

“Building a Plane while flying it”;the Crisis of Professoriate Academics in Ugandan Universities: 1980-2016

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Abstract: This study examines the crisis of professoriate academics amidst the ever increasing number of universities in Uganda. In so doing it lays bare the fallacy of “building a plane while flying it”, an idea that has been behind the establishment of many of the universities in Uganda. Using a qualitative method through a descriptive approach, this paper establishes that despite the growing number of universities in Uganda, the country faces a huge challenge in terms of qualified and skilled academic staff especially at the professoriate level in many of the universities, which has in turn affected such universities greatly. The question here is why this situation? This paper answers this by examining the factors that have hindered the growth of academics to professoriate level in the universities in Uganda. The paper concludes with an argument that, unless government and stakeholders come up a pro-active action to put up structures and policies that enhance the ability of universities to train and retain staff at the professorial level, the situation can only get worse and these universities will only be by name but and not by functions.

Key Words: Professoriate, Academics, Universities, Academic and Staff

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I. INTRODUCTION

Universities the world over are the highest institutions of higher education. They are authorised to award degrees, diplomas and certificates, they conduct research so as to create new knowledge and skills through publication and offer community service. To effectively deliver on these functions, qualified and competent academics are a must (Abdulsalam and Mawoli, 2012). The academic staff constitutes a major component of a community of teachers and scholars that make or break a university. Thus a good university can be judged by its ability to plan, recruit and build brilliant academic staff who can perform in all aspects. In Africa, the earliest university of Al-Karaouine was established in Fes, Morocco in 859 A.D. and is considered as the oldest university in the world (Mushemeza, 2016). This university was later followed by Al-Al-Azhar University in Egypt in 969/970 A.D. and then the University of Timbukutu, 1327 A.D. in Mali (Esposito, 2003). These universities were later joined by western-style institutions affiliated to other universities in the mother countries that were established in different parts of Africa during the colonial period. It was during this time that the Uganda Technical College, later renamed Makerere College was established in Uganda in 1922. In 1949, Makerere College was elevated to the level of the University College of East Africa attached to the University of London (Mushemeza, 2016). At this time, the academic staff was mostly composed of doctoral degree holders who were mainly foreign professors. The decades that immediately followed independence of Uganda were characterised by limited growth in higher education. This meant that from 1894, when Uganda became a British Protectorate until 1988, only Makerere University existed in the country (Ochwa-Echel, 2016). The situation was even worsened by policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) which favoured investment in primary education and other sectors of the economy. But the last decades of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century were characterised by substantial growth in the establishment of universities in Uganda. Having realised that the British colonial administration had intentionally kept higher education small and open to very small percentage of the population, the government of Uganda followed the analogy of “building a plane while flying it” and expanded higher education particularly public universities outside of the capital Kampala as well supporting a rapid expansion of private religious founded universities (Cutright, 2010). This process has involved starting universities at whatever state and then developing them as they operate. Consequently, the country has more than 42 universities, of which nine of them are public while others are privately run by religious organisations or individuals (Musisi, 2017).

Despite the increasing numbers of universities in Uganda, most of them lack the corresponding number of qualified human resource especially at professoriate level to fulfil the academic requirements. While various efforts have been made to address this problem, there seems to be little progress, due to a variety of reasons, particularly the inadequate investment in higher education and other training programmes. To complicate the

issue, even the narrow skilled base that exists in the universities is being eroded at a very fast rate by the out flow of academics to other professions, retirement and deaths. An evaluation of the situation in the universities over the last thirty five years suggests that the sector of higher education is beleaguered by myriad of problems that affect its ability to function as hub of producing graduates with relevant knowledge and skills. Clearly unless something is done to enhance the ability of the universities to train and retain the staff at the professoriate level, the situation can only get worse. It is on this basis that using documentary evidence from published work, university data bases available and interview of key respondents, this paper analyses Ugandan universities to inform the debate that can intern build formidable universities for academic growth and development. This study is therefore motivated by the fact that Ugandan universities are lagging behind in terms of professoriate growth is concerned, and with the absence of such capabilities the university cannot expect to compete at an same level with its counterparts not only in the region but also from other developing countries. A developed capacity base (made up of many professors) is not only an asset that enables countries to promote forward looking ideas, initiate, guide action and build on successes; it also makes the universities attractive destinations for investment and intellectual collaboration, both of which if managed appropriately lead to positive returns in such universities and country at large. This disputes Samras' and others view that we can “fly the plane as we build it”, as that can only be an avenue for disaster which is already here with us.

Therefore, this paper presents an analysis and shows why academic staff at a rank of professor has continued to remain few in many universities in Uganda. The study also clearly shows that this problem cannot be solved by recruiting staff but by the ability to train and retain the staff on ground when they are still productive. At the same time, there is a tendency to assume that problems with recruitment and retention can be solved only through salary-based interventions; this paper tries to disprove that notion. This is due to the fact that non-salary based solutions can make in many cases, make up for concerns that are up with measures that can be implemented within the tight economic context of universities. This paper identifies the obstacles for staff to progress to the level of a professor and show the impact of this to the general university education in Uganda.

Who is a Professor?

The term professor comes from a Latin word “profiteri” which means to declare or acknowledge openly. Thus, a professor is usually a person who professes or declares knowledge and is an expert in some kind of area either in arts or sciences (Online Etymology Dictionary). In English speaking nations professor is a title reserved for senior academics holding a department at a university or higher institution of learning. In the United States and Canada, the title professor is granted to senior academics in colleges and universities. However in Spain, Portugal, France and Rumania the term professor is used for anyone who teaches at a school, institution or university. For the case of Uganda, professor is the highest rank given to academic staff especially at the level of a university. Beyond holding academic papers and being a title at university cadre ship, a university may also award famous athletes, artists, businessmen and leaders the title of professor. However, this category of professors usually does not undertake academic work for the degree awarding institutions. Professors as experts, generally perform a number of tasks: they manage teaching and scholarship mainly research and publications, mentoring young aspiring academics especially graduate students and junior staff in their departments. Professors also conduct and carry out advanced research projects in their areas of specialisation. In addition, professors are also required to provide pro bono community services such as consultations, conduct managerial or administrative functions especially at higher levels in the university and other institutions of learning. The journey to professorship normally begins with one applying for a teaching position in a university on full time basis usually beginning from an Assistant Lecturer for the case of most university in Uganda, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, Professor to Professor Emeritus or retired professor or Emerita for a female. The procedure to arrive at all these titles follows a stipulated tenure in teaching, research and publication in which one must be energetic and energising to attain (Mukiibi, interview, 25th January 2015).

World over, it is agreed that universities' as we have already seen, have core functions that centre around four areas: teaching, research, publishing and outreach services (Mushemeza, 2016). Thus universities have been mainly established to promote a high and practically skilled manpower for service to society, to initiate, encourage and promote specific and specialised research in scientific, technical and technological fields in accordance with the needs of Uganda. These can only be possible when such universities have qualified staff especially at the level of professors, competent and committed academic staff and students who can increasingly play a role in fostering economic and social development (Varghese, 2006). While the universities in Uganda have student enrolment on their side, they still have a long way to go as in recruiting, training and retaining academic staff especially at the level of Professor.

Makerere University which the oldest and largest university in Uganda by the end of 2013 had 84 professors, 133 associate professors, 181 senior lecturers and 399 lecturers (Makerere University Annual

Report, 2013), Kyambogo University which is the second largest university as at 31st July 2016 had one professor, 20 associate professors, 49 senior lecturers and 177 lecturers (Human Resource Department KyU, 2017). Most of the other universities especially private ones such as; Uganda Christian University, Ndejje, Bugema, Nkumba and Islamic University in Uganda have less than 30 senior lecturers on their entire teaching staff (Muriisa, 2015). In general, most universities have not filled 50% of the academic staff establishments. For instance, as at June 2019; Busitema University is at 25%, Muni University is at 30%, while Kabale University is at 20% (Levic, 2019). The situation is even worse in the newly established public and private universities. Such universities have greatly depended on other public universities especially Makerere University for both administrative and teaching staff, but all the same have been operating hence, fulfilling the philosophy of “building a plane while flying it”. In comparison, the number of staff in Sudanese High Educational Institutions by academic rank in 2003 were; 590 professors, 960 associate professors, 1970 assistant professors, 3538 lecturers and 2334 teaching assistants. (MHER, 2003 cited by Mushemeza, (2016). The number is even higher in the higher education of South Africa. This clearly shows that universities in Uganda face a huge challenge in terms of filling their teaching staff establishment and as a result have less than 50 per cent of the academic staff they need (Wesonga, 2017). It is therefore clear that all universities in Uganda lack senior academic staff; staff at the rank of professor, associate professor and senior lecturer in most of their academic units (Baryamureba, 2013). Consequently, despite the recent expansion of higher education in terms of new universities, there is much cause for concern when it comes to the level of the professoriate in these institutions. The quality of higher education is determined not only by the number of academics but even more importantly by their qualifications and experience in the academy. In addition to the majority of academic staff being below senior lecturer, they are also engaged more in teaching than any other professional activities such as research and publication. It is also noted that the majority of the staff at the level of Senior Lecturer are approaching retirement age or have already retired (Nambi and Werner, 2013). In addition, many of the academics opt out before they embark on proper academic journey to professoriate.

Why a Crisis of Professoriate Academics in many Ugandan Universities

As already indicated, university education in Uganda has been expanding at a very fast rate. However, many of these universities lack the required number of staff especially at senior levels to carry the academic functions to the increasing numbers of students. The vacancy rates for academic staff in some universities frequently run between 50 and 85 percent (University World News, 2008). This is due to a number of factors which include;

Most of the Universities in Uganda are faced with the problem of recruiting and retaining academic staff. Despite the fact that the problem of recruiting academic staff remains a challenge across all the universities in Africa, the situation in both public and private universities in Uganda appears to be more serious. Most of the universities have clear established positions in their establishments for academic staff, but none of them has filled all its established posts. According to Ministry of Education and Sports, Makerere University had 140 unfilled slots of the established positions for academic staff, Kyambogo University had 294 vacant posts most of which are academic positions, Mbarara University of Science and Technology had only filled 21% of its staff slots, the situation was worse in private and the newly established universities where the number of lecturers on full time were less than 45 (Wesonga, 2017). In 2012, a report from the Auditor General’s office showed that there was need to close 3000 lecturers in the then four of the five public universities in Uganda (Businge and Karugaba, 2012). One of the factors that explain this scenario especially in public universities is the Government ban on recruitment of additional staff in public service. To make matter worse, even replacing those who have either left or died is delayed by appointment process which is unnecessarily cumbersome, tedious and time consuming. Therefore, applicants end up either taking appointments elsewhere or giving up before the process is completed. Consequently, the few staff on ground carry heavy teaching workloads and teach large classes, thus finding it hard to conduct meaningful research or effectively supervise student research projects (Owoeye and Oyebade 2010, p.15). The large classes keep the few available academic staff busy between semesters with large numbers of scripts running into another semester and sometimes into another due to short breaks and multiple activities (Byamugisha, Interviews, 17th January 2015). Therefore, the complexities in recruitment coupled with the increasing student-staff ratio, presents a denting challenge to the professoriate as a whole, but particularly so for those in the early stages of their career in the academe. The work load that accompanies responsibility for larger student numbers imposes significant career- stalling burden on the young scholars. These spend most of the time in their early stages of employment conducting tutorials, marking scripts and other related duties as less time is directed toward professional growth. Another challenge to the recruitment of academics in most universities in Uganda is the unfortunate case of the institutions’ failure to recruit Teaching Assistants (TAs). TAs are traditionally the lowest standing cadre of academic staff, who as apprentices, get the tools of the trade on the job from working closely and under-studying more senior members of staff (Ndibalema, 2004, p.80). Most of the university have

abandoned the tradition of recruiting TAs. The new approach that has been adopted by these universities is to advertise for the self-made Lecturers and Professors out there to fill the various vacant posts. The obvious result has been that, although many staffs especially at the rank of Lecturer have been recruited, they are mainly pushed into teaching by zeal to seek for opportunity with rapid advancement and economic gain and not the need to grow academically to attain the title of professor. The underlying factor has been that, in past, universities in most countries were dependent on public funding for their growth and expansion of the academic level. This was later abandoned in the 1980s when the public sector reduced its contribution to the funding of universities. For example, out of US \$ 710 million that was earmarked for Uganda's Education sector investment plan 1999-2003, only 9% of total figure was for Higher education (New Vision, 1999). Therefore, as Ssekamwa rightly states; recruitment, development and motivation, facilitation and retention of an academic staff force that is sufficiently qualified to work is difficult because it necessitates colossal financial resources (Ssekamwa, 1999). In the universities in Uganda, the availability of such resources had become particularly meagre since the 1970s (Mamdani, 2007, Mayanja, 1996 and Muvawala, 2005). Thus, there has been limited capacity to attract academic staff let alone retain the existing one's many of whom have drained out university services (Barifajjo, et. al.).

The other factor that explains the low number of professoriate academics in many universities in Uganda is low salaries. Salaries are a very important ingredient in ensuring employee commitment to any profession and organisation. Thus, dissatisfaction with salaries has been key factor that has undermined the commitment of academics to career development in universities in Uganda. Despite the 2006 presidential initiative to enhance salaries of academic staff, the take home of a full professor is only about US dollar 2000 per month, which is still low even by African Standards (Damfwe and Altbach, 2003, p.7). The poor remuneration in addition to poor working conditions only leaves teaching staff humiliated and with few options other than moonlighting and involving themselves into various activities like scouting examination with other organisations such as Uganda National Examination Board, teaching on part-time basis in other department or other private universities, selling goods, operating kiosks to mention but just a few (Nakanyike, 2003). Dissatisfaction caused by poor pay makes it difficult for many potential staff especially in the fields of engineering, Technology, law and business to join academics (Ociti, 1999 and Head of Department Civil Engineering, Makerere University, 2016). For those already in the universities, instead of striving to grow academically, they start planning ways of leaving or expanding their frontiers in other professions. A respondent at Makerere University noted that;

What happens to people when they retire has not been a good experience to staff who may want to stay longer in university service. Many are making a decision to quit the teaching in good enough time and taking up positions that are better paying and are more likely to enable them ensure a more comfortable retirement, even if they do not get large pension (See Blair and Jordan, 1993: 55).

This has therefore created a “transitory workforce” among the academics in many universities in Uganda. For instance in Makerere University, in the period between 2013 and 2014, a total of 24 professors, 39 associate professors and 75 Senior Lecturers left the University, affecting mostly the College of Health Science (Visitation Report 2007). These are cadres or personnel who find it inevitable to occupy positions temporarily or on short contracts rather than developing a career that lasts or seeks to last a lifetime (Ndibalema, 2004:71). This is even made worse by the situation where staff decide to leave the country for “greener pastures” in other countries. According to a report by a committee of all vice chancellors in Kenya, the monthly salary and allowances of a full professor in Rwanda was at average of UDS 4900, compared to Kenya USD 2,200, 3,200 in Tanzania and 1,150 in Uganda (Natukunda, 2016). Since universities both at local and international levels compete to attract best professors, many of would be professors in Uganda have been forced to migrate to Rwanda and other countries with better remunerations. In addition, due to meagre earnings the few who are committed to career development cannot afford processes that enable them to get involved in academic growth such as training and research, authoring books and writing journal papers. Thus many of the staff in universities cannot be promoted to senior positions because they lack the necessary requirements on one hand, while the university due poor working conditions does not attract senior academic from other universities outside the country on the other. The academic staff spend most of their time struggling for their welfare through their associations and unions more than they concentrate on academic projects. For instance most strikes at Makerere University have been for agitations by staff for salary increments. Kalinaki had this to say when the university was closed in 2016:

The biggest indignity is that Makerere University was shut, not because of public letter by its professors criticising a particular government policy, or a dispute over time or academic freedom, but over money. It is sad when the country's intellectuals are reduced to having to sing for their supper. It is tragic there is no one to hear their cry or at least join the chorus... (Kalinaki, 2016).

One other challenge to academic growth in Ugandan universities has been the low level of staff development with the aim of putting in place a large number of candidates for senior appointments in the

academy. This has in turn led to low level academic staff with doctorate degree qualifications. The table below shows the different universities Uganda and their academic staff qualifications by the 2006.

Universities, Staff and their qualification in Uganda by the end of 2006

Name of the University	Qualifications		
	PhD	Masters	Bachelors
Makerere University	363	585	118
Mbarara University of Science and Technology	12	98	60
Kyambogo University	31	251	74
Gulu University	19	89	80
Uganda Martyrs University Nkozi	29	73	29
Uganda Christian University	10	81	30
Islamic University in Uganda	18	94	30
Kampala International University	88	266	86
Makerere University Business School	35	159	95
Aghakan University in Uganda	01	30	16
Bugema University	04	48	15
Nkumba University	35	159	95
Ndejje University	01	30	16
Busoga University	06	28	72
Kabale University	03	15	15
Kampala University	18	42	06
Kumi University	03	03	36
Mountain of the Moon University	05	33	15
Bishop Stuart	01	27	19

Source: Cited in Muriisa, 2015

The table above clearly show that most universities in Uganda especially the private ones, by 2006 had very few of their academic staff with PhD qualifications. For instance, by 2011, only 43% of the academic staff at Makerere University had PhDs (Musiige and Maassen, 2015). By 2012, with more than 35 Universities, Uganda had a less than 700 PhD holders and as we have already noted, more than 60% of these were staff at Makerere University (Baryamureeba, 2012). This is due to the fact that most of those universities still lack a well-planned system to follow in training Staff; staff training mainly depends on personal initiative which sometimes does not rhyme with university needs. In Addition, the graduate schools in these universities with the exception of Makarere University are still in the infancy where the overall graduate enrolment is still restricted in the specialities of humanities and social sciences. Even then, many of these departments are offering postgraduate programmes for which they do not have the appropriate calibre of staff or resources to meet the intellectual and empirical needs of the students to come out as complete academics (Mac Gregger, 2007). The universities are therefore facing a big problem of absence of graduate programmes in many departments. As a result the only option for many staff is to pursue graduate training in other universities or abroad. This makes postgraduate training very expensive and thus a difficult venture. Yet, the demand for staff with doctorate degrees (PhDs) has been increasing especially with the increasing number of universities in Uganda. This is due the fact that, the strength and rating of universities largely depends on the PhD graduates they are able to produce that is function of how many professors a university has employed as faculty (Muriisa, 2015). To make matter worse, most universities in Uganda do not have proper strategies retain the few staff who obtained PhDs so as they can advance their careers. There are no engagements to ensure that expectations of such staff are adequately taken care off (Tabaire and Okao, 2009). As a result, most of the staff has left the universities just a few years after completing their doctoral studies.

To further compound the above problem is the recurrent issue of insufficient funds to finance the staff development budget. Most universities can only manage to train a handful of staff and those on training programmes are always bogged down by insufficient logistical support from their universities, where even the little approved and allocated funds to the candidates are not disbursed on time, thereby forcing them to take long time to complete their programmes or some times to completely drop out. The candidates also delay to finish their training programmes due to poor facilitation that force them to continue either working with their departments or try elsewhere to make ends meet. Moreover, most universities have a poor staff development policy that has resulted to poor utilisation of the little funds budgeted for, the bureaucracy involved for one to be funded on the university staff development programme is very tedious and discouraging. At the same time, the

national statistics of postgraduate students show that majority are in fields that are not designed to provide them with skills for career advancement in the area of academics, but responding to market demands outside the universities. Due to poor remuneration, many staff also finds it of no need to go for further studies with the argument that it may not improve much of their general welfare. All these play a big role in creating few candidates to become professor in this university.

In addition, there is also a problem with the appraisal and promotion systems in most Universities in Uganda. The Report of the Visitation Committee to Uganda Public Universities 2007 emphasises one of the primary functions of the academics in universities as to create and produce knowledge through research and to disseminate knowledge through publication so as to consistently create knowledge that they deliver to their students (Owoeye p.6, also see NCHE, 2011:9). For that matter, this is one the criteria followed during the appointment and promotion of Academic staff especially at the senior levels. On the contrary there is negligible research and publication in most universities which in turn retards the academic staff to rise to the professoriate level. This is due to a number of factors: The huge teaching load encountered by academics leaves them with very limited time to devote to research and publication. Junior academic staff especially at the rank of Lecturers spend most of their time on teaching and grading students' scripts from one semester to another. There are limited chances for such academics to go for sabbatical as there are always no colleagues to replace them in teaching their courses due to thin staff on ground. There are also insufficient resources in terms of library holdings; most of these universities especially the newly established one have no library facilities to talk about. There is also limited internet access, poorly equipped and dilapidated laboratories etc. One member of Chemistry Department at Kyambogo University confirms this challenge in the following words; “it is difficult to conduct any meaningful research in our poor laboratories that are not only in sorry state but, lack any meaningful working equipment to run a successful experiment... using them is very stressful” (Anonymous). Such conditions discourage staff from carrying out research. The evidence presented in this paper earlier also show that there is a relatively paucity of doctoral degree holders in many departments of the majority universities. It is when one attains a PhD that he/she will be able to provide leadership in research, publication and dissemination of knowledge. Thus the limited number of faculty with PhD has also impacted negatively on the institutions' ability to run credible research projects. It has for instance most of these universities to acquire the necessary recognition needed to foster collaboration and partnership with other researchers in other universities and organisation that carry out research. In many faculties among the universities, most of the academic staff lack skills, expertise and experience to lead and supervise research projects that can enhance publication.

Related to the above, the limited number of senior academics has made it difficult for junior members of staff to be mentored into serious academic research. Building of a pool of appropriate mentors is constrained by the fact that the big number of academic staff are at the rank of lecturer and below. This challenge is even made worst when it comes to female academics. The other factor that has contributed to low research output is the limited funds put aside annually for non- award research in the university. The little funds available have been channelled to staff on graduate and post graduate studies. The consequences of underfunding are the limited and continuously declining value for research in universities. Available evidence, also show that the little funds budgeted for have not been managed properly to achieve the intended objectives. The bureaucracy involved for one to access the research funds has discouraged many academics especially the ones at junior ranks. The hierarchy of decision making turns the whole process of accessing research funds by intending researchers difficult as such decisions keep on changing for one level to another due to lack of clear institutional research grant policy. Limited research output is also due to lack of clearly articulated educational priorities, academic-conducive environment such as conferences, seminars and general lack of supportive leadership in various departments and research units to coordinate and monitor research activities in the universities. In addition, most universities in Uganda are not able to support their faculty to thrive in professional activities such as attending international conferences and workshops, research meetings and symposia, assistance in grant proposal writing to mention but a few due to limited of funds. For instance, the entire research budget at Makerere for 1999-2000 was only USD 80,000 (Musisi, 2003). In the financial year 2016/2017, Kyambogo University provided only USD 144,000 for both award and non-award research for its staff (Kyambogo University Approved Budget estimates for FY2016/17). As a result most universities have transformed into only teaching institutions due to limited funds for that endeavour.

The universities in Uganda have been marred by mal administration. There is lack of appropriate relationship between management and staff with each side claiming superiority which has resulted to intrigue at all levels (Tabaire and Okao, 2009). In most of these universities Human resource is the most mismanaged assets. Academic staff has always had problems with delayed promotions, lack of staff proper working conditions which escalate disagreement between management and staff. For instance, Makerere University has been dogged by wrangles, one after the other. If it is not salary, it is allowances or some form of benefit. (Worldpress.com) corruption and sloppy management styles were commonly blamed for the continued decay of

the once well-managed and highly regarded intellectual giant in the region and whole academic world (New Vision, 13th January 2013). At Kyambogo University, a study carried out by Jaruga, found out that corruption, irregularities, conflict of interest, failure to follow initial staff integration procedures of amalgamation from the three former institutions, inappropriate management functions, unfavourable management and leadership styles and conflicting public policies have been key in causing the persistent conflict in the university (Jaruga, 2013). A lot of time, resources and time has been wasted by the Government, University Council, Staff Association and other sections of the universities to deal with the crisis after crisis. Also due to the ambiguities in the law; section 31:35 of the Universities and other Tertiary Institution Act 2001, there is always conflict among top managers of public universities; the Academic registrar and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs), University Secretary and the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Finance and Administration) and University Secretary and the Vice Chancellor. Consequently, very little has been concentrated on growth and development of academic staff in the university. Similarly, the leadership in most universities have been preoccupied with managing internal conflicts with less focus on the welfare issues affecting staff, which has made many of them to lose hope in the future of the university. There is also a lot of insecurity among the staff that also affects their performance including in the area of professional development. Most the academic staff is not aware of the major goals of the university and their roles in fulfilling them. Thus many of the university plans on human resource planning remain on paper. The conflict and intrigue in the university also greatly undermine teamwork which is key in professional activities such as research and publication. The University also relies mostly on part-time staff to run courses in the departments who are paid on wage basis and do not find any reason to pursue further studies carry out research since such staff cannot supported financially by the university.

The Outcome of “Building a Plane while flying it”; Inadequate Professoriate to University Education in Uganda

As a result of the above scenario, more than three quarters of the university academic staff are not on the tenure track but are mainly lecturers serving on year to year contract on part-time basis. Many of them are hired without undergoing the vetting commonly used in appointing tenure-track professors. For instance, in 2010, fulltime academic staff in Universities in Uganda were at 48%, part-time 31% while 21% were not categorised (A Report by the NCHE, 2011). This kind of situation affects the intellectual tradition in these universities. Engagement in intellectual work at a university requires some kind of clear tenure and commitment to the institutions (Sselwanga, 2019). The ever growing demand for qualified staff in universities has resulted into “moonlighting” as professors roam from one university to another. As a result, teaching and research are compromised as such academics have no time for quality research, preparation, grading or interaction with students. This has even been made worse by fact that most universities emerging in Uganda are developmental Universities. These are universities whose mission are directed towards specific development goals. While it is important that universities should be put in place in order to contribute to socio-economic development in the country, this cannot be possible without seriously looking at the professoriate available (Sawyer, 2004). In this case, pushing for science universities without minding on the number of professors in such area, only encourages these universities poaching on each other for staff. Due to lack of clear tenure, universities recruit young academics, develop them over time to make them suitable for becoming professor, but due to scarcity in the country such staff are easily convinced to transfer to other universities which need them (Celestine Obua, the Vice Chancellor of Mbarara University, 2019).

To make matters worse, even among the few available staff in these universities, there is also a serious issue of such staff being unqualified. Due to the pressure of many universities, some of them have hired staff who do not qualify (Spaull, 2015). According to the NCHE, there are serious concerns about the authenticity of the academic qualifications of academic staff especially among the newly private universities. For instance, academic qualifications for a number of staff at Ndejje University; one the private universities in Uganda were queried by the NCHE in 2013. An investigation was launched and results indicated that four out of five of the universities which the staff claimed to have studied from are not recognised by NCHE (The Monitor, Monday July 29, 2013). Thus, the biggest problem that come with inadequate staff in Universities is that of quality and standard of education that is given to young people in Ugandan universities. Despite the fact that there were few people who accessed higher education during the colonial period, in the colonial and early independence years, the question of quality of universities was hardly an issue as the relationship between the African institutions and metropolitan institutions helped to set and maintain “international standards (Sawyer, 2004), pp.1-59). For the former British colonies the first post war universities were set up as colleges “in special relationship” with the universities of London. Staff appointments, syllabi and examinations were controlled from London (Mazri, 1978). As we have already noted, this dramatically changed in the 1970’s and through the 1980’s universities no longer play the principle role of contributing to society in terms of producing quality, knowledgeable graduates with habits of critical thought and problem-solving skills that in turn influence society. In other words universities no longer stand as institution which produce graduates who are of quality and have social relevancy

to their communities and countries at large. This confirms the view that, no education can be better than the quality of its teachers (Kajubi, 1998). Many of classes and practicals are handled by individuals at a level of Teaching and Assistant Lecturers due to scarcity of senior academics. Furthermore, due to scarcity of the professoriate in many of the Ugandan Universities, curricula or course outlines are hardly reviewed as periodically as stipulated or desirable (Hyuha, 2014). Hence, such universities have kept using outdated curricular, a factor that drastically impacts on the quality of graduates.

The most drastic effect of scarcity of professors in universities in Uganda has been the decline of scholarship. Whereas, much emphasis has been put on teaching as many hours and in as many universities as possible, very little has been done in the area of research and publication as already noted earlier. Due to unclear tenure-track and few numbers of senior staff in Ugandan universities, it is difficult for the few available to enjoy some perquisite of academic life such as sabbatical leave to enable them grow their academic career and independent thought. However, leaders among all sectors need to understand that academics are the pillar to economic and social development and that they deserve all it takes in order to improve on their current numbers and status in the faculty (Ramdass and Kruger, 2010). It was a common thing to talk about the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR), the Historical School of Ibadan, the Dar es Salaam School and the Ethnography at the Université Cheick Anta Diop de Dakar. These were not only centres of academic excellence, but places that shaped the ideologies of such universities and later on their respective countries. According to Sawyerr (2004) by all accounts, such centres provided research and learning environments that were conducive to the study of a variety of disciplines in the natural and social sciences and also served as bases for learned and socially enlightened debate of national and global issues. This is not the case today in many of the universities that have emerged in Uganda which consequently created a shaky or non-existent ideological strand of the country. Other than the name inscribed on the transcripts and sign post of such universities, there is nothing outstanding in terms of scholarship to talk about. It is such grounds that some scholars such as Hyuha (2014) has referred to some universities that have emerged recently as “glorified high schools”. They lack high calibre professors such as Walter Rodney of the Dar es Salaam School or Ali Mazrui at Makerere University during the 1970’s. Consequently, the universities no longer have push for debate than used to define these universities. To confirm this one of the academic staff at Makerere had this to say; “we used to have intellectual debates but today it is difficult to organise such debates because there are no crowd puller professors and this is impacting on the quality of the graduates we produce (Otago, quoting Josephine Ahikire, 2018).

Another area that has been severely affected by a limited number of the professoriate in all Universities in Uganda is mentoring of junior staff. Available research shows that mentoring is an important ingredient in the nurturing of junior scholars, in general, and the underrepresented groups, in particular for a successful academic career (Tetty, 2006, p.51). This should be a role of all the senior academic staff who unfortunately are rare in most universities as we have already noted above. According to Applebeum (2000), mentoring has been promoted as a means by which individuals can be guided by more experienced or senior colleagues to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and be supported to develop their potentials to the fullest. Therefore quality mentoring by faculty plays a crucial role in enhancing professional growth (Fedynich, and Bain, 2008.). It is through the process of mentoring that junior staff acquires key ingredients of professional/academic growth such as making paper presentations, exposure through attendance of professional conferences, increased productivity and career path success (as cited by Fedynich and Bain from Wright-Harp, 2008). But for this process to yield desirable fruits, the university must put in place a clear policy of recruiting and retaining key talents who can then be developed into future experts or professors (Klasen and Clutter Back, 2000). In essence, for effective mentoring to take place, the faculty or mentors must be willing to move out of their comfort zone by interrogating reality through asking questions like, who is the today’s junior staff and of the skills and knowledge I have, which ones are relevant to them? What has worked elsewhere and how practical will be the implementation of my mentoring strategies to foster meaningful help the mentee? All these will be answered by practices that suit particular individuals being mentored into tomorrow’s senior academics. For instance, a senior staff can receive a grant and involve junior colleagues to produce some desirable results which in the end benefits both parties- as a senior staff may acquire data to complete his publications, the junior one may write a dissertation that is submitted in partial fulfilment leading to the award of a graduate degree. This will create trust between the mentor and the mentee, through personal communication and fulfilling personal interests in the mentee. During the process of mentoring both parties, especially the mentor should demonstrate and exhibit a high level of professional ethics. Above all, all these can only take place if there is adequate and motivated number of senior academic staff who are scarce in most of the universities in Uganda. For example, the development of research skills take place mainly on job as young staff work with senior ones. Therefore, it is such a perspective that I strongly agree that mentorship of the junior by the senior staff especially at the level of professors that produce a big number of faculty that enhances proficiency and scholarship in the academy.

II. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have established that one of the problems confronting many Universities in Uganda is inadequate qualified academic staff especially at the level of Professor. A number of challenges have been identified to be responsible for the above scenario in the universities, and suggested possible solutions for such challenges. However, to resolve the problems analysed in above, there is need for a concerted approach among the staff, top management, University Council, the government of the republic of Uganda, with the university management playing a leading role. Therefore, the immediate priority is a need for an urgent dialogue among all the stakeholders to re-examine the university system of recruitment, incentive- reward system, how to boost post graduate training, research and publication that will enhance promotion of staff to the professoriate level in their respective universities. Admittedly, current financial circumstances in the universities make it difficult to raise the required number of the professoriate of the university. The answer however, is not to sit and give up, but to come up with workable plans of how to avert the problem at hand and see that the universities in Uganda gets out of this awkward situation.

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