

Non-motivational factors affecting choice of program of study among students joining Higher Education in Uganda

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Abstract: In Uganda, students pursue programs of study where they lack background knowledge of their career opportunities. Drawing from interviews and discussions held with students and staff, this study sought to establish the exact reasons behind the students' choice of programs of study and how non-motivational but influential factors affect students' choice of programs of study accessing higher education. The study used a cross-sectional survey methodology and analyzed data using qualitative and quantitative methods. A total of 201 randomly selected students completed a self-administered questionnaire, involved in 10 focus group discussions and five key informant interviews. The study found that student performance, higher education policy and access to information were among the non-motivational factors influencing student choices. The study recommends, therefore, that Institutions of higher learning or colleges should have a school-to-school outreach program focused on building the capacities of students to understand the programs, higher education should align its human resource training to its national development priorities and invest in training the human resources it needs based on the demands both by its public and private sectors, and higher education should re-integrate higher education to equip students with key practical skills that would help in strengthening the future industrial needs.

Keywords—Non-motivational factors; 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, they find themselves at a crossroad of career choice, requiring the student to decide the program of study they would take up at the undergraduate level. With many professional and academic programs available these days, decision-making becomes difficult. It is a decision that will significantly impact 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.

Higher education is a vital subsector in innovation and human capital development. It is essential to the success and sustainability of the knowledge economy (Dill & VanVught, 2010), necessitating adequate market demand planning.

Higher education has grown in importance on national agendas and has seen significant transformations and reforms worldwide in recent decades, as evidenced by an OECD evaluation of tertiary education policies (OECD, 2008).

Uganda's higher education system is defined by the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (2001) as the sector that offers post-secondary education. It consists of institutions like universities, colleges of commerce and technology, national teachers' colleges, and other schools and

colleges, both private and public, offering courses leading to the award of certificates, diplomas, and degrees (Obwona & Ssewanyana, 2007).

The higher education institutions in Uganda include 44 licensed Universities (12 public and 32 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, 2014).

The Ugandan higher education subsector has grown in student enrollment and the number of institutions since 2006, when NCHE first released "The State of Higher Education and Training." However, these increases have occurred despite decreased or flat unit cost support for education buildings, infrastructure, and academic staff.

Students, parents, and policymakers tend to prefer university over technical education, so higher education is regarded as a subsector at a glance (NCHE, 2006). The subsector has continued to grow in terms of enrolment and the number of institutions.

In 2010/11, the number of registered universities increased from 29 to 34, representing an increase of 30%. In 2006, there was one "Other Degree Awarding Institution", Uganda Management Institute. Since 2006, a second one, Team

Institute of Business Management, has been licensed. By 2010, there were three university colleges: two private (Burham, affiliated to UCU and Kisubi Brothers University College, affiliated to UMU) and one public (College of Health Sciences, Makerere).

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Students transitioning from Secondary Schools to Higher Institutions of Learning are typically faced with choosing academic programs to pursue higher education that meet their career goals (Guerra & Braungart-Rieker, 1999). The choice of the study program for higher learning is 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 the student's future career demands.

Despite the challenges associated with the choice of the program of study among students enrolling for higher education, while there is increased enrolment for higher education and an increase in the number of programs of study offered in higher institutions of learning, the non-motivational factors for the choice of these programs of study are not apparent. Quite a small number of studies have been conducted in this area, and these included 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 (2019) compared the student motivations of European and Ugandan social work students; no study has studied the non-motivational factors for student's choice of a program of study while joining higher education in Uganda.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Non-motivational but influential factors for students while choosing programs of study

ADMISSION REQUIREMENT/ STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Career selection is a continuing process that begins with a child's vision of a job and progresses through school, higher education, and adulthood. As a result, students must meticulously plan their professional paths. Choosing a career is time-consuming, expensive, and prone to bias, errors, or favoritism, resulting in unfair advantages for students. One key problem students encounter is matching their profession choices to their aptitude and academic achievement (Mberia & Midega, 2018). As is being practised worldwide, admission boards use prior academic performance to select students for admission (Kyoshaba, 2009). Moreover, in Uganda today the main admission criteria to universities is prior to performance either at A' level, using Diploma certificates or through mature age examinations.

2.1 INFLUENCE OF GOVERNMENT/HIGHER EDUCATION POLICIES ON STUDENT'S CHOICES FOR THE PROGRAM OF STUDY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education policy provides a framework within which institutions are organized, funded, and operated (Ansell, 2008). The framework is seen as a tool that guides how post-secondary school education is organized and funded and how that affects students when making choices about programs of study for higher learning.

In 1950, practically all Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member countries had a publicly sponsored higher education system that served just a tiny proportion of the population. In recent decades, several states have seen the elite model evolve into a new mass higher education system. The move to a mass system has resulted in several financial modifications. Several jurisdictions, like Australia and the United Kingdom, have significantly reduced public financing for higher education. Higher education policy in the OECD is shaped by a series of politicized decisions on the scope of coverage, the level of subsidization, and the overall public expense of higher education. Moving from the Elite model to one of the mass models of higher education requires overriding potential veto players who might block reform (Ansell, 2008).

Ghana's educational policies have undergone significant modifications. Governance and structure in higher education have emerged worldwide. Some of the changes include the accreditation of private colleges, tax breaks on imported books, a reduction in government support for higher education, and decreasing enrollment at public universities to make way for private ones (Fosu & Poku, 2014).

The specific strategies involve revising the curricula of universities and technical institutes by including more science and technology subjects. In partnership with the private sector, the Government also recognizes the need to increase funding to enable institutions of higher learning to support those activities envisaged under the economic pillar and to be a regional Centre of research and development in new technologies (The Republic of Kenya, 2007).

Rwanda's Higher Education Policy guides the transformation of higher education (Higher Education Policy, 2008). It points in the direction of establishing a stable, underlying structure that should enable institutions to develop their strategies for supporting the realization of the ambitions for higher education. These are the shift to the "knowledge society", globalization, under-resourcing, increased competition amongst providers, the diverse needs of society and learners, and the need to serve as an engine for social and economic development. These policy directions of governments influence the choice of the program of study by students in that the student is more likely to choose a program that has government funding and political favour at a particular moment.

2.2 THE INFLUENCE OF COSTS ON THE CHOICE OF THE PROGRAM OF STUDY

Hoerack (1982) indicated that the influence of price on students' choices partially determines enrolment levels in degree programs. A research study on Chinese students revealed that they choose international higher institutions of learning based on affordability (Hannukainen, 2008), which implies that students easily choose certain public institutions depending on the cost of the courses. Costly institutions are only attended by those students with good economic status; most students choose courses within their financial capacity.

The perception of the costs and benefits of education are, therefore, very important factors. It is a matter of parents' method of prioritizing their finances (Kwesiga, 1993). There is little doubt that a parent's ability to pay school fees and other educational expenses plays a vital role in shaping the student's academic choices and priorities and focusing on his future goals. A study among students joining Universities in London revealed that most students' main concern was travelling costs to the institutions as a key factor in ensuring decision-making (Raey et al., 2001). Belley and Lochner (2007) find a dramatic increase over time in the effect of family income on college attendance, and Lovenheim and Reynolds (2011) find that college nonattendance decreased substantially over time, particularly for high-ability students.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study used a cross-sectional survey approach, resulting in a data collection and analysis framework. This design was developed to allow the researchers to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on a large number of factors at the same time. This design employed various groups of persons that differed in their variable of interest but shared other notable characteristics such as socioeconomic position and educational background (Richie et al., 2013). The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis (Johnson et al. 2007).

3.2 Study Population

The researchers 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 researchers 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;

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

$$= (1.96) \times (1.96) \times 0.5 \times 0.5 / (0.069 \times 0.069)$$

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 researchers made sure that the research questions were made clear and easy to understand in an easy to follow the sequence (Kumar, 2014).

3.3 Identify the Headings Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews, and Desk Reviews

Ten focus group discussions were conducted. In each FGD, seven participants were selected from a mixture of four male and three 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 primarily in the preliminary phases of this research, as it generated data that mainly informed the background, literature review, and methodology. It also included the analysis and summary of the findings phases.

3.4 Data Quality Control

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

3.5 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data was 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 by generating frequency tables, graphs, and pie charts using univariate analysis to establish relationships between variables.

3.5 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 researchers revised the data by conducting content analysis by 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).

4. RESULTS

4.1 NON-MOTIVATIONAL BUT INFLUENTIAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT STUDENTS WHILE CHOOSING PROGRAMS OF STUDY

HOW ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE MOTIVATES/INFLUENCES STUDENTS' CHOICE OF THE PROGRAM OF STUDY

Table 1 below indicates that 53.5% of the respondents said they are pursuing the programs of study because of their performance at A' level. Beggs et al. (2008) established that many students choose their courses based on their academic ability and actual performance.

In qualitative data collection, several other insights about the matter under discussion were raised, as indicated below;

"I know all students would have loved to go for courses of their first choice, but because of performance and some other factors, you may find yourself getting your second or third choice", Head-teacher, Caltec Academy.

Table 1: Reasons for preferring these programs of study

Reasons for course preference	Frequency	Per cent
Better courses	36	18.0
Government emphasis	107	53.5
Capacity to pay	36	18.0
Practical and marketable	21	10.5
Total	200	100.0

The Career and Admissions Desk Officer, Makerere University Senate, raised a related and equally pertinent point about students' performance and capabilities and how they should align their abilities with their ambitions. Some students apply for courses yet do not have the required grades. During focus group discussions, students had these to say;

"For me, I think it is all about someone's performance; as an example, I was so passionate about journalism that, luckily, I performed well and qualified for it. So, it is passion and performance, but had I failed to qualify for it, maybe I would have been given another course" (A female University student).

"Performance is central to the choice of course of study; I always wanted to do law; it was my dream course, but now I am doing Social Work; I failed to do law because I did not perform as required. (A male university student)

Availability of various and varied program choices and program reputation: The results further indicate that 35.5% were motivated by the availability of a wide choice of programs of study and program reputation. Traditionally, professional programs that produce doctors, lawyers, and engineers have a higher reputation than other programs in universities. Because of the government policy emphasizing science studies, the interviewees' appetite for science courses was high and for arts very low. Another factor for this is the dwindling sponsorships available in the Arts programs, yet competition is very high. Qualitative interviews captured some voices speaking to that fact, as quoted below;

"I was in Kitende SS for high school, but I have observed that it is now a culture that most students who do PCB or BAC end up doing medicine, those who do PCM end up in engineering courses, those who excel in arts subjects end up doing law, in our year alone we are about 20 of us doing medicine, but I also know many from our class at law school and the same applies for technology programs, and the bigger number of us are on government scholarships" (A male University student).

The Career and Admissions Desk Officer, Makerere University Senate, emphasized this, indicating that science-related programs of study normally attract the brightest students as potential beneficiaries; on the contrary, students from rural schools lack access to sufficient information about newer programs of study and timely guidance.

4.2 Education policy affects student's choice of program of study

It was established through the interviews that students in Uganda hardly clearly understand Uganda's higher education policy. However, a policy framework under the National Council for Higher Education regulates the higher education systems in Uganda. It regulates higher education in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and all other stakeholders. It sets the minimum admission standards, e.g., for one to be admitted for a certificate, they must have passed O-level with at least three subjects; if one wants to be admitted to a diploma, one must have passed A-level with at least one principal pass and two subsidiaries, and if one wants to be admitted to a university for a degree, one must have two principal passes. However, according to students, the effect of education policy, as viewed through public perception and students' experiences with the education system, makes them conclude that the education system is mainly theoretical. This implies that the education system promotes more of the white-collar job-seeking mentality rather than blue-collar jobs, and such views are expressed as seen below:

"Government emphasizes science-based courses, especially most government scholarships for science courses. I think it is good because science promotes innovations, which

should be an engine of national development" (A male University student).

Another student had a different view;

"The fact that government is prioritizing science disciplines for government sponsorship is unfair and undermines art-based courses, yet they all contribute to national development"(A male University student).

However, he was contradicted by another student who argued that;

Emphasis should be put on technical education, allowing most students to be impacted with hands-on skills that enable them to create jobs other than focusing on colour jobs. We need that paradigm shift, and to me, these are policy matters said the female student.

In a key informant interview, the respondent expressed the following view;

"The government and urban schools have continually emphasized sciences. The appetite for arts courses has decreased, perhaps due to the government campaign for sciences and the dwindling of scholarships in the arts courses." (Career and Admissions Desk Officer, Makerere University Senate)

The other respondent weighed in on the relevance of policy and recommended how policy can be a tool for strategic focus on government programs and how it can be aligned with educational institutions and the industry in shaping implementation strategies to inform employment strategies for graduates;

"I want to agree with the national direction regarding emphasis on science, mathematics, engineering and technology (STEMS). The president or minister of education should encourage that, but of course, not negate the importance and relevance of humanities and social sciences because the world today still needs economists; we still need lawyers, sociologists, psychologists, and financial analysts, among others. You can't rule out the importance of teachers today; for example, China and South America are in serious demand for teachers because the world is now a global village. For example, the Chinese who come here always need translators. I want to believe that the Government is aware of those trends because I know that the Ministry of Gender and Labour has that information and statistics; the issue is how it is shared with the public and how it is aligned with the higher education/training framework for our young people to be able to tap into that job market." (Focal person Gender mainstreaming division, Makerere University)

The above statements from qualitative data indicate that the student's perspective is that education policy has promoted theoretical approaches, leaving much to be desired in the practical world. The policy is well woven to impact people's perceptions and understanding of the ministry of education. This implies that the university education system contradicts Carneiro's (2007) findings, which state that both students and adults require academic and applied knowledge, as well as the ability to connect knowledge and skills, learning and competence, inert and active learning, codified and tacit

knowledge, and creative and adaptive learning, and transform them into valuable skills.

Much as there is an established tertiary education act made in the year 2002, it is still grappling with weaknesses that include financing strategies, principles for allocating public funds, incentives for private institutions, accountability and operational quality assurance mechanisms, poor collaboration between Higher Education Department, the Department of Business, Technical, and Vocational Education (BTVE), and the teacher education department within the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES).

However, all institutions receive directives from the government, which implies that the government affects the output of all educational products in Uganda.

The other policy challenge-related issues that were extracted from the qualitative data included government scholarships, the structure and design of secondary education and how it affects student intakes given the geographical spread of Uganda;

"In terms of steering efforts for science and technology (STEMS), we have seen and heard the president say the country needs more scientists; he has even increased the pay for science teachers and professions, even the admissions when you look at the admissions quarters, the science courses take more numbers, out of the 4000 government scholarships, the science courses take about 65% share and 35% arts. I think different stakeholders are coming up with a policy platform, and I think for Makerere, we will institute a quarter system for courses in sciences to encourage more females." (Career and Admissions Desk Officer, Makerere University Senate)

Students in FGDs shared their views on how government policies for higher education affect students' choice of program of study and how they think policy should be turned into an effective tool in shaping equitable access to higher education, especially on programs of study where the platform is favourable for all students.

"I think the government should scrap government scholarships completely and channel all those funds to finance student loans and not limit it to only science programs; after all, most of the beneficiaries of these scholarships come from affluent families. For instance, here at medical school, about 80% of the students on government scholarships did their secondary education at prestigious and expensive schools, which leaves vulnerable, bright and deserving students from low-income families who cannot afford such high fees going for cheaper programs" (A female University student)

Another respondent had more or less a similar view;

"Most professional courses with government scholarships for courses like medicine, law, engineering, and veterinary are taken up by mainly students from the top private schools like Kitende, St. Lawrence, Namirembe Hillside, and a few other public secondary schools like Namagunga, Budo, Gayaza, Ntare, Makerere College etc, this

disadvantages other student's from rural public schools." A male University student)

The same respondent went on to comment on the unregulated and competitive nature of private schools that has worsened the state of higher education and limited student's access to good courses to students from those top-notch secondary schools and wealthy families because they can afford to hire the best teachers, they in most cases fish bright students from public schools and offer them scholarships to perform well and attract more students and in the long run affected the performance of the once admired public secondary schools. The respondent thinks that this matter should be looked into and addressed at a policy level.

Table 1: Effects of the education policy on the choice of the program of study

Affected by Education policy	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	59	29.5
No	141	70.5
Total	200	100.0

When asked if students think they were affected by the current higher education policy, a third (29.5%) of the respondents believed that the education policy has affected their choice of courses they are doing. However, the majority (70%) believe the education policy has not affected their choice of course at the university. Although East Africa's education system has been geared towards the promotion of science-based courses (STEM) to link the industry directly to the institutions of learning, the mechanism linking universities and research institutions with the production sector in East Africa appears to have failed to bear much fruit (IUCEA, 2015). There is widespread concern that research at universities and institutions does not focus on the needs of the industry.

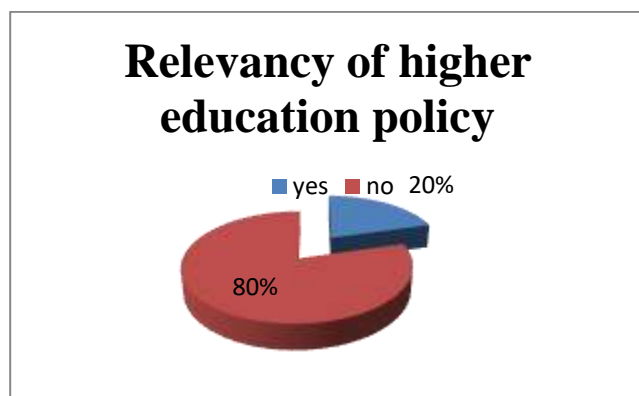


Figure 1. How is government policy relevant in affecting student's choice of program of study for higher education?

The key challenge of higher education policy from the student's perspective is that it is seen as not favourable in

affecting students' choice of study programs in higher learning institutions in Uganda, as per the 80% of students covered. However, 20% assert that the policy is favourable. On probing further into the higher education policy, the key challenges highlighted included the policy promoting theoretical education, running a non-relevant curriculum, and running courses that are not competitive internationally. The reason forwarded above is not different from student experiences with the current program of study being pursued. This acts as a confirmation of the common weakness of Uganda's higher institutions of education that need attention.

Table 32: Other factors that influenced the choice program of study

Factors for choosing the course	Frequency	Per cent
Neglected course	31	15.5
The flexibility of the course	61	30.5
Had read books and got inspired	59	29.5
Prospects of scholarships	48	24.0
Need to preserve the environment	1	.5
Total	200	100.0

Three in ten students covered in this research (30%) assert that the choice of the program of study currently undertaken at the university is a result of its flexibility; the same proportion, however, also asserts that the course was undertaken after being inspired, whereas 24% had the anticipation of getting a scholarship. Traditionally in Uganda, every program of study pursued based on either financial factors/cost or anticipation of scholarship, considering constrained families who struggle to raise tuition fees, and flexibility when it comes to timing so that the students who can improvise and get work to do during day time can undertake the courses at night or evening time. Most models split the student decision-making process into three stages: ambition development and alternative evaluation, options consideration, and evaluation of remaining possibilities and ultimate decision (Jackson, 1982). Zimmerman et al. (2000) identified "push and pull" factors that operate along the student decision-making process at different levels. This is directly related to the above findings, where students considered course flexibility and inspiration as reasons behind course preference.

Access to information influences the motivation for the choice of the program of study

This section focuses on access to information as a motivation for choosing their current program of study.

Access to information about various programs of study available in higher institutions of learning plays a key role in the demand for the same programs. Therefore, the way this information is available to the student while still in secondary school is anticipated to influence what motivates students to opt for the programs of study when given the opportunity. The responses from student focus group discussions show narratives about how access to information about the program of study influenced them to prefer the program currently being pursued.

Some other students opt for programs of study because they know them as traditional programs or because they are professionals within different service sectors who have done such programs, for example, education, agriculture, health service, and judiciary sectors, as the traditionally revered programs, taking engineering as an example.

"I studied from a rural school, we didn't get career guidance and we lacked access to information, I only knew that I was to study education, I didn't interest myself with other programs because I knew I wouldn't qualify for most of them. I think that the majority of students from rural schools suffer from similar challenges. I only knew of the most common courses like social work, Law, Medicine, engineering and education; for me, I only wanted to do education, and I was lucky I got a bursary scheme" (A male University student)

"Limited knowledge can push you into a corner. Most of these students lack the knowledge of the newer fields. Because they lack that knowledge, they only think of the older fields in medicine, engineering, pharmacy, social sciences, such courses, so the lack of knowledge also impacts them." (Career and Admissions Desk Officer, Makerere University Senate)

In the case of the student above, it is clear that the student's motivation for choosing a program was limited to his knowledge, which he accessed only through common social circles.

Another student had a similar experience

"I studied at a local secondary school in Kaberamaido; I did not get enough career guidance, and besides, only art courses were taught in my school, so I ended up getting Social Sciences. I did not know about other courses yet. I recently realized that I qualified for many other courses. My being in Makerere is a miracle. Among all my former classmates, I am the only one who made it to Makerere"(a female University student).

Rural students have very limited information about programs available in higher institutions of learning, an indication that the institutions do not conduct outreach programs to create awareness. Perhaps, now in the era of

mobile applications and the internet, great outreach would be greatly achieved with minimum costs.

5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

Although there was very little knowledge about higher education policies in Uganda among the students this study covered, there was a general knowledge of the traditional government policy of promoting science courses right from secondary school to higher education. More emphatic data was captured from the key informant interviews, which gave the researchers insights on the policy as a tool for development; these policies are implemented by the Uganda Ministry of Education and all relevant partner agencies. Due to these higher education policies, some students focus on programs of study because the government may offer scholarships after performing to the expected standards. In contrast, others focus on the job rewards after completing the course. A minimum number of students focused on the practicability of the course. Therefore, due to this policy, it is only after experiencing the course content. At the same time, at university, one realizes that some courses do not impact any practical skills that would be useful for survival after university.

Most students opt for the program of study not by choice but rather by academic performance. The other aspects included the cultural influences attached to the community's stereotypical attitudes towards some courses, which affected students' choice of the program of study. Therefore, if a student does not have the required minimum academic scores for the desired course and does not get his/her desired program of study, he/she settles for the 2nd or third choice that institutions offer and is accepted for the sake.

The study, however, was limited by the choice of the population. Sampling was based on students' generalization without considering the different decisional challenges that affect private and government-sponsored students at the time of application.

5.2 Conclusions

The study established that academic performance is central to the choice of the program of study. Therefore, if a student does not have the required minimum academic scores for the desired course, that student does not get his/her desired program of study; he/she settles for the second or third choice that institutions offer and pursues it as the only alternative.

Government emphasis on science programs and subjects has not created the impact in producing the practical skilled workforce that would drive the economy in a positive

direction as was projected. This is because the policy does not steer the students in the right direction since it loses direction at higher education, where a minimum number of students are admitted to science-based programs and trained to only for focus only employed in white-collar jobs. Uganda's policy of higher education still lacks emphasis on skills development and practical applicability of the received knowledge, which should focus on developing both art and science students. Although there is an existing BITVET policy that promotes vocational education, the policy has failed to promote mindset change among the population to start looking at vocation education as the most practical and skills training that would drive the economy in the right direction, this should be coupled with compulsory apprenticeship courses for all A-leavers.

5.3 Recommendations

Having established that most students opt for the program of study not by choice but rather by academic performance. The BITVET higher education policy should be redesigned or re-integrated into university education to equip students with key practical skills that would help strengthen the future unseen industrialization era. As the student pointed out, key skills include driving, tailoring, welding, farming, metal fabrication, and wood modelling. Such skills may take the shortest period during the course but are of paramount importance to the entire development of any country.

The government policy framework on higher education should align its human resource training to its national development priorities and invest in training the human resources it needs based on the demands both by its public and private sectors tagged to the national development plans and vision but also to encourage entrepreneurship and productivity grounded in personnel emancipation.

Institutions of higher learning or colleges within each institution should have a regional school-to-school outreach program that builds students' capacities to understand the programs of study content and the respective skills output at the end of each program. Such programs should incorporate detailed brochures for each course, leaflets, and establish a web portal with full information that can guide a student in making accurate decisions, such that students are guided and encouraged not to choose programs of study for the sake of but rather be able to link it with life after school.

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