Achieving quality amidst work-load equation system in Ugandan higher education institutions: quality-equality trade-off

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ABSTRACT

This book chapter confronts the most controversial debate in the academic arena of performance-based pay systems that has borne the concept of ‘faculty workload’ as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) strive for ‘quality’. The chapter cites provisions in the Uganda’s National Council for Higher Education (UNCHE) that is incongruent with Management Development Institutes (MDI) which only recruits graduate students. The provisions include; minimum teaching load, lecturer-student ratio, supervisor-supervisee ratio and minimum qualifications for facilitators on graduate programs. The study highlights numerous strategies devised by Uganda Management Institute (UMI) to enhance staff capacity so as to strengthen and sustain efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery of teaching, research and community engagement. The chapter concludes that although there were numerous unprecedented internal and external forces that threatened quality, UMI still holds her glory quality leadership, staff and systems. The chapter recommends that UMI should uphold her quality assurance practices especially of; self-assessment, peer reviews, tracer studies and evidence-based research.

Key words: Faculty competency, performance-based systems, quality assurance systems, staff development strategies, workload distribution.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADC; Austrian Development Cooperation, AUN; Association of Universities in the Netherlands, CHES; Center for Higher Education Studies, HEIS; Higher Education Institutions, ISO; International Standardization for Organization, IUCEA; Inter-University Council for East Africa, MOE; Ministry of Education, NCHE; National Council for Higher Education, SDG; Sustainable Development Goals, UNCHE; Uganda’s National Council for Higher Education, USAID; United States Agency for International Development.

INTRODUCTION

The last two decades or so, have witnessed the war for ‘quality’ in higher education, while external forces emphasized value-for-money and fitness-for-purpose which promoted the concept of ‘performance-based pay systems, transforming it into an alien process of accountability and compliance with no relation to the very essence of ‘quality’ of higher education teaching and learning (King, 2019; Garner, 2008). As a regulatory body of education, the Uganda’s National Council for Higher Education (UNCHE) was born, purposely to regulate operations of higher education institutions in Uganda and is responsible for accreditation of HEIs, students and staff recruitment, teaching and learning standards, modes of assessment, graduation load, among others (Kasozzi, 2006). Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Uganda derive their prerogative for quality assurance endeavors from the quality assurance frameworks of NCHE, as established by the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions’ Act of
Parliament of 2001, as revised in 2006, to include “Other Degree Awarding Institutions” such as Uganda Management and Nsamizi Institutes among others (Kasozi, 2006). As a semi-autonomous government regulatory agency, the Council is responsible for providing guidance in the establishment of HEIs, quality and relevance programs, resource, facilities and staffing etc. (Bunoti, 2012; Kasozi, 2006). The framework ensures that NCHE and HEIs work together to achieve and enhance the desired quality in higher education. Hence, quality assurance in higher education is entrenched in the NCHE (2014), which provides for the establishment of “Quality Assurance Units” to handle quality assurance-related matters, in a more dynamic, regulated and customized fashion. The quality assurance framework therefore comprises of two major components; (a) the regulatory component at National level and (b) the institutional component at each individual higher education institution (NCHE, 2014). Specific roles for the Council include; to license new universities and other tertiary institutions of higher learning, to monitor the performance of the licensed institutions, ensure that HEIs maintain the standards and remedy those aspects where there is need for improvement (NCHE Frameworks 2014). The quality assurance frameworks (QAF) endeavors therefore have been cascaded to the lowest level of HEIs so as to facilitate effective coordination and monitoring (Kasozi, 2006).

The background

The Uganda National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) became extremely fundamental when higher education was being yearned for, with the sector gaining prominence and opening doors to a broader scope of the populace, instead of the dominance and monopoly originally enjoyed by only the elite. Hence, quality became more significant when global forces were transforming the way HE was being delivered (Bunoti, 2012). Hence, given the Council’s vision of “A Uganda with accessible, equitable, relevant and sustainable quality higher education”, its impact has been felt by all stakeholders (Kasozi, 2006). As a world class institute and in her effort to achieve sustainable development goal No 4 “Achieving Quality Education”, Uganda Management Institute (UMI), has continued to emphasize “quality” in all her operations of teaching, research and community engagement. The Council holds that to qualify to teach on graduate programs and supervise graduate students, one must possess a doctorate. The Council further stresses the importance of content expertise and specialization in the field surrounding the student’s research. Kiley (2011) further emphasizes methodological and theoretical competencies of supervisors that not only develop students’ research skills, but also quality of research and ability to provide direction and structure. Like Kiley (2011), Lahenius and Ikävalko (2012) augment that graduate research students should be supervised by PhD holders, with experience and expertise, considering that intellectual and methodological expertise is key supervisory pointers of quality. Cognizant of the need to embrace performance-pay systems, achieve equality, reduced the burden on the few qualifying academics, as well as to improve completion rates, Uganda Management Institute resorted to more realistic, equitable and sustainable practices, such equal distribution of supervision load, facilitate on research workshops, moderate research proposals and dissertation. Hence, in an attempt to develop, embrace, sustain and uphold quality, numerous quality assurance strategies such as team supervision/co-supervision, were devised to avert possible effects of workload equation – without trading off ‘quality’. Similarly, for purposes of arriving at equitable performance management decisions, every faculty was accorded an opportunity to participate in course and module leadership as well as teaching.

Theoretical exploration

Bandura’s (2011) self-efficacy and the social cognitive learning theories underpin the discussion of this book chapter. The theories were premised as relevant in explaining areas of faculty competencies and self-efficacy that lead to quality. The self-efficacy theory posits that teachers become more confident and competent once they acquire relevant trainings (O’Connor and Carvalho, 2014). Self-efficacy comes from four sources; performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and demonstration; and physiological states. The theory explains how each behavior witnessed can change a person’s way of thinking (cognition) (Bandura, 2011). Hence, for one to excel in class, three conditions are required; behavior, skills and knowledge. Therefore, for effective learning to happen, teachers must be knowledgeable, competent and confident and with good behavior, maximum interaction and participation, relevant examples and positive attitude. Unless there are clear feedback strategies of behavior, all the efforts may be futile. Conversely, the social cognitive learning theory holds that portions of an individual’s knowledge acquisition can be directly related to observing others or more so watch others do things within the context of social interactions, and experiences. The theory posits that people learn by observing others with the environment, behavior, and cognition all as chief factors in influencing development in a reciprocal triadic relationship (Bandura, 2011).

Behavior being the most critical knack in teaching, it becomes significant in students’ learning and plays a significant role in enhancing quality (Bandura, 2011). He explains that when people observe a model performing a behavior or practicing it successfully, they remember the sequence of events and use this information to guide
subsequent behaviors which prompts the viewer to engage in behavior they already learned and sometimes do it even better. In other words, the survival of humanity is dependent upon the replication of the actions, and observations which include; attention, retention, production and motivational. Rationally, practices such as periodic self-assessment systems, joint development and review of academic programs, joint graduate supervision and teaching, regular thematic training workshop, mentorship etc. target to achieve self-efficacy, confidence and a feeling of self-worth, which all lead to the desired faculty pedagogical competencies that lead to effective teaching and learning. Similarly, such competencies lead to quality of graduates, research output and quality of service delivery.

Conceptual orientation

Quality assurance is universal notion, whose application is diverse and depends on discipline, fields of study, circumstances, intentions, environment and sometimes criteria (King, 2019). Similarly, the term ‘quality’ lacks a conventional definition that is acceptable by all stakeholders, especially those who have a relative stake in the conceptions (Aarts and Greijn, 2010). As much as the definition from the business perspective is fluid, the definition from the education perspective is even more complex and sometimes controversial. For example, what is viewed as high quality by an institution, it may appear different in the faces of staff, students, parents or even employers. King (2019), articulates ‘quality in education’ as a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their award and ensuring that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them. The IUCEA’s (2010), definition of quality is an amalgamation of essential character with which something is identified or described as an extremely valued or grade of a particular merchandise”. Adams (2008) posits that quality in education is the helping of students to develop graduate skills and attributes that employers’ value as essential. Yirdaw (2016), extends it to “quality assurance” which he defines as a systematic process of assessing and verifying inputs, throughputs, outputs and outcomes against standardized benchmarks of quality so as to maintain and enhance quality. He espouses that the purpose of quality assurance is to ensure greater accountability, comply with quality assurance frameworks and facilitate harmonization of standards within HEIs and across academic programs, institutions, systems, activities and, among individual staff (IUCEA, 2010). Perhaps, this definition which emerged from a ‘package’ of simultaneous changes affecting higher education, such as the devolution of authority, diminished government funding, expansion of student numbers etc. suffice. From a broader perspective however, quality frameworks in HEIs are concerned with minimum standards in the establishment of higher education institutions in terms of; funding, facilities, staffing, minimum standards for students’ recruitment, progression and graduation, minimum qualification of staff, acceptable teacher-student ratio, supervisor-supervisee ratio, the program development processes and support systems (Basheka et al., 2013; Garner, 2008).

This book chapter adopts the ‘quality assurance frameworks’ of the Uganda’s NCHE which provide guidance on the desired faculty qualification and competencies and provides UMI’s quality assurance strategies that have attempted to avert the potential quality-equality trade-off. Arguably, pedagogical competency’ are the ‘the ability of lecturers to manage students’ learning, increase their interest and curiosity about numerous aspects of the subject matter both in and outside the classroom (USAID, 2015). Critical aspects of pedagogical competencies include; scope, breadth and depth of the content and to effectively engage and assess the learners. Consequently, core faculty competencies is knowing well the students’ characteristics, mastering the learning theories and principles, effectively communicating with the learners and objectively scoring and evaluating students. Ironically, although educationalists value and advocate for faculty competencies as the key to quality delivery, they lacked credible measures from which an institution can make objectively derive defensible staff decisions. Yet, it was on the basis of perceived lack of pedagogical competencies that workload had been inequitably distribution thereby causing performance-based rewards controversial. Vardi (2009), explained how faculty workloads were complex because it comprised multiple components of higher education mandate. He clarifies how typical faculty workloads included research activities, instructional components and community engagement. Other components of workload include; participation on institutional committees, leadership, representation on boards and other routines that require faculty participation. To better understand the variation in workload, many institutions find it helpful to set targets according to institutional strategic objectives and cascade them to departmental teaching benchmarks (Ellis, 2014). Hence to obviate disparities in faculty workload, Uganda Management Institute had to devise quality assurance strategies in order to streamline workload distribution.

CURRENT QUALITY ASSURANCE AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

There are various types of quality assurance strategies that have been devised by higher education institutions in Uganda. Whereas all the strategies seek to prevent, detect, and correct problems in the quality of services provided to stakeholders, quality improvement strategies attempt to
improve quality through continuous study and modification of the services being provided (Ellis, 2014). Although both assurance and improvement tend to have different quantitative techniques and philosophical perspectives, they are inextricably linked (Anders, 2015). Hence, in a bid to fulfill Strategic Objective One, of UMI’s Strategic Plan 2013/2018; 2018/2023): Enhancing the quality and relevance of education and training, a number of internal quality assurance and improvement strategies have been devised and implemented. The external quality assurance programs attempt to broadly define and maintain at least minimum standards for quality; while ‘internal quality assurance’ and improvement strategies are developed and utilized by individual institutions of their own accord as a way to improve the systems and processes that help them realize quality. Hence, in her effort to embrace and promote external quality assurance strategies, UMI initiated extra strategies to address her peculiarity as an MDI.

The teaching function

Teaching in any HEIs depends to a great extent on the quality of teaching staff, although the quality of students also matters. The quality of teachers therefore, becomes critical because students often thrive on the broad knowledge and skills of their teachers, content expertise and competencies, enthusiasm and motivation. Teaching is critical because universities exist to perform the most cardinal role of teaching (Nyathi et al., 2011). Although research is very significant especially in three areas of support to the teaching function, enhance institutional visibility, and global benchmark for career growth (Dicker et al., 2018), it becomes secondary. In her struggle to strengthen the quality of teaching, Uganda Management Institute instituted numerous quality assurance strategies:

Teaching and learning

As countries continue to experience a shift in demographic challenges, Uganda Management Institute, is vigorously developing market-driven programs creating opportunities for everyone to participate for purposes of quality. Hence, in order to effectively manage courses and lead modules, content experts were preferred as was provided in the quality assurance frameworks (UMI QAD, 2016). With the advent of ‘performance-based pay systems’, the issue of expertise fell short in addressing ‘equality’ and therefore, the philosophy of ‘performance-based pay’ did not suffice, as it left many academics disgruntled, and majority got penalized for failure to meet their minimum “teaching-load”. Although equality is achieved through this arrangement, Bunoti (2012) recommends the issue of content expertise to be upheld because modern learners demand excellent content and instructional competencies from the faculty. Yet, meeting minimum workload requirement does not only affect academics financially, but also, renewal of tenure and upward mobility are heavily dependent on meeting the minimum workload requirement (Barifaijo et al., 2016). Consequently, lack of content expertise has affected not only syllabi coverage but the quality of delivery as well as assessment. Similarly, faculty was involved in writing academic references for their former students for various reasons, including; career advancement, funding, employment opportunities etc. Quality of writing is critical in this activity because reaching a balance between an accurate portrayal of a candidate's academic, extra-curricular and personal profile and a convincing picture of a student often pause real challenges, given that some students lacked sufficient qualities that matched the performance to identify skills, qualities, or experiences the person possesses that make them a good fit for the purpose.

Although the teaching function is often perceived as distinct from research, Jadama (2014) maintains that the two complement each other because without research, teaching cannot happen. He argues that although the function of teaching may seem guileless, it is difficult to define, and comprises multiple activities that are not easily measured. Scholars (e.g Aarts and Greijn, 2010; Basheka, et al., 2013), have attempted to define ‘teaching’ using different parameters. This book chapter adopts Jadama’s (2014) definition of teaching as a social process that involves a range of activities with interaction between the teacher and the learner, with the intention of improving students’ achievement. He asserts that teaching is a key aspect in students’ development and, constitutes a critical measure of workload in HEIs. It is a known fact that teaching at higher levels is very challenging because it does not only require interaction to improve students’ achievement, it also demands application of strategies that target to empower students to become critical and analytical thinkers in order to handle academic challenges as well as the world of work (Kangas et al., 2017). In her wisdom to enhance quality, UMI introduced mandatory utilization of guest speakers, whether a senior colleague, professionals in the industries or practitioners. In addition, there has been an effort to become more transparent in drawing up of teaching time tables, co-teaching and moderation of examinations. These practices have gone a long way in promoting and strengthening quality, as well as linking theories to practice.

Curriculum development and review

One of the most critical aspects that promote quality of teaching is the joint program development and review because, the competency of piecing together topics, that fit well into specific content, to constitute a module (course unit) and finally translate into an entire program is hard
work. Although curriculum development constitutes one of the jobs described for academics in their offer letters, many do not engage or attempt to initiate ideas for new programs. In fact, although curriculum development is often initiated singly by a faculty member, the entire process should involve everyone in the institution. This practice has been adopted by Uganda Management Institute to ensure that everyone gets acquainted with new ideas in order to effectively participate in teaching. Conversely, Wiles (2009) affirms how curriculum development was a titanic task to be left to an individual, because the task itself was more complex than even teaching which the evaluators often struggled with. Curriculum development is a complex process (King, 2019), which should be recognized because it is such an engaging activity and demands analytical and logical thinking. Nonetheless, curriculum development even with its demanding and engaging nature, it was such an enriching and fulfilling experience for those who were passionate about it, especially with every stage that gave birth to new challenges and disagreements (USAID, 2013).

**External examinations**

Quality of faculty is key in the choice of an institution (Egesah et al., 2014). Initially the role of external examination in HE focused on partnerships and networking today, it has stretched to quality assurance, including peer assessment for staff where the aspect of quality assurance features more prominently (Shahid & Wahab, 2015). As the higher education landscape continues to change, the quality of teaching becomes more contentious, with new demands such as internationalization of education, technology, diversity of the body of the learners, new products on the market and value for money the need for enhanced quality has become even more significant requiring superior competencies of faculty (Egesah et al., 2014; Nyathi et al., 2011). External examination is one of the quality mechanism strategy that is globally recognized, and it is recognized as critical while evaluating staff performance as a faculty component that comprises workload. Uganda Management Institute thrives on sister institutions for quality especially in areas of external examination, peer reviews and assessment for various reasons. In fact, institutions consider external examination as one of the most objective and irrefutable quality assurance mechanisms (Barifajo and Karyeija, 2015), because external examiners were appointed on the basis of their expertise and experience. McCulloch et al. (2016) found that because external examiners offered independent assessment. Hence, like peer reviewing of research grant applications or journal articles, external examination too, relies on the teaching expertise as well as research excellence. External examiners play the role of a ‘critical friend’ – by providing support and feedback in an honest and candid manner, even when it may be difficult and uncomfortable (Shahid & Wahab, 2015). Hence, as a quality assurance activity, those who perform it have been recognized and encouraged to continuously learn from best practices of other institutions where they provide such services.

**Students’ evaluations**

Students’ evaluations have long been used to evaluate the teaching performance with the purpose of determining faculty teaching effectiveness, and have yielded useful benefits for institutions (Bunoti, 2012). Nonetheless, although commonly used as a quality mechanism in higher education institutions, student’s decisions depended on numerous factors (Kozub, 2008). In fact, students’ evaluation decisions depend on the day of the week, particular staff, previous experience, performances in previous assessments, complexity of the content, the environment, moods of students and many others. Although student evaluations have long been used to evaluate the teaching performance to determine effectiveness, students did not understand the actual purpose of the exercise, and perhaps that’s the reason students have fortuitously abused the system, which has left student’s evaluations quizzical (Mooney, 2013). Students’ emotions in the evaluations, timing of the evaluation, knowledge of content, motivation of students, behavior of the faculty in class, faculty’s ability to get students involved in their learning etc. all affected students’ decisions. In fact, Basheka et al. (2013), for example found students’ evaluation significant on two accounts; a) in helping faculty improve delivery techniques, b) to determine personnel decisions. To minimize the trauma this exercise caused to staff, UMI had to revisit the tool not only to curb subjectivity and prejudice, but also the comprehensiveness of the program, teaching and learning processes as well as coverage. For UMI, the revised tool targets three accounts; (1) suitability of program content (2) coverage and delivery techniques and (3) overall effectiveness of the learning environment as well as facilities. These areas have yielded significant improvement especially in strengthening faculty competencies.

**Staff development and continuous learning**

The concept of the learning organization is related to current and emerging practice in staff development, particularly in the Enterprise in Higher Education initiative. We examine the link between organizational development and individual development and argue that the current climate of rapid change makes a strategic and coherent approach particularly necessary. Key issues include the renegotiation of relationships between managers and professionals, the role of corporate strategy and the development of organizational cultures which are tolerant,
but purposive. We conclude by describing the characteristics of staff development processes which have the capacity to enhance organizational learning, his study explored the contribution of staff development to quality education in Uganda. The study was triggered by the persistent public criticism of the quality of education especially in private Universities in Uganda. The positivist research paradigm and a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design were used to conduct the study. Higher education environments across the globe are frequently described as turbulent and dynamic (Dicker et al., 2018). Global and national forces are driving change within higher education institutions across countries. These changes heightened demand for expansion of higher education services leading to the emergence of private universities to meet the growing demand. The increase in the number of private universities has led to commercialization of higher education and the introduction of market-oriented courses and programs and this has created a challenge of maintaining the quality of education (Gordon, 2019). Several strategies are therefore needed to help these institutions improve and maintain quality by employing qualified teaching staff and devising staff development initiatives that increase teaching staff access to opportunities for knowledge improvement and skills development.

Tracer studies

Graduate tracer studies are important as a way of understanding the relevance and quality of programs offered by the universities as well as the labor market. Demand for empirical evidence regarding the professional relevance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) study programs using graduate tracer studies. The Tracer Study The ILO Thesaurus (2005), defines a tracer study as an impact assessment tool where the impact on target groups is traced back to specific elements of a project or program so that effective and ineffective project components may be identified. In educational research the tracer study is sometimes referred to as a graduate or alumni survey since its target group is former students. Graduate surveys are popular for analysis of the relationship between higher education and work and provide quantitative-structural data on employment and career, the character of work and related competencies, and information on the professional orientation and experiences of their graduates (Schroeder, 2015). Although the usual end of the course evaluation can ask for the student to assess whether they have gained the knowledge and skills necessary for fulfilling their personal objectives, there is really little proof of this until the student has completed the entire course of study and has entered the workforce. By surveying a cohort of graduates from: a specific institution; profession; discipline; graduation date; level of education; or a combination of these for comparative analysis, Schroeder(2015), presents examples of issues which can be addressed in tracer studies. Biographical data on “Where are our graduates now? may supply information on income, job title, nature of employment, and years of employment. He also believes that surveys should also include information about the kind of work task the relationship between study and work, and professional values and job satisfaction”. The information gained from survey items can be used by the graduate’s alma mater and indeed other education stakeholders for curriculum development and reform.

The research function

Today, more than ever before, there is more pressure than ever before for faculty to conduct research and publish in order to become visible, relevant and attain promotion. This drive therefore makes academic research very fundamental for institutional visibility, profiling and opening doors for collaboration and funding (Barifaijo et al., 2018). Consequently, the role of research in an academic institution has been recognized for sustainability and development, as well as its potential to innovate education systems. Hence, the quality of research work directly translates to the quality of teaching and learning. In fact, the quest for knowledge is the basic principle behind research and it is glorified for its power to benefit not only students and staff in those institutions, but also the larger society (King, 2019). Therefore, the promotion of research has the potential to help the nation evolve as a knowledge reservoir in the international arena and improve the quality of staff and students. Cognizant of its importance, Uganda Management Institute has strengthened the quality of research amidst numerous constraints and challenges. Among them are; the establishment of a research centre, a research fund, annual research workshops, co-supervision of research students, introduction of a journal, among others. Further, UMI has introduced research clusters and encouraged academics through recognizing their research activities, equipped libraries, and improved research infrastructure, such as the introduction of an incubation centre. However, this book chapter adopts the definition by King (2019), thus; research has been as a complex, stable, multi-formation in the psyche of the individual or groups, which is acquired through a systematic crafted process, which facilitates clear understanding of phenomena, and unravels the unknown through scientific instruments.

Similarly, research is a significant indicator and has high impact publication and scholarly productivity which has become important criteria not only for determining performance-related pay of academic staff but also a key determinant for promotions of faculty in HEIs (Barifaijo, 2016). Research is one of the key higher education mandate that constitute measures of workload at UMI and, a core mandate in higher education, which is responsible for
institutional visibility image building and profiling (King, 2019). Research competence as an integral part of learning was found to transform the knowledge, capabilities, intellectual skills and socio-economic values (Azad and Seyyed, 2007). Research increases faculty competencies in all faculty roles of teaching, supervision, and even community work and indeed, research competence increases the efficiency and confidence of academic staff to become better teachers, focused and more knowledgeable (Taylor, 2017). Research competence increases growth, creates opportunities for ground breaking innovations (Garner, 2008). Hence, research mastery of faculty plays a significant role in enhancing faculty pedagogical competencies and intellectuality (Bell, 2016). Research competence is associated with the capacity and willingness to find the meaning solution of the novel problems through intellectual skills and knowledge (Garner, 2008). Research competence has become the most important factor not only in promoting faculty pedagogical competencies, but also in winning consultancies for the institution, attracting partnerships and donors, recruiting quality students and staff. Although UMI is a development institute, her research performance in research is ranked among the best HEIs in East Africa (Jowi, 2016). The following are some of the competence-related strategies instituted by the research centre.

**Establishment of a research centre**

Uganda Management Institute, established a fully-fledged research centre as a strategy to promote research and innovation both for staff and students. This forum has opened opportunities of research endeavors for both teaching and non-teaching staff, heightened peer reviews and promoted co-authorship. Through the research centre, research clusters were introduced that have enabled staff pool ideas, conduct research and disseminate findings to staff at workshops and outside audiences. Research clusters for two things (a) academicians learn from each other and, (2) novice researchers are mentored by their senior colleagues in the process. The research centre annually organizes research workshops where staff dialogue on a number of mysteries and contradictions with a purpose of arriving at consensus of many controversies and conflicts. Research workshops and seminars have useful in the promotion of evidence-based teaching, strengthened the quality of research and enhanced research supervision. These research workshops also have provided peer assessment to the researchers, not only on the quality of the reports, but other methodological, conceptual as well as theoretical aspects (The Research Centre Report, 2017). Through periodic dialogues that are organized between academicians and practitioners, policy briefs have been developed and the quality of debates among staff has improved. Further, academic staff have gained more competencies as a result of productive research as well as the quality of supervision (Barifaijo and Nkata, 2018). Consequently, an international journal has been established to handle faculty’s research output. The online journal of UMI has made it possible for staff and institutional visibility.

**Graduate co-supervision**

The escalation of universities and increased demand for higher education have led graduate programs being yearned for than ever before, requiring higher education institutions to come up with workable policies for supervision (Taylor, 2017). Notably, supervision of graduate students is a complex, multi-layered and often times challenging task, which requires high caliber pool of trained academics and professionals (Taylor, 2017). The term co-supervision, as the word suggests, involves two or more people being involved in supervising a higher degree student through the process of their research degree (King, 2019). Taylor (2017) defines co-supervision as two academics sharing the entire responsibility of guiding a graduate student from the time the candidate develops a concept, through proposal generation to thesis writing. Hence, as a way to achieve quality, relevance and graduate completion Uganda Management Institute adopted co-supervision as the best strategy to achieve quality and students’ timely completion. Whereas the provision for graduate supervision does not allow non-PhD holders to supervise, this decision too targeted to address performance-based pay gaps, thereby threatening the quality of supervision. Nonetheless, through the research workshops such scares have been addressed. However, co-supervision has been challenged for pausing conflicts as a result of supervisors’ divergent views, varying research values and perceptions, orientation and trainings received and also their varying disciplines, which often cause derailed students’ completion (Manathunga, 2012). In her wisdom and in recognition that co-supervision was complex, Uganda Management Institute devised further strategies such as; identification of disciplines/specialization, rank, levels of expertise, experience and reputation to pair supervisors. The strategy resolved some of the challenges among supervisors, such as, supervisor attitudes, availability and competency through the research workshops. Nevertheless, even with such challenges, co-supervision brings complementary expertise, continuity if one supervisor is absent or leaves, demonstrating to the student that different positions can be taken, which can model the development of independence and autonomy and mutual support for the supervisors, in the face of difficulties (Taylor, 2017).

The multilateral confusion ‘artificial hierarchy’ of terms that have posed irreversible confusion in the supervision process has however continued to threaten students’
motivation but also their retention (Manathunga, 2014). For example, terms such as; ‘primary, principal, expert, senior and first supervisor’ tend to diminish harmony, unity and cooperation, and has often times caused disputes, yet sometimes have been found to be just cosmetic titles. However, despite such challenges, performance-based pay systems seem to sustain even distribution of supervision load (Kiley, 2011). This is because supervision is a core responsibility of academics and a measure of academic output, where equity and equality have to be upheld because the solution for this dilemma is being sought out. UMI is cognizant of this challenge and attempting at cost to protect her integrity, reputation and profiling lest they crumble. Another option would be ‘single supervision’ or ‘dyadic’ model to yield better results because of the supervisor-student closeness they develop, and opportunity to work collaboratively with an expert in a specific topic of interest without interruption throughout. This model often leads to a very productive interpersonal relationship, although, it can only be suitable for highly intelligent, self-directed and self-disciplined students who are potentially independent researchers (Egan et al., 2009). Yet, co-supervisors worked along a spectrum of hierarchical structures, from distinctly pyramidal arrangements where the ‘principal’ or ‘primary’ or ‘first’ supervisor is the senior researcher often with the final say on any decisions about the research project (Wadesango and Machingambi, 2011), which demanded a lot of restraining and respect for one another, otherwise, even with exemplary expertise, effective, co-supervision, cannot work. Hence, co-supervision was much more demanding than egalitarian relationships which can be daunting to the process of supervision especially with the misinterpretation of the roles of first and second supervisors, which terms Hammond, et al (2010) thought were just playing a ‘dominating role’. Although the fundamental tenet of quality assurance frameworks provided by the NCHE is to produce quality graduates at higher levels through skilled and experienced research supervision, the ‘minimum workload’ under performance based pay systems dictates equality of work. Even with this perceived challenge UMI has found benefits of enabling every academic participate in the supervision activity. They are reduced work overload, equal opportunities and benefits that come with research supervision, and competency development, mentorship, as well as succession planning.

Research and publication as a condition for contract renewal

As Uganda Management pursues her 2nd strategic objective thus; to generate and disseminate cutting edge knowledge on public administration, management and leadership research and publication was placed high among the top priorities as a core mandate of higher education. Hence, the adage ‘publish or perish’ applies is being embraced through promotion of faculty. Previously though there was laxity to publish because there was no motivation to punish. Hence, on realization that despite her numerous efforts to develop research competencies among faculty at UMI, staff remained adamant about publishing, while others continued as “free-riders” even as they formed part of the ‘research clusters’, the provision in the revised Human Resource Manual of 2016, for one to publish at least one journal article before their employment contract can be renewed was implemented, because graduate supervision and teaching both demand superior research skills in order to enhance graduate competencies and quality. Review of students’ research proposals, participating in proposal defense and moderation of research dissertation were all strategies to improve research competencies. Other strategies included the introduction of research committees at school and departmental levels who represent their units at higher levels. This committee is responsible for appointment of supervisors, internal and external examiners, organizing viva voce, among others activities. Therefore, this strategy too targets to contribute to the quality of research and publication.

DISCUSSION

In her endeavor to strengthen quality, and in line with the NCHE’s quality frameworks, Uganda Management Institute, has a well-established department of quality assurance, under the leadership of the Head of Quality Assurance and guided by quality assurance policy. The department is charged with formulating quality related policies and guidelines, provide guidance on numerous quality related institutional frameworks, conduct institutional self-assessment undertakings and tracer studies as well as benchmarking endeavors. Remarkably, whereas the Uganda’s National Council for Higher Education (UNCHE) carries out external evaluation, Institutional Quality Assurance team is mandated to ensure the internal quality activities and services, but in collaboration with the NCHE. Quality activities executed include; institutional self-assessment schemes, which have greatly contributed to the enhancement of quality of internal activities, quality of teaching and learning as well as the quality of other services provided by UMI. Similarly, the department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPM&E) which is charged with institutional-wide performance outputs has stepped up group and individual performance through regular monitoring of performance outputs by both teaching and non-teaching units, which is mandatory. Wadesango and Machingambi (2011), define monitoring as the ongoing, systematic collection of information to assess progress towards the achievement of objectives, outcomes and impacts, and it defines evaluation as the systematic and
objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, program or policy, its design, implementation and results, with the aim to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Hence, as the continuous and systematic collection of data to facilitate staff decisions, M and E strengthens quality (Gordon, 2019). Hence, M and E aims at tracking the progress of activities and performance review which has further contributed to development and sustainability of quality at Uganda Management Institute. Consequently, since the teaching-learning process is equally as important as input variables in education, having such monitoring has given insightful information on explaining the quality of teaching-learning that is being provided as well as ascertaining the achievement of institutional objectives.

In fact, an effective monitoring and evaluation becomes even more strategic in determining the quality of instructors, quality of training programs, quality of facilities, as well as the quality of graduates (Richard, 2010). The outcome of effective internal monitoring and evaluation has actually resulted in skill maintenance, skill improvement and expansion, professional development, reduced stress and enhanced accountability considering that quality teaching is an influential factor on learning outcomes (King, 2019). He argues that the ability of institutions to critically evaluate their own performance, as well as that of their employees, is vital to the process of continuous quality improvement. Therefore, it is evident that M and E in higher learning institutions is necessary for adequate management of staff, students, and other stakeholders to continuously improve. Consequently, with the performance output demands together with the performance-based pay systems, the concept of faculty workload became more prominent, yet controversial. The issue of workload computation has become more sophisticated than ever before, because of performance-based pay systems making personnel decisions more complicated than ever before. Higher Education Institutions have long examined faculty workloads but with challenges in quantifying faculty work which made decision making more complex (Barifaijo et al. 2016). Yet, the significance of workload policy in HEIs, serves two major purposes (a) to ensure that work is equally distributed among faculty and (b) to make employees more accountable (UMI Workload Policy, 2016). The third and institutional significance is to enable UMI determine compensation for those who have exceeded their minimum teaching load and also guide decisions for contract renewals. Considering that UMI operates on “Contract Employment System”, workload becomes a key performance indicator, and goes beyond teaching to include graduate supervision, research, training/teaching and community work (HR Manual, 2016; Vardi, 2009). At institutional level, allocation of teaching load depends on a number of factors; rank, position, roles and responsibilities in the Institute. Special activities such as committee membership attract workload waiver given that staff spend so much time on committee work and other meetings (Barifaijo et al., 2016). Although the existing workload guidelines had been reviewed twice in less than five (5) years, some of the provisions were unbearable, unfair and incomprehensive rendering the policy unusable (Barifaijo, et al 2016). According to the policy, teaching load attracted immediate financial benefit, which research e.g. graduate supervision and publication, attracted long term benefits such as promotions. Therefore, the provision for content experts to lead modules and facilitate on graduate programs, and also only PhD holders to supervise graduate students would not only create rifts, disharmony, intrigue and pay disparities, but would deny others career growth as well as causing work overload for the qualifying staff. Consequently, UMI loosened the NCHE provision and instead distributed workload to staff previously considered unqualified or even lacked pedagogical competencies to facilitate or even supervise graduate students.

Pedagogical competency was defined by Svinicki and McKeachie (2011), as educational and teaching qualifications, whose primary consideration is teaching, while USAID (2013) defines pedagogical competency, as the ability of lecturers to manage learning such as; plan and preparation of the teaching, involving the learners in the learning process, administer assessments and evaluate the learning. Campbell and O'Meara (2013), on the other hand, defines pedagogical competency as one’s ability to interest and increase students’ curiosity about numerous aspects of the subject matter. They provide critical aspects of pedagogical competencies to include; scope, breadth and depth of the content, as well as the ability to plan, initiate, lead and develop education and teaching materials, which USAID (2015) sums up as; knowing well the students' characteristics, mastering the learning theories and principles, ability to develop, effective communicating with the learners and objectively scoring and evaluating students. This book chapter is in congruent with all the above definitions and adds the ‘theoretical’ competency to methodological and expertise identified by previous scholars. To resolve the ‘equality-quality trade-off resulting from bending the quality assurance provisions by NCHE, the quality assurance practices instituted at UMI have sufficed. For example, joint development of teaching timetable and co-facilitation, examination moderation and ‘conveyor-belt marking systems’, co-supervision (where those with PhD become the principal supervisors), mandatory utilization of guest speakers, students’ evaluations, moderation of research proposals and reports, regular research and pedagogical training workshops, daily duty officers, external examinations etc. To further sustain quality the practice of regular tracer studies was found to be extremely significant. For example, it is important to know the retrospective views of graduates based on their career experiences, courses they considered a wastage or an opportunity, components of the curricula that helped
them to execute their work task etc. The main objectives of the tracer study therefore, are to; investigate the transition process from higher education to shed light on the course of employment and work over a five year period after graduation; analyze the relationships between higher education and work in a broad perspective which includes the fulfillment of personal goals such as job satisfaction and objective measurement like job position, income, job security and the type of work and find out what factors are important for professional success of graduates (Wadesango and Machingambi, 2011). Although this is a conventional practice in higher education, most institutions have shunned it because of cost. Nonetheless, Uganda Management has continuously and aggressively upheld the practice for continued quality.

CONCLUSION

Given the peculiarity of Uganda Management Institute (UMI) as a management development institute (MDI), and whose academic programs are all at graduate levels, there were restrictions on teaching and graduation supervision such as; teacher-student, supervisor-supervise ratios, staff without PhDs not to supervise and facilitate on graduate programs etc. Consequently, for Masters Programs to be accredited, evidence of qualified staff (PhD holders) who served on permanent employment was and still is a requirement by NCHE. Consequently, with the introduction of Masters’ in 2008 followed by the PhD Program in 2012, it became inevitable for all facilitating agencies to attain PhDs, which requirement was systematically implemented in phases, starting with paying for those already registered and then identifying universities for the rest of staff. From 2013 to date, UMI has been able to train over 85% of her teaching and non-teaching staff in various universities within and outside Africa. In support of the above strategy, UMI had to embark on the drive for talent attraction, acquisition and development, of those already with PhDs from other institutions, identified their skill gaps and provided the requisite trainings. This strategy was used as a stop gap measure to enable accreditation of the Masters’ programs as UMI fully attains the required human resource capacity as demanded by the NCHE quality frameworks. This strategy was followed by implementing structures in terms of departmentalization in accordance to disciplines and fields of study. Hence the promotional procedures that were formulated for both tracks were to provide career growth direction, leading to promotions of 2019 that are hoped to yield staff engagement, commitment, motivation and the desired quality.

Consequently, quality at Uganda Management Institute was not negatively affected by performance-based pay systems given all the strategies including the continuous vigilance in her staffing function, continuous assessment, the 5 year contractual employment, monitoring and evaluation systems, yearly performance targets and appraisals, relevant individual and group training initiatives, research workshops among others. Hence, training and development have strengthened staff competencies that lead to self-efficacy and self-fulfillment (Strategic Plan, 2018); joint program development and reviews broaden staff quality perspectives, peer assessment and self-assessment, tracer studies and benchmarking endeavors have all become useful in ensuring quality (QA Report, 2015). Further, periodic reviews of her quality related policies, such as; strategic plan, examination guidelines and curriculum development and review guidelines and international and institutional partnerships that have responded to Goal No.17 of the Sustainable Development Goals - 2030. Unlike other HEIs, UMI maximizes the utilization of the institute’s internal audit not only in regulating financial-related matters, but also matters of quality in the areas teaching, learning and assessment as provided by UMI Strategic Plan, 2018. More recently, UMI acquired an International Standardization for Organization (ISO) Certificate not only for its current quality-related endeavors, but also as a sustainability strategy for quality assurance, making UMI the first HE Institution in Uganda to acquire an ISO certification. Hence, aspects of quality assurance and quality improvement have been upheld and sustained due to discussed existing strategies.

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