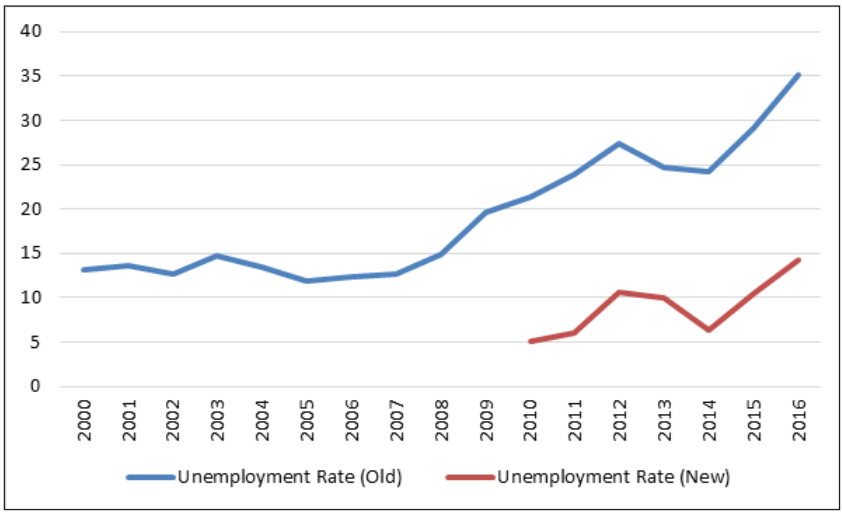

Figure 1: Unemployment rate in Nigeria

Note: unemployment rate (old) is based on the former calculation used before 2010, which combined both unemployed and underemployed individuals, while unemployment rate (new) is based on the current calculation that separates unemployed individuals from those who are underemployed.

Source: computed by the authors using data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2017)

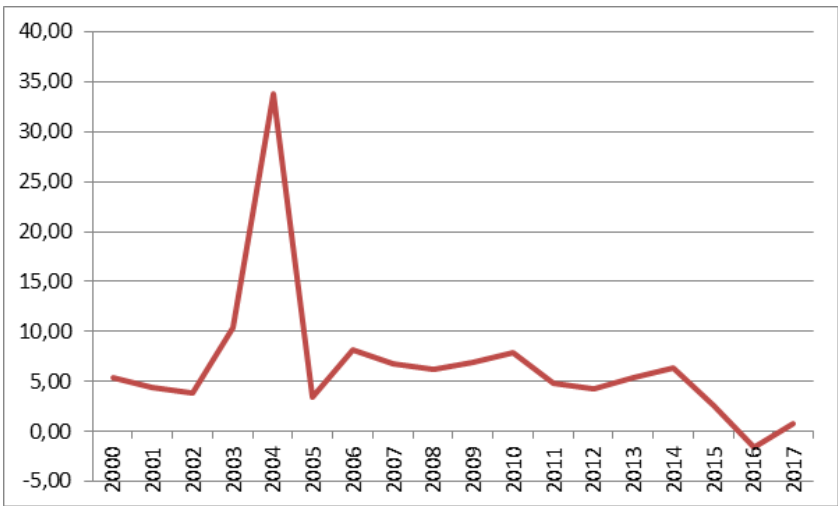

Figure 2: Nigeria's GDP growth (annual %)

Source: computed by the authors using data from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (2018)

Literature and Theoretical Framework

Understanding LALIs and their drivers

LALIs are the acquisition of 200 or more hectares of land through lease or purchase, for the primary purpose of agricultural use (LMGO 2017).[6] It differs from the term 'land grabbing', which often means taking possession of and/or controlling a scale of land for commercial/industrial agricultural production that is disproportionate in size in comparison to the average landholding in the region (Hall 2011). Land grabbing in simple form is a situation where locally used land is leased or sold to foreign investors (Daniel 2012; Osabuohien et al. 2019; Zoomers 2010).

A recent land rush to middle and low-income countries has resulted in the negotiation of an estimated 50 to 80 million hectares of land by international investors (African Union 2011; HLPE 2011; Wily 2012). This rise in LALIs has been motivated by various incidences such as food price crises, an increase in commodity prices, and the failure of financial markets as seen from the global economic crisis. Others include support for the use of biofuels and the relatively low prices of land on the continent (Anseeuw et al. 2013; Borras et al. 2010; Cotula et al. 2009; Deininger et al. 2011; Nolte et al. 2016). Population growth has amplified the global

demand for food, while volatile oil prices have redirected most countries towards opting for alternative energy sources (Aabø and Kring 2012). These have aggravated the investments in land, particularly in Africa.

LALIs: Peril or Promise

There have been considerations about the socio-economic impact of LALIs on households and smallholder farmers in the communities in which they are located, such as the rural areas. Some studies have alluded to the benefits of LALIs, including rural development, increased agricultural production, and employment creation. One such study was carried out by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO 2012), in which they concluded that investments in the agricultural sector (i.e., LALIs) in Ghana contributed to more than 180,000 jobs between 2001 and 2008. Zhan et al. (2015) examined the impact of larger-scale agricultural investments on communities in South-east Asia and observed that direct employment amounted to about 7,000 people, while indirect employment totalled an estimated 47,000 people. Cotula et al. (2009) noted the potential of LALIs to increase government revenue and gross domestic product (GDP) growth, as well as leading to economic development and improved livelihoods in rural areas. Finally, Odhiambo (2011) suggested that LALIs could create links with the international market for agricultural produce, stabilise global food prices, and enhance opportunities for employment in agriculture.

However, while Cotula et al. (2009) acknowledged the positive benefits that land investments could engender, their work also cautioned that where host governments do not negotiate favourable terms for their citizens, LALIs may yield adverse outcomes instead. In the same vein, concerns about the possible risks of LALIs have been identified to include the infringement on the rights and livelihoods of the rural poor who depend on the land for their subsistence (Aabø and Kring 2012; Osabuohien et al. 2019). One noteworthy example in the Nigerian context was put forward by Aigbokhan and Ola (2015), who submitted that Presco Industries' agricultural land investment in Edo State failed to enhance the livelihoods of nearby community households through employment. Relatedly, Schoneveld et al. (2011) noted that LALIs in Ghana instigated increased rural poverty, especially for women, due to their focus on the acquisition of customary land, thereby depriving households of their livelihoods. Okuro (2015) observes that LALIs could jeopardise the welfare of the rural poor by robbing them of the safety net they enjoyed from farming on their lands.

In order to address the potential threat to poor rural communities in developing nations due to increasing interest in their farmlands, some studies have been conducted to guide policymaking on the employment and welfare effects of LALIs. In this context, Ahlerup and Tengstam (2015) focused on the short-term and long-term relationships between agricultural investments and farm wage incomes from commercial farms. They found that there was moderately positive long-run effect of agricultural investments on commercial farm wage incomes for smallholders in Zambia. The study identified that on average households that were 'land-poor' were able to gain from agricultural investments, at least in terms of employment opportunities. Christensen et al. (2017) explored the welfare implications of LALIs on prior land users. The authors employed the difference-in-differences approach to compare changes in land investment before and after the 2007/2008 global food crises across private property rights and customary system regimes in Liberia. The study concluded that farmers tend to lose out in customary systems where local authorities serve as middlemen, who siphon off rents by driving a wedge between the land prices paid by investors and the sums received by farmers. Other studies like Khadjavi et al. (2017), Nolte and Ostermeier (2017), and Barbanente and Aisbett (2016) addressed both the employment and welfare implications of LALIs and found LALIs to have a more significant effect on the employment nature of communities with a high level of LALIs than communities with a low level. Similarly, the welfare implications were observed to be more pronounced in areas with a high level of LALIs than in areas with a low level.

Empirical studies with precise reference to Nigeria include the works of Mustapha (2011) and Odoemene (2012), which focused on Shonga, Kwara State, and in which the activities of white Zimbabwean farmers, food and human security issues were examined. In another study, Aigbokhan and Ola (2015) focused on Edo State and investigated the impact of LALIs on household livelihood by considering Obaretin and Ologbo communities. In Olokoyo et al. (2015), the impact of land deals on income sustainability of smallholder farmers and landowners was studied in a rural community in Ogun State. Finally, Osabuohien (2014) conducted a nationally representative analysis in which the author emphasised the role of local institutions in influencing the location of LALIs in Nigerian communities. In contrast to these primarily quantitative studies, this present study takes the literature on LALIs forward by providing qualitative insights into the implications of LALIs in Nigeria. Furthermore, this study brings a different perspective to the debate on LALIs by considering the employment effects of university-based LALIs on households in host communities using both qualitative and comparative modes.

Theoretical Framework

The theories that this study engage as the framework for the analysis are highlighted in this sub-section.

Land tenure and university – host community relations

For centuries universities have been engaged as teaching, knowledge generation, and research centres across the globe. However, in recent times, universities have been challenged to consider their role in society and the type of relationship that they develop with their 'various constituents, stakeholders, or communities' (Jongbloed et al. 2008). This has spurred the relationship between universities and the host communities. For example, when the government asks for land to site a university, host communities are denied large tracks of land. As a result, community members and authorities have high expectations that such institutions will offer opportunities (employment, amenities, corporate social responsibility, socio-economic development, among others) to them. Universities could therefore use their farm investments to expand and improve their role in host communities further.

There are different theories about the implications of LALIs on the local people who reside where such land deals are located. Some theoretical approaches conclude that the type of land tenure system influences the effect of land acquisitions. The enclosed model has it that a shift from communal to private property will lead to the displacement of smallholders and lower their standard of living and job opportunities (Mutopo et al. 2015). Platteau (1996) in the evolutionary theory concludes that there is movement from communal to private property and that once land assumes a scarcity value, its demand increases, thus strengthening the land security for smallholders.

Welfare-enhancing Theory

The welfare-enhancing approach is another theory on LALIs. This theory, as espoused by Deininger et al. (2011) assumes that the property rights system is already established and land investment can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes for investors and community members. Smallholders can benefit from the land rental and contract farming, on the one hand, while, in the other hand; wage payment would allow landless members of the community, such as women, to benefit from their labour supply. LALIs can improve infrastructure, market access, boost production, lead to rural development, create employment opportunities and increase welfare.

De Soto Theory

The De Soto Theory, as described by Castellanet and Diepart (2015), advocates that land privatisation encourages access to credit. It opines that privatising land facilitates investments and increases production and productivity. However, the link is not always demonstrated in practice as land privatisation tends to encourage speculations on peri-urban lands and seems to benefit the urban middle class rather than the farmers. More so, in a situation where communities manage common-pool resources (i.e., land) in an efficient way, their privatisation might cause a long-term decline of the resources. The private investors may also face insecurity if the concession contracts on the land titled are not respected by the host community.

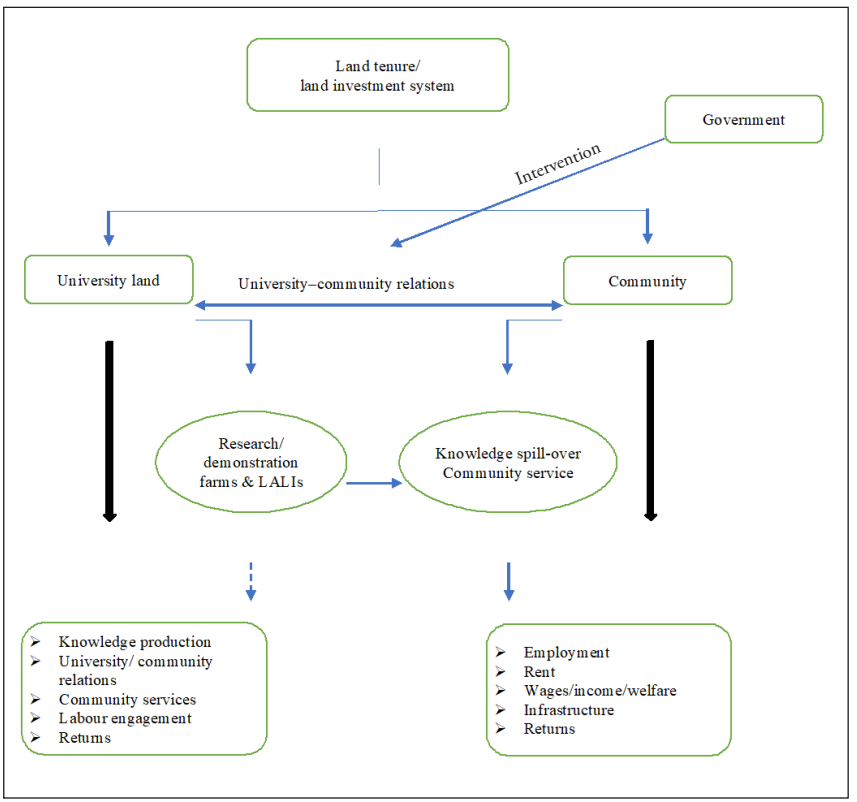

Figure 3: Land tenure system and university-host community

The theoretical framework for this study follows that of the welfare-enhancing theory, in that the agricultural land that these universities acquired have promises that will benefit the host communities. Hence, these land deals can enhance welfare and create employment, as depicted in Figure 3. This theoretical framework assumes that property rights are already defined, the market for lands functions, and information is accessible. The relationship between the community and the university can thus be welfare enhancing. However, where some of the conditions are not met or there are rising tensions between the community and university, the government will need to intervene to resolve any impasse.

As depicted in Figure 3, if the land contract system is good, and there is good collaboration between the university farm and community members, the university stands the chance of enhancing the relations they have with the community. University farms could enhance the creation of knowledge as they engage in farm experiments and make returns on farming activities. Such farms tend to also benefit host communities. For example, they create employment for members of the host community,[7] landowners enjoy rents, wages are paid to labourers, and incomes are earned. Smallholders may enjoy agricultural technology spill-over (e.g., improved seedlings, methods of farming, fertilisation) from the university farm and other infrastructural provisions as universities may engage in social responsibility projects beyond the farm. Where such benefits are not forthcoming or where such land contracts raise tendencies, the government intervenes.[8]

Method of Analysis

This study adopt qualitative analysis to explore not only the number of persons employed but, more importantly, the nature of employment provided by LALIs, which cannot be captured with quantification as 'not everything that counts can be counted' (Albert Einstein quoted in Toye 2015: 7).

Sample Size

The study presents the case of three private universities with sizable farms that can be classified as LALIs based on the fact that the farms operated on a commercial basis, unlike most public university farms that operate mainly as demonstration/research farms. The selected university farms are Afe Babalola University Farm (ABUAD Farm), Landmark University Farm (LMU Farm), and Covenant University Farm (CU Farm). Each of the three university farms has agricultural land that spans over 700 hectares and all institutions are vigorous proponents of agricultural entrepreneurship.

Interview Instruments

The workers at each of the three farms were part of the respondents for the study. They included (a) farm labourers (wage workers), (b) farm supervisors, (c) farm managers, and (d) others (e.g., former workers).[9] The interview guides[10] included questions on socio-demographics, educational status, households, employment, income, expenditure, welfare details, and about the farms.

Some of the respondents were also interviewed (in each of the categories) to obtain further information, which the questionnaire may not have covered. This was done to address some questions on LALIs that only the farm managers were required to answer. Some of the information entailed the ownership of the farm, date and mode of acquisition, commencement of operations, activities engaged, expansion plans, staffing, organisational policies, the proportion of land under cultivation, compensation for former land users, and relationship with the community.

In selecting the participants for the FGDs, non-probability sampling technique (purposive sampling) was used. This technique was used because the probability of other stakeholder groups cannot be determined. Hence, individuals are left to choose whether to participate in the study or not. Similarly, for the KIIs, individuals interviewed were those deemed to have sufficient information on the farm as well as their operations. Hence, the respective farm managers (or assistant farm managers), other officers in the farm such as unit/departmental (marketing/accounting, and processing) heads were interviewed. FGDs were also conducted among the respondents in small groups between five and seven persons (with the females alone, the males alone, and both males and females) as well as community association leaders. The KIIs and FGDs allowed the respondents to speak freely on other concerns about employment and remuneration related to the farms. Texts from the qualitative data were transcribed, identified, and analysed through thematic analysis. The thematic analysis focuses on the respondents' perception of the farms' contribution to employment, nature of employment, wages, and welfare outcomes.

Results and Discussions

This section reports the results and discusses the findings from the analysis carried out. Table 1 provides a summary of the main information and activities of the three farms.

Land access and acquisition

In this sub-section, the location, processes involved in the land acquisition, and sizes of the selected university farms are briefly discussed.

ABUAD Farm

ABUAD Farm has a total size of about 2,000 hectares of land, located in Ado-Ekiti of Ekiti State (South-west Nigeria). The farm commenced operations in 2010 around the time the university opened up to its students. A second farm at Ikere started before the university but has now become a part of the university's farms. The land used for farming activities was acquired from the original owners who were then employed as workers on the farm.

CU Farm

CU Farm spans over 2,000 hectares of land located within four communities in the Ota area of Ogun State (South-west Nigeria). The farm commenced operation in 2009, seven years after the university was established. This farmland was acquired as part of the total land owned by a religious organisation, which is to be used for various purposes including the university facilities, housing estate, and other church facilities. In the interim, however, it was essential to keep the land in use to prevent encroachment from indigenes. This spurred the start-up of farm operations, which includes perimeter fencing with the aid of palm oil trees to create a natural boundary for the farm.

LMU Farm

LMU Farm was acquired in the year 2000. It is located in Omu-Aran, Kwara State (North-central Nigeria) and began its operations in 2010, just one year before the university opened up its campus to students. The farm is 1,100 hectares, with 295 hectares located at Landmark University comprising 80 per cent cultivation activities. Over the years, other farmlands were acquired in Eleyin (385 hectares) and Agbonda (390 hectares). 'Both Eleyin and Agbonda farmlands were acquired and fully paid for in 2016', says a former farm director. The farm was purchased from the community based on consensus. There were several promises made to the landowners that incentivised them to offer their land at a highly discounted price. In fact, to date, some community members are of the belief that the land was virtually given 'free' to the university due to the 'give-away' prices at which the land was bought.

The largest of the three farms is CU Farm, while the smallest is LMU Farm. All farms have their farming activities in more than one location. CU Farm commenced operation one year before both ABUAD and LMU farms, and while both CU and LMU farms are owned by a religious organisation, a private individual whom the university is named after owns ABUAD Farm.

Table 1: Summary of key findings from the university farms

Details	University farms		
	ABUAD Farm	CU Farm	LMU Farm
Location	Ado-Ekiti; Ekiti State; South-west Nigeria	Ota; Ogun State; South-west Nigeria	Omu-Aran; Kwara State; North-central, Nigeria
Ownership	Private – Individual	Private – Religious organisation	Private – Religious organisation
Year of acquisition	2009	1998, on a continuous basis	2000, 2016
Year university started	2010	2002	2011
Year farm operations commenced	2010	2009	2010
Size acquired	2,000 hectares	2,000+ hectares	1,100 hectares
Current size of operations	hectares	725 hectares	880 hectares
Major activities	Crops; poultry farming; fish farming; woodworks; processing of produce	Crops; processing of produce	Crops; poultry farming; fish farming; processing of produce
Major crops	Maize; cassava; vegetables: okra; pepper; rice; soya beans; watermelon; plantain; palm oil; moringa; mango; wheat; tomato; pawpaw; mushroom	Maize; cassava; vegetables; okra; pepper; watermelon; plantain; palm oil; cucumber	Maize; cassava; vegetables; okra; pepper; rice; soya beans; pineapple
Animals	Fish; chickens; quails; pigs	None	Fish; chickens; turkeys
Processed products	Moringa range of products; mango juice; plantain chips; furniture; smoked fish; fish pepper-soup; eggs; poultry feed; fish feed	Plantain chips; palm oil	Smoked fish; smoked chicken; frozen chicken; eggs; poultry feed; garri

Current employment	Up to 500 workers	Up to 80 workers	Up to 130 workers
Qualification for tenured staff	Secondary school certificate; Bachelors; National Certificate for Education (NCE); Ordinary National Diploma (OND); Higher National Diploma (HND)	Graduates in agricultural related disciplines	Bachelors; Masters; Ordinary National Diploma (OND); Higher National Diploma (HND)
Qualification for casual staff	No qualification	No qualification	No qualification
Type of workers	Tenured (full-time); casual; Industrial Training (IT)	Tenured (full-time; regular & non-regular); casual; Industrial Training (IT)	Tenured (full-time); casual; Industrial Training (IT)
Working hours	7:00am–4:00pm	8:00am–5:00pm	7:00am–5:00pm
Wage structure & career prospects	Same as university structure	Different from university structure	Different from university structure
Wage range[a]	₦35,000–₦ 94,000 (US$98.59–US$264.79)	₦16,000–₦70,000 (US$45.07–US$197.18)	₦16,000–₦100,000 (US$45.07–US$281.69)
Employment density[b]	0.50	0.11	0.15
Pension plan[c]	Available for tenured staff	Not defined	Not defined
Incentives	Live animals (fish or chickens) Bonuses (if target is exceeded)	Farm products can be sold at discounted prices to members of staff	Live animals (chickens); 1%–5% commission on bulk purchases (chicken 200kg; eggs 200 crates)

Note: [a]The average exchange rate was ₦355 to US$1 at the time the fieldwork was conducted. [b]Employment density is computed by dividing the current employment by the current size of land in operations. [c]The Pension Reform Act of 2014 has the provision that private sector employers with a minimum of 15 employees should subscribe to the contributory pension scheme where the employer and employee contribute a minimum of 10% and 8%, respectively of the employee's monthly emolument (see KPMG 2014; Pension Reform Act 2014; for details)

LMU Farm

LMU Farm was acquired in the year 2000. It is located in Omu-Aran, Kwara State (North-central Nigeria) and began its operations in 2010, just one year before the university opened up its campus to students. The farm is 1,100 hectares, with 295 hectares located at Landmark University comprising 80 per cent cultivation activities. Over the years, other farmlands were acquired in Eleyin (385 hectares) and Agbonda (390 hectares). 'Both Eleyin and Agbonda farmlands were acquired and fully paid for in 2016', says a former farm director. The farm was purchased from the community based on consensus. There were several promises made to the landowners that incentivised them to offer their land at a highly discounted price. In fact, to date, some community members are of the belief that the land was virtually given 'free' to the university due to the 'give-away' prices at which the land was bought.

The largest of the three farms is CU Farm, while the smallest is LMU Farm. All farms have their farming activities in more than one location. CU Farm commenced operation one year before both ABUAD and LMU farms, and while both CU and LMU farms are owned by a religious organisation, a private individual whom the university is named after owns ABUAD Farm.

Status of Farm Operations

This sub-section briefly highlights the operational status of the selected university farms as well as the kind of activities that they are engaged in.

ABUAD Farm

ABUAD Farm engages in both crop and animal husbandry (see Table 1). Units at ABUAD farms include: two fish farms, a poultry farm, a piggery, a feed mill, a moringa farm and factory, a mango juice factory, a plantain chips unit, an export division, a furniture unit, a mushroom farm, a bee farm, silos, and the ABUAD Tourist Village. The ABUAD Tourist Village is where the staff of the university, as well as outsiders, come to relax and are served freshly prepared catfish in pepper soup. At the export division, wood is prepared and exported to countries like South Africa and South Korea. This division obtains wood from the farm, which is processed as intermediate goods to be exported. The bee farm produces honey for commercial purposes. The furniture unit (carpentry and joinery unit) uses some of the farm's wood to produce all the furniture used by the university. These products represent the final goods from the wood obtained on the farm. The research unit at ABUAD Farm was able to decipher the essential

latent attributes of the moringa plant and 'this is processed to consumer products', stated the farm manager enthusiastically. The products from the moringa plants include moringa oil, which is an antioxidant, moringa tea, moringa hair shampoo, moringa hair conditioner, moringa body butter, moringa hair cream, moringa bathing soap, and moringa powder, which may be used as food spice. The farm has numerous customers within and outside the state. They have suppliers who come to buy their products on a large scale and sell to retailers. Most of the farm's products are also consumed within the university.

CU Farm

CU Farm is engaged in the cultivation of various crops (Table 1). The primary outlet of the farms' products is local markets (CU cafeteria and eateries around the community, especially plantain, watermelon, and vegetables). In recent times, some companies regularly come to buy maize and cassava. At the onset of the farm's activities, community members would come to buy fresh maize for consumption. However, the maize is now left to dry and sold to companies that need them for further production as flour, which is far more profitable and sustainable for the farm. The plan is to focus on the production of maize, cassava, and palm oil as these have better financial returns. There are also plans to have a processing plant for plantains and cassava. The one for making plantain chips is already in place, and it supplies to shopping malls around the area. The farm depends heavily on rainfall as well as skeletal irrigation using hose/pipe due to the mandate of not erecting permanent structures as there are plans underway to use part of the land for real estate purposes.

LMU Farm

Like ABUAD Farm, LMU Farm is involved in both crop farming and animal farming (poultry and fish). Animal husbandry (high-breed goats and cattle breeding) was yet to commence due to high cost and adaptability. 'There was an initial plan to import high-breed goats from Zimbabwe, but the plan was dropped due to high cost and adaptability of the animals', as told by one of the interviewed personnel. The mandate crops are cassava, rice, and maize tailored to providing foods to student population, the immediate community, and industrial sector. Given that cassava has four different varieties used for households and industrial consumption, its cultivation is often determined by demands from both markets (that is, availability of off-takers). Manual labour is used to peel cassava for a mechanised plant to

process it into *garri* (dried and coarsely ground cassava). While most crops are planted at the farms within the university, cassava is planted at Eleyin, which has only 50 per cent cultivation activities. Farming activities were yet to commence at Agbonda. For its operations, the farm used tractors for planting and the application of fertilisers, while pesticides with herbicides were used for weeding.

The target markets for LMU Farm's produce are Lagos, Ilorin, Ondo Oshogbo, and its host community. However, the road network to the farm was a negative psychic for customers wanting to purchase products directly from the farm. Most of the marketing for LMU Farm was done by word of mouth as the farm's website was still under development. However, ABUAD Farm had a functional website that showcases the products the farm has to offer.

Of the three farms considered in this study, ABUAD Farm had a wider variety of products and more finished products that had been processed for final consumption, particularly the range of moringa products, mango juice, plantain chips, and even the fish pepper-soup served at the ABUAD Tourist Village.

Employment Creation by the Farms

How the selected university farms contributed to employment creation in their host communities as well as the type of employment created are discussed in this section.

ABUAD Farm

ABUAD Farm had about 500 workers. There were about 18–20 workers at the fishery, with the feed mill having 11 workers who worked daily from 7 am to 4 pm. There were four workers at the plantain unit who were assisted by IT students from time to time. When extra hands were required, the farm employed '*mallams*' (casual/cheap labour) to assist with the workload. In terms of employee qualification, the manager responded, saying, 'We employ all categories of staff at ABUAD Farms. The qualification of staff ranged from school certificate holders to bachelor's degree (BSc.) holders. Some workers had the National Certificate for Education (NCE), Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) qualifications'. All full-time workers paid tax to the Ekiti State government, making the founder of ABUAD the highest taxpayer in the state. However, the farm manager pointed out that ABUAD did not enjoy any support from the state.

CU Farm

The employees at CU Farm were categorised as tenured (regular and non-regular) and casual. The regular tenured workers were those in the administrative arm, including the manager, assistant manager, and supervisors. The non-regular tenured workers were those with some technical skills comprising the storekeeper, cleaners, and mechanics. The difference was that the regular tenured staff were always needed while, depending on the situation, the non-regular tenured would be replaced. The tenured workers employed were graduates with a background in agricultural-related disciplines and their working hours were usually from 8 am to 5 pm.

The casual staff are also known as labourers and they are paid based on a given task. They are categorised as either skilled or unskilled contract workers. They are usually comprised of migrants from neighbouring countries like Togo and Benin, and they have some expertise in a given farming operation such as weeding and harvesting. They are usually given the job per hectare on a fixed amount, and they determine their own time to start and finish work. However, their leader motivates them to work as their speed determines how soon they finish the allocated work; if they get it done swiftly, they may get an extra reward. One of the supervisors usually oversees their operations to ensure that it is carried out as agreed. The unskilled contract workers are those recruited to do a particular task. Trainings are conducted for casual workers in-house. The vendors can also be categorised under this group as they receive their income on commission. 'There are more of women working on the farm, although we also have some youths and a few university students on industrial training', said one female worker.

LMU Farm

The university appointed the farm director at LMU Farm (who reported to the Chancellor through the Vice-Chancellor). At the same time, the full-time workers were engaged by the university, which include seven graduates of Landmark University. There was, however, no preference for employing LMU graduates as workers were employed as and when needed. Casual workers were engaged on a three-month working period subject to renewal based on expertise and good behaviour. The farm also employed graduates from other universities for industrial attachment (that is, IT). At the time of this study, the farm was being managed by a consultant, and as at April

2018, a farm Board was not in place', said a one-time manager at the farm. The staff strength in some of the units were: 10 workers and one supervisor in the processing and cold room; six workers in the feed mill; 10 staff working with the broilers and 20 staff working with the layers in the poultry farm and 14 staff at the cassava unit.

Regarding academic quaalifications of staff, supervisors had a BSc., with other staff having master's degrees (MSc.), HND, and OND qualifications. The farm's workforce included 38 workers who were unit heads, supervisors, accountants, and managers. There were also casual staff and contract staff who are mostly unskilled workers. Most of the workers at the unskilled level learnt on the job (e.g., feeding of birds, cleaning of the pens, ascertaining when birds are ill) and so there were no particular qualifications required for employment. For instance, some of the cassava peeling was done manually (mostly women). The official working hours at LMU Farm were from 7 am to 5 pm but often extend to about 10 pm during exigency periods. Shifts (i.e., rotation) occur at the poultry unit.

ABUAD Farm employed considerably more workers (500 staff) than the other farms in this study. Working hours were similar among the three farms at nine hours each for ABUAD and CU farms, and 10 hours for LMU Farm daily. However, the staff at LMU Farm pointed out that they sometimes had to stay for up to 15 hours a day in cases of urgent demand. All farms engaged skilled and unskilled labour in their operations. Besides, the information in Table 1 reveal that ABUAD Farm had the highest employment density, which was about 4.55 and 3.33 times more than those of CU Farm and LMU Farm, respectively. This was because ABUAD Farm had more varieties of processed products compared to others. This implies that emphasis on the processing of products by LALIs will go a long way in increasing their employment levels.

Impact of university farms on employment creation

The university farms in this study had increased the level of employment in their host communities. This is because most of the workers were people who were formerly unemployed, or who practised subsistence farming before the establishment of the farms. For instance, some of the farmworkers at ABUAD Farm were subsistence farmers who had no land but were trespassing and illegally cultivating land not belonging to them. These lands are part of those that were later acquired by ABUAD. However, rather than sending the farmers away, ABUAD absorbed them into their operations to on the farm legally. Further, several other workers had been

employed since the commencement of the farm's operations. There were less than 100 subsistence farmers on the land before the farm started in 2010, but as of 2018, the farm had 500 workers. There were also some casual employees who worked at the farm from time to time. Similarly, CU Farm and LMU Farm provided job opportunities for some of the unemployed within their vicinities, although on a smaller scale. In two of the three farms studied, the employment of females was lower than that of males mainly due to the laborious nature of farm work.

It can be noted that the three farms tended to employ some contract or casual workers as direct labourers. In contrast, the more experienced workers were engaged as farm supervisors, machine operators, salespersons, handle processing, and packaging of by-products. These were not necessarily from the indigene youths in the community as some of the experienced workers, particularly the skilled workers, migrated from other communities. Aigbokhan and Ola (2015) observed a similar concern that the LALI owned by Presco Industries in Edo State mainly employed contract workers. The findings of this study on employment creation lend some credence to the welfare-enhancing theory, which posits that land investment can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes for both investors and community members. For the community, there is increased employment of members formally engaged in small-scale farming (usually at the subsistence level). The findings, however, contradict the prediction of the enclosed model but support the evolutionary theory.

Concerning the relationship among the university farms and the host communities, the Ota youth leader (where CU Farm is located) stated that employment generation, food availability, and communal development were some of the benefits enjoyed by the community. Such benefits strengthen the relationship between the university and community members. This also follows the supposition of the welfare-enhancing theory as both parties involved become better-off. To improve community relations with LMU Farm, a key informant advised that the university should embark on small projects for the community, employ more indigenes at the skilled level, and grant scholarships to the youth. This serves as a form of corporate social responsibility by the university to the community. It is important to note that the farms had more to do to improve university–community relations, to enhance the goodwill of the universities. This is essential because cordial community relations with LALIs (universities in this case) is vital to the overall success of the farms (LALIs).

Remuneration and Welfare

ABUAD Farm

When asked about the salary structure on the farm, the manager explained that, 'All the workers at ABUAD Farms were paid a monthly salary using a similar structure to that of the university'. This implies that a BSc. holder was on a similar salary scale (level 8) as staff in the university, while an HND holder was on level 7 as obtained in the university (ABUAD). The least qualified staff earned ₦35,000 (US$98.59), and the highest qualified staff earned ₦94,000 (US$264.79). The workers were paid between 26th and 27th of each month and were never owed any arrears from their salary. This was a contrast to the Ekiti State government, which at the time of this study owed about eight months of its workers' salaries. All staff were permanent, and enjoyed a pension contribution from their employer. Further, staff were given various unit/departmental bonuses whenever they generated more beyond expectation. For example, during festive seasons (e.g., Christmas), staff received a part of the produce from their unit as gifts. These included rice, oil, pig, chicken, and fish. Where a unit did not produce perishable edible items (e.g., feed mill), they received a live chicken each.

CU Farm

The regular tenured workers (including the manager, assistant manager, and supervisors) had fixed salaries. A former assistant farm manager noted that salaries at this level ranged from ₦50,000 (US$140.85) to ₦70,000 (US$197.18). The non-regular tenured workers also had fixed salary per month, although they were not always actively engaged. The unskilled contract workers are paid usually between ₦800 (US$2.25) and ₦1200 (US$3.38) per day, depending on their skills skill (e.g., mechanics, driver of farm machinery). The vendors got who old produce (such as vegetables) on behalf of the farm were paid through commissions. Staff members were allowed to purchase products from the farm on discounted price.

On speaking with one of the staff at CU Farm, one woman complained that work is not guaranteed as workers are called and dismissed at any time. There was also little or no incentive, making workers unhappy. Further, she mentioned that there had not been any pay rise for some workers who had worked for more than three years at the farm. It was also gathered that there was once a reduction in the supervisors' pay, and there were differences in pay among the same level colleagues.

LMU Farm

The university determine the salary and allowances of the director and full-time staff. The average salary for full-time staff was about ₦100,000 (US$281.69). The supervisors were paid at a little less than ₦2,000 (US$5.63) daily, amounting to an average of ₦54,500 (US$153) monthly. The highest-paid supervisor earned a little above ₦80,000 (US$225.35). The casual staff were paid ₦1,000 (US$2.81) per day, which totalled ₦25,000 (US$70.42) per month and contract staff were paid on an 'on-the-job' basis. 'Contract staff were employed on a need basis, and they are paid off once they get the job done', said a former manager at LMU Farm. The unskilled workers earned an average of ₦600 (US$1.69) to ₦700 (US$1.97) daily payable at the end of each month. For example, the workers at the Cassava Processing Unit earned ₦700 (US$1.97) for peeling 300 kg of cassava tubers in a day. This amounted to ₦2.33 per 1 kg peeled. This sums up to between ₦16,000 (US$45.07) and ₦18,000 (US$50.70) for most workers, and up to ₦22,000 (US$56.34) for some, depending on the number of days worked. Most of the workers worked seven days a week, particularly those who worked at the animal section. However, work on weekends was limited.

When asked by management staff at LMU Farm to compare their wages to other farms, he complained that the pay was not good enough. To use his words, 'It is terrible'. He, however, assured that proposals had been made in that respect, but approvals and implementation had been slow so far. He mentioned that because the farm reports to the university rather than directly to the proprietor base, he had limited authority in implementing specific changes, including the amount workers were paid.

Although there is no Christmas allowance, workers received a live chicken and/or fish at the end of the year to celebrate the Christmas holidays. 'This was stipulated in everyone's employment contract, so they were aware of their annual entitlements', said a management respondent. According to the staff at LMU, there were no staff incentives for meeting or exceeding targets. The farm manager, however, gave a contrary response stating that there was a commission of 1–5 per cent on bulk purchases made to the workers who brought in customers. Bulk purchases were calculated as any sales from 200 kg and above for chicken, and from 200 crates and above for eggs. Noting the issue of leave allowances, a staff hinted that, 'Since the inception of the farm, leave allowance had only been paid twice to workers'. Also, for the first time since inception, workers were enjoying the annual leave. The pension scheme for the full-time staff at the farm was applicable to all staff of Landmark University but did not apply to casual staff.

There was no staff canteen on the farm where workers can buy their meals. There was also no medical clinic and workers had to find a means to get to the LMU hospital located within the university campus, which took several minutes walking. On the remuneration structure of the three farms, it was observed that ABUAD Farm proved to be the highest paying of the farms. All farms provided pension only for full-time staff. All farms provided some form of incentive in terms of gifts and/or commissions, even though these were deemed insufficient by the workers, and the farms could do better to boost workers' commitment.

Summary and Conclusion

This study has brought some insights to light on the nexus between LALIs and employment creation using the case of university farms, which makes it unique and different from extant studies. The summary of the key findings is highlighted herein.

Aligning the results of this research with the hypotheses stated, it was established that LALIs had created employment opportunities for the members in their host communities and improved the overall welfare of the individuals through wage payments, food production, and communal development. However, there remain some other issues to be addressed by the LALIs. The conversations with staff at CU Farm and LMU Farm suggested that there was a need for attention to the welfare package of the staff, which is crucial to their job satisfaction. Without this, there will be a high turnover rate due to migration to other sectors with better welfare packages. Notably, there is a need for improvement in the pay structure of university farms. Other farms can take a cue from ABUAD Farm, which paid its workers based on the same salary scale as the university. This is likely to encourage more individuals with a flair for farming to engage in farming activities, as an unfavourable pay structure does not disadvantage them. Further, better pay will serve as an incentive to workers to deliver enhanced results that will, in turn, increase the productivity of the farms. Were more agriculturally inclined jobs to pay wages and salaries similar to what obtains in the white-collar jobs, the agricultural sector will be able to attract more workers into the sector.

In addition to an excellent pay structure, the provision of pension plans for workers would provide a sense of belonging and a form of job security for employees. Thus, a pension plan (for example, the contributory pension scheme that is operational for firms employing a minimum of 15 employees as contained in the Pension Reform Act of 2014) for LALI jobs will make it more attractive and enhance the employment effect of LALIs, and the

productivity of the agriculture sector, in general. This should be encouraged among university farms, mainly based on the fact that the universities whose name they bear are formal establishments with more than 15 employees.

The line of reporting on the farm can affect the progress of its activities. Notably, ABUAD Farm reported directly to the proprietor base of the university, and this helped improve processing times in the farm's activities. This is unlike LMU Farm where the manager complained of having to report through the university, rather than directly to the proprietor base, which has caused a number of delays due to bureaucracy.

In conclusion, this study concludes that LALIs could employ a sizable number of individuals in their host communities as well as those in the neighbouring communities. However, the extent to which this can take place depends largely on their employment density, which is closely related to the level at which they are able to engage in the processing and packaging of their farm produce. The implication is that placing emphasis on the processing and packaging LALI products will boost their employment creation abilities. Added to the above is the need for the LALIs to do more in the area of workers' remuneration, particularly in their pay structure, which is essential in increasing employee commitment. Lastly, LALIs should embark on more social and infrastructural projects that will benefit their host communities.

As a suggestion for future research, it will be essential to compare the employment level (intensity), remuneration package, as well as the productivity of university farms with other LALIs that are not university-owned to further explore the issue. This can be done using mixed of analysis to complement the findings documented in this present study.

Notes

1. Two related papers, notably, Edafe et al., (2023a; 2023b) that built upon the CODESRIA–MRI project idea have been published elsewhere. The views expressed are the authors'.
2. During the COVID-19 lockdown that resulted in the closure of schools, available evidence indicated that many private universities where able to engage their students through virtual learning unlike their counterparts in public universities.
3. In many private universities, they use the term 'research farms' for where they teach practical skills on agricultural practices to students and researchers; conventional universities generally call them 'demonstration farms'.
4. As of September 2018, 75 out of the 165 universities in Nigeria are private (http://nuc.edu.ng/#). In 2019, the Times Higher Education Ranking of Universities designated a private university as top of three Nigerian

universities listed in the global ranking (https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/covenant-university; https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/286731-three-nigerian-universities-ranked-among-worlds-best.html).

5. This was also noted in interviews with the workers in the farms as well as the community and youth leaders.
6. Some others like Cotula et al. (2009) conceptualised LALIs as deals/acquisitions involving outright purchases and lease of land areas over 1,000 hectares. This study follows the definition by LMGO (2017) of LALIs as above 200 hectares because 200 hectares is quite sizable enough given the recommended land per household of 2 hectares in Africa (Africa Union 2011).
7. There is also the possibility of indirect employment opportunities; however, we are not able to accommodate this in our present study. Empirical analysis of indirect employment would therefore benefit from future research.
8. Local institutions can also play a role in this regard (see Nolte 2014; Osabuohien 2014; Osabuohien et al. 2018). However, this is not the focus of the present study.
9. The former workers were able to provide some background information on the farm history and also give some insights to the conditions that warranted their leaving work on the farm.
10. The respondents were duly informed that their responses are solely for research purposes. Detailed questionnaires are not included for space but are available upon reque

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Operationalisation of the Commission for University Education's Guidelines for Teaching and Learning in Kenya's Public Universities

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Abstract

This article examines the capacities and structures within Kenya's public universities to operationalise guidelines from the Commission for University Education (CUE) regarding quality academic practices. The concerns of the study arose from evident increasing number of students in public universities in the absence of matching resources. This article presents an analysis of the CUE guidelines issued to universities concerning teaching and learning resources, as well as an evaluation of the extent to which these guidelines have been implemented in four selected public universities. The argument made is that effective management cultures and capacities determine successful implementation of CUE's standards and guidelines, which translates to quality teaching and learning practices. Conversely, a weak management culture restricts the effective application of the guidelines. The article points out several obstacles that the institution and regulator must address to implement the guidelines effectively. The obstacles include resistance to change, inadequate facilities, underfunding, understaffing and lack of capacity building.

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Résumé

Cet article examine les capacités de gestion et les structures des universités publiques du Kenya à appliquer les directives de la Commission de l'enseignement universitaire (CUE) élaborées pour des pratiques académiques de qualité. Les préoccupations soulevées par cette étude découlent de l'augmentation manifeste du nombre d'étudiants dans les universités publiques en l'absence de ressources correspondantes. Cet article présente une analyse des directives de la CUE adressées aux universités concernant les ressources d'enseignement et d'apprentissage, ainsi qu'une évaluation du degré de mise en œuvre de ces directives dans quatre universités publiques sélectionnées. L'argument avancé est que des cultures et des capacités de gestion efficaces déterminent la mise en œuvre réussie des normes et directives de la CUE, ce qui se traduit par des pratiques d'enseignement et d'apprentissage de qualité. A l'inverse, lorsque la culture managériale est inadéquate, la mise en œuvre des orientations est remise en cause. L'étude montre également plusieurs obstacles que l'institution et l'organisme de réglementation devront surmonter pour une mise en œuvre efficace des directives. Il s'agit notamment de la résistance au changement, des équipements inadaptés, du sous-financement, du manque de personnel et de mesures de renforcement des capacités.

The shift from small elite to mass education due to increasing demand for university education (Githaiga and Tuitong 2009) has led to issues of quality in university education in Africa (Constance and Pletsch-Betancourt 2009). Increased enrolments in universities have resulted from the need for upward mobility (Marginson 2016) and, in the context of Kenya, because of improved completion rates at primary and secondary education levels (MacCowan 2018; Mohamedbhai 2008; Muema and Lavery 2018). Kadenyi (2009) and the Ministry of Education (2018) further attribute increased enrolments to the financing of students in both private and public universities by the Higher Education Loans Board.

Besides, as discussed by Mukhwana, Kande and Too (2017) liberalisation of higher education in Kenya, has resulted to the establishment and growth in the number of both public and private universities. (CUE 2015; Mukhwana, Kande and Too 2017). Liberalisation has been a change in thinking towards embracement of private initiatives in the provision of university education (Boit and Kipkoech 2012; Gudo, Olel and Oanda 2011; Ministry of Education 2016; Mukhwana, Kande and Too 2017; Nyerere, Gravenir and Mse 2012; Sall and Oanda 2014).

Table 1 below illustrates how liberalisation of university education, resulted to the increase in enrollment rates in universities. Although there is a slight decrease in the years 2019 and 2020 probably due to Covid-19, the growth picks momentum in 2021 and 2022.

Table 1: Enrollment in universities 2015–23

Academic Years	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Total Rates	409,221	564,507	522,059	519,462	509,468	546,699	562,066	562,925

Source: CUE statistical data 2015-2023; KNBS 2017, 2018, Mukhawana et al. 2017

Increased enrollments to universities has taken place in the context of decreased public funding to public institutions, forcing the universities to enroll self-sponsored degree and diploma students (Muema and Lavery 2018). The enrollment of privately sponsored students has been driven primarily by the need for institutions to generate additional revenue to offset government funding shortfalls, rather than being aligned with existing institutional resource capacities. Increased enrollments have also led to unplanned curriculum reviews and modes of delivery to meet the needs of diverse students' populations (Muema and Lavery 2018). These developments and challenges have put pressures on university management (Mange et al. 2005), to respond to the changing university landscape for Kenya to compete globally (Muema and Lavery 2018).

In terms of external quality assurance, the CUE has provided guidelines that universities need to implement to ensure quality academic programmes. Implementation of the guidelines, however, also require resources that the universities are struggling to generate.

Requirements of the Standards and Guidelines from CUE

The CUE Universities Standards and Guidelines contain eight schedules outlining the standards for quality teaching and learning in Kenya's public universities. These include institutional standards; standards of physical resources; standards for an academic programme; standards for open, distance and e-learning; standards for university libraries; standards for technical universities; standards for specialized degree awarding institutions and commissions form (CUE 2014). The Commission mandates universities to be responsible for the internal quality assurance of their academic programmes (Mukhwana et al. 2016). The Commission stipulates the standards to be followed in the development and administration of the

programmes in universities. This ranges from development to the actual implementation of the programme in the lecture room. Focus is also placed on supplying academic resources to support the programmes (CUE 2014). The Commission personnel and university management monitor these standards. University management is responsible for creating an enabling environment to meet CUE standards and guidelines on quality teaching and learning (CUE 2014). This study examined the degree to which university management adhered to CUE standards and regulations, as well as the measures taken to foster an environment conducive to quality teaching and learning within universities.

Statement and Contextualisation of Research Question

With rising enrollments to public universities, the question around the capacity of the institutions to implement the standards stipulated by the CUE needs to be examined. While standards and guidelines aim to ensure university quality, increasing student numbers and shrinking public resources often leave institutions unable to fully implement them. Existing literature does not explain this role and does not show the management structures in place to enforce the standards and guidelines. This article examines the impact of a growing student population on teaching and learning processes and highlights the role of university management in implementing CUE standards that affect educational outcomes within higher education institutions.

University senates serve as key organs established to ensure the quality of academic programmes. The role of Senate is to lead, manage and facilitate changes in respective dockets to align with CUE requirements. The role includes establishing and ensuring favorable environments for teaching and learning. University senates are further tasked with the role of administration and leadership within the university in relation to academic programmes, student affairs, finance and administration. In the university management structure, the Vice Chancellor(VC) is the chief executive officer (CEO), with the ultimate administrative responsibility for the institution. The CEO, however, is accountable to the university council. Universities in Kenya also have Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs) who oversee the portfolios of finance and administration, academic and student affairs, and research and extension. Under the DVCs are principles of colleges and deans of faculties who provide leadership within their respective colleges and faculties in support of the DVCs. Heads of departments, positioned at the base of the administrative hierarchy,

coordinate teaching and learning activities at the operational level. It is under such arrangement that this article considers these offices as key decision makers responsible for quality teaching and learning in their respective universities.

Management of university programmes occurs at two levels. The first consists of top academic leadership through which the senate sets the tone of quality required in the delivery of academic programmes. This is usually set by the institutional academic mission, and actualised through institutional academic policies, including those provided by CUE. The second level occurs within the school or department, where the actual processes of teaching and learning are administered. In the public universities where this study was undertaken, the system of electing academic leaders had been discarded in favour of appointed departmental deans, directors and heads of departments who are representatives of the appointing authority. The role of these appointed heads and directors is therefore to manage academic activities on behalf of the appointing authority and to ensure that the basic processes are in place regardless of the quality and channels. This study presupposes that university management plays a significant administrative role in mainstreaming best practices that ensure quality teaching and learning even in large classes, which can pose significant challenges (Hornsby et al. 2013).

Consequently, university leaders are tasked with the responsibility of promoting high-quality teaching and learning processes (Alabi and Alabi 2014; Muriisa 2014). This article deals with university management's role in the implementation of some of the key CUE standards that relate to teaching and learning environment including enforcement of CUE quality assurance policies under the themes of periodic review of the curricula, staffing capacities, teaching and learning activities, learning facilities and resources and student welfare. These indicated were selected since they directly influence the quality of teaching and learning.

The teaching and learning processes may go beyond what core management – vice-chancellors and their deputies – can do, since it will have to depend on how the lower tier of academic leaders – deans, heads of departments and coordinators of programmes or timetable and examination officers – organise activities at that level. Nevertheless, core management serves as both the primary policy developer and, to a significant degree, the executor of those policies; this dual responsibility is essential for maintaining quality by ensuring the necessary resources

are provided. Academic leaders should ideally be imbued with the ability to know what knowledge is more critical to teach, excite students and peers about learning, know what teaching practices are most effective and invest their considerable energies in the promotion of student learning (Bond 1997).

> Administrative positions at the senior level are vested with the responsibility, whether derived by statute, charter or articles of incorporation, of ensuring that the institution and its members fulfil their educational, social and ethical mandates. Administrative leaders may or may not be leaders in either teaching or research but are respected for their judgment, institutional knowledge and predictive powers. While holding a leadership position does not guarantee that a person is a leader.

The administrative leader speaks to the academy, including its students, staff and external constituencies, about what the academy is, what it is doing or could be doing better, and provides a contextual framework with which to guide the institution's progress towards its goals (Bond 1997). Accepted teaching and learning practices are measured against the extent to which university leaders implement the CUE standards and guidelines. In the context of this article, the 'goodness' or 'badness' of these practices is under the weight scale of CUE standards and stipulation that provide guidelines to the same.

Study Design and Research Methodology

This was a comparative study that sought to compare the compliance to CUE standards in four universities – University of Nairobi (UoN), Moi University (MU), Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) and Kisii University (KU). The study utilised document analysis, data sets, in-depth oral interviews, observations and questerviews to explain how these universities apply teaching and learning practices as directed by the CUE.

Sampling proceeded in two stages: first, the selection of public universities, and second, the identification of respondents. The sampling universe comprised the thirty-one chartered public universities. These chartered public universities were categorised into two, based on their period of establishment – six that were founded before 2001 and the remaining two that were founded after 2001 (Mulinge et al. 2017). The assumption underlying this categorisation was that more established universities enjoy better physical and human resources that enhance their domestication of CUE standards, which is important in understanding

variations of the latter. First, the study purposively sampled the UoN and MU as the pioneer universities. Secondly, MMUST and KU were randomly selected from a pool of 24 remaining institutions on 10 per cent rule for homogenous populations (Kothari 2004: 61; Kumar 2011: 169).

The schools of arts and social sciences (SASS) from the four sampled universities were purposively sampled based on existing studies and an overview of enrollment trends. The schools of SASS enrolled more students than any other school in the selected universities. The Ministry of Education (2018: 26) also confirms that most programmes in Kenyan universities focus on arts and social sciences, while there are relatively few courses in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The SASS also service all the other schools that admit students to study arts and social science related courses.

The study purposively sampled and interviewed two VCs, three DVCs, three deans of SASS, three directors of quality assurance directorates and heads of academic departments in 10 per cent of departments of SASS. To ensure representation from every department within SASS, the study randomly selected 10 percent of all lecturers and conducted interviews proportionally based on departmental size.

Data Presentation and Discussions

The focus of the study was to examine the level of teaching and learning resources, the level of enrollments, curricular and the teaching-learning process gauged against guidelines provided by CUE. Data on staff to student ratios, availability of staff, their workload and availability of teaching and learning spaces are also examined.

Enrollment Levels Versus Teaching and Learning facilities in Public Universities

Statistics on enrolment in the four universities show that student admission has been on the increase as Table 2 indicates. However, it is notable that data for 2020 and 2021 (Covid-19 years), was incomplete, and therefore not captured. The table shows significant reduction in numbers in three of the four universities after 2019, probably attributable to the pandemic. It may also be attributed to the move by government to strengthen technical institutions while encouraging students to take up craft and technnical subjects.

Table 2: Enrolment in selected public universities in Kenya in the last four years

University	2017/18	2018/19	2022/23	2023/24
UoN	67,827	71,610	34,111	41,174
MU	37,907	35,963	20,931	17,067
MMUST	16,827	20,294	27,245	24,277
KU	19,903	62,524	31,743	36,013

Source: CUE statistical data 2017-2024

Public universities in Kenya admit students two pathways through the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) and through direct admission by individual universities. Under the KUCCPS admission system, each university and school declares the number of vacancies available in what is called declaration of capacities as observed by an associate professor in an in-depth interview:

> Normally, the universities declare smaller numbers so as to leave some space for students for what is popularly referred to as Direct Entry. Sometimes students who don't meet the minimum entry requirements to university are taken through bridging courses and others processed through certificate to diploma before they enter bachelors.

Despite this observation, there have been new development since 2023 where new higher education funding model (the Student-Centered Funding Model) replaced the Differentiated Unit Cost model. The new model places students on a need-based system classifying them from vulnerable to less needy. It further combines government scholarships, loans and household contribution to support students to join universities. Depending on the student's band, specific amounts are sent to the institutions and the rest to the student for upkeep.

Subsequently, to date, the management of the four universities sampled for the study focus more on creating capacity for direct entry enrollments to generate funds to cover shortfalls from public funding from government. 92 per cent of lectures sampled across the four universities and interviewed for the study indicated that increased class sizes had made realisation of quality teaching difficult. They blamed their university administration of their focus on income generation through direct entry recruitment, which contravened the stipulated CUE standards and guidelines on matching the number of students to the available university physical and human resources.

The Commission stipulates that universities and campuses should have adequate minimum facilities to support the student population (CUE 2014: 13–14). There are clear stipulations on the physical facilities

required for different programmes and numbers of students. However, resources have not concomitantly increased alongside the growing number of students (Mukhwana, Kande and Too 2017). To increase space for more direct entry students, the universities had resorted to hiring private physical facilities across major urban centers and establishing these spaces as satellite campuses. However, because these facilities were not originally designed as educational environments, it was impossible to adapt them into suitable spaces for teaching and learning.

Staff to student ratio is one of the most important statistics in any learning institution. This helps in determining the loading levels of the faculty, adequacy of learning space and availability of materials for teaching and learning. Data presented in Table 3 shows the teacher–student ratio in public universities for the years 2023 and 2024.

Table 3: Teaching Staff Ratios in Universities by Category

University Category	**2023**	**2024**
	Teacher/ student ratio	**Teacher/ student ratio**
Public Chartered Universities	40.77	44.36
Private Chartered Universities	42.83	33.96
Public University Constituent Colleges	14.29	61.32
Private Constituent Colleges	25.92	8.29
Letter of Interim Authority Institutions	8.32	11.49

Source: CUE (2024:20)

In all the universities, in 2023, the teacher-student ratio stood at an aggregate of 1:64, meaning one teacher served 64 students. In public chartered universities, the teacher student ratio increased from 40.77 in 2023 to 44.36 in 2024. Varied ratios in other categories are as observed in table 3 above. In all public and private chartered universities, the ratios are all above the UNESCO accepted level of 1:30. Further, these ratios are more than triple of the ratio stipulated by CUE's university standards and guidelines (2014), which requires a full-time staff–student ratio of 1:10 in applied sciences, 1:15 in arts and humanities, 1:10 in pure and natural sciences and 1:18 in social sciences.

CUE (2014) guidelines provide that the maximum number of students an academic member of staff supervise in any given academic year should be five master's students and three doctoral students. The workload relative to the available staff, as well as the student-to-qualified academic staff ratio, significantly exceeded initial estimates. While certain clusters reflect

accurate figures, comprehensive contextual analysis is necessary to grasp the true nature of the university environment. This study found that, as staff numbers declined in some departments, careful adjustments were made regarding the number of courses offered each semester, as well as intra-school and inter-school co-teaching provisions.

High enrolment numbers in schools of education resulted in overcrowding across several departments offering arts courses. Furthermore, staff shortages compelled these departments to reduce their course offerings to only essential core and elective classes, thereby restricting students to options manageable by the current faculty. The requirement that staff to student ratio be used to determine the loading levels of the faculty, as CUE mandates, was not applicable across the sampled universities. Lecturers indicated that in some courses, they taught large classes that ranged between 500 to 700 students. Similarly, it also followed that since lectures serviced other departments, the indicative staff to student ratios were not accurate as these were calculated using an academic staff 's teaching load in the core department only.

The shortage of qualified staff is evident in national statistics that show how academic staff are spread among various public and private institutions, as illustrated in Figure 1.

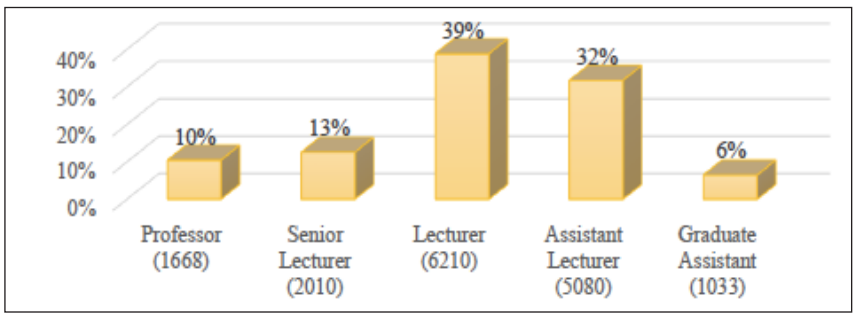


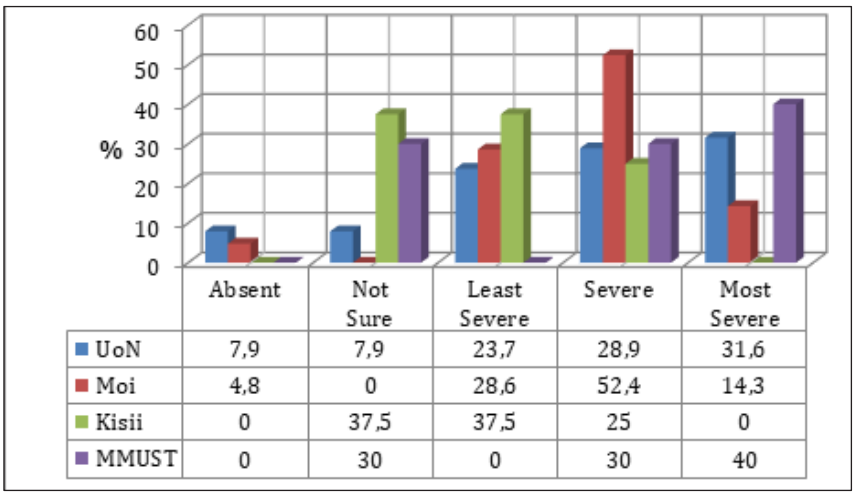
Figure 1: Staff distribution across universities

Source: Mukhwana et al. (2016: 67)

From the study, on a perception index, 70 per cent of respondents in MMUST indicated that there was severe inadequacy of staffing. This was followed by MU at 66.7 per cent, UoN at 60.5 per cent and KU at 25 per cent (see Figure 2).

The inadequacy of qualified teaching staff had adverse implications including shortage of lecturers and supervisors for postgraduate students as well as capacity to develop new programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Studies, globally suggest globally have established that the

number of students per teacher has a remarkable effect on the achievement of students (Black 2015; Blatchford 2003; Blatchford and Lai 2012; Glass and Smith 1978; Graue and Rauscher 2009; Kilonzo, Sandfort and Liu 2016; Mohamedbhai 2008; Ramsden 1998). For the universities participating in this research, the shortage of lecturers translated to unsustainably heavy teaching loads for lecturers. Though the study did not measure quality of teaching given the challenges of staffing, studies have shown that such constraints compromise the quality of education offered (Black 2015; Glass and Smith 1978; Kilonzo, Sandfort and Liu 2016). The strain also compromises the research capacity for the lecturers, as well as capacity building. None of the universities in the sample had sponsorship for doctoral studies, which could be a basis of building a generation that would fill in the gaps of shortage of staff. This implies that the understaffing is likely to remain an issue for some time. Members of staff blamed university management for lack of sufficient support on adequate staffing, although this challenge goes beyond the management given the insufficient capitation from the government.



	Absent	Not Sure	Least Severe	Severe	Most Severe
UoN	7,9	7,9	23,7	28,9	31,6
Moi	4,8	0	28,6	52,4	14,3
Kisii	0	37,5	37,5	25	0
MMUST	0	30	0	30	40

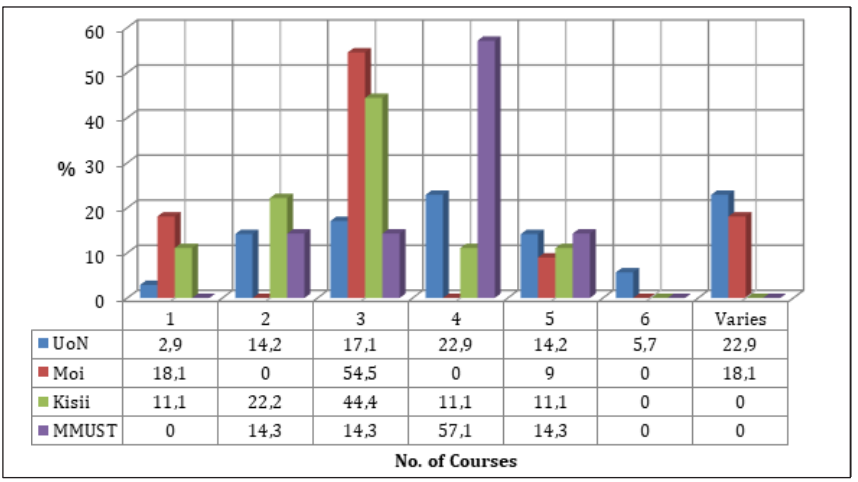
Figure 2: Inadequate staffing of lecturers

Source: Authors' field data, 2018

Teaching Loads

CUE standards stipulate that, ideally, a lecturer should teach three courses per semester. The study found that many lecturers at all four universities taught over three courses per semester (UoN) 42.6 per cent, MU 9 per cent, KU 22.2 per cent and MMUST a staggering 71.4 per cent, as seen in Figure 3.

It can therefore be extrapolated that, given the above findings, it was not feasible to give individual students due attention, thus lecturers were likely to resort to teaching strategies that favour rote learning rather than learning for understanding (Prosser and Trigwell 1999). Beyond teaching the large class sizes, compromised the capacity of lecturers to prepare, administer, and grade examinations. It is not surprising therefore, that most (89.5 per cent) of all the lecturers interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the processes. One lecturer commented: what the dean needs is complete marks. They do not care about how teaching happens. The pressure is about students' examination marks.' University managers indicated that there were procedures of employing academic staff, which required them to justify the need and obtain approval from the Ministry of Education. In so doing, they had to justify how they were going to raise money to pay the new staff, which is a tall order given that they were not profit-making organisations.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	Varies
UoN	2,9	14,2	17,1	22,9	14,2	5,7	22,9
Moi	18,1	0	54,5	0	9	0	18,1
Kisii	11,1	22,2	44,4	11,1	11,1	0	0
MMUST	0	14,3	14,3	57,1	14,3	0	0

Figure 3: No. of courses taught per semester
Source: authors' field data, 2018

Limited resources present a significant challenge for university administration, resulting in the stalling in career advancement for lecturers due to substantial teaching workloads, leaving little time for research. Research on staff-to-student ratios (Blatchford 2003; Blatchford and Lai 2012; Graue and Rauscher 2009) indicates that maintaining caution with large class sizes is essential. The implementation of divided classes and the inclusion of teaching assistants are recommended to support quality instruction, as failure to do so may result in diminished educational outcomes.

Teaching and Learning Spaces

One of the adverse outcomes of rapid enrollment expansion is overcrowded classrooms, largely stemming from the absence of proportional investment in physical facilities and the shortage of qualified staff to manage the growing student population. Although CUE (2014) recommends that an ideal arts and social science class should be eighty students, it adds that such an ideal is best judged by the space available to accommodate the students. This ranges from 1 to 299 students as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: CUE recommendations on classroom space

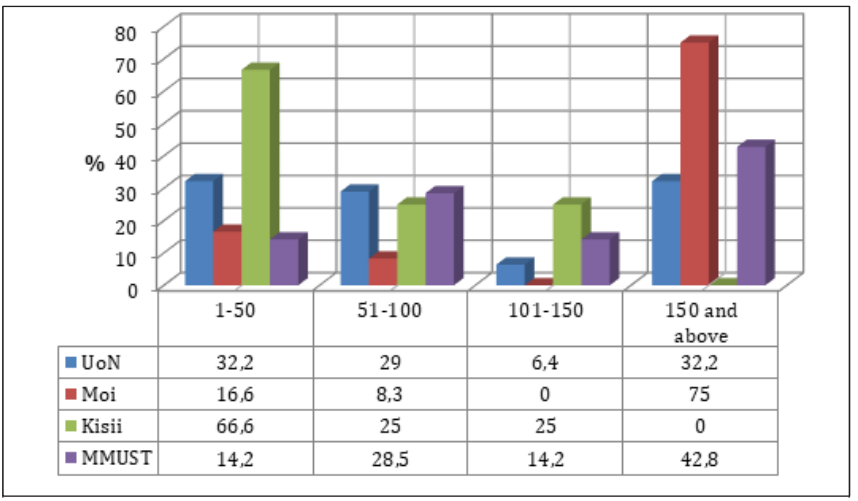
No. of students	Space in square meter with desk and chair	Space in square meter with chairs only
1–29	1.9	1.9
30–39	1.9	1.4
40–59	1.7	1.3
60–99	1.7	1.2
100–149	1.7	1.0
150–299	1.5	0.9

Source: CUE guidelines 2014

Field data showed that the average class in the SASS departments was 150 students in spaces that were grossly overcrowded. In some cases, the numbers were as high as seven hundred students for common courses since many SASS departments also serviced other schools, especially the school of education. Where there were no adequate teaching facilities like lecture halls, the scramble for a space inside the rooms was evident. Some students ended up in doorways and the verandas around the rooms. Further, most of the available spaces did not have some basic facilities, such as a public address system, to ameliorate the situation. Students carried seats from one lecture room to another, implying that these were not in sufficient supply either. Comparatively, KU came on top in relation to manageable classes, as 66.6 per cent of its classes do not have more than fifty students. At the extreme end, at MU 75 per cent of its classes had more than 150 students (Figure 4).

Up to 77.8 per cent of KU had adequate lecture spaces, followed by MMUST at 60 per cent, UoN at 53.6 per cent and lastly MU at 40.9 per cent. It is interesting that even the well-established institutions lacked enough spaces for learning. Conclusively, the substantial number of students per class and the comparative lack of sufficient learning spaces and other

facilities were not ideal for effective teaching and learning environments, which made it virtually impossible to meet CUE's standards. A growing body of research suggests that there is a relationship between learning facilities and student/teacher outcome (Hathaway 1995; Ayers 1999). It is against this backdrop that the Commission requires that all academic programmes in Kenya's universities 'shall be supported by appropriate and adequate facilities and equipment' (CUE 2014, PROG/STD/18).



	1-50	51-100	101-150	150 and above
UoN	32,2	29	6,4	32,2
Moi	16,6	8,3	0	75
Kisii	66,6	25	25	0
MMUST	14,2	28,5	14,2	42,8

Figure 4: No. of students per mandatory course class
Source: authors' field data, 2018

Management Interventions Align Teaching and Learning Practices with CUE Standards

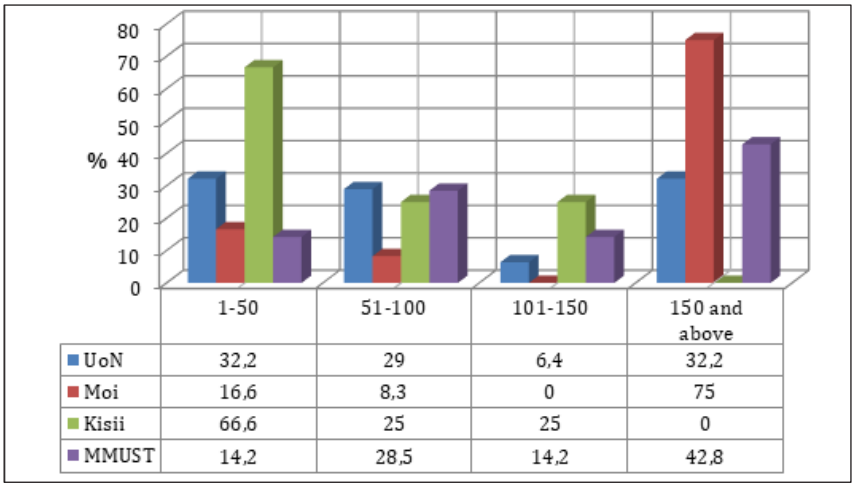
This section explores efforts university managers to implement standards and guidelines for teaching and learning processes as provided by CUE. It examines the ways in which university management tried to navigate the challenges of large student numbers, limited physical facilities, lack of adequate staff, capacity building and research challenges, among others.

Deployment of Information and Communication Technology and Virtual Learning Centers

All four universities provided Internet access to both staff and students. Wireless hotspots were available throughout the campuses, facilitating student assignments, guided learning, and social engagement. The management appreciated the role that information and communication

technology (ICT) play in virtual learning, especially for online students. One effective way to address growing student populations is by using internet services to support innovative teaching methods. Concerns were, however, raised on the need to train lecturers on the use of ICT for online teaching and learning. Although some training in online facilitation had already taken place, additional sessions remain necessary. Importantly, the significance of online teaching and learning has increased markedly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The facilities for online learning such as computer laboratories were, however, inadequate in all the four universities. Some of the computer labs that were available for students taking any IT related or online courses were the same computers used by students studying computer science. As Sampong (2009) opines, the majority of public universities do not have the capacity to install modern facilities for learning, such as video conferencing, soundproofing, auditoriums, performance theatres to cater for the growing student numbers, especially around creativity (see Figure 5).



	1-50	51-100	101-150	150 and above
UoN	32,2	29	6,4	32,2
Moi	16,6	8,3	0	75
Kisii	66,6	25	25	0
MMUST	14,2	28,5	14,2	42,8

Figure 5: Multimedia facilities (e.g. auditoriums, theatres)

Source: authors' field data, 2018

Across much of Africa, universities are increasingly deploying ICT systems to manage the large student populations. This is because education is recognized as a critical factor in the promotion of economic and social growth of both the individual and the national. The growth of the global economy and information-based society has pressured education systems around the world to use technology in knowledge and skills acquisition (Morawcynski and Ngwenyama 2007). In Kenya, learning institutions

are under increasing pressure to integrate ICT in teaching and learning (MOEST 2012). The Government of Kenya has formulated and implemented a two- part framework on ICT integration in education: a review of the national ICT policy and the provision of ICT infrastructure to institutions public institutions.

One way in which university management is harnessing ICT is through establishment of virtual learning centers (VLC) and satellite campuses. It is understandable that newer universities indicated enlarged capacities for ICT in use (66.7 per cent and 53.3 per cent for KU and MMUST, compared to 46.3 per cent and 36.4 per cent for UoN and MU respectively). At MMUST, which led in the number of VLCs, a dean explained that their introduction, and that of satellite campuses, was the only way they could compete in the market and serve as many students as possible. Table 5 shows both increased VLCs and newly created larger learning spaces.

Table 5: Perspectives on the existence and use of VLCs and learning spaces in the institutions

	Existence of VLCs					New spaces for teaching and learning				
	Never Used	Not Sure	Least Used	Used	Most Used	Never Used	Not Sure	Least Used	Used	Most Used
UoN	17.5	15	30	27.5	10	17.1	2.4	26.8	46.3	7.3
MU	38.4	8.7	30.4	13	13	9.1	36.4	13.6	36.4	4.5
KU	11.1	33.3	22.2	11.1	22.2	0	11.1	11.1	66.7	11.1
MMUST	28.6	14.3	0	57.1	0	13.3	13.3	13.3	53.3	6.7

Source: authors' field data, 2018

The situation was stark but positively different regarding physical teaching and learning facilities. The four universities fared differently on this account. At KU, a massive 90 per cent of respondents indicated that the university provides adequate teaching and learning facilities and equipment. UoN followed this at 53.5 per cent, MMUST at 53.3 per cent and MU at 45.8 per cent. There were indications of expansion of facilities indicated by on-going construction witnessed during fieldwork, especially at KU and MMUST. The established universities paid more attention to construction of modern facilities.

Staffing and Capacity Building

Quality staff is key to the success of an institution's success (Altbach and Knight 2007). In recognition of this fact, the Commission's PROG/ STD/17 standard requires universities to have academic programmes

supported by adequate full-time staff who hold requisite academic qualifications. The standard further requires a programme to be guided by an appropriately qualified academic leader. Further, a university must provide evidence of the qualifications and appointments of its staff. Universities are also expected to provide technical support to the teaching staff to ensure quality teaching and learning. The Commission requires universities to consistently enhance the capabilities of their academic staff to ensure leadership in knowledge acquisition and dissemination. The study found that the administration of the four universities did not fully comply with this guideline. According to one Deputy Vice Chancellor responsible for academic and student affairs:

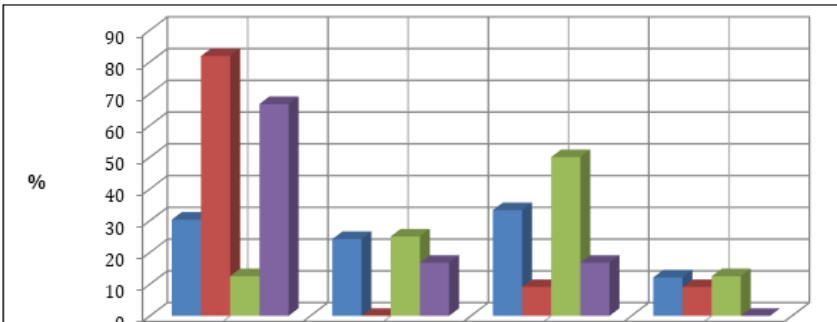
> Insufficient funds makes it difficult for the administrations of universities to run programmes that are needed to offer quality education to the ever-increasing student population. The universities find it virtually impossible to hire more staff, purchase more equipment and improve existing and/or put up new structures.

This speaks about the challenges that university administrators faced. As observed by Hénard and Roseveare (2012), any educational institution that hopes to provide quality education must align its policies and practices to quality teaching. Quality teaching is linked to quality teaching staff. In Kenya, the Commission requires a doctorate as the basic qualification for a lecturer. Those who are below this rank are employed as tutorial fellows or graduate assistants and on contractual basis. Due to this demand, university administrators often heavily encourage their teaching staff to obtain doctoral degrees and sometimes concerns about quality might be neglected as a result.

Management had tried to bridge the qualification gap by hiring temporary lecturers, but this only exacerbated an already challenging situation because most of these part-time lecturers were not qualified and had little or no experience in teaching at the university level. Furthermore, those doing the part-time teaching were already in the service of other universities spread all over the regions. The problem was complicated by the perennial lack of funds, which made it difficult to pay the part-time lecturers on time. There were reports that some of the part-time lecturers withheld students' scripts or in the end surrendered the scripts without marking. All these are in direct contravention of CUE (2014) standards that stipulates that 'an academic programme shall be supported by adequate full-time staff holding requisite academic qualifications.

CUE recognises the importance of in-service capacity building for academic staff and clearly stipulates this fact in standards for quality education. The study sought to understand whether capacity building is institutional or members of

academic staff prerogative. Lecturers said that the use of seminars, workshops and in-serving training (for graduate assistants and tutorial fellows) were some of the internal methods used by the management for capacity building, with MMUST and UoN leading with 73.3 per cent and 60.3 per cent respectively, followed by KU at 60 per cent and lastly MU at 41.6 per cent. Interviews with respective managers of these universities indicated that these were the preferred capacity building methods because of cost-effectiveness in low resource settings. Although records were not available to qualify this claim, interviews with lecturers indicated that there was some form of capacity building activity driven by the management every academic year, although these figures were low: 12.5 per cent in KU, followed by UoN at 12.1 per cent and MU at 9.1 per cent. Majority of those interviewed indicated that capacity building did not happen at all, as seen in Figure 6.



	Not at all	Not Sure	Sometimes	Always
UoN	30,3	24,2	33,3	12,1
Moi	81,8	0	9,1	9,1
Kisii	12,5	25	50	12,5
MMUST	66,7	16,7	16,7	0

Figure 6: Capacity building after every academic year
Source: authors' field data, 2018

Staff Welfare

The management of all four universities had similar incentives including house allowance, responsibility allowance, mileage allowance and medical coverage. Additionally, these institutions encouraged their academic staff to apply for research grants under the aegis of their universities. The universities managed these grants at a commission labelled administrative cost, but the principal researcher managed the rest of the grant to run the research project although they remained accountable to the institution. The research grant counts as a contributory factor to criteria for promotion as demanded by the Commission, especially in the positions Senior Lecturer, Associate

Professor and Professor. Among other considerations, the Commission's promotion criteria for university lecturers include research, publishing, supervision of postgraduate students, attending seminars/ conferences and community participation. In this situation, the adage of 'publish or perish' is a professional death knell to most lecturers. Most are unable to cope, as they do not have sufficient time for research and publication. Others opt for predatory journals, where they pay money to have papers published faster, and without a lot of editorial demands.

Development and Review of Academic Programmes

CUE standards require that an academic programme shall facilitate a balanced learning process, ensuring that students are able to acquire cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills as consistent with the educational goals and aspirations of Kenyans. The design of an academic programme should consider contextualization and relevance, contribution to the overall national human resource development and requirements, and practical orientation (CUE 2014). The study established that there were challenges that limited the institutions from meeting this aspiration. The two most critical limitations were around inadequate academic staff capacity and financial resources. All four universities examined experienced these challenges. However, UoN and MU—ranked better than MMUST and KU on these metrics. For MU however, later financial challenges since 2020 have compromised service delivery in the institution. Consequently, some programmes developed under these conditions may not meet CUE standards. The Commission maintains the responsibility to approve or reject submitted programmes, adhering to well-defined standards and guidelines in its evaluation process.

All the four universities lacked the resources to adequately address challenges that compromise development of quality academic programmes. For example, none of the management of the four universities had in place a working academic staff development programme, despite the demands for academic growth of lecturers and the shortage of trained lecturers. Although this may not squarely lie on the management – as the state needs to better support these institutions – there should be an effort to train graduate assistants through full or partial scholarships. The position of tutorial fellows is a slight exception; however, although these are training positions, tutorial fellows take on full course loads and thus have little to no time to carry out meaningful research. This also derails the process of attaining their doctoral degrees.

At one of the two established universities, a dedicated unit within the School of Education (Arts) was responsible for curriculum development and review. However, the scope of the unit was not university wide. Such units were not present in the other institutions in the sample. Instead, curriculum reviews were undertaken at the level of respective teaching departments and faculties. The irony is that public universities have had phenomenal growth of bachelor's and postgraduate programmes in the recent past as compared to their private counterparts; they have had many programmes approved by CUE. Overall, data from CUE, as seen in Figure 7, shows a disparity between public and private universities. With the challenges noted in staff growth and development, this can only mean one thing. Poor quality in public universities' output.

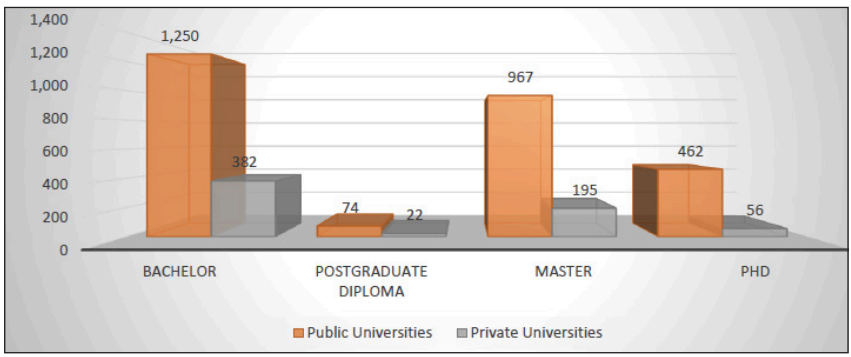


Figure 7: Programmes in public and private universities per category
Source: Mukhwana et al. (2016: 16)

Regarding review of academic pprogrammes, CUE standards stipulate that universities shall conduct self-assessment of their programmes at regular intervals by instituting structures for continual internal assessment of their academic programmes. The Commission requires that all universities review their academic programmes at least once in every cycle of the programme. Further, the Commission's standards require that each institution establish a programme development team that guides the institution on programme and curriculum development to ascertain that the institution's proposed curricula has met the standards of curriculum development. The university senate reviews and approves this before sending it to the Commission for accreditation evaluation. In this aspect of curriculum review, MMUST led on the perception index that the institution had complied with 86.7 per cent, followed by MU at 79.2 per cent, KU at 70 per cent and last UoN at 69.8 per cent. MMUST recorded a high percentage probably because

there were only three departments in SASS, which made it easy for the members to know when a review was conducted. This was in contrast with UoN whose faculty of arts and social sciences is vast. In-depth interviews with officers in charge of quality assurance in the university confirmed that regulations required every teaching department to conduct a thorough review of their courses to conform to industry needs. All universities confirmed that the curriculum review is done every four years to ensure that the programmes being offered were relevant to the learners. This is as required by CUE guidelines.

Internal Quality Assurance Processes

CUE (2014) stipulates that all universities in Kenya must be chartered and their programmes accredited. Within this stipulation, CUE acts as the external quality assurance mechanism. Consequently, universities are expected to institutionalise their own internal quality assurance mechanisms. For this reason, Table 6 captures an analysis of the management enforcement of internal quality assurance policies and mechanisms in the institutions.

Table 6: Views on enforcement of quality assurance policies

	Never enforced	Not sure	Enforced	Highly enforced
UoN	9.5%	21.4%	61.9%	7.1%
MU	.0%	26.1%	69.6%	4.3%
KU	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%
MMUST	6.7%	13.3%	80.0%	.0%

Source: authors' field data, 2018

The majority (77.9 per cent) of the respondents agreed that management was enforcing quality assurance policies. It emerged that universities had tools to track teaching and to monitor and evaluate teaching in various campuses. The first tool used was the students' attendance register. Though the attendance was recorded on sheets in every institution, these were entered into logbooks or files (which were signed by class representatives and lecturers after every lesson) that were surrendered to the head of department's office for onward transmission to the office in charge of quality assurance. However, this was an almost impossible task for classes of more than one hundred students since the exercise took a lot of time. In such cases, some lecturers did not conduct the exercise at all, while others delegated the work to the class representatives, which created the potential for malpractice. Such classes require, as Black (2015) argues, commitment and loyalty, as well as time management skills (Drew 2010) and support services (Fullan and Scott 2009).

Further, in three of the four universities, the quality assurance departments also provided course evaluation forms for students to independently fill and establish whether teaching met the required standards as well as the expectation of the students. A follow up to establish measures taken against those who were faulted by students for not either teaching effectively of satisfying the needs of the students showed no existence of such measures. A probe on the perception on the use of these evaluative forms by the lecturers gave the general impression that in an environment where services were offered to such a large number of students, there was a mix of very serious and less serious students, thus an evaluation form completed by a student who may not be interested in attending classes was arguably a futile exercise. The offices in charge of quality assurance, however, deemed this important because, as two officers indicated, it tamed rogue lecturers who did not take their work seriously.

The universities also used continuous assessment tests (CAT) to gauge the students' progress in the various courses. CATs are coordinated at the academic department level. The requirement was two CATs for every course before students sit for their final examinations. However, this was again a demanding exercise for lecturers teaching the larger groups. The lecturers interviewed on this said that giving two CATs means marking three sets of examinations for every course; for a class of 300 students or more, they felt it was too daunting a task and therefore ended up giving only one CAT. The implication then would be that if a student failed in that one test or missed the same, then this resulted in failure of the course altogether. It is in such scenarios that creativity in teaching and grading was called for. However, very few used teaching/learning groups, flipped classrooms, peer evaluation, project work or other possible means to creatively reach out to students.

In addition, regulations require that departments moderate their examination papers before and after sending them to external examiners for comments. The same process applied for the examination results. Once internal examiners mark the scripts, the departmental examination coordinator calls for a meeting for all internal examiners to moderate the examination and afterwards the results are forwarded to the external examiner. This was a common practice across the institutions. The managers were keen to ensure the set dates for the various examination exercises were adhered to. The registrars in charge of academics released the semester calendar to the heads of departments and deans of schools early in advance for members to prepare for the exercise. This schedule prepares the staff for the semester and allows them time to prepare for the required examination processes.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Overall, there seemed to be an effort to comply with the standards and guidelines for teaching and learning as provided by the Commission. In instances where the management could not enforce or enhance compliance, there were underlying factors that may be systemic and require the attention of the various stakeholders including the Ministry and the government. However, in an era of increased enrolments and insufficient funding from the state, university managers were left with little choice but to creatively innovate and partner with the private sector to address the challenges facing the implementation of the guidelines.

One can argue that the quality of university education is largely dependent on the qualifications of students at the point of entry. However, what students gain by the time they complete their studies at the university is dependent on the quality of learning and teaching practices. This study has presented mixed indications on the success of the efforts of university managers on the implementation of CUE standards and guidelines in teaching and learning practices. These inversely determine the available facilities and resources to guarantee quality teaching and learning processes or otherwise. As the study has shown, practices and regulations that are in place to transform quality of education in these institutions, translating to satisfactory performance, have been compromised by the number of learners admitted to these institutions without matching resources. The inability of staff to effectively accommodate the considerable number of students in the classes they teach is a serious challenge of public university education in Kenya. Student to staff ratio has a serious implication on the quality of education. Hiring enough qualified staff could ensure that the quality of education being offered meets the standards required. Classes could also either be sub-divided or co-taught as a way of ensuring efficiency, but this also requires enough staff. The need to train enough postgraduate students, and especially doctoral students, is urgent in the sector.

Funding is critical for quality university education. In Kenya, university education is state-centric. It is also highly dependent on policy makers. The state channels a lot of funding to basic education – primary and secondary – to the detriment of university education. Public funding is not sufficient for the actualisation of the many standards and guidelines required of the institutions. It would therefore be inappropriate for the government and other stakeholders to demand quality education when the tertiary education sector is devoid of sufficient funding. Furthermore, the funds generated from self-sponsored learners are not sufficient to support public universities given the number of enrolments. Beyond state funding and student fees,

more innovate ways of generating funds need to be explored: universities should expand their search for grants and partnerships from private and public entities, as UoN achieved with its Chinese funded Confucius Centre. Finally, the Kenyan government and universities could adopt the Ghanaian model in which the government uses 2.5 per cent of the value added tax to fund university education. Such an initiative could significantly improve the challenges currently experienced in the sector.

Kenyan public universities need to develop a strong brand to ensure they remain competitive and relevant in attracting students, staff and international partners. This requires not just adhering to the CUE stipulated guidelines but going above and beyond. Given the current environment where demand surpasses supply, forcing increased admissions, the need to re-examine existing standards and a modification that suits the current market is necessary. This is not to say that the regulations should be loosened to the detriment of quality. Some of the internal self-regulating mechanisms like call registers can be improved through technology where clocking machines are available for students to swipe or use finger prints and the data transmitted to the quality assurance office. This will not just reduce paperwork but also decrease the time lost in conducting role-calls in large classes. In this regard, CUE should make regular follow-ups on whether universities are implementing and refining the standards in line with the specific needs of each institution. Besides developing technologically advanced information monitoring systems, the Commission should engage the institutions in training workshops targeting university managers who are enforcing these standards.

The need to improve existing curriculum development departments and create new ones where they do not exist remains key. This will fast track the curriculum reviews and the development of appropriate programmes to match market demands. Tied to this is the need to train members of academic staff on programme and curriculum development. Though CUE (2014) provides a criterion for developing programmes, much more is required in relation to staff skills. The process also requires some form of commitment and sacrifice on the part of the government and the institutions. A strategy that might be useful in this respect is developing beneficial educational partnerships and co-operation with other global partners that have succeeded in linking their higher education curricula and programmes to the demands of market. A place to start is at the Inter-University Council of East Africa, which seeks to create a Common Higher Education Area and is in partnership with the East Africa Business Community.

The management of public universities encounters several significant challenges in the process of ensuring that standards are implemented and achieved. These include resistance to change, inadequate facilities, understaffing, insufficient funds and under-capacity. Most of these identified and quality-related challenges have been highlighted in previous research. For example, Keener et al. (2002), Shin and Harman (2009) and Teixeira and Koryakina (2013) have identified challenges related to funding; Drew (2010), Fullan and Scott (2009) and Keener et al. (2002) have examined staff management and human resources challenges; and Black (2015), Fullan and Scott (2009) and Altbach and Knight (2007) have shown how red tape and bureaucracy affects these institutions. These challenges are not very different from those highlighted in the context of this study. It is up to each institution's management to work towards overcoming these issues for better teaching and learning practices.

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Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Use and Research Productivity of Middle-level Lecturers in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

This article examines the influence of the availability and use of information and communications technology (ICT) on the research outputs of middle-level lecturers in Nigerian universities. The influence of specific variables such as the availability of a functional research laboratory, swift internet connectivity, functional laptop computers, functional e-library and data analysis/simulation software was investigated. Performance in research output was operationalised to mean the number and quality of publications. The study utilised a non-experimental research design involving the triangulation of a cross-sectional survey and in-depth interview research methods. The cross-sectional survey method was used to elicit quantitative data from 1,325 respondents drawn from 12 universities in South-west Nigeria, while in-depth interviews with administrators, unit managers, heads of departments, lecturers and students were conducted to generate qualitative data for the study. The results show that while ICT facilities were largely available, ownership was mostly personal; and that although access to ICT impacts research output, productivity of middle-level lecturers in this regard is impaired by inadequate underlying infrastructure and poor funding support for publication and higher education more generally. The article recognises the role of middle-level academics in the domestication of ICT-based higher education in Nigeria and calls for improved funding and more aggressive integration of ICT in higher education in the country.

Keywords: ICT, utilisation, research outputs, Nigerian universities

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Résumé

Cette article examine les effets de la disponibilité et de l'utilisation des technologies de l'information et de la communication (TIC) sur les résultats de recherche d'enseignants de niveau intermédiaire dans les universités nigérianes. L'influence de variables spécifiques telles que la disponibilité d'un laboratoire de recherche fonctionnel, une connectivité Internet rapide, des ordinateurs portables et une bibliothèque électronique fonctionnels, et un logiciel d'analyse/simulation de données a été étudiée. Dans le présent travail, la performance dans les résultats de recherche a été opérationnalisée pour signifier le nombre et la qualité des publications. L'étude est basée sur une conception de recherche non expérimentale impliquant la triangulation de méthodes d'enquêtes transversales et d'entretiens approfondis. La méthode d'enquête transversale a été utilisée pour obtenir des données quantitatives auprès de 1 325 répondants issus de 12 universités du sud-ouest du Nigéria. Les entretiens approfondis avec des administrateurs, des responsables d'unité, des chefs de département, des professeurs et des étudiants ont été menés pour générer les données qualitatives de l'étude. Les résultats montrent que les installations TIC sont largement disponibles, mais sont, principalement, des propriétés personnelles ; et que, malgré l'impact de l'accès aux TIC sur les résultats de la recherche, la productivité des enseignants de niveau intermédiaire est entravée par l'inadéquation de l'infrastructure sous-jacente et l'insuffisance du soutien financier alloué à la publication et l'enseignement supérieur en général. L'étude reconnaît le rôle des universitaires de niveau intermédiaire dans la domestication de l'enseignement supérieur basée sur les TIC au Nigéria et appelle à un meilleur financement et à une intégration plus proactive des TIC dans l'enseignement supérieur du pays.

Mots-clés : TIC, utilisation, résultats de recherche, universités nigérianes.

Introduction

This article discusses the outcome of a study that was conducted to examine the availability and use of ICT in 12 universities in Nigeria's South-west region. The study also sought to determine how and the extent to which ICT facilities such as functional research laboratory, swift internet connectivity, functional laptop computers, functional e-library and data analysis/simulation software affected the performance of middle-level academics. The study was spurred by the growing utility and relevance of ICT in research, especially in higher education, and by the need to establish if and the extent to which middle-level academics in Nigeria are leveraging the humongous possibilities offered by ICT to improve the quality and quantity of their research, and to enhance their visibility in the global epistemic village. Extant

literature seem to suggest that efforts at both governmental and institutional levels to adopt and integrate ICT in higher education institutions across Africa has remained largely sluggish and uneven (Hennessy et al. 2010; Nja and Idiege 2019) and that ICT facilities in most of universities are plagued by poor quality and low speed of connectivity, inadequate underlying infrastructure and low levels of awareness and commitment by higher education administrators (Idowu and Esere 2013; Nwankwoala 2015). Yet, in ICT driven global world, prioritising ICT adoption and integration, especially by higher educational institutions, has become non-negotiable if these institutions are to attain optimum global visibility and competitive advantage in the discharge of their core mandate of knowledge production through teaching and research.

Statement of Problem

The centrality of ICT in today's globalising world has been acknowledged. Its positive and pervasive influence permeates every facet of human endeavour. Kpolovie and Awusaku (2016) describe it as a revolution with an abiding capacity to positively transform every aspect of our social, economic, and cultural life. For the education sector, the adoption of ICT has redefined activities in all aspects of the provision and administration of higher education (Egoeze et al. 2018). Maitra et al. (2017) add that, for the researcher specifically, ICT also facilitates access to and exchange of intellectual properties among colleagues across geographical divides, improves the quality of research and publications through the use of information and quality materials from the internet, facilitates record-keeping and enhances overall job efficiency.

However, despite the promises of ICT for research, data on whether and how academics in Nigerian higher education, particularly middle-level academics, are using ICT to improve their research are still scanty, narrow and mostly focus on limited aspects of ICT such as the internet (Ajegbelen 2016). In addition, literature suggests that ICT has had greater impact on administrative services such as admissions, registration, fee payment and purchasing and that these financial services are conducted online. Conversely, there is little or no online visibility of much of the works of Nigerian academics, thus raising questions about their exploitation and the revolutionising power of the ICT (Ezema 2011). This study sought to fill this gap in knowledge by interrogating the influence of ICT availability and utilisation on the research performance of middle-level academics across the three categories of universities – federal government-owned, state government-owned and private sector-owned – in Nigeria.

Literature Review

This section of the article attempts to provide a thematic review of literature on ICT availability in higher education, ICT accessibility and utilisation in higher education and ICT and research outputs of academics in higher education.

ICT in Higher Education

Since the start of the twenty-first century, there has been a considerable expansion of ICTs in higher education systems around the world (Saikia 2017). This is connected with the enormous opportunities and ease of life that ICT presents to all players in the sector (Tedla 2012). Egoeze et al. (2018) hold that the adoption of ICT in higher education institutions especially has redefined activities in the teaching and learning process, research and information sourcing, administrative services/management of students' records, as well as communication among teachers, students, researchers and others in these institutions and beyond. It is in this context that Punie (2007) and Wang (2008) contend that ICT has become a desideratum for any university or institution that aspires to reduce costs, deliver on mandates of promoting teaching and research, achieve global visibility and truly compete in our fast-growing digital world.

However, the use of ICT to improve higher education has remained uneven across regions, countries and even institutions within same countries (https://www.iau-aiu.net/technology). While most of Europe is maximising the full benefits of ICT in higher education, most of Africa appears to lag (Hamidi and Chavoshi (2018); Alden Rivers et al. 2015). Latin America and Asia also rank ahead of Africa in ICT integration in higher education whether for teaching, learning or research (World Bank 2016). Within Africa, variations also exist, with studies putting South African universities ahead of Eqypt, Algeria, Bostwana, Kenya, Senegal, Uganda, Ghana, and Nigeria (in that order) (World Bank 2016). This is expected given the ranking of Africa as the worst region in the world in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Information and Communication Technology Global Development Index 2015 (International Association of Universities, n.d.). In Africa, Nigeria is ranked among the very worst five countries, in 134th position with a very low score of 2.61 in the ICT Development Index by ITU (2015). The ITU Information and Communication Technology Global Development Index is a key indicator of national advancement (ITU 2015) Underscoring the importance of this ranking, Kpolovie and Awusaku (2016) note that ICT has become a key factor in distinguishing between

developed and developing countries. They add that ICT has since become the core basis for national survival and development and that the growth of a nation can correctly be defined based on the number of its citizens who effectively and efficiently employ ICT to meet human needs productively.

Different surveys blame the sluggish penetration of ICT use in higher education in different parts of Africa, including Nigeria, on diverse factors including weak infrastructure either in terms of low broadband width or lack of access to reliable source of electricity; unequal access to these resources between urban and rural areas; high costs of using such a technology; the poor perception of ICT by some African governments, at least at the current stage of development; and poor ICT skills, among others (Hennessy et al. 2010; Wilson et al. 2014).

Availability of ICT in Higher Education in Nigeria

After years of apathy, the Nigerian government introduced the Nigerian National Policy on IT in the year 2001. The aim of the policy was to revitalise the country in general and its educational sector in particular, in keeping with the acknowledged role of ICT. Yushau and Nannim (2018) note that one-third of the objectives of the policy dwelt on the need to integrate IT into the mainstream of education and training, to establish new multi-faceted IT institutions as centres of excellence to ensure Nigeria's competitiveness in international markets, and to develop human capital with emphasis on creating and supporting a knowledge-based society. Some of the implementation strategies of the policy included the restructuring of the education system at all levels to respond effectively to the challenges and emerging impact of the information age and particularly, the allocation of a special IT development fund to education at all levels. An ICT department was also created at the Federal Ministry of Education to collaborate with government agencies and other stakeholders in the private sector to initiate ICT-driven projects and programmes to impact all levels of the education sector (Ekpo 2012).

Despite the above efforts and initiatives, the application of ICT to higher education in Nigeria, as in the rest of Africa, has remained far from satisfactory. Nigerian universities are yet to appreciably integrate ICT into its curricula to have a better direct impact on economic growth in the current world of e-commerce, e-governance, e-learning and e-everything (Kpolovie, Iderma & Ololube 2014). There is also little evidence of ICT integration and use in the teaching, learning and research in Nigerian universities (Bello and Aderibigbe 2014). This may not be unconnected with an earlier

observation by Achimugu et al. (2010) that tertiary institutions in Nigeria lack adequate ICT infrastructure to effectively tap into the opportunities offered by the cyberspace. Ekpo (2012) reinforces this point when she argued that, although the National Universities Commission (NUC) prescribes that there should be at least one computer to every four students and one PC to every two lecturers below the grade of lecturer I, one PC per senior lecturer and one notebook per reader/professor, the majority of Nigerian universities have not achieved this recommended system ratio for their faculties. Instead, many university lecturers and students must go to commercial cyber cafés in town before they have access to a computer that is internet connected or at best buy private modems with which they are able to connect to the internet. For the private universities, the situation was better off in terms of availability of ICT facilities because many of them have 24-hour internet connectivity in their campuses, and there are comparatively fewer lecturers and students than in public universities.

In a study on ICT availability and utilisation in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Egomo et al. (2012) found that the three institutions that were covered by the study did not have the necessary ICT facilities for instruction and research, and neither did the lecturers possess skills in ICT for effective classroom interactions. This approximates an earlier study by *Gambari and Chike-Okoli* (2007), which found specifically that only 20 per cent, 52 per cent and 48 per cent respectively of the respondents agreed to the availability of ICT facilities at universities, polytechnics and colleges of education *in Niger State*. About 56 per cent of all respondents agreed that ICT facilities were available at all levels of tertiary institutions in the state. In another study on the ICT services available in educational and research institutions in Nigeria, Osofisan and Osunde (2007) observed that there were computer systems in many of these institutions, but that their use was limited to only word processing and that they were often plagued by one problem or another, including low access speed, poor power supply and poor maintenance culture. They also found that most of the institutes and universities had ICT equipment and services such as printers, scanners, local area network (LAN), email, the internet, intranet and telephone, but there was no wide area network (WAN) connectivity between any two educational or research institutes in Nigeria, that not all the institutes had websites, that those that did were not updated regularly and that the content of most of the websites were not useful to researchers. Their position was corroborated by the works of Jumare et al. (2017) and Nkoyo and Egbe (2016), indicating that there are inadequate ICT facilities in the universities and that, where facilities are available, they are dormant and underutilised

(Egoeze et al. 2014; Hamilton-Ekeke and Mbachu 2015). Yushau and Nannim (2018) add that internet connectivity in most tertiary institutions in Nigeria was poor because the bandwidth subscribed is too small to support any meaningful activity during peak periods and that, where ICT infrastructures like multimedia projectors are available, other infrastructures like interactive whiteboards are lacking. In sum, therefore, ICT availability in higher education in Nigeria is still a challenge.

Accessibility and Utilisation of ICT in Higher Education in Nigeria

Access to ICT infrastructure and resources are necessary preconditions for the effective adoption and integration of ICT hardware and software facilities into teaching, learning and research in universities and other tertiary educational institutions (Ololube et al. 2015). Access here is used to refer to the ability and the actual frequent application of that ability in utilising the functionality and benefits of ICT tools, facilities, systems, or entities (Kpolovie and Iderima 2016). The term also describes the degree to which ICT is accessible to key stakeholders in the universities. ICT utilisation is the actual appropriate use of ICT facilities and services or taking advantage of the services made possible by ICT facilities for teaching, learning and research. Access and utilisation are both aided by availability and much more by the competence and appropriate attitude of people towards technology; availability or simply having ICT in schools will not guarantee their effective use either for teaching or for research unless there is access, competence and the right attitude (Kpolovie and Awusaku 2016).

Compared with developed countries, and even parts of Africa, access to ICT in most of Nigeria's higher institutions is not as widespread as would be optimal, and utilisation of e-learning or ICTs in higher education institutions in Nigeria is low (Beebe 2013). This is corroborated by Egoeze et al. (2014) who investigated the extent and level of ICT application in Nigerian universities and found that the usage of following were all at the lowest level: scanners, webcams, digital cameras, WAN interconnecting the university to other institutions or linking various campuses, LAN, controller area network (CAN) connected to the internet for private internet access by the university, e-library for online access to the university library resources, use of teleconferencing for interactive communication for lectures, seminars, meetings, and radio/television broadcast lecture delivery. *Egomo et al. (2012)* had earlier found that although lecturers in tertiary institutions in Nigeria recognise the importance of ICT in teaching, learning and research, their competence and usage of the available ICT facilities is below expectation. Gambari and Chike-Okoli (2007) similarly note that although most Nigerian

tertiary institutions already incorporate computer study as part of their academic programmes, most of them are still theoretical in nature and so are unlikely to meaningfully impact society; they also found that ICT has had more impact on administrative services such as admissions, registration, fee payment and purchasing than on the fundamentals of classroom teaching, learning and research. This view is reinforced by Kpolovie and Awusaku (2016), who observed that financial dealings are more or less online in most Nigerian universities, but the areas of data assessment such as semester results, grades, lecture timetables and lecture notes are still not being attended to with the use of ICT, even when fees have been charged for the requisite ICT facilities. This raises concerns about lecturers' access, competence, and attitudes to ICT, especially given that many lecturers have only very few publications that are readily available on the World Wide Web.

Existing literature indicates a positive relationship between university lecturers' computer competence and their attitudes toward, as well as their utilisation of, ICT for teaching and research. Most teachers who showed negative or neutral attitudes towards the use of ICTs in education lacked knowledge and skills that would enable them to make informed decisions (Al-Oteawi 2002; Jimoyiannisa and Komis 2007). Research has demonstrated a correlation between computer access and teachers' attitudes toward technology (Kpolovie and Awusaku 2016), as well as between access to ICT resources and their utilisation (Emmanuel et al. 2014). Lecturers' successful utilisation of ICT for teaching and research is hampered by a myriad of problems. Among these are low levels of ICT literacy, a dearth of technical staff, low levels of funding, irregular power supply, prohibitive costs of ICT facilities and lack of relevant ICT infrastructures (Ololube et al. 2014). Others include resistance to change (Cuban et al. 2001; Idowu and Esere 2013) and cultural perceptions (Albirini 2006).

ICT and Research Output Among Academics in Higher Education

Research is one of the core duties for which the university lecturer is engaged. Not only is research output – measured in terms of the number and quality of publications (journals, books, chapters in books, conference papers, reviews, reports, research proposals etc.) – the key determinant of academic career advancement, it is indeed a major indicator of their quality (Kpolovie and Awusaku 2016) and productivity (Popoola 2008). Research output enables academic staff to demonstrate scholarship, gain recognition for creative thinking and develop a reputation for expertise in a specialty area; it also partly determines both local and international recognition and

respect for academic staff and academic institutions more generally (Popoola 2008). In any field of specialisation, it provides current information for growth, progress, and improved society.

This explains the burden on the academic to either publish or perish and underscores the seeming celebration of the advent of ICT among most researchers in view of its potential to facilitate the efficient and effective performance of their research tasks (Akpan 2014). Colwell (2000) also suggested that the widespread use of ICTs will inevitably influence every area of research. Kpolovie and Awusaku (2016) add more specifically that ICT is quite relevant in research designs and execution of experiments, descriptive studies, statistical analysis, data production and storage and dissemination of research information, Ehikahamenor (2002) notes that ICTs are altering the ways in which academics hunt for information, communicate with each other, conduct research and dispense research results. ICT can assist research in any discipline as it provides faster and easier access to most comprehensive and up-do-date information through digital libraries that provide digitised full-text resources to learners and researchers.

Despite the acknowledged importance of ICT to research, however, empirical studies on the influence of ICT on research outputs especially in Nigeria are still scarce (Nwagwu and Agarin 2007) and mostly focus on limited aspects. Kpolovie and Awusaku (2016) also add that lecturers' attitudes towards the adoption of ICT in the execution of research and teaching/learning activities have not been duly investigated.

In one of the few existing studies on the impact of utilisation of internet services on teaching and research outputs in two private universities in South-western Nigeria, Okafor et al. (2011) found a remarkable difference in the percentages of research output of respondents three years before they began to access and utilise internet services and after they began to access internet services. Specifically, they found that the utilisation of internet services aided the respondents to publish their works (54.3 %), to attend conferences (61.6 %) and to improve both the quality of their teaching (74.2 %) and the quality of their research output (79.1 %). Furthermore, respondents recorded an improved research output in terms of books, chapters in books, monographs, and journal articles, from when they began to use internet services compared to their research output prior to the implementation of computers and internet services at their institutions. The study, however, recognised that a number of other variables such as lack of funds, unfavourable university policies/guidelines on promotion and publications, individual traits of academics, environmental factors, differences in perspectives and other social constraints could mediate between internet use and research publications. These factors also influenced

the extent of utilisation of internet services, for which purpose and the type of research output respondents concentrated on (books, chapters in books, monographs, journal articles or conference attendance). For instance, while senior academics did not prioritise the internet because they were under less pressure to publish having already reached the peak of their career, junior and middle ranked academic staff were found to be more motivated in browsing for materials on the internet for promotional advantages than for scholarship purposes. These choices were based on how they perceived their situations and goals within the university system.

A related study by Khan and Dominic (2009) on the influence of internet use on research output by 50 faculty members of the Engineering College of Moradabad, India, also found that while 50 per cent of the respondents claimed it had great influence, 30 per cent reported partial influence and 20 per cent reported no influence at all, suggesting the possible influence of other undetermined variables. Zainab and Meadows (1999) investigated the impact of the use of computers on research productivity in two Malaysian universities – University of Malaya and National University of Malaysia – using eighty-three academic engineers and 239 academic scientists. They found that although more than half of the academic engineers used computers for research purposes, it did not significantly influence their publication output. On the other hand, they found that the highly published academic scientists were those who made frequent use of computers. This may also suggest that while ICT use is a predictor of research output, other intervening variables may mediate between use of computers and publication outputs.

For instance, in their analysis of ICT utilisation and the research outputs of Kenyan scientists, Schaefer et al. (2016) found that institutional affiliation (institutional context), level of education and type of research activity engaged in will predict their use of ICT in research. The study established that scientists in Kenyan Universities utilised ICTs for research more than those in the Kenyan Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and that the level of education of a scientist was related to the extent to which they utilised ICTs to enhance research outputs. Also, while KARI scientists appeared more prominent in the use of ICTs to present their data at conferences, university lecturers were more proficient in simulation and data analysis and review and publication of journal articles (Schaefer et al. 2016). A similar study by Akpan (2014) on the relationship between ICT competence and lecturers' job efficacy in selected universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, revealed that the higher the skills of a lecturer on ICT utilisation, the more likely they will deploy ICT for research and teaching in the university.

Most studies agree that ICT affects lecturers' research output, though other factors may also contribute. This study sought to examine these factors within an as-yet unstudied group – that of middle-level lecturers in Nigerian universities – to ascertain the links between ICT utilisation and research outputs.

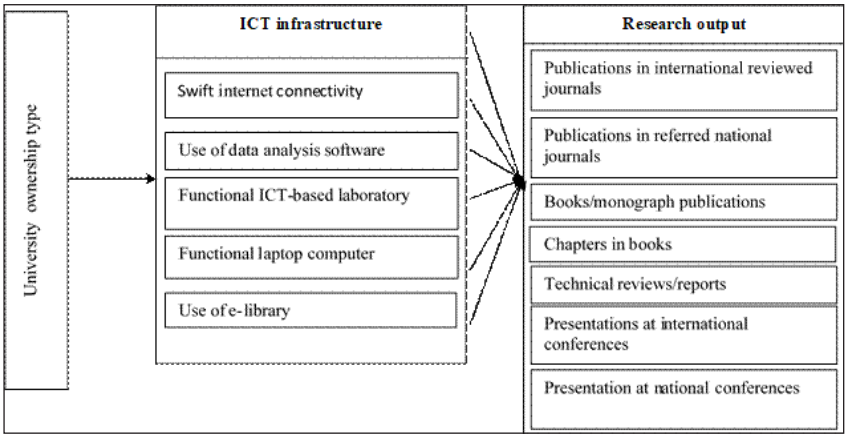

Figure 1: Research model

Source: Adapted from Jabbouri et al. (2016)

Proposed Research Model

This research builds upon the conceptual model for measuring the efficiency of ICT infrastructure on education as sourced from literature. It considers ICT infrastructure availability and utilisation as the independent variable whilst seeing research outputs of academics as the dependent variable. Oyerinde and Bankole (2019) as well as Jabbouri et al. provide support for the model through their research, which demonstrate links between various forms of ICT infrastructure to performance. The model posits that ICT infrastructure – hardware, software, networking and communications, databases and, in our case here, swift internet connectivity, use of data analysis software, functional ICT-based laboratories, functional laptop computers and e-libraries – are predictors of productivity measured in terms of research output of academics (see Mitchell et al. 2012). Where these infrastructures are available, functional, and utilised, they will predict high research output and vice versa. Also, given literature evidence that availability and functionality of ICT infrastructure in the Nigerian higher education is sometimes influenced by type of university ownership, this paper further posits that research outputs of academics will vary based on the ownership of their universities – whether public or private.

Methods and Data

Research Design

The study adopted the non-experimental research design involving the triangulation of a cross-sectional survey, in-depth interview research methods, and a checklist of available ICT materials in the selected institutions. A cross-sectional survey collected quantitative data from 1,325 participants across 12 universities in South-west Nigeria. Additionally, in-depth interviews with administrators, unit managers, department heads, lecturers, and students provided qualitative insights for the study. The adoption of the mixed research design derives from its acknowledged benefits, one of which is that it enhances the validity and reliability of data obtained because of the high likelihood that information that are missed out by one method are captured by the other (Caracelli and Greene 1993; Olsen 2004). The non-experimental research design was also adopted because it is the most preferred in studies where experimentation is not desired to investigate the study variables (Reio 2016).

Study Population and Sample Size

The population for this study consisted of all middle-level academics operationalised in the study to refer to academics who are designated as lecturers II, lecturers I and senior lecturers (using the standard lecturing grades in Nigeria) in 12 selected universities across the six states of South-western Nigeria. An equal number (4) of universities was sampled based on ownership type, namely: federal government, state governments and private operators to allow for comparison. A sample of 1,500 middle-level academics was drawn from the selected universities for the cross-sectional survey based on populations and in a manner that ensured that all the faculties, schools and colleges in each university were sampled in order to guarantee fair representation. Only 1,325 questionnaires were filled out correctly and sent back. (Refer to Table 1 for details about the universities and sample sizes.) For the qualitative data, six lecturers, one library staff and one ICT personnel were purposively selected in each university. The library and ICT staff were selected to provide information on the status of availability and functionality of the ICT facilities under investigation. The study was a one-time study conducted between June and October 2018, and the individual lecturer is the unit of analysis.

Table 1: List of sample universities and sample size

State	Schools	Ownership	Proposed sample size	Achieved sample size
Ekiti State	AfeBabalola University, Ado-Ekiti	Privately owned	75	86
	Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti	State government	175	140
Lagos State	University of Lagos, Akoka	Federal government	150	122
	Lagos State University, Ojo	State government	100	86
Ogun State	Covenant University, Ota	Privately owned	75	60
	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	Federal government	175	156
Ondo State	AdekunleAjasin University, Akungba	State government	175	162
	Joseph Ayo Babalola, University, Ikeji-Arakeji	Privately owned	75	74
Osun State	ObafemiAwolowo University, Ile-Ife	Federal government	175	156
	Redeemers University, Ede	Privately owned	75	64
Oyo State	University of Ibadan, Ibadan	Federal government	150	184
	LadokeAkintola University, Ogbomoso	State government	100	35
Total			1,500	1,325

Research Instruments and Operationalisation of Variables

A structured questionnaire was used to elicit quantitative data from respondents. The questionnaire contained closed ended questions for the nominal and binary variables except for ratio variables that require input of actual numbers. The questionnaire contained ten sections and eighty-one questions. The section on socio-demographic characteristics had questions on sex, age, ethnicity, marital status, religion, education, position, nature of employment, among others. Regarding ICT facilities, the study interrogated access to five core items, namely: functional research laboratory, swift university internet connectivity, functional laptop computers, functional e-library and data analysis/simulation software. The questions were designed to gather suitable responses related to this topic. Research outputs were similarly measured on the basis of six indicators, namely: number of articles in peer reviewed international journals, number of articles in referred local

journals, number of books/monographs, number of book chapters, number of presentations at international conferences, number of presentations at national conferences, number of technical reports and number of written research proposals. The respondents' claims were verified through direct examination of the publications.

An in-depth interview guide was used to collect qualitative data. In the guide for lecturers, respondents were asked about availability and functionality of different forms of ICT facilities in their university, and how these affect their research outputs and publications. However, the interview guides for library and IT personnel required the respondents to describe access and use of available ICT facilities by middle-level lecturers.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were entered and analyzed using version 22 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Frequencies, means and percentages were used for descriptive univariate analysis while T-Test (for independent variables with two attributes), analysis of variance (for independent variables with three attributes) and binary logistic regression were used to test six different hypotheses, namely: the relationship between swiftness of university internet connectivity research output; the association between use of data analysis and simulation software and research outputs; whether access to functional research laboratory would increase research outputs; the association between availability of functional laptop computer and research output; the association between use of e-library and research output; and whether private universities perform better in research output than government universities. The interviews were transcribed in Microsoft Word and content analysed along major themes.

Ethical Considerations

Letters of notification were written to the Vice-Chancellors of the twelve universities to inform them about the study prior to commencement. The questionnaire also contained a brief introduction and a letter of consent. Additionally, respondents received a verbal explanation of the study prior to taking part. No participant was coerced into participating in the study.

Results

Results indicated that 46.6 per cent of the respondents were drawn from federal universities, 31.9 per cent were from state universities, while 21.4 per cent were from private universities (see Table 2). About 68 per cent of the

respondents were male and 32 per cent were female. Also, 45 per cent of respondents were 40–9 years old, followed by those in the age bracket of 30–9, who constituted 35.5 per cent. The mean age was 42.5 with a standard deviation of 7.23. Lecturers II constituted 35.3 per cent of the total sample, lecturers I 35.9 per cent while senior lecturers constituted 28.8 per cent of the sample. About 95 per cent of the lecturers were full-time staff.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Nature of ownership	**Frequency**	**Per cent**
Federal	618	46.6
State	423	31.9
Private	284	21.4
Total	1,325	100.0
Sex	Frequency	Per cent
Male	897	67.7
Female	428	32.3
Total	1,325	100.0
Age	Frequency	Per cent
Below 30 years	48	3.6
30–9 years	471	35.5
40–9 years	596	45.0
50 years and above	210	15.8
Total	1,325	100.0
Mean: 42.5		S.D: 7.23
Rank/position	Frequency	Per cent
Lecturer II	468	35.3
Lecturer I	476	35.9
Senior lecturer	381	28.8
Total	**1,325**	**100.0**

Availability and Functionality of Selected ICT Facilities

As indicated earlier, the study investigated the availability of specific ICT facilities considered critical to research output especially, such as functional research laboratory, swift internet connectivity, functional laptop computers, functional e-library and data analysis/simulation software. It turned out that none of the sampled universities had up to 90 per cent availability of any

of these basic ICT facilities. Functionality was also observed to decrease, compared to availability, in all items examined. The most available item was a laptop computer at 88.0 per cent. However, most of available laptop computers were personally owned as opposed to official ownership, as shown in Table 3 and demonstrated in Figure 2. The functionality of laptop computers when compared to availability is 9.5 per cent short. Internet facilities, university email services, and websites recorded shortfalls of 27.1 per cent, 31.5 per cent and 29.8 per cent respectively in functionality. The least available facility is e-library (37.7 %), which recorded only 24.3 per cent functionality. Private universities recorded the highest level of availability of desktop computers at 78.4 per cent. However, state universities recorded the highest level of functionality of laptop computers with 94.8 per cent followed by federal universities at 91.5 per cent. Printers, scanners, and digital photocopying machines were more available and functional in private universities than government-owned institutions. Most of the lecturers purchased the laptops they use with their own money. While university email services, websites and e-libraries were one hundred per cent officially owned and provided by the universities, only 53.7 per cent of respondents had access to official internet facilities. A much lower proportion had access to provision of other ICT facilities including desktop computers, laptop computers, printers, scanners, and digital photocopying machines. Lecturers in private universities enjoyed official ownership of ICT facilities more than their colleagues in public universities. Purchase of these facilities with personal money was common across all the items in public universities than in private ones.

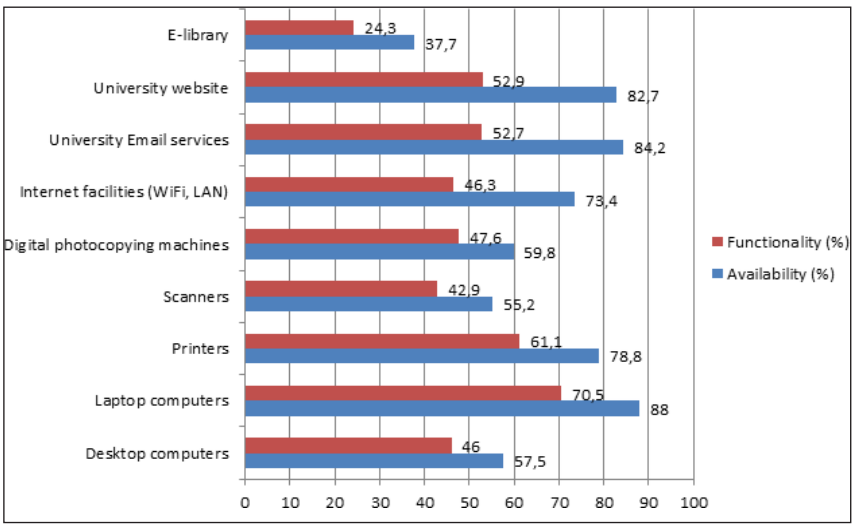

Figure 2: Chart showing the availability and functionality of ICT

An analysis of the data from the in-depth interviews (IDIs) also reflects the findings from the quantitative data. Bemoaning the non-functionality of most ICT facilities in some universities, a respondent reported thus:

> The facilities are not available; even when they are available, they are usually malfunctioning. Most of these facilities are outdated…Some of the facilities that are presently available on campus are not up to date with the current technological advancement…One of the problems is inadequate training, a lot of people would have loved to make use of these facilities. Even if they were available, how many people have acquired the training on how to use them? Skype is available, for instance, but how many people are aware that there is networking platform called Skype. We have a lot of old lecturers who cannot search through their mail. They must employ assistants to check their mail, and to send their mail to them. Rigidity and resistance to change is a problem among our colleagues. In addition, most of these facilities are never prioritised by the University. Many of what you see are provided for by units/departments using internally generated revenue (IDI, male lecturer).

Access to and Utilisation of Research-related ICT Facilities

This study found that 45.1 per cent of the respondents had access to functional ICT-based research laboratory, 49.1 per cent reported that internet connectivity in their universities was quite slow, while barely 8.3 per cent of the respondents reported that they had very fast internet connectivity in their universities. Also, only 42.5 per cent of the respondents reported that they had access to the university e-library always while another 18.9 per cent had no access to the e-library at all. While 43.5 per cent of respondents could only use data analysis software well, another 24.9 per cent could not use any data analysis or simulation software at all, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Access to and utilisation of research-related ICT facilities

Access to functional ICT research laboratory	**Frequency**	**Per cent**
No	727	54.9
Yes	598	45.1
Total	1,325	100.0
Swiftness of internet connectivity	Frequency	Per cent
Very fast	110	8.3
Fast	564	42.6
Slow	651	49.1
Total	**1,325**	**100.0**

Frequency of access to university e-library	**Frequency**	**Per cent**
Always	563	42.5
Sometimes	512	38.6
Never	250	18.9
Total	**1,325**	**100.0**
Use of data analysis and simulation software	**Frequency**	**Per cent**
Very well	419	31.6
Fairly well	576	43.5
Not at all	330	24.9
Total	**1,325**	**100.0**

Results from the qualitative data revealed that the internet and electricity supply were central to the functionality of other ICT facilities. Unfortunately, these were mostly unavailable. As a respondent put it:

> The very first thing when talking about ICT is the internet, so when internet is not present, every other component of ICT is not going to work. Currently, we are having issues with the university internet. If there is no internet, how do you check your mail, how do you link up with other researchers? How do you use the E-library? How do you conduct research in the laboratory? (IDI, female lecturer).

It was discovered that resources in e-libraries were not being fully used, as many lecturers either were unaware of their availability or chose not to use them. As a respondent put it:

> That is part of the challenges we are having…We spend a lot of money to subscribe to these e-library databases and they send the usage statistics to us…sometimes, I want to cry when I think of the amount we are spending and people are not using it…sometimes they [the service providers] send us messages and ask if anything is wrong with the service because people are not using it…we keep informing people that we have this, we have that… During NUC accreditation, supervisors are usually amazed about what we have in this library…Many lecturers do not know what shelves to get book for their own courses in the library…If I want to be generous, I will score lecturers 40 per cent in terms of usage; if I don't want to be generous, I will give them 20 per cent (IDI, male lecturer).

Yet another respondent said:

> Yes, they use it but not as much as we expect…it is a bit under-utilised… what we normally do in order to sensitise them to make them aware of these resources…we normally organise college to college training on the

use of these resources; if you were to come tomorrow when the training of academic staff will take place, we are going to give training to them (IDI, male administrator).

Table 4: Performance in research outputs

Research outputs	Percentage of respondents who had published	Mean number of articles published
Article(s) in peer reviewed international journal	74.7	8.5
Article(s) in local journal	69.8	5.8
Book(s)	36.1	1.7
Book chapters	29.4	2.6
Presentations at international conference	42.5	2.9
Presentations at national conference	48.3	3.4
Technical reports	26.6	2.5
Presentation of written research proposal	45.9	2.3

Performance in Research Outputs

The study found that 74.7 per cent of the respondents had published articles in international journals, making this the highest in terms of output with a mean number of 8.5 per cent. The second highest in terms of outputs were articles in local journals where 69.8 per cent of respondents had an average of 5.8 per cent publications. Books were the least usual form of research publications with only 36.1 per cent of the respondents having authored an average of 1.7 books, as shown in Table 4 and Figure 3. This could be because books take more time to write than other forms of publications. The relationship between the various independent variables in this study (availability of functional research laboratory, swift internet connectivity, functional laptop computers, functional e-library and data analysis/simulation software) on research outputs are fully demonstrated in the testing of hypotheses later in this article.

Hypotheses Testing

This study did not set out to establish causality between ICT and research outputs of academics. This is because of the clear understanding of the possibility of other variables beyond ICT availability and use that could impact the research outputs of academics. However, there are indications in the relevant literature that ICT can and does have an influence on the quality and quantity of research output of academics. With this in mind, he study examined six hypotheses, and their results are outlined below.

Figure 3: Mean number of research publications

Hypothesis 1: Swiftness of university internet connectivity is associated with research output

Results show that swiftness of internet connectivity is associated with at least one form of research output. Lecturers who reported fast internet connectivity had approximately 11 articles on average in international journals compared with nine articles for respondents who had slow internet connectivity. Fast internet connectivity also increased the number of technical reviews/reports, albeit insignificantly as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Association between internet connectivity and research outputs

Research outputs	Swiftness of internet connectivity	Mean	F	P-value
Publications in peer reviewed international journals	Very fast	10.81	2.318	0.029
	Fast	7.84		
	Slow	8.65		
	Total	8.46		
Publications in refereed national journals	Very fast	5.83	0.291	0.748
	Fast	5.58		
	Slow	5.96		
	Total	5.76		
Books/monographs	Very fast	1.69	0.856	0.426
	Fast	1.58		
	Slow	1.89		
	Total	1.70		

Book chapters	Very fast	2.47	0.235	0.791
	Fast	2.50		
	Slow	2.71		
	Total	2.57		
Technical reviews/reports	Very fast	3.23	0.664	0.516
	Fast	2.39		
	Slow	2.41		
	Total	2.47		
Presentations at international conferences	Very fast	2.36	1.546	0.214
	Fast	2.71		
	Slow	3.16		
	Total	2.87		
Presentations at national conferences	Very fast	2.96	1.159	0.315
	Fast	3.28		
	Slow	3.72		
	Total	3.45		

Hypothesis 2: Use of data analysis and simulation software is associated with increased research outputs

The study found that proficiency in the use of data analysis and simulation software resulted in increase in research output among respondents. It significantly increased articles in peer-reviewed international journals (F: 8.260; p: 0.000), national journals (F: 5.486; p: 0.004) and technical reports (F: 3.979; p: 0.020) (see Table 6).

The results of the qualitative data also reinforced the outcome of the quantitative data that ICT can make or mar research outputs of lecturers. Speaking about the importance of the internet and adequate e-library facilities to research outputs, a respondent said:

> ICT of course aids publications. If you do not have ICT, it will be difficult for you to publish. ICT has more positive consequences on research than negative. Before you write any paper, you must do a review of literature. You need internet to get current literature. Even when writing proposals for grants, you need to know what information is available, if internet is not there, it will be difficult to know how far people have gone in that subject area. The only negative side is in terms of plagiarism because all your works and methods are online (IDI, female lecturer).

Table 6: Effect of use of data analysis and simulation software on increased research outputs

Research outputs	**Use of data analysis and simulation software**	**Mean**	**F**	**P-value**
Publications in peer reviewed international journals	Very well	10.42	8.260	0.000
	Fairly well	6.99		
	Not at all	7.83		
	Total	8.46		
Publications in refereed national journals	Very well	6.79	5.486	0.004
	Fairly well	5.16		
	Not at all	5.12		
	Total	5.76		
Books/monographs	Very well	1.97	2.546	0.080
	Fairly well	1.42		
	Not at all	1.80		
	Total	1.70		
Book chapters	Very well	2.81	1.363	0.257
	Fairly well	2.29		
	Not at all	2.72		
	Total	2.57		
Technical reviews/reports	Very well	3.16	3.979	0.020
	Fairly well	2.18		
	Not at all	1.63		
	Total	2.47		
Presentations at international conferences	Very well	3.04	0.603	0.548
	Fairly well	2.68		
	Not at all	2.94		
	Total	2.87		
Presentations at national conferences	Very well	3.65	0.498	0.608
	Fairly well	3.30		
	Not at all	3.33		
	Total	**3.45**		

Another respondent also alluded to the role of e-library facilities in research outputs thus:

> The main problem is access to current literature. Lack of ICT can limit the approach and accessibility to materials and constrain researchers to use readily available methodology. ICT enhances your work and promotes your visibility globally. It also makes you competitive globally. The only danger is that it limits creativity: when you have everything, you will no longer be able to think and fashion out solutions to problems. That is why many publications are not solving any problem but only exploring loopholes. They look for gaps, but the gaps they find are they solving any problem? (IDI, male lecturer).

Hypothesis 3: Access to functional research laboratory will increase research outputs

Results show that access to functional research laboratories did not significantly influence any of the research outputs of respondents. This is because many respondents came from fields that do not use laboratories. Use of a laboratory is common in the sciences (see Table 7).

Table 7: Association between access to functional research laboratory and research outputs

Research outputs	Access to functional ICT based research laboratory	Mean	T	P-value
Publications in peer reviewed international journals	No	8.03	-1.215	0.225
	Yes	8.98		
Publications in refereed national journals	No	5.76	-0.019	0.985
	Yes	5.76		
Books/monographs	No	1.74	0.378	0.705
	Yes	1.65		
Book chapters	No	2.46	-0.907	0.365
	Yes	2.73		
Technical reviews/reports	No	2.43	-0.197	0.844
	Yes	2.51		
Presentations at international conferences	No	2.94	0.524	0.600
	Yes	2.78		
Presentations at national conferences	No	3.50	0.388	0.698
	Yes	3.37		

Hypothesis 4: Availability of functional laptop computers is associated with research outputs

Across all the items, availability of laptop computers yielded increased, but insignificant, outputs. It yielded 8.6 international articles compared to 7.9 for those who did not have functional laptops. Similarly, availability of functional laptops yielded 2.9 international conference presentations compared to 2.3 for those without, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Association between availability of functional laptop computers and research output

Research outputs	Availability of laptop computers	Mean	T	P-value
Publications in peer reviewed international journals	Available	8.58	0.460	0.645
	Not available	7.87		
Publications in refereed national journals	Available	5.84	0.089	0.929
	Not available	5.75		
Books/monographs	Available	1.68	0.305	0.760
	Not available	1.54		
Book chapters	Available	2.51	0.132	0.895
	Not available	2.42		
Technical reviews/reports	Available	2.51	0.600	0.549
	Not available	2.00		
Presentations at international conferences	Available	2.90	0.920	0.358
	Not available	2.30		
Presentations at national conferences	Available	3.51	0.920	0.358
	Not available	2.47		

Hypothesis 5: Use of e-library is associated with research outputs

Like availability of laptop computers, frequent use of e-libraries yielded increased but insignificant number in international publications, articles in national journals, technical review/reports, and presentation in local conferences, as represented in Table 9.

Table 9: Association between use of e-library and research outputs

Research outputs	Use of e-library	Mean	F	P-value
Publications in peer reviewed international journals	Always	9.07	1.053	0.349
	Sometimes	7.95		
	Never	7.87		
	Total	8.46		
Publications in refereed national journals	Always	5.83	0.300	0.741
	Sometimes	5.81		
	Never	5.22		
	Total	5.76		
Books/monographs	Always	1.82	0.461	0.631
	Sometimes	1.60		
	Never	1.63		
	Total	1.70		
Book chapters	Always	2.58	2.073	0.127
	Sometimes	2.77		
	Never	1.73		
	Total	2.57		
Technical reviews/reports	Always	2.68	1.305	0.273
	Sometimes	2.45		
	Never	1.48		
	Total	2.47		
Presentations at international conferences	Always	2.82	0.807	0.447
	Sometimes	3.03		
	Never	2.36		
	Total	2.87		
Presentations at national conferences	Always	3.63	1.603	0.202
	Sometimes	3.46		
	Never	2.57		
	Total	3.45		

Hypothesis 6: Private universities perform better in research outputs than government universities

Although private universities published more articles in peer-reviewed journals than state and federal universities, the difference was not significant. However, state universities had produced significantly more books and publications in local journals. Lecturers in federal universities have had significantly more presentations in international conferences than those in state and private universities, but state universities have had significantly more presentations in local conferences. Upon reviewing each university's research performance, it was determined that Covenant University (a private institution) led with an average of 106.8 publications, closely followed by the University of Ibadan (federally owned), which had an average of 103.67 publications. Each of the two institutions has published more than twice the number published by other universities, except for Ekiti State University, which had an average of 64.5 publications per respondent. Interestingly, while a private university took the lead in the numbers of publications, two private universities were also at the bottom of the chart, as depicted in Table 10 and Figure 4. This implies that while ownership type of university may influence research outputs of academics, it may not be the only predictor of output.

Table 10: Association between university ownership type and performance in research outputs

Research outputs		**Mean**	**F**	**P-value**
Publications in peer reviewed international journals	Federal	8.00	0.981	0.375
	State	8.73		
	Private	9.49		
	Total	8.46		
Publications in refereed national journals	Federal	5.71	4.882	0.008
	State	6.55		
	Private	4.02		
	Total	5.76		
Books/monographs	Federal	1.56	2.064	0.128
	State	2.05		
	Private	1.51		
	Total	1.70		

Book chapters	Federal	2.67	3.073	0.047
	State	2.86		
	Private	1.79		
	Total	2.57		
Technical reviews/reports	Federal	2.78	2.633	0.073
	State	2.46		
	Private	1.50		
	Total	2.47		
Presentations at international conferences	Federal	3.12	6.158	0.002
	State	3.06		
	Private	1.61		
	Total	2.87		
Presentations at national conferences	Federal	3.62	8.473	0.000
	State	3.89		
	Private	1.81		
	Total	3.45		

Relationship Between Selected Socio-demographic Characteristics and Research Outputs of Respondents

Data were manipulated to determine the relationships between key demographic variables such as gender, age, and education of respondents on their research outputs. It transpired that while gender of lecturers was not a predictor of research outputs, age and education were found to have a considerable influence on research outputs. The analysis shows that research outputs increased with age as lecturers aged 50 have more publications than younger groups. This may be because research output is important criterion for promotion to Associate Professorial and full Professorial positions, which occurs around age 50 in Nigeria. Similarly, lecturers who have a PhD had more than 100 per cent research outputs higher than those who did not.

Table 11: Relationship between selected socio demographic characteristics and research outputs of Respondents

Gender	**Mean number of publications**	**Standard deviation**	**Standard error**	**F**	**P**
Male	22.6275	22.70383	2.24801	0.723	0.397
Female	26.5750	29.79407	4.71086		
Total	23.7394	24.85837	2.08607		
Age	Mean number of publications	Standard deviation	Standard error	F	P
Below 30	14.6000	22.75522	10.17644	6.992	P<0.001
30–9	16.2439	15.96838	2.49384		
40–9	22.7467	22.61134	2.61093		
50 and above	44.0952	35.72661	7.79618		
Total	23.7394	24.85837	2.08607		
Education	Mean number of publications	Standard deviation	Standard error	F	P
Master's	10.8889	13.85389	2.30898	14.196	P<0.001
Doctorate	28.3077	26.46818	2.59542		
Total	**23.8286**	**25.01652**	**2.11428**		

Binary logistic regression for the predictors of selected research outputs

Binary logistic regression analysis was performed to establish the predictors of some selected research outputs. As is seen in Table 11, when all the predictors were put together, at least one of them predicted one or more research outputs. For instance, data simulation software predicted writing at least one technical review/report and one article in an international publication. Lecturers who used data analysis/simulation software very well were 1.9 times more likely to have written at least one technical report than those who have never used the software at all. Lecturers who do not use the software at all were 1.6 times less likely to have published in international journals than those who used the software very well. Also, access to functional research laboratory predicted publication of books as lecturers who had access to same were 1.9 times more likely to have published at least one book than those who had no such access. Use of e-libraries predicted publishing in international journals and authoring books. Surprisingly,

respondents who never used e-libraries were 3.1 times and 4.8 times more likely to publish in international journals and to publish books respectively than those who always used e-libraries. Nature of university ownership was associated with publishing in international journals and authoring technical reports. In both dependent variables, lecturers in federal universities were more likely than those in state and private universities to publish at least one book and write at least one technical report. State universities were similarly likely to have had better publications than their counterparts in private universities.

Table 12: Binary logistic regression for the predictors of selected research outputs

Predictors	**Having articles in international journal**			**Having published books/monograph**			**Having written technical review/ report**		
	B	**Exp. (B)**	**Sig.**	**B**	**Exp. (B)**	**Sig.**	**B**	**Exp. (B)**	**Sig.**
Internet connectivity									
Very fast			.791			.283			.508
Fast	.009	1.009	.983	.389	1.476	.239	.342	1.408	.285
Slow	-.161	.851	.710	.544	1.722	.116	.202	1.224	.552
Use of data analysis/ simulation software									
Very well			.010			.142			.036
Fairly well	-.499	.607	.052	-.038	.963	.854	-.141	.869	.497
Not at all	.451	1.570	.226	.405	1.500	.093	-.683	.505	.011
Access to functional research lab									
No									
Yes	-.050	.951	.836	.648	1.912	.001	.285	1.330	.139
Availability of laptop computer									
No									
Yes	-.056	.945	.886	-.279	.756	.359	-.631	.532	.082
Use of e-library									

Always			.028			.000			.258
Sometimes	.009	1.009	.970	.347	1.415	.069	-.240	.787	.218
Never	1.135	3.110	.011	1.573	4.823	.000	-.450	.637	.144
Nature of university ownership									
Federal			.000			.586			.000
State	-.693	.500	.014	.194	1.214	.336	-.621	.537	.003
Private	-1.344	.261	.000	.015	1.015	.951	-.861	.423	.000
Constant	2.556	12884	.000	-1.539	.215	.000	-.128	.880	.705

Discussion of Findings

The research findings in this study showed that most middle-level lecturers now have access to the basic ICT infrastructure such as laptops, printers and internet facilities (Wifi/LAN), even though ownership of most of these facilities is largely personal rather than institutional (with the exception of managed facilities such as university emails and university websites). However, the study shows that many of them are yet to have access to e-library resources and ICT-based research laboratories. The finding on availability of ICTs infrastructure such as computers is in line with the research of Ajegbelen (2016), which established that while access to computers has improved in most universities in Nigeria, further narratives on the state of supplied computers supplied indicate that most are either malfunctioning or poorly maintained by the university administration.

Furthermore, although most of the middle-level lecturers have access to ICT facilities, these have not translated to high productivity in research across the board as output is still considerably low in some universities. This may be explained by the reported lack of regular public electricity, slow internet connection, poor funding support for publications, among others. This aligns with the views of Teferra and Altbach (2004), who noted that inadequate electricity supply remains one of the constraints to effective teaching and research in many higher institutions of learning in Africa and a major stumbling block to the integration of ICT into the education sector in sub-Saharan Africa.

More fundamentally, findings from this study suggest that ICT has a positive influence on research productivity. This agrees with the outcome of similar studies discussed earlier in this article. However, in agreement with Okafor et al. (2011), the findings of this study also indicate that while ICT services may influence performance in research output, some

other variables such as lack of funds, unfavourable university policies/ guidelines on promotion and publications, individual traits of academics, environmental factors, differences in perspectives and other social constraints could mediate between internet use and research publications. Other variables could include individual academics' ranks, priorities and perception about their situations and goals in the university system. Senior academics may not prioritise the internet because they are under less pressure to publish, having reached the peak of their career, compared to their junior and middle-level counterparts. These other variables may also explain the mixed results regarding the influence of university ownership where some private universities did better than public ones in certain areas, while performing below the latter in other areas.

Of interest too is the finding that less than 40 per cent of the academics who took part in this study possess the skills to use data analysis software and conduct simulation exercises, thus aligning with Schaefer et al.'s (2016) argument that, even when internet access is available, lack of skills to maximise the gains of the global technology can still inhibit the productivity of lecturers in the university system. It also points to the fact that there is need to shift higher education policies towards capacity building to create world class researchers.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the influence of ICT availability and utilisation on the research outputs of middle-level lecturers in Nigerian universities using 12 Universities from South-western Nigeria. The study found that availability of ICT was about 68.6 per cent across all the universities studied; however, only 49.3 per cent of these were functional. This raises questions about university governance, leadership, and maintenance culture, especially in government owned universities. The study found further that ICT, where available and utilised, has a positive influence on the performance of academics in research, but that there could be other intervening variables that predict research outputs.

The study further found that availability and functionality of critical ICT infrastructure was more prevalent in private universities relative to public institutions. This raises the question again of whether the government has the capacity to continue the funding of university education.

The results of the study bring to the fore the urgent need not only to intensify efforts in the digitisation of higher education in Nigeria, and indeed in the rest of Africa, but to also isolate and remove all probable barriers to the maximum utilisation of ICT in research in the tertiary

sector. If lecturers are to be productive, the learning environment must have adequate ICT support and infrastructure that promotes research and development. This is the goal of national governments and other stakeholders in the education sector, including the World Bank, the United Nations, UNESCO, the African Union and the Council for the Development of Social Sciences in Africa, and the Nigerian government cannot ignore the need for improved funding and more aggressive integration of ICT in higher education in the country.

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Bureaucracy and the Negation of Collegiality in Nigeria's Nascent Federal Universities: Insights from a Typical Instance

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Abstract

This article examines the erosion of collegiality in Nigeria's nascent federal universities against the backdrop of the rising bureaucratic tendencies in such institutions. From the standpoint of a vintage case of one of such universities, the article observes that there has been a sustained systematic subversion of the collegial ethos through gradual bureaucratic centralism and excess. Using a qualitative analysis that relied on a synthesis of primary and secondary data, the article highlights aspects of these bureaucratic tendencies and underscores their implications for internal institutional autonomy and academic freedom. It posits that the trend is tantamount to the emasculation and usurpation of the faculty and, in effect, negates the culture of collegiality and academic sovereignty. To reverse this trend, the article makes a case for institutional reform aimed at devolving university governance strategically in a manner that restores the functional autonomy of the faculty alongside the academic sovereignty of its academia.

Keywords: Academic freedom, bureaucracy, bureaucratic centralism, collegiality/collegialism, institutional autonomy, university governance

Résumé

Cet article examine l'érosion de la collégialité dans les nouvelles universités fédérales du Nigeria dans le contexte de croissantes tendances bureaucratiques dans ces institutions. D'un cas d'école d'une de ces universités, l'article observe qu'il y existe une subversion systématique et soutenue de l'éthos collégial par un centralisme et d'excès bureaucratiques progressifs. Par une analyse qualitative qui s'appuie sur une synthèse de données primaires et secondaires, l'article met en lumière certains aspects de ces tendances bureaucratiques et

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souligne leurs implications pour l'autonomie institutionnelle interne et la liberté académique. Il postule que cette tendance équivaut à l'émasculation et à l'usurpation des prérogatives du corps professoral et, en fait, dénie la culture de collégialité et de souveraineté académique. Pour inverser cette tendance, le document plaide en faveur d'une réforme institutionnelle qui, stratégiquement, déléguerait la gouvernance universitaire de manière à restaurer l'autonomie fonctionnelle de la faculté tout en garantissant la souveraineté académique de l'université.

Mots clés : liberté académique, bureaucratie, centralisme bureaucratique, collégialité/collégialisme, autonomie institutionnelle, gouvernance universitaire

Introduction

The university is a traditional organisation principally dedicated to the production and reproduction of knowledge as well as the interrogation and transformation of conventional episteme. It is composed of tenured and non-tenured academics, researchers and para-bureaucrats who work in clusters of faculties and establishments loosely structured into an organic and self-regulating system (Baldridge 1971; Russell 1993; Nybom 2008). The academic corps is the core of the university system. In most instances, especially in Africa, this constituent of the university system devolves from the Senate (central academic board) to the faculty and departmental boards, with critical extensions to allied academic units and associated academic staff platforms (Jowi 2018). These structures play a pivotal role in the governance of a university.

Originally, the university system was run based on academic leadership, founded on the principle of collegiality. In that regard, leadership and responsibility were laterally decentralised and determined by expertise in scholarship (Babalola 2014), while academic departments and faculties played decisive roles in the governance of the system. Although the post-World War welfarist/interventionist states promoted a bureaucratised university system, this emphasis on bureaucracy is today being widely challenged 'by a normative preference for collegiality' (Singh 2005: 11), what could be referred to as the 'collegialism redux', after Pollitt (2014: 1).

Paradoxically, most contemporary universities are still enmeshed in bureaucratic traditions and tendencies. As Babalola (2014: 9) succinctly puts it, 'Nigerian universities are weighed down by the bureaucratic demands of political correctness, reporting, and regulation that stifle productivity and capacity to innovate'. This happens in the wider context of restrictive institutional relations whereby 'Exaggerated concerns with "efficiency" and

"excellence" lead to increased regulation and surveillance of scholarly output, rendering academic freedom vulnerable to formulaic measures of performance that may be insensitive to the work of African academics' (Mama 2006: 1).

So rather than deepening the culture of collegiality, most Nigerian universities have taken to increased bureaucratisation and managerialism, with the attendant consequences on institutional autonomy in general and academic freedom in particular. Consequently, just as in most African universities, the 'prerequisites for the existence of a healthy and vibrant academia, not to mention academic freedom, are not in existence ...' (Mama 2006: 15). It is against the backdrop of the above context and observations that the study sought to investigate how bureaucratic tendencies in Nigerian universities affect the culture of collegiality as well as the prospects of proper university autonomy and academic liberty.

Extant scholarship about university governance/autonomy in Nigeria has privileged the external dimensions of university autonomy (Jonathan 2006; Ekundayo and Adedokun 2009; Arikewuyo 2013; Olorunsora 2018). In this regard, what has been emphasised is the relationship between the university administration and the wider society, including the government and industry, as well as donor agencies (Engwall 2007; Mukoro 2013). While these perspectives are important, they have, nonetheless, failed to factor into their analysis of the equally important internal dimensions of the subject. The study looks at some critical aspects of the rising managerial varsity tradition by considering the often-dialectical relationship between the bureaucratised university management and the faculty.

In the main, the study seeks to proffer answers to a set of pertinent questions:

- How does bureaucracy affect the culture of collegiality in Nigeria's nascent public universities?
- How does bureaucratisation undermine academic freedom in the faculty?
- How could centralist/bureaucratic tendencies be moderated in the interest of institutional autonomy and academic freedom?

In tandem, the study posits that the prevailing bureaucratic ambience of the university system by management tends to erode and emasculate the culture of collegiality, thereby vitiating proper institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

The remainder of the article is thematically structured into seven sections based on the underlying objective. What comes next is a highlight of the basic terms that form the conceptual thrust of the study. This is followed by an exploration of the literature on issues of university governance and

autonomy. Next is the theoretical framework, designed as an analytical anchor to the study. This is in turn followed by an attempt to situate the context, scope, and methodology of the study. Thereafter is an analysis of facets of bureaucratic tendencies in the focal university, next to which some implications of that trend for institutional autonomy and academic freedom are examined. The last section is the conclusion, alongside some recommendations.

Conceptual Clarifications

Six key terms constitute the conceptual thrust of this study: academic freedom, bureaucracy, collegiality, institutional autonomy, university, and university governance. The contextual operational meanings of these concepts are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Operational Definitions of Basic Concepts*

Term	Operational Definition
Academic freedom	The right of an academic to operate within the statutory and professional ambits without unlawful epistemic, pedagogic, ideological, or structural restrictions. It encompasses the security of tenure as well as the right of the faculty to determine the structure, content, and administration of the curriculum. Technically, the idea of academic freedom is embodied in the concept of institutional autonomy in its broadest sense. Crucial aspects of academic freedom include freedom of/from (cf. Mama 2006; Arikewuyo 2013): teaching and discussion research and publishing Institutional or political censorship Professional association.
Bureaucracy/ Bureaucratic tendencies: centralism/excess	Bureaucracy is used restrictively in this context to designate a system of large-scale organisational leadership/management characterised by hierarchical orientation, command and control, corporate ethos, etc. (see McLean and McMillan 2003). Bureaucratic centralism in the context of this study refers to the excessive bureaucratisation of the university system in such a manner that stifles the faculty and negates internal institutional autonomy as well as academic freedom. Bureaucratic excess relates to the undue and abusive incursions of bureaucracy within the academic portfolio in the faculty.

Collegiality/ Collegialism	Collegialism/Collegiality implies that the university faculty and academic committees or platforms allied to it constitute critical centres of decision-making (cf. Rabah 2015). Governance in this system is run based on collegial and peer academic leadership. Features of collegiality in the context of university governance include: - Shared leadership responsibility and governance - Fluid and non-hierarchical management structure and line of reporting (lateral devolution) - Emphasis on peer relations and consultation rather than on authority and structure.
Institutional autonomy	Institutional autonomy refers to the relationship between the university and its diverse stakeholders concerning operational (in)dependence (cf. Martini 2016). External autonomy refers to the relationship between the university and the wider society. Internal autonomy has to do with the relationship between the university authority and the faculty. It refers also to academic sovereignty in a more nuanced sense.
University/ Collegial university	An institution of higher learning specialising in research as well as teaching undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across various academic disciplines. The notion of the university here encompasses its organisational structure and community, including the students, teachers, and administrative and other staff of a university. The conception of the university in this article is biased towards the collegial model (cf. Baldridge 1971; see also Table 2, column 3).
University governance	The control and co-ordination of the various stakeholders and activities of the university towards the realisation of its purpose. The crux of university governance is to optimise institutional performance by applying the available resources to efficient use (cf. Osisioma 2012; Ogunbadeniyi and Uhumwuangho 2014).

**Author's contextual definitions, edified by insights from the various sources cited.*

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University governance refers to the relationship between the internal and external stakeholders of the university system aimed at realising both the strategic and civic ends of the system (Engwall 2007). It is a multi-stakeholder process that involves the staff and students' bodies, statutory boards at the departmental and faculty level, the University Senate and Council, the university management, as well as the various governmental and non-governmental oversight structures (Mignot-Gerard 2003).

The crux of university governance is to strategically balance the imperative for institutional autonomy and academic liberty (freedom) with the demand for public accountability (Jonathan 2006; Babalola 2014). The notion of institutional autonomy is at best problematic. According to Nybom (2008: 137), 'Autonomy, in this regard, is certainly no synonym for independence; it is rather a case of the widened scope of decision-making under certain important constraints, with less local power but more responsibility.' Hence, institutional autonomy is a matter of leveraging the stakeholding capacity of the university vis-à-vis the external stakeholders (especially the government) or that of the faculty about the university administration.

Academic freedom (liberty), on the other hand, 'refers to the actual working conditions of individual faculty members' (Nybom 2008: 137), the essence of which is that the faculty member is a free career entity in an organisational context where he or she also holds a stake in collegial decision-making processes (Russell 1993; Babalola 2014). Collegial decision-making is based on consensus-seeking through lengthy discussions among academic peers. It forms a self-regulating community capable of regulating itself with little or no external hierarchical interference (Mignot-Gerard 2003).

While the collegial model emphasises 'collaborative leadership' (Mooney, Burns and Chadwick 2012: 143), whereby 'faculty members become an integral part of the leadership process' (Singh 2005: 11), the bureaucratic model favours a vertical-cum-hierarchical centralisation of powers that negates academic freedom and internal institutional autonomy (Babalola 2014). Contemporary scholarship on university governance is fraught with polemic about how and where to strike the balance between the extremes of institutional bureaucracy and collegial democracy (Singh 2005).

These are two dimensions of university autonomy: external and internal. External autonomy is concerned with the operational liberty that the university management enjoys from its proprietors and funders,

while internal autonomy refers to the degree of freedom at the disposal of academic members of the university, both as career entities and stakeholders of the system (Jowi 2018). Whereas much has been written in respect of the external dimensions of university autonomy from a variety of perspectives (Ordorika 2003; Okorosaye-Orubite, Paulley and Abraham 2012; Mukoro 2013), little is known concerning the internal aspects of the same process in respect of the Nigerian context. This study, among other things, is an attempt to address this apparent gap in knowledge by considering the bureaucracy–collegiality dialectics vis-à-vis their implications for institutional autonomy and academic sovereignty.

But to address the epistemic situation creditably, it is apposite to situate the discourse within the framework of the 'managerialism vs. collegialism' debate. Managerialism presupposes, among other things, the tendency to corporatise higher education administration (Deem 2000; Leslie-Hughes 2013). It 'involves the exercise of power by leaders and top-management figures' (Marini and Reale 2016: 6), geared principally towards reorienting the institution on the path of corporate entrepreneurism. On the other hand, collegialism refers to the underlying 'philosophy' implicit in the culture of collegiality as it applies to the organisational context of a higher institution. It is characterised by three core elements, namely: 'a process of shared decision-making by a collegial group about academic matters; mutual support in upholding the academic integrity of members of the group; and conservation of a realm of special knowledge and practice' (Harvey 2016: 2).

The managerial-collegial debate refers to the paradigmatic contestations between the cultures of collegiality and bureaucracy in the administration of institutions of higher learning, especially the university. The tension is one of virtual antagonism. As Marini and Reale (2016: 6) put it, 'the more a university is managerially led, the less it will be collegial because the increasingly top-down structure of decision-making and the strengthening of accountability will detract from the individuality and the bottom-up voice of the peers'. However, contemporary thinking on the subject matter tends to see a measurable level of mutual coexistence between the two traditions. This perspective is captured in the revisionist notions of 'new-managerialism' and 'new-collegialism' (Deem 2000; Harvey 2016).

Four traditions/regimes of university governance are identifiable in the literature. These are statism, managerialism/executivism, commercialism and collegialism (see Table 2). Statism is a situation where the state wields firm control over the university sector. In such a system, the government is deeply involved in the affairs of the university both at the level of funding

and general administration (cf. Murphy 2008). Universities under this regime lack all measures of operational autonomy. The tenets of institutional autonomy and academic freedom have no place in such a system as the universities are run as appendages of the education department of the state.

Managerialism/executivism refers to the tradition whereby the universities operate with limited autonomy under strict supervision and oversight by the state agencies. Here, institutions may exercise minimal discretion on some local matters, but the government wields an overriding stake in the entire governance process. There is much emphasis on costs recovery, hence the running of the university is modelled on corporate sector practices (Aspromourgos 2012). Here, too, academic freedom is sacrificed at the altar of bureaucratic centralism and correctness (Babalola 2014).

On the other hand, commercialism represents an outright orientation towards marketisation, vocationalisation and commodification. In this regard, universities are run not only with the intent to cover/recover costs but also to make and maximise profit. This model fits nicely into the abiding traditions of most privately owned universities in Africa, be they religious or 'corporate'. Here, there is much emphasis on entrepreneurialism and the penchant for credentialism is widespread.

Collegialism is a tradition that devolves administrative processes from the top management to the faculty, where tenured academia holds sway in governing the university (Ogbogu 2013). In this system, there is an appreciable degree of functional autonomy and academic freedom, as both the government and the university management accord with the faculty its pride of place in university governance. Contemporary neoliberal incursions into the global university sector have incidentally rendered this tradition endangered (cf. Bricks 2013). Nonetheless, elements of this tradition subsist in varying degrees in established universities.

Suffice it to note that the transformation of African universities from the colonial to developmental model has led to a sustained bureaucratic ascendancy. Similarly, the advent of the corporatised multiversity model has entrenched bureaucratic consolidation in African universities even more. In the face of these institutional changes, the collegial culture has nearly become otiose and the best of what is left of that represents a mere ideal. This collegial impasse has been aptly situated thus:

> As a mark of capitalist ascendancy, the university as corporate has, it would seem, lost its soul and its autonomy. The focus on collegiality invokes the communitarian and independent spirit which has for centuries been the foundation of university ideals, but which is presently undermined by managerialism and its profit-driven motives. A crass utilitarianism

> appropriates and 'brands' academic values to retain pseudo-prestige while impoverishing the sense of vocation without which collegiality is rendered an anachronism. (Weinberg and Graham-Smith 2012: 68)

Table 2: Three Regimes of University Governance in Africa

Regime	**Orientation**	**Illustrative Example(s)**
Statism	No institutional autonomy; abusive political interference/politicisation; lack of academic freedom (intellectual sovereignty, secured tenure, and collegial/academic leadership)	Cameroon
Managerialism/ Executivism	Bureaucratisation/corporatisation; cost recovery; clericalisation, compromised institutional autonomy and academic freedom	Nigeria
Collegialialism	The primacy of the faculty; functional institutional autonomy; academic freedom; lateral devolution	???

Source: Author.

The instances (working examples) given in Table 2 are neither exhaustive nor representative. They are merely illustrative and are designed to stimulate thinking in respect of the prevailing patterns of university governance in Africa.

In addition to being illustrative, the typologies considered in Table 2 overlap substantively. Hence, the most reasonable approach to understanding them is to think in terms of a continuum. In this regard, one could be talking of the following sub-categories: extreme managerialism/executivism, moderate managerialism/executivism, low managerialism/executivism, etc. Notice, however, that the collegial model in the table has no illustrative example. This is deliberate but indicative of the fact that that tradition has become almost crowded out by the pressures of statism, managerialism, and commercialism.

Theoretical Framework: Collegialism

This study adopts collegialism as an analytical framework. In this context, collegialism presupposes that the university faculty and staff platforms allied to it constitute critical centres of decision-making. It refers to a pattern of an organisational culture characterised by collegial relations, peer academic leadership, and academic sovereignty. The collegial precept arose in contradistinction to the rising bureaucratisation of the university system

in the West, following the advent of the welfarist state (Babalola 2014). Concerning the emergence of the model, Singh (2005: 11) notes that 'the traditional emphasis on bureaucracy is being challenged by a normative preference for collegiality'.

Collegiality is a lateral-cum-horizontal system of collaborative leadership based on the principles of peer consultation, collaboration, and participation (Singh 2005; Mooney, Burns and Chadwick 2012). It emphasises the leading-from-the-middle approach (Jowi 2018), whereby faculty members become stakeholders of the university leadership process. Singh (2005: 11) notes that it is marked by shared leadership, decision-making, vision, and values. According to Lesniaski, MacPherson, Fister and McKinzie (2001: 234), the collegial model is characterised by the following features:

- shared leadership responsibility and governance.
- fluid and non-hierarchical management structure and lines of reporting (lateral devolution).
- emphasis on peer relations and consultation rather than on authority and structure.

Applied to the purpose of the study, it is instructive to note that the university faculty and staff platforms allied to it present the institutional avenues for collegial consultation as they relate to the question of university governance. The emasculation of such avenues through bureaucratisation is, therefore, antithetical to the imperative of institutional autonomy as well as academic freedom (Rabah 2015). It is in the light of this fact that the proposed study posits that the bureaucratisation of the university system tends to erode the culture of collegiality, thereby impeding the prospect of university autonomy and academic freedom.

Context, Scope, and Methodology

The study's subject matter was the governance approaches in Nigeria's nascent public universities. By nascent public universities is meant twelve newly established national universities, created between 2011 and 2014. The focus on this category of the institution was informed by the fact that they present an atypical internal governance paradigm vis-à-vis the prevailing traditions in the established universities. These new universities share some striking semblance, which holds critical implications for the study. First, they emerged in an era when public universities in Nigeria were at the peak of crises of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Second, they employed their administrators principally from established universities where the ethos of institutional autonomy and academic liberty largely had

been compromised and overly vitiated. Third, and more importantly, these new institutions were established with a good chunk of early-career and novitiate academics, most of whom would have to work for several years to earn their full academic tenure.

An academic taking up a first appointment in the Nigerian university system is required by law to serve a mandatory probationary period of three years before his or her appointment is 'confirmed' and therefore 'tenured'. Within this probationary period, the staff member is merely holding a provisional appointment, which could be terminated at any point by management without any recourse to due statutory procedures. The dominance of this category of academics in the new universities creates a dicey asymmetry between management and the faculty, with the former retaining the powers to 'summarily' dismiss any academic staff who may be considered a threat to its 'authority. This is more so given the prohibition of staff union platforms in those universities in the early years of their nascence. The above scenario festered in a particular institutional context where the pioneer vice-chancellor's *ab initio* operated as paramount bureaucrats amidst an overly ad hoc establishment set-up bereft of properly constituted Councils and the Senate (Okoli 2016).

The study focused on the internal structures of leadership and decision-making in one of those new universities, with an emphasis on how the workings of bureaucracy in those contexts tended to negate collegiality and, by extension, university autonomy, and academic freedom. It approached the internal dimension of the university governance problematic from the standpoint of the eroding impact of bureaucracy on faculty-level collegiality. The essence and end of the study were to generate what could be termed worst-case insights capable of forming a point of departure in subsequent efforts at analysing the eroding impact of bureaucratic centralism in Nigeria's contemporary university system.

The study was quasi-phenomenological exploratory research with a descriptive-analytical orientation. It relied on the use of a combination of primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was sourced from personal observations as well as shared lived experiences of select mid-career academics in the focal institution, elicited through corroborated study chats. Secondary data was derived from documentary resources, viz statutory instruments, reports, literature and allied official documents. The outcome of the study was qualitatively analysed in themes, drawing selectively from the relevant library and official sources. There was a modest attempt to ground the analysis in the theory of collegialism. Analytical triangulation was applied to synthesise insights from various data sources.

The origin and substance of the study owe a lot to the proceedings of the 2019 Higher Education Policy Initiative (HEPI) Institute, held at the University of Ghana, Legon, from 20 to 30 May 2019, wherein the author participated as a laureate. The various presentations by resource-persons/facilitators and co-laureates as well as the sideline activities, such as sessional discussions/conversations, research-writing-publishing clinics and group engagements, formed platforms that shaped the study and determined its outcome herewith presented. The author is a tenured mid-career academic and a former programme co-ordinator as well as a union leader at one of the newly established public universities in Nigeria. The author's positionality in this respect is expected to leverage his lived experiences in such a manner that profits the analysis. In appropriating the author's lived experiences and personal observations, a conscious effort was made to eschew personal prejudices and stay within the bounds of analytical objectivity and systematisation. To this end, the author simulated the study *ab initio* through solicited peer discussions whereby select faculty colleagues across the academic-administrative divide volunteered valuable insights regarding his potential personal biases. Additionally, the outcome of the study was again subjected to another round of detached scrutiny by the same peer group to detect manifest author prejudices.

Bureaucracy–Collegiality Dialectics in the Focal University: An Empirical Narrative

So far in this study, our discussion on how bureaucracy affects collegiality has bordered on theoretical, if hypothetical, generics. This section attempts to reduce the discussion to some concrete specifics by way of empirical illustration and validation. To begin with, it is pertinent to observe that the university that is the locus of analysis here apparently represented an extreme case of bureaucratic centralism and ascendancy as well as collegial downturn. It may not necessarily typify the situation across the public universities in Nigeria. Even the federal universities in the same category as the one under review have diverse significant peculiarities and specificities. Hence, any attempt to meaningfully extrapolate or generalise the observations and findings arising from this illustrative case must be cognisant of its contextual peculiarity, as earlier highlighted in the contextual background.

For the avoidance of doubt, the focal university is neither a fictional nor a hypothetical case, although it has been anonymised here for ethical reasons. It belongs to the latest generation of federal (national) universities in Nigeria. Established in 2011, the university took off on a miniature campus

model with an administrative structure that was overly centralised and top-heavy. Upon inception, the university was inappropriately constituted at the faculty level with a preponderance of junior and inexperienced academics, some of whom were abusively elevated to important positions as programme co-ordinators and academic advisers (Okoli 2016). The asymmetry of management–faculty relations in the university was disproportionately skewed in favour of the management. This bred an awkward organisational culture that thrived on command and control rather than on collegial relations and fellowship. It also promoted an awkward tradition of organisational behaviour among academics that leveraged bureaucratic orthodoxy and conformism. It is upon selecting indicators of such a peculiar organisational context (see Table 3) that our analysis is predicated.

Table 3: Some Empirical Indicators of Erosion of Collegiality in the focal University

Indicator	Instance(s)
Emasculation and usurpation of faculty	Unilateral appointment of deans by the VC; top-centric student admission and staff recruitment
Over-clericalisation of academia	Lecturers' involvement in petty clerical work; use of lecturers as laboratory or class attendants
Establishmentarianist patronage/cronyism	Nepotistic appointment, placement, promotion, etc.
Excessive regulation and control	The signing of daily attendance; oath of secrecy; lecture note rule
Executive authoritarianism	VC's power is supreme, tending to autocracy; he is an overlord operating with utmost arbitrariness
Management-union tension	Union's resistance and backlashes resulting in structural victimisation and persecution of unionists and radical scholars.

Source: Author's compilation

Suffice it to note that some of the attributes observed of the focal university apply to the rest of the universities in the same generation, and even beyond. Comparative empirical narrative and anecdotes, however, indicate a more significantly dire situation in the newly established universities. What then are these significant attributes? This analytical poser forms the concern of the sub-sections that follow below, which by design focuses on an illustrative, and not necessarily a representative, case.

Over-clericalisation of academia

The professional mandate of a university academic can be compartmentalised into teaching, research, and community service (Okorosaye-Orubite et al. 2012). To do well in these responsibilities, these academics must devote the bulk of their career time more to intellectual resourcing and less to extra-scholarly engagements. But in the focal university, academics routinely were made to undertake petty clerical tasks, such as registration of students, laboratory and class attendance, and the like. An absurd situation in this respect occurred in the 2015/2016 academic session, when members of academic staff were required by the management to sign for the collection and submission of classroom keys at a security desk as part of their teaching schedule.

By signing for the keys, a lecturer undertook responsibility for the safety and security of the facilities in the class within the period of the lecture. This arcane practice was encouraged in an institution whose staff distribution was overly skewed in favour of clerical personnel. There was an outright surplusage of non-teaching staff in the system to undertake such clerical tasks. One, therefore, wonders about the rationale for the involvement of academic staff in such a lowly clerical line of duty.

The involvement of teaching staff in some administrative duties is not altogether condemnable. As a matter of need, faculties require some measure of knowledge of administrative operations to consummate their expertise in academic leadership. The worry here, however, was the tendency to excessive use of academic regular members for petty administrative tasks, especially those that were far from their original and statutory schedule of duty (cf. Okoli 2016). Again, the disproportionate amount of time those members of academic staff spent on such 'irregular' duties calls into question the rationality of the practice in a university set-up. It smacks of professional impropriety to reduce an academic staff to the status of ad-hoc clerical personnel, whatever the bureaucratic exigencies were.

Excessive regulation and control

University in general is widely acknowledged to be one of the most liberal organisations in the world. It is often and rightly acclaimed to be the quintessence of that (Babalola 2014; Rabah 2015). However, in the focal institution, there had been much structural restriction and control. In its early years, the university had operated a peculiar mini-campus system that was excessively regulated. Then, faculties were meant to scan their official identity card at the heavily policed security gate by the main entrance to

document and confirm their entry and exit. This practice was justified by management as a rational contingency policy dictated by what was then considered a volatile security situation in the state where the university was situated. Curiously, whilst this 'securitisation regime' lasted, lecturers arriving for classes, who had misplaced their identity cards, were often denied access to the campus, even in the full glare of recognition.

Lecturers were also required to sign an attendance register at the department to document their arrival and departure days. In several isolated cases, such attendance records were used to witch-hunt academics under the pretext of a punctuality rule. Besides the punctuality rule, there was a lecture-note precept that required lecturers to prepare their lecture modules in both PowerPoint and full-text versions and make the same available to students in soft and hard copy. In addition, lecturers were mandated to engage in 'smart teaching' with the aid of PowerPoint slides. This pedagogic formula, to a significant extent, reduced teaching and learning to a mechanistic process bereft of rigour and dynamism. In the advancement of this pedagogic modality, the chief executive and cohorts working for him periodically went round the classes to enforce conformity, often interrupting the teaching process.

In the 2015/2016 academic session, the management of the university produced a controversial document whereby members of academic staff were required to sign an oath of secrecy. The accompanying memoir instructed faculties to comply with the 'secrecy directive' or face drastic disciplinary sanctions. The secrecy document reads *inter alia*:

> I … do solemnly promise that I will not directly or indirectly reveal, except to a person to whom it is my duty or to whom I am authorised to communicate it, any code work, sketch plan, model, article, note, a document of information entrusted to me by any person holding office in the (university) or the public service of the Federal University of Nigeria, which I may obtain, or to which I have access, owing to my position as a staff of the (university) …[brackets are mine].

Incidentally, many were intimidated or cajoled into compliance, and acquiesced and signed the controversial document either under duress or pressure. The effort of the academic staff union to challenge the policy precipitated hostility between the management and a segment of the union leadership, which snowballed into a showdown with a few of the leaders. The secrecy policy was significant because it represented the height of affront to the principle of academic freedom.

Emasculation/usurpation of faculty

The ascendancy of bureaucracy in the focal institution led to the emasculation of the operational independence and integrity of the faculty. For instance, the authority of the faculty to initiate and lead the process of academic staff recruitment as well as student admission was eroded (cf. Ernst 2009; Nwisaka 2014). The same was true regarding other aspects of academic policy and programming. For instance, up to the 2014/2015 academic session, the administration of the semester examination had been abusively centralised. In this regard, faculties were required to generate as much as twenty-five to fifty questions (depending on the scope of the course module) and submit them to their dean, who hand them in to the office of the vice-chancellor (VC) for typing and reproduction. Here, junior members of non-teaching staff, who were serving as personal aides of the VC, took charge of the process with only limited oversight by the deans. This arcane situation resulted in a major examination leakage scandal in which the university's Central Examination Misconduct Committee indicted the office of the VC.

In such an anomalous system, unfortunately, the position of the dean remained appointive rather than elective, even in sharp contradiction to the dictate of the Staff Handbook, which stipulated that a validly constituted Faculty Board should elect the dean. With an appointed dean unilaterally selected by the absolutist vice-chancellor, the faculty became a mere appendage of the management, a management that was poised to elicit strict and 'slavish adherence to the rules from the faculties (McLean and McMillan 2003: 55). This scenario undermined the capacity of the faculty to watchdog the management but also defended its academic corps from unwarranted executive authoritarianism. More significantly, it negated the ideals of collegiality as well as academic tenure and sovereignty at the faculty.

Executive authoritarianism

The powers of the chief executive in the focal institution were immense and paramount. The vice-chancellor (VC) personified an overlord whose dictates were more dreaded than respected (Okoli 2016). With most arbitrary powers to 'hire and fire', the VC was feared as the supreme determinant of career prospects and sustainability. There were cases of irregular appointments as well as the termination of appointments by the management at the instance of the VC. Academics were summoned, questioned, or even penalised for holding critical views, especially of the university administration. There were also cases of gross mistreatment of academics by the university authority under disturbing circumstances.

In 2014, a lecturer was chastised and humiliated for trying to enforce discipline during an examination that he was invigilating. He had stirred a rush at the close of the examination by threatening students to 'hand in their articles or risk being penalised'. In the process, a female student sustained an injury. This caused a commotion, attracting the attention of the VC who was on routine executive supervision in the area. Rather than appreciating the circumstances of the incident objectively, the VC blamed it squarely on the invigilator and charged him to formally apologised to the student and foot the bill of her treatment. This bizarre occurrence signalled the vulnerability of academics in an institution that not only undermined their academic freedom but also negated their dignity.

Establishmentarianist patronage

Establishmentarianist patronage refers to the abuse of public office in the service of particularistic self-regarding interests that are personal or primordial. This tendency had manifested as nepotism and cronyism in the focal university. Nepotistic considerations often predetermined and compromised the process of staff employment, placement, and promotion. Some academics were appointed, placed, or promoted based on parochial sentiments arising from sectionalist, ethnic, religious, or clannish rationalisations. Career advancement and recognition were at best based on a fetishistic recourse to article-credentialism and nominal ranking rather than on intellectual resourcing and productivity (Okoli 2012). By this, the chief executive ensured that his cronies and support agents were mainstreamed into the regular members of academia. This practice promoted an obnoxious organisational culture where sycophancy and hypocrisy were prided as standard marks of efficiency and loyalty. Nonetheless, what was reproduced and perpetuated in such a 'spoil system' was systemic inefficiency and mediocrity.

Management–union tension

One of the critical manifestations of the abusive system under review was management–union tension and attendant industrial contestations. The endeavours of the academic staff union to resist or change the status quo often engendered backlashes whose outcomes threatened harmonious industrial relations. For obvious reasons, the management often sought to subvert the strength of the union by targeting its leaders for persecution under diverse pretexts. A system of structural inducement and victimisation was put in place to condition radically inclined scholars into acquiescence. The

consequence of this was a dialectical institutional ambience where enduring stability could not be guaranteed. The implications for institutional progress and sustainability (cf. Okoli 2016) were diversely ominous.

Of Bureau-varsity: Implications for Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom

An ideal university (although one is hardly found nowadays, anyway) is a collegial entity. In this system, leadership is a shared responsibility that is performed at the different committee levels, from the Senate (Central Academic Board) to the various faculty and departmental boards. Leadership in this context is based on academic tenure and expertise, peer consultation, shared governance, and collegial democracy (Taiwo 2011; Babalola 2014). Decision-making flows laterally from the faculty and allied academic platforms to management in a systematically devolved bottom-up pattern. This is not with any prejudice to the prerogative of the management in matters peculiar to the establishment. The bureaucratisation of the university in the fashion highlighted in the preceding section stifles the collegial tradition of the university. More significantly, it vitiates the tenets of institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

To reiterate and amplify what has been said earlier in this study, institutional autonomy relates to the relationship between the university and its diverse stakeholders concerning relative but functional operational 'dependence' of the university administration or its faculties (Osisioma 2012; Mukoro 2013; Abdullaheem and Muhammed 2014). It is a matter of leveraging the powers and responsibilities of the university or the faculty thereof to bolster its operational efficiency and integrity. There are two dimensions to institutional autonomy, namely external and internal/local (Martin 2016). External autonomy refers to the relationship between the university and the wider society, including the state, industry, and donor agencies. Internal autonomy has to do with the relationship between the university authority and (management/administration) and the faculty. It is concerned with the functional operational autonomy and self-determination of the faculty, especially about the academic policies of the university. The concept of institutional autonomy in this study refers discretely to its internal dimension.

What then does the 'bureau-varsity' tradition presented in this study portend for institutional autonomy and academic freedom? It reduces the faculty to a mere appendage of the management by usurping its statutory mandate. Consequently, critical decisions regarding recruitment, tenure, promotion, discipline, curriculum, and welfare are made at the managerial

level without recourse to the faculty. Rather than being a centre of excellence in terms of collegial relations and academic leadership, the faculty becomes a space for establishmentarianist politics and patronage. In this context, leadership roles are negotiated and assumed through sycophancy rather than meritocracy. This creates an abusive organisational culture that celebrates mediocrity over excellence. About academic freedom, it leaves much to be desired. The faculty has little or no control over the structure and content of the curriculum. A strict epistemic and pedagogic censorship prevails over what is to be taught and how teaching is delivered. In effect, scholarship is tightly circumscribed and reduced to exercise in deference to orthodoxy.

Bureaucratic correctness in the context of university governance is not wholly negative, and this study is not entirely averse to it. But overbureaucratisation of the university in the measure x-rayed above is tantamount to the emasculation of free scholarship. This is antithetical to the original calling of the university. It also negates one of the cardinal organising principles of a modern democratic society, the principle of liberal thought. This is instructive considering the avowed status of the university as a prime agent of modern civilisation and societal transformation. Alas, while the wider society is making incremental progress towards democratisation, African universities are relapsing into the morass of liberal retrogression essentialised by bureaucratic centralism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

University is one of the critical centres of civilisation. It is a community where the best and finest of human ideals are espoused. It is also a centre of excellence in terms of human practices and principles. Two of the most acclaimed and cherished principles of the university community are collegialism and liberalism. The former relates to the belief in peer academic leadership, while the latter has to do with academic freedom as well as tolerance of alternative viewpoints. These are operational principles in an ideal university where the faculty and academia hold a stake in institutional decision-making. The institutional dynamics in the focal university system, however, tended to make the realisation of these values at best problematic. The growing bureaucratic and centralist tendencies in the university administration occasioned management–faculty relations that negated the culture of collegiality, thereby undermining institutional autonomy and academic freedom. It is in the light of this understanding that the study examined the contours and implications of the erosion of collegiality in Nigeria's nascent federal universities.

From the illustrative standpoint of what passes for a quintessential case, the study observed that there was a sustained downturn in the collegial ethos of the university to such an extent that the faculty was undermined. The study identified the indicators of these tendencies, which included usurpation of faculty powers by the management, clericalisation of academic staff, establishmentarianist patronage, executive authoritarianism, excessive regulation and control, and management–union tension. These failures imply that the bureaucratic imperatives of management were overriding collegial concerns at the faculty. So, as the university grew in bureaucratic practice, the culture of collegiality gave way to a hierarchical institutional order where internal autonomy and academic freedom virtually constituted endangered practices.

To reverse this awkward trend, there was a need for an institutional reform aimed at devolving the university governance strategically in a manner that restored the functional autonomy of the faculty alongside the sovereignty of its academia. To be meaningful and sustainable, such reform must prioritise the revitalisation of faculty-based collegial structures, such as the faculty and departmental board, the peer committees, and relevant staff associational forum. The strength and vitality of the faculty as the nucleus of decision-making should be restored through strategic measures, such as the election of deans and heads of departments, peer-reviewed promotion and recognition, as well as strict adherence to the statutory provisions that govern official staff relations, especially in respect of discipline and welfare.

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The Level of Academic and Professional Competencies Required by Middle-level Academics to Serve in African Universities

Chika Eucharia Eze*

Abstract

Using the lens of situational leadership theory, this article interrogates if early career academics serving in leadership positions, particularly those who have worked in a university for less than seven years, possess the task-relevant competencies that are required for university leadership The study assessed academics' competency levels by examining their pedagogical capabilities, their research and publication output, and their proficiency in integrating ICT tools into teaching and learning. The research adopted a qualitative design, using narrative nterviews and focus group discussion (FGD) to sample ten early-career aders in a private university in Nigeria. The findings indicated that participants had weak research and publication records and relied predominantly on traditional lecture-based pedagogy, which limited opportunities for innovative and participatory teaching and learning. However, the participants' engagement of ICT was apt and promising. Based on their narratives it is recommended that some restrictions be applied to the appointment of early-career scholars as middle-level academic leaders, on the grounds that they need adequate time to develop their academic and professional competencies before taking up leadership demands.

Keywords: Middle-level academic leaders, early-career academics, academic and professional competencies, university leadership and governance, university-set goals/mandate

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Résumé

Par le prisme de la théorie du leadership situationnel, cette recherche demande si les leaders universitaires en début de carrière occupant des postes de responsabilité, en particulier ceux qui ont travaillé moins de sept ans dans une université, possèdent les compétences requises pour le leadership universitaire. L'étude a évalué les niveaux de compétence des universitaires en examinant leurs capacités pédagogiques, leurs travaux de recherche et leurs publications, ainsi que leur aptitude à intégrer les outils TIC dans l'enseignement et l'apprentissage. La recherche a adopté une conception qualitative, utilisant des entretiens narratifs et des discussions de groupe pour échantillonner dix leaders universitaires en début de carrière dans une université privée du Nigeria. Les résultats ont montré que les participants avaient peu d'expérience en matière de recherche et de publication et s'appuyaient principalement sur une pédagogie traditionnelle basée sur les cours magistraux, ce qui limitait les possibilités d'enseignement et d'apprentissage innovants et participatifs. Cependant, l'engagement des participants en TIC était pertinent et prometteur. Sur la base de leurs récits, il est recommandé que certaines restrictions soient appliquées à la nomination d'universitaires en début de carrière en tant que leaders universitaires de niveau intermédiaire, au motif qu'il doit leur être accordé suffisamment de temps pour développer leurs compétences académiques et professionnelles avant d'accepter des exigences de leadership.

Mots-clés : leaders académiques de niveau intermédiaire, universitaires en début de carrière, compétences académiques et professionnelles, leadership et gouvernance universitaires, objectifs/mandat fixés par l'université.

Introduction

What academic and professional competencies do academic leaders need to discharge their daily duties in African universities? This research question was examined in the context of the deployment of early-career academics to serve as middle-level academic leaders in various university academic and institutional administrations, particularly as co-ordinators of academic programmes, unit heads, Heads of departments (HoDs) and deans. An African university, like any other university in the world, has clear mandates and roles which are reflected in their research, publication, teaching and community service (Etim 2009; Muriisa 2010; Mwiandi 2010). Achieving these mandates means that faculty staff have to be proactive in ensuring that their pedagogy is properly planned and delivered. The staff must also be prepared to guarantee a good track record of research and publication, and the utilisation of ICT in the teaching and learning process. In this context,

universities need competent academic and professional personnel to manage their academic and administrative activities, which do not necessarily need to be carried out by top leadership personnel, such as the governing council, vice-chancellors (VCs) and deputy vice-chancellors (DVCs) (NUC 2018). Consequently, quality leadership skills of middle-level academics are needed to augment top leadership efforts towards achieving university-set goals.

This research explored the level of academic and professional competencies required by middle-level academic leaders who serve in African universities. Specifically, the academic leaders referred to in the research were early-career academic scholars who had less than seven years of service in the university. The rationale is that such early-career academics are still considered novices (Omotosho 2019) who, not only dutifully but assiduously, need to develop competent professional skills required for leadership in terms of research and publication, pedagogy and the engagement of ICT in teaching and learning, among others. The prevailing narrative is that there is a proliferation of universities in Africa (Ojudu 2012; Okebukola and Fonteyne 2015; Omotosho 2019), and therefore the demand for academic leadership is higher than the supply, which has escalated the practice of enlisting early-career academics in these mid-level positions.

For example, Nigeria and Ghana opened their first universities in 1948. Today, the former has over 150 public and private universities with a capacity to carry 600,000 students (NUC 2017). Recently, Nigeria's Federal Executive Council (FEC) approved the inauguration of twenty new private universities in Nigeria, bringing the total of private universities in the country to ninety-nine (Ayitogo 2021). Ghana is no exception, with seventy universities (Education in Ghana 2019). Definitely, such progression stretches the already high demand and supply interplay for quality university leadership.

The implication is that the continued rapid growth of African universities requires a concomitant growth in the number of competent academic and professional leaders. This is a challenge. In the past, when universities were few and systems for producing academics were functioning, only the best-experienced academics, with a track record of research and publications as well as pedagogy, would be appointed to a position of university leadership (Omotosho 2019). However, rapid institutional growth has outpaced the supply of such academic leaders. Another factor limiting the size of this pool is the constant brain drain of many qualified African academics migrating to foreign nations, which leads to early-career academics being deployed as leaders (Ayee 2014; Omotosho 2019; Isibor et al. 2020).

Not much research has been conducted in Africa regarding academic and professional competencies required by early-career academic leaders, apart from conceptual analyses of why such a situation should exist. It is against this background that this research was conducted, to fill the gap by exploring what competencies early-career scholars need to provide quality leadership as middle-level academics in African universities.

The argument is that university academics are expected to research and publish as a way of improving their professional competencies but also as a means of sustaining national development. This is based on the premise that research is key to innovation and development. In addition, research and publication expertise directly promote innovative pedagogy, including the integration of ICT into teaching and learning. The perspective of CODESRIA's (2019) HEPI training programme is that knowledge of ICT, from which middle-level academic leaders are not exempted, will augment quality leadership for African universities.

Data for this research was collected from ten early-career middle-level academic leaders working at a private university in Nigeria, using individual interviews and a focus group discussion (FGD). The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim in order to capture exactly what the participants said. Thematic analysis was employed to present the participants' narratives, paying attention to their experiences and competencies with regard to pedagogy, research and publication and application of ICT software in teaching and learning.

The findings revealed that early-career academics employed as middle-level leaders had minimal skills for research and publication and that they mostly used traditional lecture methods for teaching and learning, which fall short of engaging students in critical analysis of the lessons taught. However, their narratives regarding the incorporation of ICT in teaching and learning was assuring; most of them indicated that their affiliated university had afforded them with opportunities to learn how to integrate ICT into teaching and learning. Hence, they were able to embrace the best ongoing practice of online teaching and learning, particularly in the era of virtual interaction.

Early Academic Career Scholars: Perspective Clarification

Typically, an 'early-career scholar' is defined in relation to research output within the five years following PhD completion and career progression from the time of the postdoctoral appointment and beyond (Bosanquet et al. 2017). However, there are other parameters for measuring early-career scholars. The parameters include an appropriate pedagogical approach and

the incorporation of ICT in teaching and learning. The interest of this article focuses on early career scholars scholars who are appointed as middle-level academic leaders in African universities and institutions of higher education.

Based on de facto observation, in only their second and/or third year after completing their PhD, some early-career scholars have been appointed as unit heads, programme co-ordinators, HoDs, assistant deans and deans of faculties (Omotosho 2019). Technically, such scholars do not have yet the academic or professional qualities to serve in such administrative positions (Elham et al. 2011). Even so, these appointments are fast-tracked in the face of massive growth in numbers of universities in Africa (Etim 2009; Omotosho 2019) and the world at large.

The importance of this research is based on the fact that there is a paucity of literature regarding the competencies required of such early-career academic leaders (Blair 2000; Isibor et al. 2020; Mapp 2008; Muriisa 2013b; Omotosho 2019; Townsend and Bassoppo-Moyo 1997).

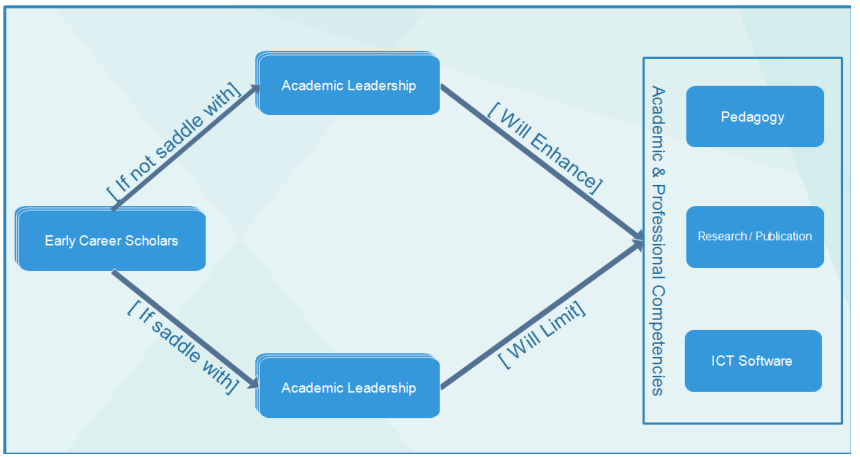

Figure 1: The conceptual framework expressing the relationship between early-career scholars and academic and professional competencies

Source: Author

Conceptual Framework

The relationship between being appointed as a middle-level academic leader while still being an early career academic scholar, and the level of academic and professional competencies to effectively provide quality leadership in an African university, is portrayed in Figure 1. The variables of academic and professional competencies are espoused in pedagogy skills, research and publication, and the use of ICT in teaching and learning (Elham et al.

2011; Nwoye 2013; Omotosho 2019). Respectively, these variables could be tracked through expertise in planning and delivering lectures, robust record of research and publication, and ease of engagement with ICT in teaching and learning. Hence, the competencies are considered to be antecedents that serve as motivational strategies to enhance leadership performance geared towards the sustainable development and achievement of university-set goals.

Level of Academic and Professional Competencies Required by Middle-Level Academics to Serve in African Universities

A body of literature affirms that university governance and leadership require competent leaders (Aniagolu 2019; Assie-Lumumba 2006; Archibong and Effiom 2009; Fredua-Kwarteng and Ofosu 2018; Gmelch and Buller 2015; Garwe 2014; Ojudu 2012; Seale 2019). What these authors argue is that every university academic leader ought to possess competencies in pedagogy, research and publication, and ICT applied to teaching and learning, among other things. Accordingly, early-career academic scholars who serve as middle-level academic leaders should possess the aforementioned competent skills in order to promote not only university academic leadership and governance but also to ensure that set mandates are achieved.

From inception, universities have been described as citadels of learning, where teaching and learning are of optimal importance. Correspondingly, universities map out appropriate processes of teaching and learning that cater for individual differences in students, which Nsamenang (1992) describes as the art of pedagogy. In this view, pedagogy refers to the interactions between teachers and the students' learning environment and the learning tasks. By extension this includes the choice of instructional approaches. However, there is no one-size-fits-all method for lecturers, but the onus falls on them to adhere to best practices of making teaching and learning as accessible as possible to ensure that students learn at their maximum ability. In this regard, Fredua-Kwarteng and Ofosu (2018), in their findings of a research study designed to explore the quality of university education in Africa, reported that there is a seeming lack of appropriate pedagogy method. Their observation in two universities in the west of Africa indicated that abstract facts, figures, theories and concepts were literally thrown at the students, in what might be described as 'straight lectures'. They interpreted straight lectures to mean the process of feeding students with information without stimulating them to think critically and/or engage in creative analysis of the information.

The challenge is that university lecturers (including academic leaders) need to lean more towards transformative pedagogy and provide opportunities for students to interrogate their own attitudes, beliefs and mentalities as part of their preparation for wider social transformation (Fredua-Kwarteng and Ofosu 2018). Hence, appropriate pedagogy needs be learner-centred across three domains of learning: cognitive, psychomotor and affective (Nsamenang 1992; Nsamenang and Tchomber 2011). In this way, learning would be productive, reflecting proactive engagement with the context, enabling the students to acquire suitable skills for onward progression in the world of work and life ahead. Therefore, co-ordinators of academic programmes, unit heads, HoDs and deans who serve as middle-level academic leaders ought to be adequately skilled in pedagogy in order to monitor and inspire their colleagues to adapt the best practices. In this way, the university would achieve one of its mandates, of producing viable human resources for the local community and the globe (Association of African Universities 2009).

Furthermore, pedagogical competence is linked to the potential for groundbreaking research, particularly within African nations where such research is urgently needed in fostering national development (Aniagolu 2019; Ichoku 2019; Salmi 2009). Research and publication have been described as one of the optimal responsibilities of the university, as a means of knowledge creation, dissemination of information and its utilisation (Association of African Universities 2009; Ichoku 2019; Etim 2009), which Salmi (2009) argues provides the basis for competitiveness, unrestrained scientific inquiry, critical thinking, innovation and creativity. Research and publication have also been used as metrics for university rankings worldwide, including the provision of national data for the planning and execution of developmental projects. Therefore, it is essential that middle-level academic leaders drive research, and in order to do so they must possess the necessary competencies. Thus, African university leadership needs to accelerate its research engagement otherwise it will continue to lag behind (Etim 2009).

It is in this context that middle-level academics must be research experts, exploring research orientation that integrates the best practice and knowledge in the African and Western canon to generate evidence-based value for Africa's development (Nwoye 2013). It means that early-career academic scholars, particularly middle-level leaders, need to inspire and collaborate with others in conducting African-oriented research. Achieving this requires a genuine engagement with African Indigenous Knowledge Systems, challenging the widespread assumption that highly educated Africans are detached from

their own cultural practices and contexts." (Fredua-Kwarteng and Ofosu 2018; Nsamenang 1992). Therefore, to ensure that the future of university leadership in Africa is successful, expertise, scholarship, knowledge and overall engagement with research are required.

In the same way, the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has become imperative in the presence of ever-evolving changes and the emergence of distant/online learning (Bisbee and Miller 2006; Nwaobi 2000). Digital technology is a prominent feature of education across the globe; therefore, middle-level academic leaders in African universities need to be proactive in the use of ICT devices. They need to be familiar with desktop, laptop and smartboard operations, and all forms of online teaching and learning, such as Google Classroom, Zoom, video-conferencing, as well as the application of software in data analysis, and so on.

From this perspective, Agu (2015) argues that contemporary students inhabit an increasingly technological world, forcing lecturers to learn and master digital literacy skills, – an imperative that the Covid-19 pandemic has intensified. However, he acknowledges that there are some constraints, such as the lack of facilities, particularly where institutions do not have adequate resources to sustain the use of ICT devices. This is corroborated in a research report by Nigeria's National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA 2007), which emphasised that a wide geographical disparity exists in the level of e-readiness across Nigeria, with most technological infrastructure and services being concentrated in urban areas. This disparity could be interpreted to reflect the reality that universities in urban centres have greater access to e-learning resources than universities in rural areas. On the other hand, challenges to successful ICT usage could emerge from lecturers' resistance, emanating from a lack of confidence and competence (Archibong and Effiom 2009). In this context, in-service training needs to be implemented to alleviate the distress of lack of ICT knowledge among middle-level academics, particularly for early-career academic scholars.

Theory of Leadership and Governance

Hersey and Blanchard's (1977) situational leadership theory underpinned this research. The theory states that no single leadership style is better than another, but, rather, leaders ought to adjust their style to align with their followers' ability. This theory was first introduced in 1969 as the 'life cycle theory of leadership' and has been updated recently, emphasising that effective leaders are those who are task-relevant (Kenton 2019). In this context, the core argument of this article – the level of academic

and professional competencies of early-career scholars elevated to middle-level academic leaders – must include task-relevance and the reflection of capacity to deliver expected results.

An early-career academic scholar who serves as a middle-level academic leader (be it unit head, programme co-ordinator, HoD or dean) in an African university should possess a certain level of academic and professional competencies to be able to influence colleagues/students in achieving university-set goals, especially in the area of research and publication, pedagogy and use of ICT in teaching and learning. In the words of Hersey and Blanchard (2006), an effective academic leader is one who uses four styles – telling, selling, participating and delegating – to achieve institutional goals. To be able to tell, sell, participate and delegate you must have the competencies to motivate and direct others, reflecting some of the core values of governance (Landell 1991).

Research Method

This was a qualitative interpretive research study that was aimed at capturing the participants' in-depth wealth of experience (Daher, Carré, Jaramillo, Olivares and Tomicic 2017). The choice of an interpretive approach was governed by the assumption that the participants' act of meaning-making regarding their experiences of academic leadership and level of competencies is a subjective experience. Hence, the participants were considered to be in the best position to voice their narrative experience of academic leadership and competence (Mohajan 2018).

As an interpretive research study, it employed narrative interviews with ten early-career middle-level academic leaders from a private university in Nigeria, who were invited to narrate their experiences in the context of pedagogy, research and publication, and engagement of ICT. Theoretically, post-modern psychologists argue, in order to understand the individual's act of sense-making, researchers should use a narrative approach to elicit from the participants the in-depth meaning they make from the world they live in (Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001; Crossley 2000; Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010; McAdams 2001; Riessman 2008). The participants were drawn from a private university within the Federal Territory of Abuja, Nigeria, but for ethical reasons the name of the university is withheld, based on the participants' preference.

Data was drawn from ten middle-level academic leaders whose term of service at the university ranged from two to seven years across five faculties: Education, Humanities, Management Studies, Pure and Applied Science, and Social Sciences. The data was collected through individual

face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). The individual interviews were held with five of the participants and another five took part in the focus group discussion. Although, this number might seem small, qualitative research strength lies in in-depth exploration rather than largeness of number; hence, a single case could be richly informative and meaningful (Boddy 2016). The interview data was recorded and transcribed verbatim in order to capture exactly what the participants said.

Thematic narrative analysis was employed to analyse the data with the aim of highlighting common themes that the participants raised regarding their experiences of academic leadership in relation to pedagogy, research/publication and use of ICT in teaching and learning (Clarke and Braun 2017). The rationale was to examine how the participants' narratives reflected their academic and professional competencies, as a prerequisite for quality academic leadership.

Reflexivity

The researcher in this study occupied both an insider and outsider position. At the time of the study, the researcher was an early-career academic leader in a private university. This dual positionality presented both advantages and limitations for the study. Its merit arose from the fact that the researcher could easily identify with the narratives that the participants presented, yet its demerit emerged from the fact that the researcher's identification with the participants' narrative could be disadvantageous based on the possibility of introducing bias (Heron 2005). Therefore, the researcher balanced the merit and demerit effect by keeping a research journal for personal reflection, which was used to monitor personal prejudices.

Furthermore, the potential of these prejudices to affect the trustworthiness of the data was mitigated by having the data validated by the participants after it had been transcribed (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The transcribed data was taken back to the participants for confirmation and they signed it to indicate that it represented what they had said and experienced. In addition, the participants' request for anonymity, including that of the name of their institution, was respected. Thus, they felt valued, and were able to offer their candid opinion in rich information narratives without coercion

Presentation of Findings and Discussion

The participants' narratives are discussed under three broad themes in line with the three main competencies. The main focus is to explore what level of competencies the participants possessed, including any challenges.

Participants' narrative in relation to pedagogy

A majority of the participants described their pedagogy as taking the form of lectures, term paper projects and class presentation. The participants expressed that they frequently used PowerPoint slides in their lectures, thereby providing the students with the summary points of the content. Hence, one participant narrated:

> Frequently, I teach my courses via PowerPoint slides, which provides the students the opportunities to see the summary of the topic under discussion. Besides, we try to engage in class discussion and I hope that helps them to understand the course content under discussion.

Another participant said:

> My students seem to appreciate it very much when I am able to provide them with the summary of the course content under discussion for each lecture and the PowerPoint slide does this very well for them. Hopefully, they ought to explore further what is in the PowerPoint slides … including the project work they undertake.

Clearly, these participants exhibited some competency in creating a lecture platform wherein they were able to engage the students in class discussion. But their method reflected to some extent what Fredua-Kwarteng and Ofosu (2018) refer to as straight lectures, which give students little space for critical thinking and analysis. When asked what they did to elicit active participation from their students within a lecture space that ought to include having them critique concepts, the participants responded that the students were often not interested in becoming critically involved; they would rather copy notes and reproduce them when examined. The discourse on why students reproduce copied notes could relate to how the assessment exercises are structured, which goes beyond the scope of this research. It could be explored in further studies. That notwithstanding, narrative from the focus group discussion (FGD), which captured the participants' frustration in engaging apt pedagogy, went as follows:

> See, the students we have are not interested in critiquing whatever you are telling them. What they want is the fact as you have stated it in the notes and/or PowerPoint. They want to chew it and pour it back when asked in the continuous assessment/exams, so we just do what they want. Besides, there is so much work demand that you don't even want to stress yourself any further. Prepare your lecture and let them see the point you are conveying and let them go and explore.

Another participant, who echoed a similar view, emphasised that:

> The truth is that most of these students come from the background where critical analysis is not part of their knowledge base. In fact, there is one colleague, who insist that the students cram the notes and give it back the same way during exams and continuous assessment … the students like it, for them it is made easy; they only have to 'chew and pour'… After all that is the type of knowledge base system that most of us were brought up with. So why stress yourself when you have so much other work to do. Hum … there is even not enough time for research … so why bother students who only need the fact as it is.

Yet, another participant said:

> I just dictate notes for them and I think that makes all of us happy. However, I try to go slow in this process … in order to give room for individual differences; let the slow writers catch up! Sometimes, too, they have class presentations to make and that's it!

Based on the above narratives, it is obvious that the participants saw the students coming across as passive learners, which, on one hand, is how they too were treated during their days of learning as students. So, they were giving back to society what they had received. But on the other hand, there is the underlying notion that they didn't have enough time to explore any other new method and/or something different, which could be a position they shared with other academics, such as senior scholars. However, the latter does not eliminate the fact that, as academic leaders, early-career scholars ought to exhibit better pedagogical skills, which would enable them to influence others they lead. Consequently, possessing the appropriate pedagogical skill is an aspect of academic and professional competence, which, within the premise of situational leadership theory, is a requirement that cannot be compromised.

In this context, academic leaders should go beyond what they themselves experienced during their university days and teach lectures that embrace the three domains of learning – cognitive, affective and psychomotor – as described by Nsamenang and Tchomber (2011). In this way, they would stimulate students to be proactive learners. Certainly, students' active participation has implications for the achievement of university-set goals and mandates, which absolutely is a by-product of quality academic and professional leadership.

Participants' narratives in relation to research and publication

The participants' narratives with reference to research and publication highlighted that they struggled to find adequate time to engage in research and publication. Most stated that research was a time-consuming activity that they did not have enough space to engage with. They argued that the stress of leadership had led them to compromise on research and publication, as is evident in some of the interview extracts below:

> I feel bad that I have not published much in the last two years … the demand of teaching and learning is cumbersome, not to think of combining it with being a unit head/Head of Department (HOD) … I feel very exhausted by the end of each day ...

Another participant reiterated this, as follows:

> What can I say regarding research and publication, when I have so much to do in a day and I keep wondering when/where do I figure out what to do with research and publication? Sometimes I ponder on what is going on; four years as an academia and I don't have much publication to show for it. My fear is: What will the future be like if I am not able to publish now? … It is worrisome.

These two narratives illustrate the frustration and anxiety experienced by early-career academics as they navigated academic leadership roles within a private university dominant discourse is that there is not enough time for fruitful engagement with research and publication, which has a far-reaching impact on academic and professional competencies for any academic, not least for the one who is expected to lead and inspire others to research and publish (Hersey and Blanchard 2006).

The demonstration of apt skill for research and publication is of utmost importance as such skill directly impacts on the quality and methodology of teaching and learning. However, the participants seemingly did not link their research ability to teaching but rather to career growth. They presented research and publication as a mere path for career growth, and in that regard their lack of scholarship was a source of apprehension.

The fact that the participants expressed fear of a lack of research is another needed area of study, to explore the factors responsible for this, but it is beyond the scope of the present study. Be that as it may, lack of research and publication hinders quality teaching and learning, which is why academic leaders should lead by example and inspire others to become active researchers. Low output of research and publication indicates that they lack the task-relevant academic and professional competencies. Their

struggles in the academic and professional competencies of research and publication are amplified in the following voices captured during the focus group discussions:

> Although the university lays much emphasis on research and publication, but there are numerous obstacles arising from the position of leadership that suffocates the leaders' ability to publish. The number of meetings in a day, ranging from different management to senate meetings, which sometimes impact on even teaching and learning not to think of research and publication. After such long meetings I am exhausted and they are a number of them in a week …

Similarly, another participant echoed:

> I constantly wonder how I am coping without research and publication. I feel my ability to research is ebbing away … one full year with no publication is bad … I am completely overwhelmed with work. So, what can I do?

These two quotes echo what the early-career middle-level academic leaders in the individual interviews were experiencing, with the additional constraint of the impact on teaching, as indicated in one of the extracts. The reason in their view for this inability to research and publish emerges from being overwhelmed with leadership responsibilities besides the normal demands of teaching and learning. These experiences are risk factors that impact on the level of competencies required by middle-level academic leaders in the university. As situational leadership theory puts it, such a show of reality reflects little task-relevant ability on the part of the academic leaders (Kenton 2019), and holds paltry evidence of the leaders' professional competence to tell, inspire and/or delegate others to be oriented towards research and publication (Landell 1991).

The participants' narratives in relation to engaging with ICT in teaching and learning

Unanimously, the participants confirmed that the use of ICT in teaching and learning is the new norm, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the safety protocol of national lockdown, which had compelled them to teach a full semester online. In this regard, they affirmed that their institution was doing everything possible to ensure that they gained more insights into ICT as a tool in teaching and learning. The participants expressed that they had had numerous training workshops on ICT best practices in teaching and learning, which they claimed boosted their competencies, as exemplified in the following disclosures:

> I would say, I was a complete novice when I first started teaching with regards to engaging ICT to teaching and learning. The much I could do, was just use computer to type, but today in view of the different workshop training, I could now use Google Classroom, Zoom among many others. Initially it was challenging but everyday practice is getting me and my colleagues where we are ought to be.

Yet another participant shared a similar view:

> Teaching online is fun though tasking and challenging in the face of power failure and demands of data bundle. However, I give the credit to … the university. The management has ensured that we the lecturers including leaders have adequate orientation to take-up the challenges of online teaching. There has been constant training and retraining which has enable us to function well though there is still room for improvement.

As the participants stated, they had been exposed to consistent training, which had enabled them to improve their performance in online teaching and learning. In this regard, most of the participants claimed that their affiliated university had made a noble effort to ensure that there was an adequate supply of Internet facilities within the school compound in order to boost the availability of data, and as a result they were able to overcome power failures and data availability. This was further noted in the focus group discussion:

> It is admirable the way the school (central management body) has strategise its provision of data to enable us (lecturers including middle-level academic leaders) engage effectively with teaching and learning. For example, the computer lab has been empowered by a solar system to ensure a 24 hours power supply including reliable subscription to a sustainable network provider. It all means we can troop to the lab to access Internet for effective teaching and learning. Although sometimes the network may still fluctuate, but it is not that bad.

Another narrative affirming this experience stated:

> Indeed, the school has acted noble in taking the lead in ensuring that we didn't miss any academic year in the context of Covid-19 pandemic. Lectures were duly taught and all examination written though it was tough experience but this was achievable based on the competence level of the leadership and the entire school body ...

Based on the above narratives, it is seemingly proper to acknowledge that not only the early-career middle-level academic leaders but also the entire university body displayed a high level of competency in engaging with ICT in teaching and learning. Evidently, they are on track and hopefully they will

work towards maintaining the status quo. In this way, they will continue to participate, inspire and/or delegate others to engage the best practices of ICT in teaching and learning.

However, based on field data outside the interview and in the FGD, the participants pointed out that some of the challenges they still encountered with online learning included the difficulty of blending physical classroom teaching with online teaching, in terms of their relationship with the students, and in uploading learning materials. Also, some of the participants emphasised that though they were meant to monitor what their colleagues uploaded as teaching material on the platform, the job was made easier with the assistance of the university's ICT experts. In this regard, the participants hoped to continue to adopt best practices as time went on and to be able to lead others.

Implications of the Findings

Theoretically, the study's findings confirm the premise that leaders, irrespective of whatever leadership approach they adopt, ought to possess the task-relevant skills to qualitatively inspire others towards achieving set goals (Hersey and Blanchard 2006; Kenton 2019). Hence, the early-career academic leaders who participated in this study and expressed that they struggled to research and publish, which directly/indirectly limited their ability to sustain an apt record of publication, reflected to some extent a lack in this academic and professional competency. What this means is that they are likely unable to inspire others to research and publish. In other words, they cannot give what they don't have.

Similarly, the participants' narratives seemed to indicate that they grappled with adapting a variety of pedagogical skills that would facilitate their students' critical analysis of the lessons taught. Dictating lecture notes and using PowerPoint slides predominated their pedagogy approach, which may need some innovative improvement. Therefore, they lack the professional competency in pedagogy that is required for academic leadership in the university.

In all, the findings have contributed to knowledge creation, reflecting that early-career academic leaders encounter challenges in meeting academic and professional competencies, which impacts on their ability to provide quality university leadership and confirms that they lack the necessary skill to influence and motivate others.

The findings have implications for policy implementation. They suggest that the regulatory and advisory bodies of African universities, particularly in Nigeria and in the private university where the study was located, need to

develop stringent restrictions on the appointment of early-career scholars as academic leaders, in order to ensure quality leadership. Specifically, a policy for the appointment of early-career scholars as academic leaders should set a base limit for years of service of at least a minimum of three years for such an appointment to be made.

In addition, the policy should make provision for periodic ongoing academic and professional competency training programmes for early-career scholars who, in the face of high demand for academic leaders, are required to the fill the gap, particularly in the context of massification of universities in Africa.

Recommendations/Limitations

Based on the findings of this study, some recommendations are made for university regulatory bodies, particularly the National Universities Commissions (NUC) in Nigeria and in particular the private university from where the data was drawn.

Firstly, NUC must ensure that approval and licences of operation for new universities are contingent on the availability of staff and on the accessibility of a mix of staff (both early-career and senior scholars).

Secondly, the tenure of office for the appointment of early-career academic leaders should be termed 'temporary', renewable for one year. In this way, the academic leader would be afforded ample opportunity to grow and mature.

Thirdly, there should be a mentor–mentee arrangement, with a quarterly review and report in order to monitor progress. The mentor ought to be drawn from senior academic staff of the university. The last two recommendations should be given priority in the daily running of the university by top management, such as the governing council and the vice-chancellor.

However, it is important to note that this research has some limitations. One is the fact that the data was collected only from early-career academics in a private university. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to other academics at other universities. As a result, it is recommended that a comparative study be conducted across academic leaders from both public and private universities in order to draw from a wider perspective. The second limitation is that the lack of research on academic and professional competencies of early-career academics posed challenges in interpreting the results, and hence ongoing research is needed for continual exploration.

Conclusion

This research provided important information regarding the academic and professional competencies required by middle-level academic leaders in African universities, particularly the private university from where the data was drawn, and reflected the support they need in order to continue to provide quality leadership. Therefore, it is advisable that all the shareholders, including university regulatory bodies and policy-makers, restrict the frequency of appointing early-career scholars as academic leaders, in order to improve quality academic leadership within African universities. Alternatively, if early-career scholars must be appointed as leaders to fill the gap of senior academic leaders, then continual training/orientation needed to be provided for them in order to boost their performance, otherwise quality academic and professional leadership in African universities will remain compromised. Hopefully, these findings are beneficial to university management policy-makers, facilitating an improved academic leadership appointment process as well as offering concrete orientation to existing academic leaders.

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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 facilities[2] 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 institutions[4] 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 Tanzania[6] 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 centres[7] 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 leadership[9] (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 disaccredited 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.

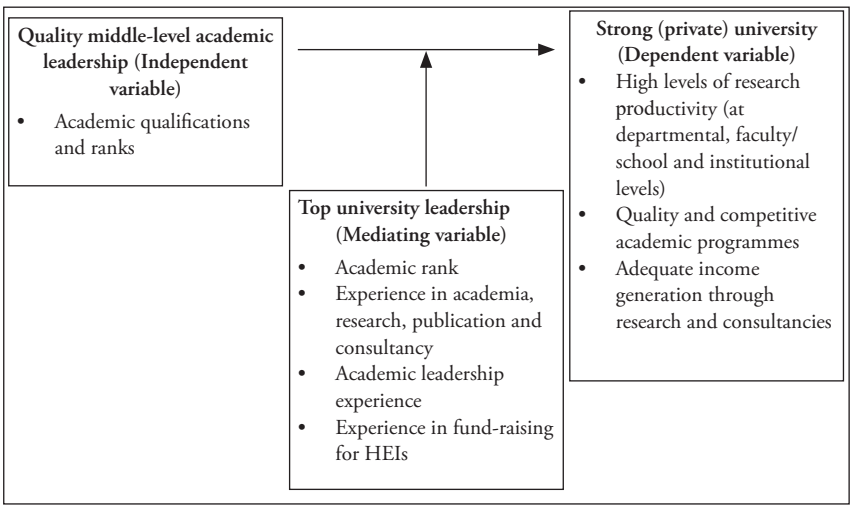

Figure 1: Conceptual framework illustrating the association between quality middle-level academic leadership and a strong university.[10]

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 experience[11] 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 consultancy[14] 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
Assistant lecturers	*1,218*	*51.0*	*2,757*	*40.6*
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-five[24] 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).

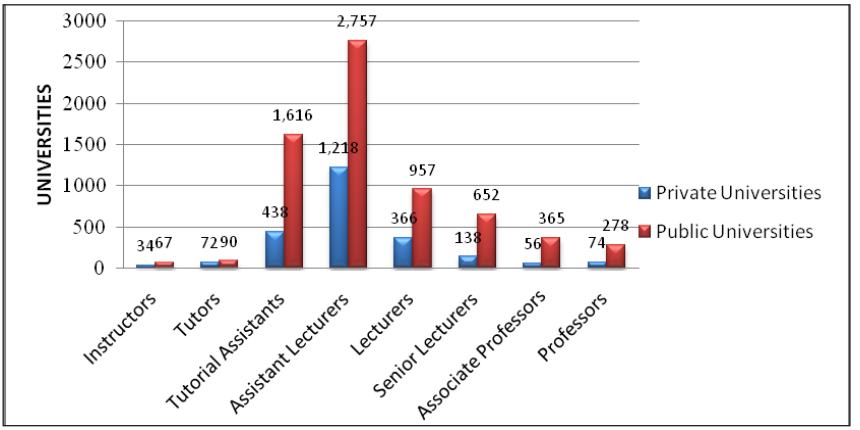

Figure 2: Teaching staff by rank in private and public universities in Tanzania, 2015

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 (Buela-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 *Nature* and *Science* 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 metrics[28] 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 roles[32] 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/faulty 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

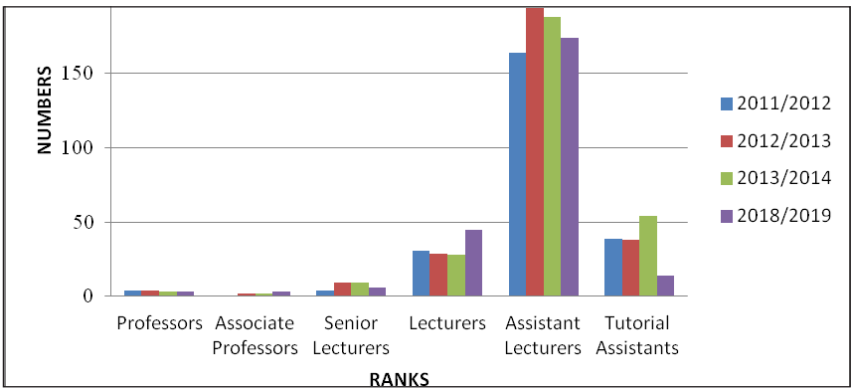

Figure 3: Distribution of Academic Staff by Rank at SAUT-Main Campus, 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2018/2019

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)

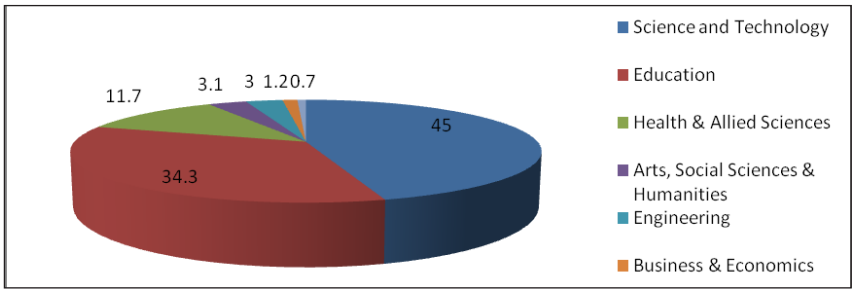

Figure 4: Shortage of Academic Staff in Tanzania's Public Universities by Discipline, 2016

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 ones[38] 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 Yielder 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.comqs-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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Challenges Faced by Heads of Academic Departments in Reforming University Curricula to Promote Graduate Employability

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Abstract

This article examines the roles played by heads of academic departments (HoDs) and the challenges they face in reforming their units' curricula to promote graduate employability in a university college in Uganda. The study arose because of persistent complaints by employers and other stakeholders about the lack of employable skills among university graduates in the country, in spite of several curricular reviews having taken place in the institution. Using the qualitative approach, data was collected from four purposively selected HoDs through in-depth interviews. The study's results showed, among others, that the participants had different understandings of what graduate employability meant: while some conceptualised it as the possession of employable skills by graduates, others viewed it as the ability of a university student to complete his/her study programme and obtain gainful employment. Second, the participants revealed that they often enabled the revision of the curricula to promote graduate employability, by involving and motivating stakeholders in curricular reviews, offering effective leadership, and by providing requisite information and support to their staff during curriculum review and development. Finally, the study participants reported facing several challenges in revising the curricula of their units, including limited co-operation by stakeholders, rapidly changing societal needs and a shortage of funds to aid the process of curriculum review and development.

Keywords: heads of department, graduate employability, reforming curricula, university

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Résumé

Cet article examine les rôles des chefs de départements universitaires et les défis auxquels ils sont confrontés dans la réforme des programmes de leurs unités afin de promouvoir l'employabilité des diplômés dans un collège universitaire d'Ouganda. L'étude est née à la suite de plaintes persistantes d'employeurs et autres parties prenantes quant au manque de compétences employables chez les diplômés de l'enseignement supérieur du pays, malgré plusieurs révisions de programmes de l'établissement. Par l'approche qualitative, des données ont été recueillies auprès de quatre chefs de départements sélectionnés à dessein par le biais d'entretiens approfondis. Les résultats de l'étude ont montré, entre autres, que les participants avaient des compréhensions différentes de ce que signifiait l'employabilité des diplômés : tandis que certains la conceptualisaient comme la possession par les diplômés,de compétences employables, d'autres y voyaient la capacité d'un étudiant à terminer son programme d'études universitaires et à obtenir un emploi rémunéré. Deuxièmement, les participants ont révélé qu'ils ont souvent permis la révision de programmes d'études pour promouvoir l'employabilité des diplômés, en impliquant et en motivant les parties prenantes dans les révisions des programmes, en offrant un leadership efficace et en fournissant les informations et le soutien nécessaires à leur personnel lors de la révision et de l'élaboration des programmes. Enfin, les participants à l'étude ont déclaré faire face à plusieurs défis à l'occasion de la révision de programmes de leurs unités, notamment une coopération limitée des parties prenantes, des besoins sociétaux en évolution rapide et un manque de fonds de facilitation du processus de révision et de développement de programmes.

Mots-clés : chefs de département, employabilité des diplômés, réforme des cursus, université

Introduction

The employability of university graduates is becoming a matter of concern among educators and policymakers all over the world. It is often attributed to the mismatch between the number of graduates that universities produce vis-à-vis the number that the labour market absorbs (Osmani, Weerakkody, Hindi and Eldabi 2019). Nonetheless, several scholars, including Bamwesiga (2013), Beaumont, Gedye and Richardson (2016) as well as Kasozi (2015), have pointed out that the low rate of absorption of university graduates into the labour market is due to the lack of relevant skills and knowledge that employers require them to possess. Yorke (2006), however, contends that the elevated level of graduate unemployment in most parts of the world is attributable to sluggish economies – economies that are growing slowly or not growing at all – to create sufficient job opportunities for graduates.

Unfortunately, none of these scholars have focused on the roles that the heads of academic departments (HoDs) in universities could play to reform the curricula of their units to promote graduate employability. Yet, university HoDs play a critical role in curricular review and development. In this study, we explored the roles played by HoDs and the challenges they faced in reshaping their units' curricula to facilitate graduate employability in a university college in Uganda.

Historically, universities have been revered for producing high-level labour and for generating new knowledge. In Uganda, until the 1980s, university graduates used to be booked for employment by private companies as well as government departments well before completing their degree programmes (Kasozi 2015; Ssekamwa 2000). Then, there was little graduate unemployment, and the language of graduate employability was not commonplace. However, with the introduction of the privatisation and liberalisation policies into the different sectors of the Uganda's economy in the early 1990s, there was a massive expansion of the higher education (HE) sector. But this expansion was not met by a parallel increase in the size of the country's economy. The result has been an acute shortage of job opportunities, not only for university graduates, but for other categories of labour, and serious youth unemployment in the country (Uganda Government, 2014).

Having fewer job opportunities aside, employers have been complaining about the quality of university graduates available, who, they allege, lack employable skills. Yet, the knowledge and skills that university graduates are expected to acquire depend on the curriculum and pedagogical techniques that they are exposed to while at university.

At a university, HoDs – together with deans – are responsible for, among other things, maintaining and enhancing the highest standards of scholarly excellence and for setting the intellectual and academic priorities for their departments (Bozeman, Fay and Gaughan 2013; Hess 2013). They are also required to plan course offerings and faculty teaching, periodically review curricula, and ensure excellence in the departments' teaching and mentoring (Lumpkin 2004). This means that HoDs can play a role in reforming the curricula of their units to promote graduate employability. But are all HoDs doing this? And if they are, how well are they doing this? What challenges could they be facing in revising the curricula of their units? The need for answers to these and many other related questions prompted this investigation.

The study focused on four major concepts, namely: graduate employability, the definition of HoD, the roles of HoDs and the challenges they face. The term graduate employability has been variously defined.

While Kinash and Crane (2015) describe it as the capacity of graduates (or alumni) to obtain or create work, Tomlinson (2012) looks at it in terms of the dynamic changes in the relationship between HE and the labour market. Yorke and Knight (2004), meanwhile, regard it as the set of achievements, – skills, understandings, and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the community, and the economy. In this study, however, graduate employability was looked at in terms of the possession of relevant knowledge and skills by the graduates and their ability to be absorbed and maintained in employment.

The second main concept in this study was HoD. According to Jones (2011), a HoD is an academic leader who guides the members of a department to work towards a common shared vision, with an ability to articulate and implement the strategic vision of the department in line with its institutional goals, values and culture. Hess (2013), however, defined a HoD as the chair of a department responsible for the leadership and management of the smallest unit of the university where teaching and learning occurs. In this study, HoD was seen in terms of the individual who was occupying the office of HoD in the university college studied at that time.

The third concept was the role(s) of HoDs. According to Day (1984), the role of HoD refers to the responsibilities that a HoD conducts to guarantee the quality of teaching and learning in a particular department. Meanwhile, Edet and Ekpoh (2017) opine that a HoD is someone '… saddled with the responsibility of directing, guiding, coordinating and evaluating lecturers and activities appropriately to ensure good quality education and effective functioning of the department' (Edet and Ekpoh 2017: 130). In this study, the role of the HoD was examined in terms of what the HoD does when reforming the curricula of his/her unit to promote graduate employability.

Finally, the study looked at the challenges that HoDs face in executing their duties. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary* (2019), a challenge is something that needs great mental or physical effort for it to be done successfully. For Onen (2016), the concept of 'challenge' is used to refer to the things (or factors) that different stakeholders involved in an activity find difficulty in doing or accomplishing. In this study, we viewed 'challenges' in terms of the difficulties HoDs experienced during curriculum review and development.

Contextually, this study took place at one of the colleges of a university in Uganda, one of the largest and oldest universities in the country. The literature review revealed that employers were already complaining about the quality of the graduates from the same college that we studied (Bagarukayo,

Ssentamu, Mayisela and Brown 2016; Ssempebwa 2008). They alleged that the graduates of this college lacked employable skills despite several recent curriculum reviews that had been undertaken under the supervision of different HoDs. This was a source of academic concern, since HoDs in universities across the world are required, among other things, to periodically review curricula and ensure excellence in the departments' teaching and mentoring (Lumpkin 2004). Nonetheless, while HoDs have a role to play in curriculum development, how effectively and how often they do it may leave a lot to be desired. We felt that if the scenario persisted, it could injure the reputation of the college as well as that of its graduates. Therefore, this qualitative study was intended to explore the roles played by the HoDs and the challenges they faced in reforming their units' curricula. It was expected that the data obtained from the study would contribute to nurdging university managers to appreciate what the HoDs are doing to promote graduate employability.

Study Objectives

This study was intended to explore the roles HoDs play and the challenges they face in shaping the curricula of their units to promote graduate employability. Specifically, the study was meant to:

1. Examine the concept of graduate employability among HoDs;
2. Explore the roles HoDs play in reforming the curricula of their departments to promote graduate employability; and
3. Document the challenges HoDs face and the coping strategies they use to overcome the challenges.

Literature Review

Graduate employability

Scholars have attempted to define the concept of 'graduate employability', albeit with limited clarity (such as Guilbert, Bernaud, Gouvernet and Rossier 2015; Yorke and Knight 2004; Matsouka and Mihail 2016; Römgens, Scoupe and Beausart 2019). In particular, Guilbert et al. (2015) define employability as 'the possibility to access a suitable job or to remain employed, resulting from the dynamic and evolving interactions between governmental and educational policies, organizational strategy, individual characteristics, and the social, economic, cultural and technological context' (Guilbert et al. 2015: 17). Yorke and Knight (2004), on the other hand, conceptualise employability as a 'set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and to be successful

in their chosen occupations' (2004: 36). This means that, for the graduates, employability 'consists of a set of qualifications, skills, attitudes and personal characteristics that enable the university graduate to seek and find a job' (Matsouka and Mihail 2016: 321).

Römgens et al. (2019), meanwhile, looks at employability as the competencies that an individual possesses to be sufficiently obtained and maintained in the labour market. This perception of graduate employability is no different from that of earlier scholars, including Rothwell, Herbert and Rothwell (2008), who perceived it as the 'ability to attain sustainable employment appropriate to one's qualification level' (2008: 2). In this case, all these scholars have indicated that employability has to do with the possession of skills that are linked to the needs of employers. However, their views about employability also indicated that there is no universally accepted definition of employability, whether used in respect of any employee or a graduate.

In this study, we sought the views of HoDs at a university college in Uganda and matched them to the literature to gauge the depth and breadth of their understanding of the concept of graduate employability. We believe that their understanding of the concept determined the roles they would play in reforming the curricula of their units to promote graduate employability.

The role of a head of department

The roles of faculty deans and HoDs in universities across the world have been widely investigated (for example, Berdrow 2010; Bozeman, Fay and Gaughan 2013; Chinyamurundi 2016; Gaubatz and Ensminger 2017; Hess 2013; Jones 2011; Jowi 2018; Kla 2012; Lumpkin 2004; Otara 2015). Several of these studies have attempted to link deans and HoDs to programme review and development (for example, Otara 2015; Gaubatz and Ensminger 2017). Berdrow (2010) categorises the roles of HoDs in two ways: first as an actor, and second, as an agent of the institution. As an actor, Berdrow states, the HoD performs three major roles: in providing managerial human capital, in providing managerial social capital, and in providing managerial cognition. Concerning managerial human capital, the HoD is expected to exhibit learned skills, training and knowledge while performing specific tasks. Meanwhile, 'in executing the managerial social capital role, the head of department has a duty to network and connect to various organisations and outsource for people who can help to do the work effectively' (Berdrow 2010: 500). In performing managerial cognition, 'the head of department has to display ability of understanding the job by monitoring, coordinating and assessing processes within the department' (Berdrow 2010: 501). But, as an agent, Berdrow points out, the HoD acts

within the context of the institution to incorporate academic functions, administrative functions and external relationships of the department. In this study, we sought to analyse how the HoDs in the college studied played such roles, linking them to graduate employability.

According to Gaubatz and Ensminger (2017), middle-level managers such as deans and HoDs are responsible for extensively reviewing the academic programmes of their units. The authors state that these managers accomplish this role by engaging in systematic investigation to determine how to align the goals of their units with those of industry. However, different individuals perceive the roles HoDs play in reforming the curricula of their units differently; thus, the genesis of this investigation.

According to Lumpkin (2004), HoDs play three core roles: personnel management, budgetary management and instructional leadership. Specifically, it is in instructional leadership that HoDs oversee the development and implementation of the curricula of their units. In this role, the HoD can enable the revision of the curricula of his/her unit to meet the needs of industry. This view is supported by Bozeman et al. (2013) who posited that departmental chairs are key decision-makers who have the powers to influence policy and procedure at departmental and institutional levels. This implies that, during curriculum review and development, HoDs could influence the kind of decisions that can be made regarding curriculum objectives, content and implementation. As a result, they can help to reshape the curricula of their departments to improve graduate employability.

According to Chinyamurundi (2016), university middle-level managers, including HoDs, are generally seekers and implementers of innovation in their units. Innovation is encouraged in the different functions of their units, including in programme reviews and development. One of the key drivers of curriculum reviews is to align the goals of the university to those of society. Nonetheless, none of these studies documented the part played by the HoDs in reforming the curricula of their units to promote graduate employability.

Challenges faced by HoDs

Studies have looked at the challenges that HoDs face in executing their roles. Lumpkin (2004), for instance, pointed out that among the difficulties that confront a departmental chair is building a team of staff who, although possessing multiple perspectives and abilities, can work together collaboratively towards the achievement of a common goal. To facilitate this, Lumpkin advises that the HoD must demonstrate strong instructional leadership. Besides, the HoD should provide leadership in the redesign of

the curricula and enhancement of the department's programmes. In this case, the HoD can encourage the realignment of the curricula to enhance graduate employability.

According to Jones (2011), meanwhile, HoDs also have the challenge of energising their staff to work effectively, since academics do not want to be rigidly led. He adds that, in addition, HoDs must find ways to source internal and external funds. These issues, and others not highlighted here, may curtail the effectiveness of any HoD to manage a university department. It can also limit the opportunity for HoDs to reform the curricula of their units to promote graduate employability.

Methodology

This was a qualitative study. It was, therefore, approached from an interpretivist research paradigm because of the study's underlying conceptualisation that the roles played by the HoDs and the challenges they face in reforming the curricula of their units could best be understood by listening to their stories individually, rather than quantifying the kinds of views they held about the issue. Specifically, a case study research design was adopted, since there was no intention to generalise the findings of the study beyond the college that investigated. In addition, the qualitative case study design would, as Gaya and Smith (2016) observed, adequately allow us 'to capture the complexity of the object of study' (2016: 529).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with four out of seven HoDs who were purposively selected from the college. Specifically, we employed the criterion sampling technique which, according to Patton (2001), 'involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance' (2001: 238). In our case, the study participants were selected on the basis that they were HoDs and were available and willing to participate in the study.

The collected data was analysed using the thematic content analysis technique which, according to Saldana (2009), makes it easier to see and compare emerging views and themes from a given dataset. Specifically, we were able to organise the data in accordance with its type and study participants. Thereafter, we identified our unit of analysis, which was the individual study participant, before we proceeded to explore and code the data, accordingly. With the use of the codes, we were able to develop, manually, a more general picture of the data that we had obtained. This enabled us to get meaning from the results that emerged. Finally, we put

in place the necessary ethical considerations, including seeking permission from relevant authorities before we could engage the participants in the study.

Results

In this section, we present the findings of the study. But first, we describe the profiles of the study participants.

Profile of study participants

The HoDs were drawn from the departments of Science, Technical and Vocational Education, Foundations and Curriculum Studies, Adult and Community Education, and Higher Education. All four study participants had been HoDs for between two to four years. They were all males, although one out of the seven departments in the college were headed by a female. We had intended to include the only female HoD in the college, but during the time of data collection she was out of the country and the person acting on her behalf was male. This finding, however, reflects the limited participation of women in higher education leadership in Uganda, an inequality that needs to be separately addressed. Three out of the four HoDs who participated in the study held a PhD degree and were senior lecturers by rank. One of them held a Masters' degree and was still a lecturer, but serving as a caretaker HoD, since the minimum rank at which one can serve as a substantive HoD is senior lecturer. All in all, the four participants willingly participated in the study, and we believe that they provided information that was desirable for answering our research questions.

HOD conceptualisations of graduate employability

The first objective of this study was to analyse the HoDs' conceptualisation of graduate employability to gauge their understanding of the concept and the importance each of them attached to it. When the participants were asked:

> 'What is your understanding of graduate employability and how important is it', different respondents expressed different opinions. One of the participants observed that 'in this era of mass higher education, producing graduates who can hardly get employed is unhealthy to both society and the individual graduate'.

The same participant reiterated that 'the skills that students obtain from the university should be relevant to the work setting'. But another participant argued that:

> While it is important to equip university graduates with employable knowledge and skills, the institutions can only provide generic skills. Specific job skills should be acquired while the graduate has already obtained employment. This means that even the employers must be ready to train their workers so that they can acquire those specific job skills.

These views showed that the participants were aware of the importance of graduate employability in university education. However, they had different opinions on the kind of skills that the students would acquire from university and those that they should obtain from their places of employment. It is that belief that made the one participant distinguish between generic and job-specific skills.

One participant defined graduate employability as 'the ability of a student to finish a given course of study and obtain better employment'. Therefore, according to this participant, graduate employability is not only a matter of being able to obtain employment, but also to complete a given course of study. Of course, university students who perform poorly academically and fail to complete their study programmes or pass with weak grades often remain unemployed for a longer period than their counterparts who complete their studies on time and with good grades. But another participant defined graduate employability as 'the capacity that a graduate has to be absorbed in the labour market and be sustained there'. This participant looked at the 'capacity' of the graduate in terms of the kinds of knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) that a graduate possesses that enable him/her to obtain gainful employment and be maintained on the job. Yet another participant had another meaning: he defined graduate employability as 'the degree to which one is employable given the competencies he/she has acquired as a result of his/her education and training'. Although different in text, the ideas of the second and third participants were essentially the same, that is, that graduate employability has to do with whether graduates have acquired the skills and knowledge their potential employers need.

The second part of the objective was to evaluate the importance HoDs attach to the issue of graduate employability. One of the study participants remarked that:

> In this era of mass higher education and growing graduate unemployment, every graduate needs to prove that he/she possesses some unique skills or knowledge that he/she can contribute at a workplace before he/she can obtain gainful employment. As a result, the way university students are trained is very essential.

Another participant had a different view. He opined that:

> For us as a university, our role is to train the students. We only provide them with generic skills and knowledge to empower them to learn and unlearn while in the field. This allows a graduate to be versatile; and therefore, able to fit in different work situations.

According to this participant, it is not necessarily the work of the university to impart specific work-related skills to students, since the students are being prepared for a wide range of employment options. In fact, the participant reiterated that 'employers have a role to play in enabling their employees to acquire specific work-related skills – not universities'. Nevertheless, this is a debatable matter, bearing in mind that employers are nowadays denying many graduates entry to the workplace allegedly because they lack employable skills. All in all, the study revealed that different HoDs had a different understanding of what graduate employability is and attached slightly different importance to the matter.

It was difficult for us to attribute the variety of conceptualisations to the difference in the participants' fields of study (Science, Technical and Vocational Education [DOSATE], Foundations and Curriculum Studies, Adult and Community Education, and Higher Education) or places where they obtained their highest academic qualifications. But the participants' specialisations may have accounted for the differences in their roles and the efforts they put into reforming the curricula of their units to improve graduate employability.

Roles played by HoDs in curricular reform for employability

The second objective of this study was to explore the roles played by HoDs in reforming the curricula of their units to promote graduate employability. Again, the study participants expressed different opinions of what they did during curriculum review and development. One reported that, 'As a head of department, I participate in all the committees that review the curricula of our department after every five years'. He proceeded to say that:

> One way by which I help the department to reform the curricula towards promoting graduate employability is by involving potential employers during curriculum reviews. I do this by ensuring that once we have drafted or revised a curriculum, we organise a stakeholder workshop where we engage employers, alumni, and other stakeholders to obtain their opinions about the drafted curriculum – before we can forward it to the relevant accreditation agencies.

This means that HoDs are central to the process of curriculum development, since they contribute to the process of reforming the curricula through stakeholder involvement. This result shows that HoDs do not necessarily work alone to reform the curricula of their departments. Instead, their efforts to reform the curricula may be hampered by the response of other stakeholders, such as employers and alumni.

Another participant observed that one way in which he helped in revising the curricula of his department was by researching and providing relevant market information. He claimed that: 'As a leader, I am expected to guide colleagues during curriculum development. I cannot do that without equipping myself with relevant information about the activity we are engaged in.' He went on to say: 'As a result, I often try to collect as much market information about our programmes and alumni, so that during curriculum review I can provide essential information that can be used to reform our curricula towards promoting graduate employability'. In this case, the HoD plays an informational role. Interestingly, this appears to be more of an 'independent leader role' in curriculum development, unlike the 'collaborative leader role' of the earlier participant. This implies that although HoDs play leadership roles in reforming their units' curricula to promote graduate employability, they do not use the same leadership approaches.

A third participant reported that his greatest role in reforming the curricula was by providing effective leadership. He observed that:

> For any unit of the university to have a relevant curriculum, the process of curriculum development needs to be effectively guided, co-ordinated and led. It is those roles that as a head of department, I try to effectively play and I believe, it greatly contributes to reforming our curricula towards promoting graduate employability.

This participant looked at his leadership role in terms of 'guiding' the process of curriculum reviews and development. This 'guiding leadership role' implied that this leader may not be a risk-taker. Yet, effective leadership requires leaders to take calculated risks for the sake of their followers and the organisation (Otara 2015). In the context of this study, effective leadership was defined by playing the leadership role that produces the desired goals, such as reforming the curriculum to promote graduate employability.

According to another participant, one of the greatest roles in curriculum development is resource mobilisation. This participant observed that:

> In this university, getting funds to undertake departmental activities such as curriculum review is not easy at all since there is always a perennial outcry for lack of funds. I therefore lobby a lot to get money for our curricular

> review activities. To me I think, that is an important role I play because if I do not do it, there is no way we can reform our curricula towards promoting graduate employability.

The above view indicates that HoDs generally consider whatever roles they play in curriculum review and development as an effort towards promoting graduate employability. Yet, in practice, this may not be true since some of these roles may not relate directly to the kind of curriculum a department may produce. In addition, this 'resource mobilisation role' implies that the academic staff engage in curriculum review only when they are paid to do so, yet curriculum review is an in-house activity that may not require any special funding. Nonetheless, the study participants pointed out that they need funds to finance several curriculum review activities, including hosting stakeholder workshops and conducting market research.

Challenges in curricular reform for employability

The third objective of this study was to establish the challenges HoDs faced in their effort to reform the curricula of their units, and how they coped with them. One challenge that almost all the study participants alluded to was 'the rapidly changing demands for skills at the workplace'. Indeed, one participant remarked that:

> There is now growing pressure and demands from the world of work about the kinds of skills university students must possess to make them employable. This often causes those of us who work at the university tension. Yet in the actual sense, as a middle-level manager, I may not influence the integration of all these new skills employers want into our curriculum.

But while this participant could be right, he appears to forget the role of internships and practicals, which his department uses to bridge this gap. In addition, even though no single university curriculum is sufficient to meet the different needs of all employers, as the participant claimed, there are also strategies that universities have put in place to address this challenge. The participant himself revealed that, as a HoD, he had been coping with 'failing to meet the demands of society' by identifying and prioritising what was realistic for the department and to practise it in line with the vision, mission and goal of the college, and that of the university.

Another participant observed that the mobilisation of funds to facilitate curriculum reviews was often a challenge in the university. The participant revealed that he lobbied constantly for funds that would ably finance the process of curriculum review in the department, particularly for hosting

stakeholder workshops and conducting market research. This view was echoed by other study participants, except one, who revealed that he has sometimes used project funds to enable curriculum review in his department.

Another challenge that emerged from the study was 'the students' attitude towards postgraduation employment'. This refers to the belief by students that they will be employed immediately upon graduation, yet 'the world of employment is now narrow to absorb the large number of graduates', said one of the study participants. This implied that the participant did not believe that it is the failure of the university that is responsible for the rising rate of graduate unemployment, but rather a weak economy that is not able to create many job opportunities. The participant reported that he had 'on many occasions advised the graduates to think of beginning their own projects where they can get employed without waiting for chances of employment from non-governmental and governmental organisations'.

During one interview, a participant reported that the lack of co-operation from stakeholders was one of the greatest challenges to curriculum reviews. He said that:

> Sometimes when we invite some stakeholders, including potential employers of our students, they do not come to attend our stakeholder meetings. This makes it difficult for us to receive feedback from them.

The same participant revealed that he normally ensured that stakeholder workshops were appropriately scheduled in terms of time and venue to achieve better stakeholder participation.

Another participant reported on the lack of commitment from some of his staff as a challenge. 'Some staff in my department have a divided attention where sometimes, when I call a meeting to discuss issues to do with our curricula, some of them do not come, and the few who turn up sometimes fail to agree on a number of issues.' This implies that curricular issues are often contentious and cannot be left in the hands of the HoD alone or a few staff. This study participant reported that he usually motivates his staff in diverse ways to ensure that they participate in the different activities of the department, although he added that: 'It is often not that easy'.

Discussion

This study came out with three key findings. First, that the HoDs who participated in the study had different understandings of what graduate employability means and attached slightly different degrees of importance to it. This finding is not surprising because the concept has been evolving, and debates surrounding it and other related concepts continue. However,

most of the definitions that the participants gave rhymed with those of earlier scholars, such as Yorke and Knight (2004), Bamwesiga (2013), Cai (2013) and Beaumont, Gedye and Richardson (2016). For instance, the definitions of graduate employability by a study participant that; 'it is the ability of a student to finish his/her study programme and obtain employment' is in tandem with that of Bamwesiga (2013), who reported on the conceptualisation of graduate employability by employers in Rwanda. These employers viewed graduate employability as the ability of the graduate to have a professional understanding of a specified discipline, to change and adapt to work-life situations and undertake skilful practices. This professional understanding would be obtained upon the successful completion of a study programme by the student.

Another participant defined the term graduate employability as the capacity of a graduate in terms of 'knowledge, skills and attitudes that can enable him/her to obtain gainful employment and be maintained on a job'. This understanding of graduate employability was closer to that of several scholars in this field of knowledge. Forrier and Sels (2003), for instance, defined graduate employability as the individual's ability to fulfil a variety of functions in each labour market. Such functions are fulfilled due to the knowledge, skills and attitudes possessed by the graduate. This also implies that weak university training can jeopardise the graduate's ability to acquire the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes, thereby limiting his/her chances of being employable.

The second key finding in this study was that HoDs often play different roles in reforming the curricula of their units towards promoting graduate employability. This finding was congruent with the works of other scholars, such as Otara (2015), Jowi (2018) and Chinyamurundi (2016), who investigated the roles of middle-level managers in universities in different countries in Africa. Otara, for instance, reported how HoDs as well as deans in different universities in Africa often incorporate stakeholders from the labour market in programme review and curriculum development. This was no different to what virtually all the study participants reportedly said they do. The finding of the current study was in tandem with that of Jowi (2018), who looked at the leadership roles of deans in Kenyan universities. According to Jowi, university middle-level managers often play a crucial role in linking stakeholder experiences to the academic demands of the students and society. Specifically, Jowi (2018) observed that middle-level managers can enhance the integration of entrepreneurial skills in university curricula, thereby enhancing the employability of university graduates. This view was not far from that of Chinyamurundi (2016), who looked at the

views of employers about graduate employability in Rwanda. He alluded to the fact that leaders can play a role in enabling university graduates acquire employable skills through effective curriculum review and development. These leaders included HoDs.

The study also revealed that HoDs commonly get the opportunity during programme reviews to reform the curricula of their units to enhance graduate employability. This was not that different from what Gaubatz and Ensminger (2017) reported when they said that middle-level managers in universities – including HoDs – are responsible for extensively reviewing the academic programmes of their units. However, the two authors stressed that HoDs and deans often engage in prior systematic investigation to determine how their curricula goals can be aligned with industry employment needs. This shows how HoDs often play an informational role in reshaping reform the curricula of their units.

Last, the study found that middle-level managers such as HoDs and deans face several challenges in executing their duties. Seale and Cross (2015), for instance, reported that deans in South Africa are confronted with a lack of management skills and experience. This was not far from what Otara (2015) observed. In fact, Otara revealed that middle-level managers in African universities most often take up these positions without prior leadership training. This means they often fail to recognise and exploit the metamorphic changes that may occur within their units. It is this kind of inadequacy that creates other challenges, such as limited stakeholder involvement and motivation, which the research participants also reported in this study.

According to Penuel, Phillips and Harris (2014), HoDs in Western universities do not necessarily face the same challenges when reviewing their curricula. Although the HoDs in Western universities say that the process of curriculum review is tedious, as do the HoDs in the college studied in Uganda, the former do not point to a lack of finance or low stakeholder participation as serious difficulties.

Finally, the finding that HoDs often receive inadequate institutional support from top management is corroborated by Jowi (2018) who studied the leadership styles of faculty deans in Kenyan universities. He observed that 'it is difficult to work as a middle-level manager in a university setting: the initiatives from the top have great impact on life at the bottom as well as the other way round' (2018: 6). This was like what the HoDs in the university college studied in Uganda reported. Despite these challenges, the study participants revealed some of the strategies they used for mitigating them; thus, the contribution of this study especially to younger HoDs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the subsequent discussion, this study concluded that the conceptual differences that HoDs have about graduate employability could be responsible for their lacklustre response towards it. Yet, the dangers of not addressing the problem of graduate unemployment in Uganda are already enormous. Second, while the HoDs appear to attach significant importance to curriculum revision and try to ensure that the curricula of their units promote graduate employability, there is a repertoire of challenges they face that needs to be addressed for effective improvements in graduate employability. This article, therefore, recommend increased institutional support for HoDs if they are to significantly enhance the process of reforming the curricula of their departments. Specifically, HoDs need to be trained in managing academic departments, and their units should be funded to host stakeholder workshops and pay for other curriculum review and development activities like conducting market research.

Note

1. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/challenge

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