Intrinsic motivations and choice of program of study among students joining Higher Education

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Abstract: *Choice of program of study for higher education has been key in student's current-day education careers. In Uganda, students select programs of study where they lack background knowledge of career opportunities. Most students enroll in university programs but later regret or drop out due to a lack of interest. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to 201 randomly selected students, 10 focus group discussions were conducted, and five key informant interviews included 3 Makerere University admissions and career guidance officials and 2 head teachers at secondary schools. The study discovered that the choice of programs of study for higher education was centered around perceptions and attitudes towards professional, traditional, and newer programs such as Medicine, law, and engineering. The program's capacity to help one get a job or get a promotion was a key factor influencing choice. Results further showed that 58.5% are driven by projections of advancing career-wise and getting career-associated jobs after completing the University.*

Keywords— Intrinsic motivations, choice, program of study, Higher Education

1. INTRODUCTION

Choosing a program of study is one of the most important decisions students make as they determine their future aspirations and career paths. Once a student has completed secondary education, he/she finds himself/ herself at a crossroads of career choice, requiring the student to decide the program of study he/she would take up at the undergraduate level. With many professional and academic programs available these days, decision-making becomes difficult. This choice will have a big influence on students throughout their lives. The nature of selection for the program of study highly depends on the individual student, and the student selects programs of study with expectations of future career prospects and aspirations. According to Dill and VanVught (2010), higher education is a crucial innovation and human capital development subsector. It is essential to the prosperity and sustainability of the knowledge economy, necessitating careful planning in light of consumer needs. According to an OECD analysis of tertiary education policies, higher education has experienced significant changes and reforms globally over the past few decades and has grown in importance on national agendas (OECD, 2008).
In FY 2015/16, the tertiary education sector of Uganda enrolled approximately 257,877 students and 258,866 in FY 2016/17 in both Universities and BTVET institutions (ESSAPR, 2016/17).
The composition of global enrolment in higher learning institutions is shifting over time. In 2000, global student enrolment in higher education stood at 99.9 million; by 2016, the student population in higher institutions stood at 215.9

million. In 2016, 44 million students were enrolled in Chinese universities, compared to 20 million in the United States, the historical global leader in higher education. Before 2002, North America and Europe enrolled more students in higher education than other regions. However, this changed in 2003, when East Asia took the top spot, largely thanks to China's rapid expansion of its higher education system. The Arab states enrolled 10.8 million students in 2016, from 5.1 million students, and Central and East Europe 18.9 in 2016, from 14 million in 2000. Central Asia enrolled 1.5million students in 2000 to 2.0 million students in 2016, East Asia and the Pacific enrolled 25.3 million in 2000 to 70.9 million students in 2016, Latin America and the Caribbean enrolled 26.2 million students in 2016 from 11.5 million students in 2000, North America and West Europe enrolled 42.2 million students in 2016 from 27.8 million in 2000, South and West Asia enrolled 42.2 million students in 2016 from 12.2 million, Sub-Saharan Africa 7.4 million in 2016 from 2.6 million in 2000 (Calderon, *UNESCO, 2018).*
The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (2001) defines Uganda's higher education system. It is the sector that provides post-secondary education and includes institutions such as universities, colleges of commerce and technology, national teachers' colleges, and other private or public schools and colleges that offer study programs resulting in the award of degrees, diplomas and certificates (Obwona & Sewanyana, 2007). The higher education institutions in Uganda include 63 licensed Universities (11 public and 43 private) and nine other degree-awarding institutions. The sector has 140 licensed technical institutions, 42 of which are public and 98 private, ranging from national teachers' colleges to colleges of commerce, technical colleges, forestry colleges, cooperative

colleges, hotel and tourism institutes, management institutes, health and medical schools, agricultural, animal husbandry and fishery colleges, a meteorological school, and theological colleges (Basheka, 2015; NCHE, 2022).

The Uganda higher education policy, therefore, declares the Government's intention to make appropriate decisions that would enable the country to build on the institutional structure put in place and to create a higher education system that would provide a foundation for the country's social and economic development (Nyerere, 2013). The government of Uganda recognizes the need for a strengthened partnership between students and higher education institutions, the government, the private sector, communities, and international donors (Nyerere, 2013).

As the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE, 2011) indicated, Uganda's higher education starts after secondary education and lasts six years. Higher education institutions ordinarily admit students who have successfully passed the advanced-level secondary school examinations that result in the Uganda Advanced Level Certificate of Education, or "A" Level, being awarded (NCHE, 2011). This implies that "A" level results are critical in determining admission to a higher institution.

In 2011, NCHE established 8 Constituent Colleges of Makerere University. Overall, the private sector owns 73%, and the public owns only 27%. Enrolment has been increasing since 2000. The total number increased by 44.4% between 2006 and 2011, from 137,190 to 198,066 (NCHE, 2006).

Also, 78% of graduates acknowledged that the skills obtained enabled them to get jobs. The four major sectors that absorbed graduates were Agriculture, health, trade, banking and finance (Basheka, 2015). In the School-to-work transition survey (SWTS) of 2013 and 2015, Byamugisha, Shamchiyeva, & Kizu (2014) contend that most of the surveyed youth had attended school or a training programme at some point in their lives (93.9 per cent in 2015), less than half of the youth population had either completed school (9.4 per cent) or was attending school (33.3 per cent). The surveys showed a slight increase in the share of youth with no education or leaving education before completion (51.3 per cent in 2013 to 57.3 per cent in 2015), with higher shares for young women than men. The study showed a strong correlation between the levels of education and a young person's labour market transition: the higher the educational attainment, the more likely a young person was to complete his or her labour market transition to stable and/or satisfactory employment.

A vast majority of employed youth in Uganda are undereducated for the job they were doing (79.5 per cent in 2015). Rarely were the respondents classified as overqualified for their jobs. The shares of youth working as professionals remained very low (3.3 per cent), thus signalling a labour market mismatch and indicating that Uganda's youth labour underutilization rate was high at 67.9 per cent in 2015, up from 62.7 per cent in 2013. Underutilized labour potential comprised 48.9% of the youth population in irregular employment (either in self-employment or paid employment with contract duration of less than 12 months), 14.7% unemployed and 4.2% inactive non-students. Byamugisha, Shamchiyeva, & Kizu. (2014).

According to the Ministry of Education and Sports (ESSAPR, 2011/12), total enrolment in higher institutions increased by 0.4% from 2009. 154 023 students were enrolled in Ugandan higher education institutions, a 12.3% rise from the 137,190 students enrolled in 2005–2006. In 2016 total enrolment was 257,855(143,212; 114,643 females in FY2015/16 to 258,866(114,314 males, 114,552 female) in FY2016/17(Ministry of education and Sports, 2017). According to UVCF (2012) and ESSAPR (2011/12), 107,728 students, or 69.5% of all higher education institutions, were enrolled in public and private universities, including associated colleges.

1.1 Problem Statement

Students transitioning from secondary schools to higher institutions of learning typically face challenges in choosing an academic program to pursue higher education that meets their career goals (Guerra & Braungart-Rieker, 1999). The choice of the program of study for higher learning is such an important decision in a student's life because it provides a direct link between the student's choice of the program of study and the program's ability to meet future career demands. Despite the challenges associated with the choice of the program of study among students enrolling for higher education, the intrinsic motivations for selecting these programs of study are unclear. Quite a small number of studies have been conducted in this area, and these include Jansson, Bukuluki, & Hojer (2017) that focused on Social Work and Social Administration as an academic discipline and explored the differences according to gender, sponsorship, geographical and socioeconomic background, and parents' educational level. Bukuluki, Höjer, & Jansson (2017) compared the student motivations of European and Ugandan social work students. No study has focused on intrinsic motivations for student's choice of a program of study for higher education in Uganda.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The research study was informed by Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (Deci& Ryan, 2008). The idea was based on motivational study conducted by the researchers in the 1970s and 1980s. Deci and Ryan's seminal book on the topic from 1985 serves as the foundation for the hypothesis. But since then, it has grown and expanded. The theory was chosen because of its relevance to career choice by emphasizing the role of both extrinsic and intrinsic factors while being sensitive to other influencing aspects. The theory fits this research study framework well because it emphasizes intrinsic and extrinsic human motivations and personality in framing motivational studies. According to the Self-

Determination Theory (SDT), human motivation, personality, and optimal performance are related. It asserts that there are two primary forms of motivation—intrinsic and extrinsic—and that both significantly influence our identities and behaviours. The source of intrinsic motivation is inside. Our moral compass, interests, and fundamental beliefs are some of the internal forces influencing our behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2008).

2.1 Career prospects and Job opportunities

The prospect of employment relating to particular courses after completion was paramount in determining the choice of course in a higher institution. Looking at Uganda's case, where higher education emphasizes hands-on experience and thus leads to easy employability, has not attracted significant interest, which leaves a lot to be investigated, especially on economic attributes like the family financial position, background, and future employment prospects for the child beyond studies. Students get engaged in different courses relating to the job opportunities available. Every student undertakes the procedure of choosing opportunities for subjective educational skills relating to the job market (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001). Naturally, students always try to forecast or direct the future, and sometimes they try to plan their careers for a secure future where superior job opportunities are the important factor that might prejudice their career choices. A career plan would help students feel contented in their jobs, directly leading to satisfaction. Therefore, students engage in courses that offer high opportunities to compete favourably in the job market. In the School-to-work transition survey (SWTS) of 2013 and 2015, Byamugisha, Shamchiyeva, & Kizu (2014) contend that most of the surveyed youth had attended school or a training programme at some point in their lives (93.9 per cent in 2015). However, less than half of the youth population had completed or attended school (9.4 per cent) (33.3 per cent). The surveys showed a slight increase in the share of youth with no education or leaving education before completion (51.3 per cent in 2013 to 57.3 per cent in 2015), with higher shares for young women than men. The study showed a strong correlation between the levels of education and a young person's labour market transition: the higher the educational attainment, the more likely a young person was to complete his or her labour market transition to stable and/or satisfactory employment. A vast majority of employed youth in Uganda are undereducated for the job they were doing (79.5 per cent in 2015). Rarely were the respondents classified as overqualified for their job (2.8 per cent) (Byamugisha, Shamchiyeva, & Kizu, 2014).
Students in Uganda showed strong preferences for finding future work in modern sector occupations, such as professionals (56.8 per cent) and technicians and associate professionals (17.8 per cent). However, the shares of youth working as professionals remained very low (3.3 per cent), thus signaling a labour market mismatch. Byamugisha,

Shamchiyeva, & Kizu (2014) indicate that Uganda's youth labour underutilization rate was high at 67.9 per cent in 2015, up from 62.7 per cent in 2013. The share of underutilized labour potential consisted of 48.9 per cent of the youth population in irregular employment (either in self-employment or paid employment with contract duration less than 12 months), 14.7 per cent

2.2 Prestige associated with the course

Most adolescents struggle to make career decisions that satisfy their personal, economic and intellectual goals. Often, they base their choices on extraneous influences, i.e., status, monetary rewards and prestige attached to those professions. Some adolescents decide to study Medicine, law, and engineering because of the recognition, prestige, and value society accords to them (Uko & Ayuk, 2013, p. 245). Course and university reputations are the same when choosing a career, mostly for engineering and business courses (Sabir, Ashraf &Ahmad, 2013 pg303). One of the many crucial decisions students will make when making plans is their career choice, which could impact the rest of their lives. What the student wishes to accomplish with their lifetime workforce will be fundamental to who they aspire to be. (Page 36, Mberia & Midigo, 2018).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a cross-sectional design, providing a data collection and analysis framework. The researcher adopted this design to collect qualitative and quantitative data on different variables at that particular point. According to Richie et al. (2013), cross-sectional design is most applicable where various groups of persons differ in the variable of interest but share other noteworthy traits like socioeconomic level and educational background. Qualitative and quantitative techniques were used in the study's data collection and analysis. (Johnson and others, 2007).

3.2 Study Population

The researcher purposely selected the second-year undergraduate students of Makerere University who were admitted in the 2015/2016 in-take. The population of the admitted students was 13,098, and the number was distributed into 10 colleges, 33 schools, and 112 departments. The researcher selected five (5) Key Informants, including three admissions and career guidance resource persons from Makerere University and 2 Head Teachers of Secondary Schools who are well-versed in career guidance roles in various institutions. The study used a 5% level of precision and adopted the formula (Triola & Iossi, 2008), as seen below;

$$n = \frac{z_{\alpha/2}^2 pq}{e^2}$$

= (1.96) x (1.96) x0.5x0.5/ (0.069x0.069)

n-sample size = (201), z-level of confidence (95%), p-chance of selecting a female student q=p-1-chance of selecting a male student, e-level of precision.

Two hundred one structured questionnaires were administered to 2nd-year students of Makerere University. The questionnaires consisted of sections about socio-demographic characteristics of students' intrinsic factors that influenced student's choice of programs of study for higher education across the 10 colleges. The researcher made sure that the research questions were made clear and easy to understand in an easy to follow the sequence (Kumar, 2014).

3.3 Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant interviews, Desk reviews

Ten (10) Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were carried out. In each FGD, seven participants were selected from a mixture of 4 male and 3 female students from every college. Purposive sampling was used to reach known contacts, and later, convenience sampling was employed to identify the other available respondents. Five (5) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted. These were purposively sampled as in-depth interviews targeting resource persons charged with career guidance roles in various institutions who shared first-hand information regarding motivations of choice of programs of study while enrolling for higher education. Desk research was conducted especially in the preliminary phases of this research, as it was employed to generate data that mainly informed the background, review of the literature, and methodology phases, but also included the analysis and summary of findings phases.

3.4 Data Quality Control

Ethical approval from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) was obtained. The researcher also obtained an introduction letter from the department, which was presented to the selected students to help the researcher collect data.

3.5 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were collected using self-administered questionnaires. A data entry screen was developed to enable data entry into the computer. Data cleaning and editing were done to check for consistency. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 24 by generating frequency tables, graphs, and pie charts using univariate analysis to establish relationships between variables.

3.6 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data was collected through FGDs and KIIs, and all discussions were recorded and later transcribed. After data collection and transcription, the researcher revised the data by conducting content analysis and creating themes related to the study objectives for easy analysis. Data interpretation, identification of patterns and trends, and explanations were part of this phase; content analysis was employed as a technique of objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the content (Abbas & Charles, 1998).

3.7 Results

A variety of factors inform students' choices of programs of study in higher institutions of learning that can't apply to everyone, and these factors vary from one individual to another. The research sought to examine the intrinsic motivations for choosing the program of study among students joining Makerere University. The research established that the intrinsic motivations for the choice of program of study are relative, and what motivates one student may not necessarily motivate the other. In this section, the researcher presents the intrinsic factors that motivate the students to pursue their current programs of study for higher learning. This section focuses on the students' inert motivations that guided them in choosing this particular program of study. Table 4 below depicts students' responses, whose results are discussed in relation to other findings.

Table 1: Intrinsic factors that motivate the choice of the program of study among interviewed students

	Not Motivated (%)	Least Motivated (%)	Almost Motivated (%)	Moderately Motivated (%)	Motivated (%)	Strongly Motivated (%)
Wide choice of courses	49(24.5%)	46(23%)	34(17%)	28(14%)	20(10%)	23(11.5%)
(A-Level Performance)	39(19.5%)	23(11.5%)	31(15.5%)	18(9%)	44(22%)	45(22.5%)
Attractiveness of the course	61(30.5%)	34(17%)	28(14%)	33(16.5%)	23(11.5%)	20(10%)
Employment prospects	53(26.5%)	30(15%)	41(20.5%)	24(12%)	23(11.5%)	29(14.5%)
Prospects of scholarship	65(32.5%)	29(14.5%)	45(22.5%)	18(9%)	20(10%)	23(11.5%)

3.7.1 Labour Market and Job prospects, and its motivations on students while making choices for the program of study

In this section, the researcher presents the labour market and job prospecting factors that motivate students to pursue their current programs of study for higher learning.

The trends of the labour market inform students' motivations for particular choices; they consider issues like the most popular jobs, e.g. today, everybody is talking about Oil and gas for instance; some students may not have a passion for oil and gas, but because they expect to get a job in that line they end up choosing it over others; the same consideration plays in favour for those who are looking at a career change or are looking for extra skills either in taxation, international business and others are focusing on oil and gas because they anticipate those opportunities soon. The quantitative results from Table 1 further indicate that 38% were motivated by career prospects associated with those particular programs of study. However, it is surprising that job considerations did not motivate the students interviewed to pursue their current programs of study.

Several interviews with students asserted that most students preferred courses with more job prospects or the likelihood of enabling them to obtain employment immediately after completing the study program.

A few narratives directly quoted students saying:
"I was attracted to Statistics because of the job prospects. I have a cousin who did the same course and is successful in her career wanted to be like her, but now I know it is all about hard work and luck. I got the same course, but I cannot guarantee that I will get a good job like hers. (A female university student)
"Medicine was my dream course, and I am enjoying it. I am sure I will get a job after my studies" (A female University student)

" I have already started earning from the skills I am getting from my course; I started some piggery and poultry projects, and I am making good money." (A male University student)

"I am already working with some pharmacy in Wandegeya even when I am still studying at university; I am sure I will get a much better job when I graduate" (A female University student)

The above verbatim quotes from students indicate that the demand for every program of study depends on how it can lead to employment or survival once the program is completed. As indicated, some are already earning from the skills attained.

On the other hand, some students prefer courses that would immediately enable them to earn a living because, in Uganda, the traditional belief is that after studying, you are supposed to support your entire family as a form of payback to support the guardians and parents. A student was quoted saying that:

"I used to work with my parents in Owino Market, especially on holidays, to help them raise my fees, but they were pushed away when the Owino Market was burnt down. I hope this course I am pursuing enables me to either get a job or improve my small art gallery and be able to support myself and my parents, who are now struggling financially." (A male student in industrial art and design)

However, one of the respondents cautioned teachers and sometimes parents who guide students while making what they think are better choices without paying keen attention to the prevailing job market trends and the student's preferences or academic competencies;

"I would want to pay attention and understand the factors in the market because the job market trends keep changing, and sometimes when you get into University, and by the time you get out, things have possibly changed. The universities should provide us with prospectus pamphlets with clear details about the course, available job opportunities, and possible links to the industry, especially in the private sector." (Deputy Head Teacher, Makerere College School)

There are some historical beliefs and mindsets that are biased towards specific academic programs, especially those traditional professional programs;
"Choice, of course, is informed by Uganda's education history and employment trends. I think there are those traditional sectors that used to be prestigious; that mentality has not gone away; you find that most students who are doing PCB, BCM, even those who have done BAC and BCFN, also think they should enrol for Medicine, I think it is because they are historical disciplines, prestigious and they think employment is available." (Head-teacher, Caltec).

Generally, job prospects and traditionally successful professions contribute a lot to influencing motivation for choosing a program of study; even though trends keep changing, traditional views/perceptions towards some programs of study have not changed.
There is also an impression that when you do a science course at the University, you eventually get a job, but then it turns out that it depends on how you strategize, the opportunities that arise, sometimes even people who have not done sciences strike good jobs." (Deputy Head Teacher, Makerere College School)

Table 2. Career prospects concerning the current program of study

Course and relation to career growth	Frequency	Per cent
Not relevant	110	55.0
It is theoretical	55	27.5
it has a demand	36	17.5

Total	201	100.0

Table 2 above indicates that 55% of respondents believe the program of study may not help them get jobs to advance their career growth or help them get promotions in the jobs some are already doing. While 27.5% assert that the course is too theoretical, possibly they have not found any practical application of the content they have interfaced with, and 17.5% assert that the course has too much demand from students, implying that many people are doing it and career prospects are not clear.

The reasons forwarded for the program of study and career prospects still show that our education system in Uganda is largely theoretical, and it puts emphasis mainly on employability rather than self-sustainability

Therefore, students need to ask themselves about the availability of opportunities concerning the programs they aspire to study and the likely rewards that fall therein. Some views related to the above findings were captured in the qualitative interviews, as seen below;

"One can be certain of a job, maybe when doing professional courses like Medicine, law, engineering, etc. I am doing a social sciences course, where there are no particular skills that impact me. What can I do with it? Unless I get into formal employment, and that is when I am fortunate; many graduates are stranded without jobs." (A female University student)

Non-professional programs of study, especially those that don't impact specific and direct skills in students, have limited job prospects. They also contribute the least motivation for the choice of the program of study since most expect formal government and NGO jobs, which are limited.

Table 3. Will this program of study enable me to advance career growth?

Will it advance career growth	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	149	74.5
No	51	25.5
Total	200	100.0

Students are motivated by what they expect to obtain in terms of rewards such as employment opportunities and remuneration. These students have backgrounds based on their families; the Deputy Head Teacher of Makerere College School gave an interesting example, *"You can identify a child and advise him/her to be a teacher, and it turns out that there is no teacher in their family, yet the father is a businessman, and he has seen it happen in the world of business, and he has a clear orientation, or he has looked at*

factors that have helped people in his family make it in life, and you seem to be talking theory to them."

Therefore, reading from Table 3 above, among the students covered, the majority (74.5%) believe the program of study they are pursuing will help them get a career-related job. In contrast, a quarter (25.5%) do not believe it will get them a related job. This aligns with many studies that include Foskett et al. (2006), who found that students pay closer attention to economic considerations such as family, housing expenses, and employment prospects to augment their salaries. This, therefore, indicates that whereas the majority of the students are optimistic that the programs of study they are doing will help them get a career-related job, a significant proportion still does not believe that.

This is an indication that there is a section of students who pursue programs of study just because they are offered at university but with no hope of ever obtaining a related job;

"I am not sure of whether I will get a job after my course because I know of many friends who graduated with a similar course and are not employed" (A male University student).

Such a gap calls for intervention or creating further awareness of the skills and abilities students will be able to get after each course. Such information can be published online in such a way that students can be able to tell the relevance of their program of study; key informant interviews with higher education and career guidance experts had this to say;

"I saw a tracer study recently that was done by the National Council for Science and Technology looking at the engineers. It was asking whether engineers do engineering; more than 50% females of those who graduated with engineering went into other things, yet about 76% of the males were in the Engineering field; we have not done any tracer study to see where our students are, what they are doing, or whether they in the same line of profession." (Focal person Gender mainstreaming division, Makerere University."

However, as noted earlier in the study, the Head-teacher Caltec Academy thinks this is because things have changed, and course preference is dynamic now.

"We always get complaints from parents who would come and tell us that, you see, my son is good at sciences, but he does not want to do Medicine because the father might have done Medicine many years ago, which was lucrative and a big deal. Trends change, and there are quite several courses at the University now that are in engineering, IT, economics and marketing that seem to be more attractive than the traditional courses; I am not saying that students do not go to them, but they seem so flashy and to give immediate results, and they get excited about them."
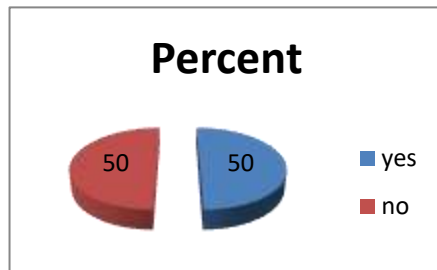
Figure 1. The program of study chosen will empower and help advance career growth

Figure 1 above indicates that half of the students (50%) believe that their programs of study will empower them to advance their careers or create career-related jobs. The other 50% believe to the contrary. This further explains the gap identified, which asserts that most higher education programs of study are designed to create job seekers rather than job creators. This gap needs to be addressed by both the government and higher education institutions. The reason for this was that job creation needs much capital. Although the Government of Uganda has established a youth livelihood project to provide youth with starting capital, the modalities of the award to different youth have not been established clearly in the public eyes, and some students had this to say;
"Certainty for jobs may be a preserve of professional courses like Medicine, law, and engineering, where there are plenty of jobs, and there is the ease of self-employment, etc. However, with an art course, which does not impart a particular set of skills, what can you do with it unless you get into formal employment" (A female University student).
Another student expressed dismay at the current higher education system, which is more theory-based, and recommended that it be changed towards skills-based training, if possible.
"I wish university education was geared towards skills-based rather than theoretical training. I am doing a professional course, and up to now, I can hardly do a simple, practical experiment; I wish our education system could strengthen my esteem and worth and allow me to compete favourably when I graduate"(A female university student.
One other respondent had a contrary view and thinks that university education is good enough and that the responsibility rests on the shoulders of the students and on how seriously they take their studies;
All courses taught on campus are good and empowering enough; it depends on the student, how much time one invests in it, and the seriousness one attaches to it. I think all courses provide a platform for self-discovery and innovation of new things; they offer many potentials for varying business ideas; for instance, people used to undermine my course as a course of failures, but now music and performing arts a big industry, and many are earning a living from it". (A female University student)
Conclusively, not all students are doing programs of their first choice or those they were motivated to do, and some are pursuing those programs they were motivated to do as their priorities. It is every student's prayer that they get employment and, in effect, build a professional career with those programs. Some are optimistic about employment or creating jobs aligned with their professions. At the same time, other students are unsure about the probability of getting jobs or creating them.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The prestige of the course and the potential for employment were two of the main reasons why students chose to enroll in the current program with prospects of promotions and job opportunities. A big proportion, more than half, did not look at the quality of teaching or programs of study but the ability to improve job opportunities as key choice motivating factors, as asserted by 61% and 53%, respectively. Other factors that motivate students to pursue the current programs of study include career prospects like promotion or job prospects for some courses. In contrast, others look at the respect attained from a university degree and the amount of tuition fees for each course, among other factors that intrinsically motivate students' choice of program of study. However, from the qualitative data, some students asserted that the programs of study pursued at the University are highly theoretical and can hardly sustain any person who opts for blue-collar jobs.
Factors like the program's link to the job market or prestige remain secondary once the program offered by the institution is not the preferred choice. Preference for the program of study is based on judgment by the student, who obtains information from social circles or personal convictions that may contain accurate or inaccurate information.

There is a need for a compulsory apprenticeship program, especially for O'level and A 'level leavers, to help students guide and shape their interests for their careers. These should be made free and compulsory in their sub-regions or districts; for example, there are factories, businesses, and local government structures in Kabale District, among others. These children should be given a chance to have a feel for what takes place in the work environment, a good ground to pick interests in some disciplines that would guide their interests in career growth and future job prospects.
Suppose a student has not been admitted to a preferred program or did not get grades that would qualify them for their first choices. In that case, there should be a forum through which the university authorities would meet with students and their parents to guide and enrich them with knowledge and career opportunities surrounding those other programs; such forums can be careers days at the University, inviting industrial experts to share with students the future careers and opportunities in the labour market, and setting up career guidance offices at every college of the University.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT (HEADING 5)

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