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EDITORIAL NOTE

This is the 2nd issue of the Bishop Stuart University's Academic Journal of Development, Education and Technology (JODET Vol. I Issue 2) which was launched in January 2023. The first issue was accepted for indexing in Google Scholar and CrossRef, thus reaffirming BSU's standing as a serious research-based institution in Uganda. We are not just any other learning institution but an establishment that creates new knowledge and contributes to finding solutions to Uganda's challenges.

The articles in this issue, cover a wide range of disciplines that reflect the serious intentions of the institution to provide an avenue for development that is commensurate with the needs of a vibrant economy like Uganda's.

Readers need not be reminded that research is the bedrock of knowledge on which the future of a developing nation can depend. It is a reflection of the thinking of the future leaders whose duty is to create a better tomorrow for everyone, regardless of their pursuits in life. At BSU we are proud to be builders of the future. Our God Reigns.

CONTENTS

ASSURING QUALITY IN UGANDAN UNIVERSITIES DURING COVID-19

An Assessment of Students' Experience with e-Learning A Case of Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) and Bishop Stuart University (BSU)[1]

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ABSTRACT

The Corona Virus Pandemic sparked a crisis across many sectors of the economy. The virus led to the closure of many sectors including education. In Uganda, the education sector was closed for 22 months leaving many children and schools stranded on how to

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learn and deliver education services. The higher education sector reacted by introducing online learning. Since to many online learning was a crisis response, the transition was abrupt, thus calling for an investigation into the quality of education offered by universities during COVID-19. We interrogate the learners' experience with online learning with a view to understanding the extent to which quality standards were maintained. Understanding how the learning experience can lead to improved design of future online programs and avoid the crisis in the education program delivery system. We collected both qualitative and quantitative data using questionnaires sent to students online. A sample was conveniently drawn from students who studied online during COVID-19. The sample consisted of both students undertaking undergraduate and post-graduate training at various levels. Our findings indicated that the majority of students were not well trained to undertake the online program, institutional support was also limited during online training and students indicated that online training can be better delivered if universities provide adequate training to students and invest in infrastructure development.

Introduction

The Corona virus pandemic caused far reaching challenges to the global economy. Economies were shut down. For the education sector the impact was enormous. In Uganda, schools and education institutions were closed for close to two years (Nawangwe et al, 2021). The aim was to prevent the spread of the disease. The closure of all education institutions was part of 13 measures (presidential directives) to prevent the spread of COVID-19 issued on 18th of March, 2020.

According to President Museveni schools form 50,688 concentration points each having 1000 or more persons interacting on daily basis. Initially schools were closed for one month effective

from 20th March 2020, but as the spread of corona virus continued to be uncertain, the closure became indefinite as more guidelines closing the economy continued to be effected.

According to the Minister of Education also the wife of the president, "I do not want to say there is a time in future we know when we will open. Whether it will be a long process of opening some and not others, is yet to be decided," The Independent, 2021). 15 million learners at all levels were affected by the closure. According to Safieldin (2021), Uganda was ranked one of the Top 20 countries with longest lockdown for schools' full closure since March 2020 and February 2021.

On 20th September 2020, the President directed that schools open for only candidate classes and finalists beginning on 15th October 2020 and other levels to remain closed until it is determined that it is safe to open (Ministry of Education and sports -MoES, 2020). The reopening of schools did not last long as the country was hit with a second wave causing total lockdown of the country and schools in June 2021 (MoES, 2021). It is with in the lockdown that universities began thinking and introduced online learning. Until 1st of November 2021 when a new directive to open post-Secondary institutions of learning to open as long as teachers and learners above 18 years were vaccinated was issued by the President on 22nd September, 2021 (Uganda Media Centre, 2021), learning in universities was online.

To continue learning during the lockdown, the government through the guidance from National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) developed learning materials for primary and secondary schools. The learning material which which were distributed using and buses and taxis were delivered to students through educational programs run on television and FM radio stations in various districts. For higher education, post-secondary tertiary institutions and universities, there was no immediate response with a national character. Each institution reacted differently. Nawangwe, et al., (2021) indicates that Makerere

University went into research because it had support from government while other institutions almost closed. Uganda Christian University went online teaching because it previously was running online academic program (Kabahizi, 2020). But the institution faced challenges when students petitioned against doing examinations online.

In response to the looming crisis of unguided online learning as evidenced by petitions against, and for online examinations and take-home assignments at Uganda Christian University and eventual suspension of online examinations during COVID-19 by ministry of education and sports (Kabahizi, 2020), the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), developed guidelines for running online programs during an emergency (NCHE, 2020). The aim of the guidelines was to ensure that the university output standards are not compromised.

Quality in higher education is important due to the central role played by universities for development of countries. Nawangwe, et al., (2021) note that universities play tripartite role of teaching, research and community service. Higher education is central to economic, social and Political development. The sector is responsible for capacity building and training professionals necessary for development. They are responsible for both technical and soft skills development.

Universities in particular are responsible for developing competences development in research, knowledge creation and generation. According to Asie`-Lumumba (2006, 18), "Universities are sources of highly trained manpower for the professions, and "they have been the principal agents for the growth of knowledge, particularly the scientific knowledge that become the dominant force of the modern world". Universities are committed to producing not only professional to contribute to the growth and development of nations, but also knowledge that is important for societal transformation. However, COVID-19 came as a new challenge to the already challenged sector. NCHE (2021) indicates

that the sector was already challenged with teaching space and lack of qualified staff to deliver academic programs for most universities. With global environment learning (a web-based) widening both in terms of tools and access equipment, it was necessary for NCHE to regulate the sector.

The online learning requires no physical space for learning but exploitation of the virtual space. Many universities introduced the online learning programs in panic as a response to the COVID- 19. To ensure quality, the NCHE introduced the guidelines for adoption of an emergency ODeL system for higher education institutions during the COVID-19 lockdown (NCHE, 2020). These guidelines among others require institutions to put in place means of delivering materials to learners including flash discs and a list of qualified academic staff to deliver ODeL programs and the strategy to cover for the lost materials and time during ODeL.

While many universities dived into online learning delivery of programs as a response to the closure of physical leaning space, they were ill prepared for the new experience and delivery of programs (Lobos, et al., 2022, Nawangwe, et al., 2021). With the introduction of online teaching due to COVID-19 pandemic and since the introduction of the NCHE ODeL guidelines, 2019 and 2020, there is limited information on how universities navigated the virtual teaching space (ICT infrastructure and teaching environment) for the institutions and for both learners and teachers. The learners' experience is less known.

It has to be noted that online learning is dependent on the availability of infrastructure such as availability of electricity and other sources of power, internet and the equipment such as mobile phone and computers. The Uganda National IT survey 2017/2018, revealed that 5.9% of Ugandan households had access to a computer at home, 10.8% of households owned a household telephone, 70.9% of all individuals owned a mobile phone, and 10.8% of all households had at least one member who had internet access (NITAU, 2018). According to Nabisubi (2022), by 2021,

smartphone penetration in Uganda stood at 29.4% with only 10 million out of 34 million mobile phone subscribers using smartphones.

In addition, Uganda is considered as having lowest (14%) internet penetration rates with a huge 70% gap between urban and rural use, and the costly internet in the East African region. The cost of internet in Uganda was USD 9.75 compared to USD 2.48 Kenya and USD 2.25 for Tanzania and Rwanda (Atwine, 2021, Nabisubi 2022). In addition, there is limited electricity coverage in Uganda with most rural households relying on cheap solar power that cannot power a computer battery to last for an hour without being charged (Nawangwe et al 2021).

As of 2004, Farrell (2007, 6), indicates that "access to electricity was a serious constraint to ICT use because 97.7% of rural and 59.9% of urban households had no access". Kakumba, (2021) shows that although connection to electricity grid has increased from 24% in 2004 to 49% in 2021, the number of households connected to electricity grid is only 26%, with 67% households located in urban areas and 13% in the rural areas. With the above infrastructural terrain, we ask was quality education delivered. Among many challenges identified by Iqbal *et al* (2022) is un availability of electricity, poor or no internet access.

Surabhi, Abha and Roshan (2015:191) note that, "the greatest limitation of online learning is to have a constant internet connection. Without the internet access and a proper medium to access the same, material shall not be downloaded timely". Thus, without proper access to internet, students learning is curtailed. Apart from the infrastructure, student learning environment also affects learning. The environment in this paper includes all those aspects such as interactivity and isolation and surrounding environment in which learners and teachers are located to deliver and receive instruction. Most students studied in their homes, which sometimes are not conducive environments for studying. In addition, most families in Africa, have extended family members

and young children and the learning environment may not be easy to control both by the learner and the lecturer.

Furthermore, most African families depend on family labour for production. Closure of universities meant that university students were sent back to the production institutions (families) and thus became part of the labour force. All these factors are part of the environment and they affect learning online. Iqbal et al. (2022) argues that the home study environment and other demographic factors affect the students' experiences. They argue that recent studies have indicated that students belonging to Asia, South America and Africa reported lowest availability of a quiet place to study.

Many institutions across the world have put in place mechanisms to ensure quality and they focus on three aspects; accreditation, assessment and audit (Kis, 2005). With regard to online teaching, the Swedish National Agency of Higher Education (HSV, 9) report, identifies 10 aspects for considering while assessing online quality programs, material/content, structure/virtual environment, communication, cooperation and interactivity, Student assessment, flexibility and adaptability, support (student and staff), staff qualifications and experience, vision and institutional leadership, resource allocation.

According to the report the quality of education must put into consideration the above aspects taken together and by their interrelationships. In addition, the report also notes that the quality aspects should be integrated into the existing quality assessment frameworks. Fundamentally to note however, is that the campus based (physical learning) is different from e-Learning. As such new ways of assessing emergency e-Learning should be developed. E-learning introduces new learning aspects such as new learning environments for both learners and lecturers.

Interaction between learners and teachers is important for knowledge creation, according to Rivera-Vargas et al, (2021, 3370), "Students create knowledge through interaction between

themselves, the teacher, and their environment, that allows and indeed forces them to assume the leading role in their learning process". The focus for this paper is to assess the university students' experiences with online emergency online learning during COVID-19 lockdown. We specifically focused on BSU and MUST and interrogated three broad questions:

- What was students experience with institutional support during COVID-19?
- What was students experience with online learning environment during COVID-19?
- What areas require improvement for learners to maximize benefits from online learning?

The Context of the Study

Nawangwe *et al* (2021), note that private and public universities were affected differently with public universities exhibiting stability due to heavy reliance on government funding and private universities almost closed due to heavy reliance on private tuition fees from students. Mbarara University is a public university established by an act of parliament in 1989. The university is funded by the government for major operations including recurrent and capital expenditures such as paying lecturers, construction works. Bishop Stuart University is on the other hand is a chattered private university founded in 2002 and chartered in 2014.

The university depends on students' fees for both recurrent and capital investments. During Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, both universities like any other higher education institutions suspended students learning activities for some time until the NCHE 2020 guidelines for open distance learning. Because of heavy dependence on student fees, Bishop Stuart university suspended payment of salaries of workers except for a few such as security guards and a few works in the accounts department and administration. Mbarara University on the other hand continued

paying her workers since salaries were drawn from the national budget.

With the introduction of ODeL guidelines, (NCHE 2020), both Universities introduced e-learning to continue teaching. In its ODeL policy statement, BSU state thus, this policy highlights the commitment of BSU management to adopt ODeL so as to restore teaching and learning during this period of covid-19 lockdown and beyond (BSU, 2021: 4). Mbarara University of Science and Technology like Bishop Stuart University, also passed ODel Policy (MUST 2021).

However, unlike Bishop Stuart University, there is no reference to COVID-19 lock down as informing the development of the policy. In addition, both policies did not make any reference to NCHE (2019) and NCHE (2020) policy guidelines which were precursors for ODeL policies in Ugandan Universities. With ODeL policies in place for the two institutions, Bishop University reinstated staff contracts with periodical review of 1-4 months for those whose contracts had expired during COVID-19 lockdown. With regard to teaching online, MUST and BSU introduced the learning management systems with learning platforms. MUST established the Claroline Open Source e-Learning LMS and supported by zoom classes, while BSU used VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) and supplemented by Moodle with integrated BIG Blue button (BBL) and zoom classes.

The BSU learning management system was more interactive and had additional features such as BigBlueButton (BBB) that facilitated learning without the need to have additional sourcing of learning platforms such as zoom classes. Both institutions' learning management systems however had possibilities of repository of learning material for students to access. In fact, for Bishop Stuart University payment of salaries to academic staff required recommendation from IT personnel and director of quality assurance indicating who had uploaded learning materials to VLE. One other distinguishing feature of the two institutions during

teaching on line was that for BSU conducted final examinations on line while for MUST only course works were the only ones conducted online leaving final examinations to be done when students returned to campus for physical learning.

There are limited studies that have investigated students' experience with online learning and more so during emergency learning. Thus, the need for this study. We believe that this study will inform policy on how quality learning is to be ensured in case of any other emergency requiring learning online.

Literature Review

COVID-19 pandemic affected many institutions of in the education sector at all levels. Countries having locked down all sectors to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is estimated that by April 2020, the number of learners who stayed at home due to closure was 1.5 billion from over 194 countries (Aleksander, 2020). The study investigated how learners were affected by COVID-19. UNESCO report 2020 (cited in Yan et al 2020) indicates that by July 2020 nation-wide closure was register in 111 nations and that over 1.07 billion learners were affected by the closure. The figures provided are contradictory indicating a knowledge gap between the known and the unknown figures of students who were affected by the lockdown. In Uganda, nearly 170,000 students in tertiary institutions were affected by lockdown during COVID- 19 with uncertainty of their academic future (Kabahizi, 2020).

Due to COVID-19 lockdown, many institutions of higher learning shifted to online delivery of academic programs. Mbarara University of Science and Technology and Bishop Stuart University are among the universities in Uganda that rolled out online learning during COVID-19-pandemic. While e-Learning has been in existence for a long time globally, there was a surge in number of universities offering online programs during the COVID-19 lockdown. The use of computers in learning began in

1967 with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) using computer-based flight simulators to train pilots. The use of computers in education continued to grow with increased access to computers and internet. While online learning continued to be rolled out, many institutions did not use this mode of delivery and Mahyoob (2020) notes that the staff of these institutions do not know what is involved in e-Learning.

Similarly, Rivera-Vargas et al (2021) indicate that the common element among online students is that they all register for the online program when they do not know what to do, what is entailed in the program and often without receiving any training. During COVID-19 there was increased use of online learning because it was the only option available for learners to access education services and learning in particular (Mahyoob 2020). It should be noted however, that the online learning program might be different from the previous online learning arrangements due to the fact that the program was introduced in a manner of managing a crisis. Rivera-Vargas, et al. (2021) on online learning, note that many of the students cannot access traditional learning centres with conventional face to face mode due to physical or economic constraints.

COVID-19 added a new dimension of limited access due to health pandemic that threatens life, thus calling for preparedness perhaps more than was when dealing with physical and economic challenges. By understanding student's experiences with online learning during a health crisis such as COVID-19, it brings to light how universities can start planning ahead to avoid a crisis. For example, we explore the necessary infrastructure required to deliver an online program in times of emergency. We also asked students to tell us areas that require improvement to make online learning better.

As already indicated earlier, students, teachers and higher education institutions entered the unknown world of learning with the unknown skills, and knowledge to run programs and study

online. What is required for students to adapt to new situation? How do they avoid future challenges if faced with similar or related conditions requiring abrupt closure?

COVID-19 did not simply impact schools by closing them. Rather it created a crisis because of the uncertainty in as to when schools would be opening. The rate at which COVID-19 spread was alarming and the immediate method of control was social distance. Since schools stood as concentration centres, opening them up would easily lead to the spread of the disease. Closing them was the only option available. Most universities in Uganda especially the private ones depend on fee paying students for survival. Closing them down meant that they had no income flow. Indeed, many private universities suspended worker's contracts for survival and to avoid litigation (Nawangwe, *et al*, 2021). For continuity of learning, online learning was adopted in some universities while some others remained closed.

There was a sudden transition from face-face learning to online learning to address the challenge of loss of learning due to countries' lockdown. It is therefore imperative that given the manner in which education institutions transited from face-to-face learning to online learning, there is need to investigate the quality of learning during the pandemic. Indeed, Iqbal et al (2022: 2) argue that, "given the emergent nature of this transition, careful consideration must be given to assessing the quality of online education provided during the pandemic. It has been implemented without any proper planning and deliberation and may have some shortcomings".

To assure/ensure quality of online line, NCHE (2020) designed the guideline to address an emergency online learning. One of the requirements was that institutions should possess an ODeL curriculum to deliver online. However, there is a distinction between online learning and emergence online learning (NCHE 2020). According to Lobos et al, 2022), emergency on line learning code-named emergency remote teaching (ERT) is a scenario where

there is drastic transformation from physical learning to online teaching with no possibility of preparedness by both teachers and learners.

Lobos *et al*, (2022) note that, the difference between ERT and online learning is that online learning focuses on delivering a quality learning experience following a predefined instructional design while ERT does not necessarily consider the critical elements of quality education on line. There are arguments to this assertion; that the necessity and value of emergency response does not allow preparedness in times of emergency such as COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, online teaching allows processes of evaluating courses and programs, virtual environment and aligning curricular components with learning outcomes (Lobos et al.2022, 2), which processes may not be followed by ERT.

ERT may also not allow preparedness in areas such as customising platforms to fit students' and academic programs' such as mathematics and languages' needs. Also, since online learning is different from face-face learning, it requires modification of previously face to face run programs to fit online learning. NCHE (2019) and NCHE (2020) provided a clear guideline on how quality should be ensured. The NCHE (2020), Guidelines for Adoption of an Emergency Open Distance and e-learning (ODel) System by the Higher Education Institutions During the COVID-19 Lockdown, provides procedure to be followed before a program is rolled out online and the implementation procedure of the guidelines.

Among the guideline (NCHE, 2020) is that there should be an accredited program to be delivered online and evidence of staff to deliver the program. However, given the timing and abruptness of introduction of the online learning (Iqbal *et al*. 2022, Lobos, *et al*, 2022), and as the Swedish National Agency of Higher Education (HSV 2008, 9) argue the campus based (physical learning) is different from e-Learning and therefore should be assessed differently.

Also, Iqbal *et al*, (2022) notes that researches have examined the online learning where it was offered as a planned modality and not as a response to emergency. It is our consideration that the rolling out of ODEL programs even when guidelines were followed should be evaluated for the institutions' ability to deliver quality programs to learners during COVID-19 pandemic.

Nawangwe, *et al* (2021), investigated how various institutions fitted in the new normal in accordance to the tripartite roles of the university; teaching, research and community engagement. The questions set were: How did the various university stakeholders respond to the COVID-19 lock down? Are African (Uganda Universities) in particular prepared to positively encounter or take advantage unforeseen shocks? What strategies can we suggest to mitigate the plethora of pedagogical challenges created by the COVID-19 Pandemic shock? What will be the future of University Education after the COVID-19 Pandemic lock down? (Nawangwe et al., 2021, 17).

Nawangwe, *et al*., (2021) indicate that "only public universities remained active, but even then, only MAK remained functional, mainly in research and community engagement during COVID-19". While it is true that all universities were closed, but the closure for some (both private and public universities) was for a short time since they quickly went online to offer programs.

This casts doubts to the Nawangwe, *et al*., (2021) assertions. Moreover, Nawangwe, *et al*., (2021) study claims to have done interviews with staff of universities in Uganda but does not indicate how many and from which universities, indicating a methodological challenge. In spite of the challenges identified in this study, it still remains an important study for it informs us of the lack of infrastructure as a key challenge for online learning. Iqbal et al (2022) note that studies on online learning have focused on the developed countries whose ICT infrastructure is already developed and thus not comparable with the ICT infrastructure in developing countries.

It is important to note that successful online learning depends on the virtual environment. Virtual environment includes easy and structured ways of finding information and of communicating with peers and teachers. The environment consists of tools such as search engines, internet voice communication, instant messaging, chat groups, e-mail, blogs, social networking programs, online web/videoconferencing systems, e-portfolio programs, and social operating system (Swedish National Agency for Higher education, 2008, 42-43).

The agency notes that skilled users utilize a number of tools to enable them learn. We thus asked the question, what eLearning tools did students use to learn during COVID-19? It is understood that most virtual tools such as LMS were developed to favor the business community and they are also developing as spinoffs from the gaming industry that considers different ways of creating an interactive environment (Swedish National Agency for Higher education, 2008). It is noted that for example, second life is used in teaching mathematics and language. The education institutions should therefore customize the learning platforms to fit their needs.

We investigate the students experience with learning environment including ICT infrastructure, access to power and the social cultural environment in which learning takes place. In particular, we investigate students experience with virtual communication between student to student and student lecturer, the online assessment, the internet access and power and electricity connectivity, and the overall socio-cultural and economic environment in which students stayed or were learning from during the online learning.

Iqbal *et al*. (2022) note that by understanding these students' experiences which affect quality of learning, institutions of higher learning (universities) can make timely and effective decisions in order to improve their teaching and learning processes. In their study, Alexander and Golja (2007), studied how students' experiences can be used to derive quality in e-learning system.

They argue that providing feedback on key challenges can lead to improving online delivery of content and system improvement. This guides our study to find out how universities can avoid future challenges.

Many studies have been conducted on students learning experiences during COVID-19 (see, Lobos, et al 2022, Mahyoob, Iqbal, 2022, Yan *et al*, 2022). These studies bring out key challenges of online learning, but it should be noted that they all come from different environments with regard to students' experiences, it is indicated that not all students had negative experiences during the emergency learning caused by the pandemic (Lobos, *et al* 2022), that students from worldwide institutions claimed to be satisfied with the support provided by teachers and institutions (Lobos, *et al* 2022 citing Aristovnik *et al*., 2022).

Mahyoob (2020) indicates that in the Arab World online learning was positively reported for being effective during the pandemic. In his study, Mahyoob (2020) cites Shivagi (2020) for having investigated the weaknesses, challenges strengths and opportunities of online education during the pandemic (Mahyoob, 2020, 354). However, the cited study is not listed in the references and Mahyoob's study does not endeavour to identify these. We believe that our study can identify some of the challenges as well as the opportunities of online learning. We believe that online learning provides many opportunities for learning, but there is a lot to learn not only from the learning environment but also from the technology we are currently using and one exploited during COVID-19 pandemic.

The learning environment and how it affects online learning

The learning environment is understood as everything (physical, emotional, virtual, institutional, *etc*) that affect students learning. There are not many references which have defined the learning environment. Even the guides available to assess quality of online

learning in different environments have not defined the learning environment (see for example, Swedish National Agency for Higher education, 2008, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation-APEC (2019). It is however understood as, "a variety of elements including educational, physical, psychological, emotional, social, and that affect students' intellectual growth" (Afari *et al*, 2013 cited in Zamani *et al*, 2022, 587).

A more comprehensive and clearer definition is that the Learning environment refers to the diverse physical locations, contexts, and cultures in which students learn. The term also encompasses the culture of a school or class—its presiding ethos and characteristics, including how individuals interact with and treat one another—as well as the ways in which teachers may organize an educational setting to facilitate learning (Bates and Bates, 2019, 490).

It should be emphasised here that the culture of a school supersedes the physical school space and encompasses the virtual environment as well provided that it is arranged to deliver educational program. The arrangements put in place involving the infrastructure, the teachers, the surrounding in which the teacher and the student stay during learning all have implications for learning.

Thus, Zamani *et al.*, (2022), argues that the learning environment determines what, how, why the student learn, and has a strong influence on the learning experience of the student. In the learning environment we investigated the surroundings of the student during learning, the access to resources such as electricity, internet and support from the university among others.

Online Learning in Uganda

There are limited studies that have considered history of online learning in Uganda. Most of the available studies emerged during COVID-19 pandemic and are more focused on the impact of

COVID-19 that the history of online learning. Articles and studies available before the COVID-19 pandemic were focusing more on the distance education. A system of education which allows minimum face to face to face interaction but relies heavily on print materials to enable students to learn where ever they are instead of coming to compass (Matovu, 2012).

Matovu notes that with the introduction of ICT infrastructure, many students will enroll into universities and it would reduce overcrowding at universities. Uganda formulated ICT policy in 2003 and the objective among others was "integrating ICT into mainstream educational curricula as well as other literacy programs to provide for equitable access for all students regardless of level" (Farrell, 2007), With the increasing number of students demanding to access universities, and with the support of government to make ICT an integral part of education system, ICT became handy tool for keeping university learning afloat.

Although online learning has been in Uganda for some time, COVID- 19 pandemic is the one that opened the bigger gates for online learning. As already indicated, it was not until 2019 that the national council opened up and provided guideline for Open distance and E-learning (ODeL) with the formulation and launch of ODeL guidelines, which were followed by emergency guidelines cater for COVID-19 pandemic emergency lockdown of schools. It is therefore important to note, although online, distance learning was in existence in Uganda, it was run without quality control. Thus, there is limited literature on the evolution of and history of ODel in Uganda.

Methodology

Data was collected using a survey questionnaire which was sent to students online. Students were selected conveniently as well as purposively. Purposively, only students who experienced online teaching during COVID-19 received a questionnaire to fill.

Conveniently, questions were sent to students whom we assumed would fill the questionnaire. Questions covered a number of areas, including student support learning physical environment of students' location, access to material online and students support services offered by the university. In addition, a sample of 10 students selected purposively was chosen to answer open ended interview questions. The population was drawn from only students who studied on line during COVID-19 pandemic. The sample consisted of both students undertaking undergraduate training and post-graduate training at various levels (postgraduate diploma, Masters and PhD). We sent a questionnaire online using email and WhatsApp platforms for learners to fill at their own convince. We collected both qualitative and quantitative data.

As already indicated, our sampling procedure was nonprobability convenient sampling meaning that we targeted people who would be accessible and willing to answer questions. The people we targeted are those who had studied online and would be reached. We targeted mainly third year students and postgraduate students mostly using the WhatsApp groups and emailing groups we knew. It became apparent that we could only access the WhatsApp groups of students now at campus.

The analysis of findings was both descriptive and analytical. The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic content analysis method. We read through each qualitative response identifying the theme and the content for example, in some cases, a student would respond to a statement that goes beyond the scope of the question asked.

For example, we asked students the experience with the university website, the student besides indicating that the website was amazing, she added that they spent a lot of time trying to learn the website and the IT and that this limited their learning. Thus, from that response we were able to learn that the student is talking to lack of training. Indeed, she is one of the students who responded

that there was no pre-raining provided before e-Learning was rolled out at MUST.

In addition, we reviewed different documents such as ODeL institutional policies and presidential directives to stop the spread of COVID-19 in Uganda. Other documents such as UNICEF and World Bank reports regarding online learning were also reviewed to inform this study.

This study observed the ethical issues of confidentiality and informed consent. Although names of respondents were sought for this study, we do not refer to the individual respondents by name in our write up. In addition, every questionnaire was preceded with a confidentiality close and declaring of goals of this study and the call for voluntary participation.

Results and Discussions

We received responses from 72 students. 16.7% from BSU and 83.3% from MUST. Majority of the students were in 3rd year (52.8%) and 4th year (26.4%) of the study program. The online training having started during the COVID- pandemic, most of the students we targeted were in their 4th year and 3rd year of study apart from the Postgraduate students. The findings indicate and confirm this choice of students. The table below indicates the profile of respondents.

Table 1Respondents by category

Respondents Per Institution	MUST	60	83.3
	BSU	12	16.7
	Total	72	100
Gender	Male		59.7
	Female		40.3
	Total	72	100

Type of University	Private	1	50%
	Public	1	50
	Total	2	100%
Level of enrolment	Undergraduate	50	83
	Graduate	4	7
	Postgraduate (PhD)	6	10
	Total	60	100
Academic Programs	Social Science/Arts/Humanities	17	28.3
Major disciplines	Education	1	1.7
	Engineering/Technology/Computer	9	15.0
	Business/Commerce	15	25.0
	Agriculture	5	8.3
	Medicine/Health Related	13	21.7
	Total	60	100.0
Year of Study	1st	6	8.3
	2nd	9	12.5
	3rd	38	52.8
	4th	19	26.4
	Total	72	100

Findings also indicated that a substantial number of students 20.8% were in second year and 1st year of study combined. While we did not ask the question on the explanation of delay of completion of studies, it is possible that the delay could have been caused by the challenges of studying online.

Studying online during COVID-19 impacted on students in so many ways including psychological, isolation, lack of access to reading materials and internet access among others (Bertolett *et al*

2023, Lobos *et al*. 2022, Iqbal, et al. 2022, Yan, et al. 2021, Nawangwe, *et al* 2021). It is possible that these challenges could explain the delay in the completion of the program, thus the 20.8% of students in 2nd and 1st year of study.

The figure below indicates the responses according to year of study. By the time we carried out this study, all students who studied online are expected to either have completed or in 3rd year of study or higher (for example those undertaking a 4 or 5 year study program).

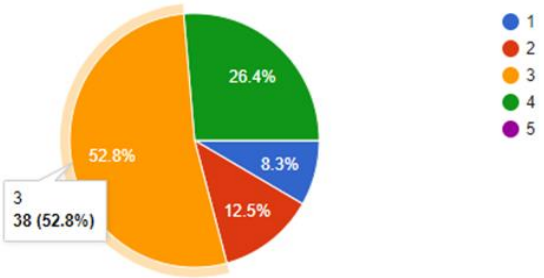

Figure 1: Year of study

In terms of gender distribution majority of respondents were male. Bertoletti, et al.,(2023) invetigated the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and found systematic gender-based differences in the perception about how different studets were affected by the COVID-19 disruptions of learning. We note however that for our study, there was no significant differences beween male and female with regard to how they were affected by COVID-19. The analyses shows that majority of respondents were male followed by female as the figure below shows.

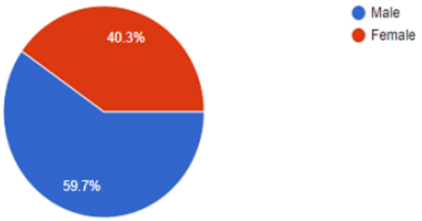

Figure 2: Responses by Gender

Research question one: What was students experience with institutional support?

Institutional support ranges from the quality of program being offered, the preparation before the start of the program and support during e-learning.

Experience with quality of the program

We investigated the quality of program using three indicators, availability of content on line, quality of content and quality of references. Majority (69.4%) of students indicated that learning materials and lecture notes were available online and could easily be accessed using the eLearning platform provided. With regard to quality of content availed on line, there was a mixture of responses but generally there was a balance between those who said that the content was good and those that said that it was bad (qualitative responses).

With regard to references used, qualitative findings indicated that although some students responded that online references were old and poor, majority of responses indicated that in both Universities, references online were of high quality and could easily be traced online through search engines such as Google Scholar. Thus, one of the responses indicated that *the quality was good especially by use of Google Scholar* (BSU Post Graduate student).

Institutional support

We asked students about their computer competence and the support they received from universities before enrolling to online learning. Majority of students 56.9% had moderate skills. This finding is in agreement with Rivera-Vargas et al (2021) who argues that most students register for online training when they do not know what it requires and thus needing training. We asked students whether they received training before or at the beginning of online program. We asked them the question, were you trained on online learning program and how to use online learning platforms? The following are the findings;

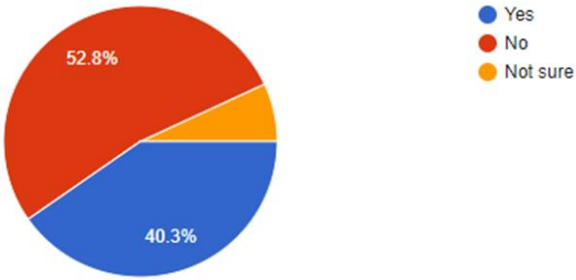

Figure 3: data indicating whether students were trained

Majority of students (52.8%) indicated that they were not trained. Even those who indicated that they were trained (40.3%), when asked about the duration of the training, majority indicated that the training was less than a month with majority (43.1%) indicating that training was between one-three days. The following figure indicates findings on the duration of the training.

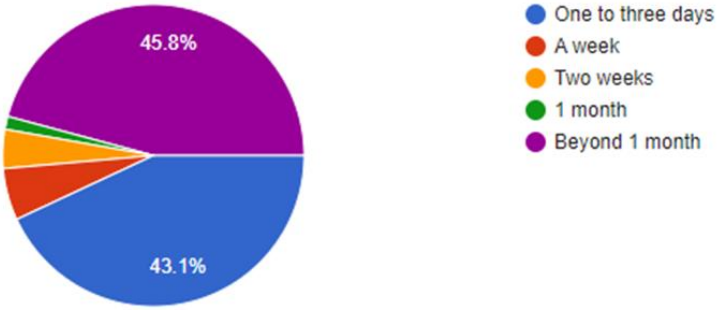

Figure 4: Duration of the Training

From further analysis, it shows that the training was not effective as 36.1% and 20.8% indicating that the training was moderately effective and not effective respectively.

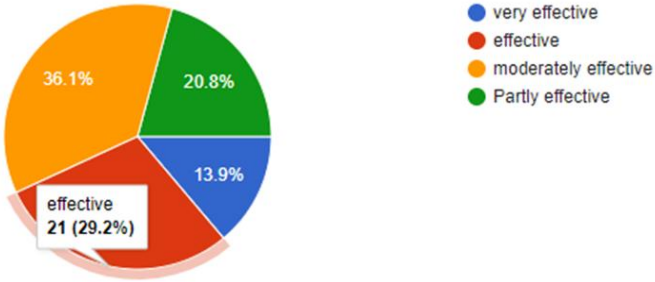

Figure 5: Effectiveness of the training

One of the students asked to describe her experience with institution's website, she had this to say, *"They were amazing. Learning how to explore them newly, was another lesson though some of us spent more time trying to deal with the IT while failing. This affected out time of study"* (MUST undergraduate student). This implies that students had less training to use IT and how to navigate the website.

From the above responses, we agree that the transition was sudden as Iqbal, *et al* (2022) argue and also that this was an emergency response to a health challenge (COVID-19) and to provide opportunities for continuous learning (Lobos *et al* 2022; NCHE 2020). We also agree that there was no preparedness for most institutions to roll out online programs.

While Mahyoob (2022) argues that transition to online learning was only successful for institutions that previously were running online programs, Kabahizi (2020) disapproves this assertion. UCU which was running online programs before COVID-19 could not transit easily and without challenges. There is no institution that can be fully prepared for an emergency whose dimension, magnitude and impact is unknown. Kabahizi (2020), argue that due to unpreparedness of the institutions to deliver and set examinations online, students took the matter to court prompting NCHE to suspend all examinations online. We argue that an emergency response as a necessity ought to be followed with continuous training of learners and staff on how to use online learning.

We asked students whether there was continuous training received after e-learning kicked off. 43.1% indicated that there was no training and 22.2% were not sure of such training and 34.7% received continuous training. From these findings one can argues that the institution did not offer enough preparation to the students for them to be ready for online learning.

University Infrastructure and Web access

We asked students the question, *how was your experience with institutional websites, platforms and e-learning management systems and the direction offered by them to accessing clear information with regard to a range of support services? Please explain in detail.* Responses varied from institution to institution, but in general most students indicated that they had a good

experience. Thus, the fact that the University has a rich website gives opportunities to get the information required in making inquiries and the BSU student portal is very simple to work with. e-learning management system was good. Its only support services that were not good at all. The efforts of lecturers to resolve issues cannot be underscored. They played a very key role in having eLearning successful (MA student from BSU). After learning about how to use e-lms, it became very easy and more interesting to learn online, the experience was Very good, for example with Zoom classes there is audibility and learning can be recorded in case you are not able to attend (MUST undergraduate student).

The MUST e-learning platform was profitable because it allowed the lecturer to upload reading materials and references directly to every student hence as opposed to using the class presidents to avail reading materials to the class. In fact, some lecturers even uploaded videos and tutorials! How great! (MUST undergraduate Student).

It was a fair experience because some of us who were in rural areas missed out on information due to electricity and network problems however, I can say the Learning management system was a good one because I managed to attend lectures and do assignments. It was good because I was able to know and learn how to use internet based platforms for studying (MUST Undergraduate student).

The above citations indicate that the experience was good. But of course, like every new system, the online learning was not without challenges. Some students indicated that their experience was not good; Sometimes the websites we're not working which would hinder us from attending classes. Sometimes it was the network issues or data issues that just made it difficult to keep up with, and, all I can say is that I didn't benefit, network issues were big factor to me and so I couldn't access the systems not until I reported to campus. Even while at campus some lecture notes were

not uploaded on the system so we had to try other ways of accessing information (MUST student).

Communication between students and lecturers and vice versa

Successful learning depends on the ability of students to be reached by staff and students to contact staff. Most students were able to reach out to staff using tools such as zoom and interactive chats during online learning.

The question asked was; were you able to contact staff using online platforms e.g. privately contact staff using interactive chats such as in zoom.

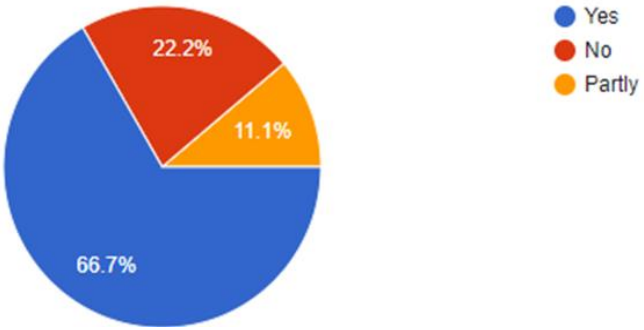

Figure 6; students' ability to communicate with staff using online platform

It was found that, at 45.9% communication using online platforms was generally not effective. We asked the question, *how effective was the communication?* The following figure represents responses we got.

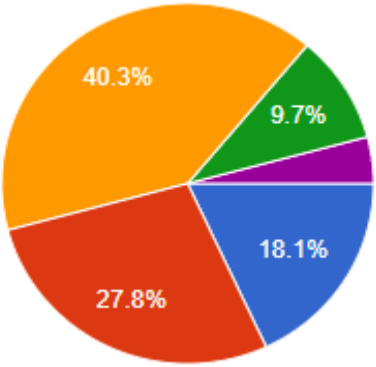

Figure 7: effectiveness of communication using online platforms

To further interrogate into the communication we found out that most students used emails to communicate (50%) and WhatsApp (26.45%). While the two channels of communication mostly used one expected instant responses. For example, WhatsApp is one of the instant messaging (IM) tools that has gained popularity and used among university students (Ali and Kootbodien, 2017). And Attalla et al., (2020) point out that WhatsApp is scored to be the first top used messaging application worldwide used in 180 countries by about 1.5 billion of the population and in the same study it was found that 100% staff responded that they use the application for communication.

With regard to email communication, El-Sabban (2009) argues that e-mail system is most widely used tool of communication in academia for disseminating information to its community and for receiving feedback. One of the advantages of email is that it can be opened anywhere, anytime where there is network and can store materials for a long time and to be opened when they are needed. Our finding indicate that most students received response to their communication in less than or within 3 days with about 44.4% students receiving feedback in less than a day.

Furthermore, 26.4 % of students received feedback after one week or never received feedback at all. This could be explained by some network challenges which we have already highlighted. Data for feedback on communication is provided below.

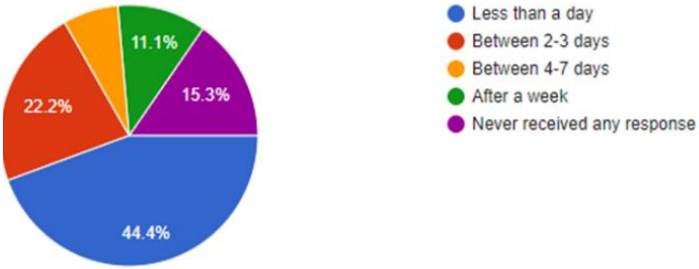

Figure 8: Time taken to receive feedback from staff

It is expected that during e-learning, institutions of higher learning should have troubleshooting mechanisms to address challenges that come with poor internet connectivity, lack of feedback and any other complaint from students (NCHE, 2020). We investigated the institutional efforts to resolve challenges such as putting in place means of reporting grievances. We asked students the question, *was there a provision for registering grievances or complaints to the university management in case of online learning challenges?* Majority of the students (58.3%) indicated that there was no provision, and a small number (9.7%) was not sure of such provisions. We thus argue that there was limited effort to put in place ways of reporting complains.

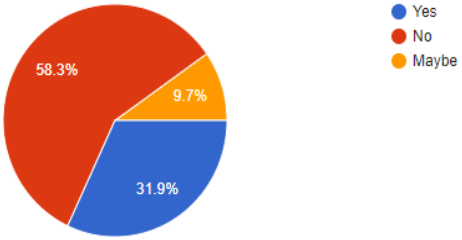

Figure 9 Availability of option to register grievances

One of the guidelines that NCHE (2020) provides is for institutions to put in place means of delivering materials to learners including flash discs and a list of qualified academic staff to deliver ODeL programs and the strategy to cover for the lost materials and time during ODeL. Without providing for ways of receiving grievances, and a non-conducive learning environment characterized by loss of internet connectivity and insufficient teaching time, student's learning is impacted negatively.

Sufficiency of Teaching Time

Findings from this study show that teaching time was not sufficient. This corroborates other findings in this study which indicated that there were breakdowns in internet and network challenges making students drop off during teaching. Data is presented below:

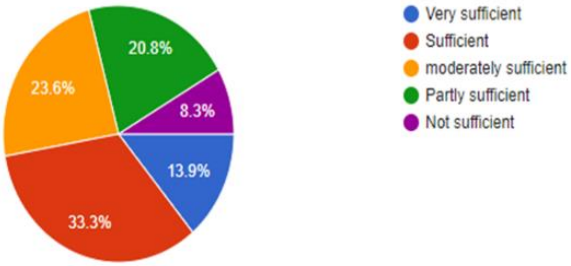

Figure 10: Sufficiency of Lecture time

Research question 2. Effect of Study Environment during COVID-19 pandemic

In terms of responses on how the students were affected by the environment. We asked students to rate their experience with online learning during COVID-19. Majority (60.5%) of respondents were of the view that the experience was an interesting one. The rest of respondents thought that it was moderate (15.5), partly interesting and 11.1% though that this was not interesting at all. We thought that this response should be corroborated by other responses that could define the experience with the learning environment. We thus directly asked respondents to describe the environment in which they studied. We asked them to respond to the question: *How would you describe the environment in which you studied during online teaching?*

From the analysis of findings majority were of the view that the environment was not conducive for learning. The following are some extracts from the qualitative responses on the environment in which learning took place**:**

It was not steady due to sudden inconveniences at home, poor networks, failure to attend physical discussions, delays in starting lectures at the right time", (MUST undergraduate student)**.**

The environment was **"**Very bad due to noise from the background, poor or lack of internet and sometimes not even having the devices to use to attend an online class" Another respondent (Student from MUST),

"The environment was distractive which made it a non-conducive area for studying". "I was home, too much distractions" (MUST undergraduate student).

"It was challenging since the people around at times engage you with other work even during lecture times, there was unstable network and not comfortable for a student since most of the times it was done at home yet at home most us, we assigned other duties" (MUST undergraduate student).

In general, it was found that the home environment for study was not conducive since students are also assigned duties and responsibilities at home.

These findings agree with Iqbal, *et al.*, (2022), who argue that the home environment is not a conduce environment for studying online.

Only a few respondents who worked outside the home environment and those that had control over the home environment were satisfied by the environment, we got the following responses: "I mostly studied from my bedroom at home which was generally OK. I need to acquire a standard desk and chair to allow me comfortably study for long hours because the lectures lasted a full day" (PhD Student from BSU) and another respondent who worked outside home had this to say, I was lucky to have been using work place environment which was conducive over weekends.

In one isolated case one of the students pointed out that environment in which they studied was highly influenced by noise from the lecturers' environment, she notes thus I would recommend lecturers/facilitators to always be at stable place with good network and less disturbance like disruption by their family members like the young children (MUST undergraduate Student).

Internet Access and Connectivity

For online learning to succeed, it requires stable internet connectivity and access to computer or internet enabled devices. Ours finding indicates that most students were challenged by the unstable network. Some students could not complete a session of learning due to either internet connectivity or lack of data or both.

This is supported by the responses we got from the analysis of qualitative data: most of us had a challenge of getting data and so could not regularly attend class, sometimes there would be a breakdown and loss of connectivity when under a lot of pressure from students, for example during online tests hence some students ended up missing the tests and submission of examinations (undergraduate student from BSU) and the learning platforms were designed to accommodate few people so they could some time slow down. I had a bad experience since it was my first time, I even missed some lectures, I didn't know the estimate of data a lecture could take so sometimes I attend lectures halfway and also the university refused to provide us with data yet we paid functional fees it was really a worst experience (MUST student), Network connection was not good at all during zoom meetings (MUST Undergraduate student).

During online teaching, I was in a remote area where network was a big problem. Therefore, attending lectures online wasn't possible which made me decline in my performance for the whole academic year, and some of us who were in rural areas missed out on information due to electricity and network problems.

One of the students describes the learning environment as “so bad, am not happy at all with this mode of delivering lectures because it doesn’t consider that some students stay in very remote areas of the country” (MUST Undergraduate student).

To support the above views, we asked students their ability to access computer systems and internet off campus. The following were the responses. We asked them to respond to the question, as a

student, were you able to access compatible computer systems and networks off campus? The following were the responses.

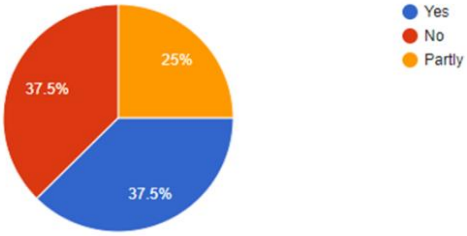

Figure 11: Students response on finding networks and computer systems off-campus

From the findings only 37.5% could find stable network and compatible computer systems off-campus. 25% had partial access, while the rest could not access. We there for argue in general there was limited by limited connectivity and access to computers and internet as the qualitative findings indicated, there was a challenge of internet connectivity. Therefore, from the data we collected we assert that for the two institutions, learning was not effective during COVID-19.

Interesting to note however is that the learning management systems in the institutions did not put into consideration the need for customizing of the platforms to fit the needs of students. Teaching mathematics and conducting agricultural experiments was difficult using existing learning platforms at the two institutions. While the learning platforms used by MUST and BSU has both audio visual and interactive features, they lacked the basics to teach courses such as Mathematics. From qualitative responses on learning environment, it was found thus, it was difficult to maintain maximum attention for long periods and also difficult to follow up in practical lectures like Maths and that the environment was not favorable since it became difficult to study different

calculations online. We could not do experiments and practicals in agriculture, they were differed until when the universities would be open, yet we were not certain of the opening of the university (MUST undergraduate student).

In an informal conversation with one of the stake holders, during the writing of this paper, he asserted that, if he went to the hospital and found a medical doctor who studied at MUST during COVID-19, he would run away without treatment because medicine was taught for 3 weeks when students returned for face to face sessions in preparation for examinations because it could not be offered online.

Medicine is one of the practical subjects that cannot be studied online for some courses without customising the e-Learning systems to fit them. The use of virtual reality environment is highlighted as one of the requirements for teaching clinical medicine online (see, Delungahawatta, *et al*., 2022). In his study of the challenges of e-Learning during COVID-19 pandemic in the Arab World, Mayhoob (2022, 353) found that it was difficult to study language on line especially phonetics and phonology where the teacher needed face to interaction to teach phonemes, allophones, morphemes etc.

Research Question 3. What to improve for better e-Learning Experience?

Given the highlighted challenges with online learning and the experience of students we asked students to make recommendations on what should be improved. They recommended that there should be more training and institutional support; there should be enough training to students on e-learning and there should be more than one IT person, and that institutions should, Create some time and train students about the use of online study and IT application. In addition, it was recommended that the universities should run online classes entirely if they come up with solutions to the online

learning challenges. Thus, one of the students had this to say, they are expenses that can be overlooked in regards to physical classrooms. So, unless the institution is ready with solutions to different challenges that come with online classes, I recommend that for now it can be blended learning (MUST undergraduate student).

Students also recommended that management should ensure a robust support system, availability of committed support staff and availability of internet services to students. For more comprehensive learning, students recommended for provision of data to students to be able to learn. But a more feasible recommendation was universities should partner with service providers such as telecom companies to make internet cheap for students.

Students also recommended for infrastructural improvement; well of course due to poor infrastructure, this makes it hard to conduct (and attend[5]) online classes, for example use of zoom which requires a good internet connectivity. But in addition, I would recommend blended online and physical classrooms (MUST undergraduate student).

Online learning is highly influence by location of students. Students in rural areas where network and internet connectivity are low and also access to electricity limited may face challenges of completing assignments as well as completing a lecture session (Nawangwe, *et al.* 2021).

Conclusions and recommendations

This study aimed at investigating learners experience with e-Learning during COVID-19 pandemic. The study investigated three questions focusing on learners' experience with institutional

[5] Emphasis is ours

support, learners experience with study environment, and recommendations for improvements

With regard to institutional support, findings indicate that while universities rolled out e-Learning programs, there was no sufficient preparation of learners. For example, there was no adequate training offered before and during e-Learning. With regard to the learning environment, most students studied in unstable network area and thus there learning experience was bad. In addition, they did not get where to address complains and this could easily escalate their anxiety and isolation. Thus, we conclude that learning environment was not conducive. With regard to what needs to be improved, findings indicate that there was a need to improve the infrastructure as well as training staff and students for better e-Learning experience. We thus conclude that there was not enough infrastructure and training of students.

In general, we make conclusions that Bishop University and MUST were ill prepared for e-Learning and this resulted a bad learning experience for learners. The challenges identified in this study, make us conclude that there was limited quality assurance with respect to e-Learning offered by the two institutions of our investigation. We make recommendation that both institutions and other institutions should start early to prepare for online learning. The situation has changed and universities are back to normal, and the online learning has completely gone down. We believe that with presence of students back on campus where they can access free internet, online earning should be encouraged as a preparation for the future. In addition, institutions should develop the e-Learning platforms to accommodate practical subjects that could not be delivered online during COVID-19 pandemic.

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CLINICAL SUPERVISION AND TEACHERS' PREPARATION FOR TEACHING IN UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION SCHOOLS OF MBARARA CITY IN SOUTHWESTERN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the relationship between clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching. It employed a cross-sectional research design where a quantitative approach was used. The researcher used a sample size of 268 respondents. The study findings showed a strong positive statistically significant relationship between clinical supervision and teachers' preparation ($r = 0.913^{**}$, $p = 0.004$). It was concluded that there is a significant relationship between clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara City. The government and the Ministry of Education and Sports should provide policy guidelines and clinical supervision materials

to all the head teachers to facilitate the implementation of clinical supervision by head teachers in Universal Primary Education Schools.

Keywords: *Clinical Supervision, Teachers, Preparation, Teaching, Education, Schools.*

Background

The world over, clinical supervision is seen as the process of helping, guiding, advising and stimulating growth in teachers in order to improve the quality of teaching (Shinkfield & Stufflebeam, 2012). Contributing to this view Okorji & Ogbo (2013), stated that clinical supervision involves the act of ensuring that teachers fulfil their instructional responsibilities effectively and efficiently in USA. He reiterated that teachers should demonstrate high standard of academic excellence through periodic checks to improve the quality of their work. In countries such as Turkey, teachers are encouraged to popularize innovative instructional processes taking appropriate steps to eliminate obstacles that may constrain their ability to adopt and acquire competencies and current ideas that facilitate growth on the job and increased professional competencies in teaching (Gizir & Aydin, 2009).

Trained teachers are expected to apply sound preparation for teaching practices whenever and wherever they work. However, many teachers working in universal primary schools in Mbarara City appear to be applying ineffective preparation for teaching practices that are reportedly already hurting the learning processes of many pupils. According to school inspection for 2nd term 2017 – 2018 by Mbarara Municipal Council inspector of schools, it was found out that few schools where administrators used clinical supervision had greatly improved in as far as preparation for teaching by teachers was concerned than other schools, where preparation was lacking.

According to MoES (2015) and UNEB (2015), most teachers in primary schools hardly use the recommended learner-centred pedagogies and neither do they regularly prepare lessons nor carryout effective learner assessments and systematic scheming of their work as well as lesson planning.

These practices, UNEB (2015) points out, are already causing many candidates to perform poorly in the primary leaving examinations (PLE). Yet, the Directorate Education Standards (DES) of the Ministry of Education and Sports and the local school authorities are there to supervise the teachers in their work something Musaazi (2006) argues is designed to improve the preparation for teaching practices of teachers. If the current scenario persists, dropout and failure rates in primary schools are likely to increase; subsequently, resulting into wastage of resources devoted to education and the under-development of the country's human resources. Therefore, the researcher felt that there was a need to investigate whether clinical supervision would improve teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara City in South Western Uganda.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara City.

Theoretical Review

The study was based on Cognitive Flexibility theory by Spiro, Feltovich and Coulson in 1988. The theory postulates how learning takes place in "complex" and "ill-structured domains". The theory of Cognitive flexibility suggests that effective supervision requires that the supervisor has the necessary skills and knowledge to support the trainee during the very difficult job of becoming a reflective practitioner (Kilminster & Jolly, 2000). The theory

concerns with transfer of knowledge and skills beyond their initial learning situation. The theory proposes that clinical supervision supports teachers' preparation for teaching. Therefore, in this study clinical supervision was correlated with teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara City.

Literature Review

A study by Darling-Hammond (2014), discovered that school head teachers give less attention to clinical supervision and dedicate most of their time on the administration aspects. Darling-Hammond (2014), stressed that clinical supervision administered in schools does help in increasing the teaching development of teachers while at the same time enable teachers to make improvements on their teaching practice to be more effective. The head teachers and inspectors of schools should give much attention to clinic\al supervision. Fullan (2014), states that clinical supervision can act as the basis towards the improvement of teachers' methods of teaching. Teachers prefer to seek advice from colleagues than head teachers.

However, effective head teachers who realize the importance of clinical supervision encourage improvements in their teachers' preparedness. Clinical supervision is a way for teachers to improve their teaching performance which indirectly will benefit the pupils through the improvements. However, the above study related clinical supervision with teaching methods, the current study related clinical supervision with teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools.

Darling-Hammond, Newton & Wei (2010) suggested five phases in administering clinical supervision, namely: pre-supervision conference, clinical supervision, analysis and strategy, post-supervision conference, and post-supervision analysis. However, the above study related clinical supervision and teaching

quality, while the present study related clinical supervision with teachers' preparation for teaching.

Tracz & Chiero (2012) state that clinical supervision program in schools in USA is one of the steps in forming the professionalism of teachers to be teachers. But in practice, until now there are teachers who have not yet realized the importance of supervision. There are still many teachers who consider that the clinical supervision is carried out to look for errors in teachers, so they are not comfortable when being supervised. This assumption should be eliminated, given the purpose of supervision is to help teachers to solve problems encountered in the classroom. Supervision is conducted by the supervisor at the school, the principal or senior teacher. Teachers should be well familiar with clinical supervision to enable them prepare for teaching effectively.

The relationship between clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools has been studied for more than three decades. Clinical supervision in relation to teachers' preparation for teaching has rarely been studied in Uganda. The study was intended to plug the above said gaps through establishing the levels of clinical supervision in Universal Primary Education Schools, assessing the level of teachers' preparedness for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools and determining the relationship between clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools.

Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design where quantitative approach was used. The population of the study comprised head teachers, directors of schools and teachers. The researcher used a sample size of 268 respondents that was determined using the formula of Yamane (1967). The study used questionnaire survey as data collection method. Quantitative data

from the questionnaires was sorted, coded, edited and classified into categories as per the study objectives (Leavy, 2014). Correlation between clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching was determined using Pearson Correlation.

Results

Table 1: The levels of clinical supervision in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara City (n=250)

Levels of clinical supervision		5	4	3	2	1	Mean scores
There is adequacy of supervisors in my school	f	125	75	25	13	12	4.15
	%	50.0	30.0	10.0	5.2	4.8	
Supervisors plan with teachers in my school	f	100	63	50	37	0	3.90
	%	40.0	25.2	20.0	14.8	0.0	
There is availability of clinical supervision materials	f	63	88	50	25	24	3.56
	%	25.2	35.2	20.0	10.0	9.6	
There is good relationship between supervisors and teachers	f	150	75	25	0	0	4.50
	%	60.0	30.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	
	f	100	75	38	25	12	3.90

Supervisors give recommendations concerning observation during supervision process and make follow ups in school	%	40.0	30.0	15.2	10.0	4.8	
Clinical supervisors always analyze teaching-learning process	f	88	50	100	12	0	3.86
	%	35.2	20.0	40.0	4.8	0.0	
Clinical supervisors always plan the strategy of observation	f	50	150	13	25	12	3.80
	%	20.0	60.0	5.2	10.0	4.8	

5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Undecided, 2=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 2: The level of teachers' preparedness for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara City (n=250)

5	4	3	2	1	Mean scores	
Lesson plans are linked to previous and future lessons	138	50	13	25	24	01
	55.2	20.0	5.2	10.0	9.6	
Lessons are learner centred	100	50	38	13	49	.56
	40.0	20.0	15.2	5.2	19.6	
	25	175	25	25	0	.80

Lesson plans have clear competences and references	10.0	70.0	10.0	10.0	0.0	
Scheme of work is linked to the curriculum	150	50	25	13	12	.25
	60.0	20.0	10.0	5.2	4.8	
Scheme of work is up to date with clear learning outcomes	100	125	13	12	0	.25
	40.0	50.0	5.2	4.8	0.0	
Lesson notes are well organized and detailed	100	75	25	25	25	.80
	40.0	30.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	
Instructional materials are relevant to lessons and are adequate	75	125	25	13	12	95
	30.0	50.0	10.0	5.2	4.8	

Table 3: Pearson Correlation coefficient for clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara Municipality (n=250)

		Clinical supervision	Teachers' preparation
Clinical supervision	Pearson Correlation	1	0.913**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.004
	N	250	250
Teachers' preparation	Pearson Correlation	0.913**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004	
	N	250	250
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 3 above shows correlation results of clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara Municipality, where r =0.913** p = 0.004. Results indicate a significant relationship between clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara Municipality. This implies that clinical supervision has effect on teachers' preparation for teaching.

Discussion

Findings under this sub heading were sought in accordance to research objective three which sought to determine the relationship between clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara City. The outcome of the study showed that there is significant relationship between clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara City at preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara City, r =0.913**p = 0.004. Which implied that clinical supervision has effect on teachers' preparation for teaching.

The above study findings agree with Darling-Hammond (2014) who discovered that school head teachers give less attention to clinical supervision and dedicate most of their time on the administration aspects. Clinical supervision administered in schools does help in increasing the teaching development of teachers while at the same time enable teachers to make improvements on their teaching practice to be more effective. The head teachers and inspectors of schools should give much attention to clinical supervision.

The above study findings are also in agreement with Fullan (2014), who states that clinical supervision can act as the basis

towards the improvement of teachers' methods of teaching. Teachers prefer to seek advice from colleagues than head teachers. However, effective head teachers who realize the importance of clinical supervision encourage improvements in their teachers' preparedness. Clinical supervision is a way for teachers to improve their teaching performance which indirectly will benefit the pupils through the improvements.

However, the above study related clinical supervision with teaching methods, the current study related clinical supervision with teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools. The above study findings further agree with Tracz & Chiero (2012) who stated that clinical supervision program in schools in USA is one of the steps in forming the professionalism of teachers to be teachers. But in practice, until now there are teachers who have not yet realized the importance of supervision. There are still many teachers who consider that clinical supervision is carried out to look for errors in teachers, so they are not comfortable when being supervised.

Conclusions

It was concluded that there is a high significant positive relationship between clinical supervision and teachers' preparation for teaching in Universal Primary Education Schools of Mbarara City.

Recommendations

Head teachers should practice all levels of clinical supervision to increase preparedness of teachers in Universal Primary Education Schools in Mbarara City.

The government and the Ministry of Education and Sports should provide mandatory policy guidelines and clinical supervision materials to all the head teachers to facilitate the

implementation of clinical supervision by head teachers in Universal Primary Education Schools.

The school administrators should ensure good monitoring and evaluating teachers' preparedness for teaching through continuous appraisal.

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TEACHING RELIGION IN A SECULAR SWEDISH SCHOOL SYSTEM: Rationale, Challenges and Recommendations

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ABSTRACT

Following my two-month research as an international Ugandan researcher in Sweden, I present an argument that the introduction of a non-confessional Religious Education in Sweden in 1919 and an objective and neutral education since 1962 had a key intention of de-linking teaching of religion from religious foundation bodies, in particular, the dominant Church of Sweden (Lutheran) and rendering it educational instead of confessional. In this paper, I will argue that, despite the subsequent birth of a secular Swedish society and the onset of a multicultural society, there was - and there continues to be a justification for the teaching of religion in schools. In my interview with two experts on Religious Education from the National Agency of Education, two teachers of Religious Education and eight students, they all responded positively to the question of the continued teaching of religion in secular Swedish society.
However, in the paper, I will argue that there was or there is an inability of the curriculum and the teachers in some respects to do justice to the integrity of different religions. Based on earlier research and interviews, I'll argue that despite the good intentions of having a neutral and objective multi-faith Religious Education (RE) curriculum in place, some text-books and teachers' approaches raise questions on fairness to all religions. In particular,

the interviews indicate that there are signs of "Immigrophobia" among some students, teachers and sections of the community. Notwithstanding, I will argue that since the findings reveal an overwhelming support for multi-faith RE by a secular population and being mindful of the increased multi-cultural society and signs of Immigrophobia[6], it is imperative that a careful choice of text-books, especially on religions, other than Christianity, is done and special attention given to RE teachers to address the concept of fairness to all religions.

Purpose of Research

The main purpose of the article is to show the rationale of making and maintaining Religious Education as a compulsory subject in secondary schools and as a core subject in upper secondary schools in a secular society.

I will do this by firstly presenting a brief historical background of the Swedish model of a multi-faith religious education. Secondly, I will present arguments in support of the Swedish model, given from mainly teachers and students who have been interviewed. Thirdly I will show threats and weaknesses of the Swedish model that have appeared primarily through the conducted interviews. Finally, I will give some recommendations for improvements of the current RE praxis in Sweden.

Methodology

In view of the limited time for research (only two months in Sweden) I read some books and unpublished articles in the English Language on the subject of Religious Education in Sweden and this

[6] This is not a conventional academic term but I have used it to denote fear and uneasiness that some Swedish citizens have of the increased (real or perceived) immigration of people of different races.

was helpful in establishing the context of my research. The major challenge though was that most books were written in the Swedish language and I was only able to get summaries at the end of the books.

I employed a qualitative method of enquiry whereby my main source of data was interviews with key informants including two historical experts on the subject of religion in schools, to be referred to as HE 1 and HE 2, two current National Education Agency experts on the Religious Education curriculum, to be referred to as NEA 1 and 2, as well as two teachers of Religious Education. Focus group discussions were held for two sets of students totaling eight and these were invaluable in eliciting views of students on pertinent issues concerning the rationale of religious education in a secular society.

The advantage of focus groups in augmenting interviews and observations cannot be overemphasized (Morgan, 1997). The major challenge was that since English is the second language to most Swedes, they do not easily express their views in English and in one case a teacher of religious education had to get a colleague to do the translation.

In addition to interviews, I interacted with different members of the community such as clergy in formal and informal settings and these were resourceful in assisting me to appreciate certain issues concerning the religious life of the Swedes and the Church and community relationship. The observation through visits to schools and churches was also important in enabling me to record events and draw some conclusions.

Table of Interviewees and their fictitious names

Fictitious Names of Swedish Interviewees	**Agency Represented**
Ann	National Agency Education (NAE), 1
Shaun	National Agency Education (NAE), 2
Martin	Teacher of RE, 1
Sharon	Teacher of RE, 2
Anthony	Historical expert (HE) on RE, 1
Viola	Historical expert (HE) on RE, 2
Fred	Student, 1
Tom	Student, 2
Nancy	Student, 3
Agnes	Student, 4
Ken	Student, 5
Judith	Student, 6
Kate	Student, 7
Alice	Student, 8
NB Average age of students is 14	

Brief Historical Context of Swedish Model of a Multi-Faith Religious Education

Similar to other European countries, there was a close relationship between church and schools (Almén & Øster, 2000). The teaching of religion in Swedish schools initially followed a confessional model of religious education whereby the catechism of Luther was the main textbook in public schools before 1919. This approach to the teaching of religion in schools implied that school teaching was more or less extensions of church work. Students were to be affirmed in the dominant Lutheran Evangelical Church. The

challenge to a confessional model of religious education came as a result of the protest from the minority religious denominations who wanted to start their own schools and disagreed with teaching the doctrines of the Lutheran Church in public schools (Almén & Oster, 2000; Osbeck & Petterson, 2009).

From 1919 there was a shift from a confessional Lutheran oriented Christian religious education to a non-confessional Christian religious education that centered on the study of the Bible, especially the New Testament, and the commonality of the Christian tradition and the history of Christianity. It is interesting to note that it was not until 1951 that Non-Church of Sweden teachers were able to teach Christianity (Osbeck & Petterson, 2009). This development would suggest that the minority Christian denominations were not considered to be on equal footing with the Church of Sweden till 1951.

The 1960's saw the initiation of an approach to teaching religion in schools that stressed neutrality and objectivity with respect to different religions and philosophies of life. Petterson (2006) argues that since the 1960s there was an emergence of a more religiously neutral state that promoted the teaching of Christendom in a more objective way as religious knowledge. In my interview of Anthony (HE, 1) at Malmö, he said: In 1962 in the teaching of Christianity, the content was centered on biblical studies and church history with a world perspective. Ethics was also taught. At the time, some students asked to know about other religions, there was little I had in terms of materials but I tried. Malmö was already secularized [7].

The historical expert expresses the attempts to be neutral in outlook in early 1960's to an extent of having dialogue with students about religions, other than Christianity.

[7] This is not a conventional academic term but I have used it to denote fear and uneasiness that some Swedish citizens have of the increased (real or perceived) immigration of people of different races.

The approach to teaching religion changed from viewing religious education as an ideological agent of churches and religious communities and instead as a school system of the Swedish model (Almén & Øster, 2000). This new approach stressed the importance of religion in personal development and independence of mind as a path to maturity and eventual development of good interpersonal relationships. According to Orlenius, (2004), since 1962 up until 1994, all curricular syllabuses for religious education prescribed for the theme of individuality and it has become even more explicit and conspicuous since then.

On the other hand, Viola (HE 2) inferred to the challenge to independence of mind and/or neutrality in teaching the Christian religious tradition in the early 1960s as follows: *In 1964 I was a candidate and the new curriculum had been introduced in 1962, the stress was on Christianity and Moral Education was attached to the Ten Commandments, it was more or less a confirmation class*.

While reference to Christianity and Moral Education is an affirmation of a neutral Christian religious tradition, the study of the Ten Commandments and the insinuation of the classes being more or less confirmation classes, suggest the inter-linkage of the school and the Christian tradition. The influence of the church of Sweden on the school system and thereby the challenge on neutrality is a matter that was not fully addressed at the time, in fact even to-date there is an informal close relationship between church and many schools (Osbeck & Petterson, 2000, p. 212) confirmed in my interview of experts, teachers, students, clergy and community.

One such example cited by all interviewees is the end of term assemblies where religious leaders are invited to speak to school assemblies. Two priests of the Church of Sweden said that they always had occasion to preach the gospel on end of term assemblies and also during Easter season visits by students to local churches.[8] The interviewees - especially the vicars and Head-teachers - were aware of the expected neutrality of the schools but in practice the

church and school relationship is only taken naturally and not questioned. The close relationship between school, church and society is reflected in the argument advanced by Erik Amnå (2010) that the present secular rational identity of Swedes actually covers up for a strong Lutheran influence and heritage.

The year 1969 was another milestone in the developments concerning religious education in Sweden following a survey that was conducted by the National Board of Education to gauge the attitudes and views of teenagers on religion and values issues. The findings stressed the need for students to explore questions of life through a study of Christianity, other religions and non-religious philosophies and the inter-linkage of such fundamental questions of life to current social and cultural issues (Almen & Øster, 2000, p. 69). This approach which addresses the felt needs of students became the cornerstone of religious education curriculum since it transcends religious views of life. The major challenge to this perspective is that it makes it difficult for students associated with strong religious beliefs to adopt religious culture from their parents and instead encourage a 'supermarket' or eclectic method of adopting 'opinions.'

Although the approach to religious education of emphasizing questions of life is meant to promote neutrality, (Thomson, 2004, p.32) argues that all forms of religious education are confessional and have underlying values including secular values. In other words, the questions of life approach can be biased towards secular philosophy of life. Cöster and Osbeck (n.d.) in their article titled "*Is ground of values* a *religion? About training world views in a non-confessional school,"*

[8] All the interviewees indicated close affinity between the Swedish public schools and the church of Sweden and I was personally able to observe this during the pre-Easter season where students were taken on Church tours and addressed by the Vicars in some Churches in Karlstad and Uppsala.

argue that there is a secular bias in Swedish schools despite the stressing of education of religion and promoting of 'certain religiously neutral values.'

The 1994 curriculum is explicit about the expected values that are to be promoted in Swedish compulsory, Comprehensive and pre-school classes. The preamble reads, 'The school has the important task of imparting, instilling and forming in pupils those fundamental values on which our society is based.' The language used is "confessional" and since the Swedish society prides itself in promoting secular values, then it is possible that the school system will espouse these same religious values, thus compromising neutrality.

On the other hand, while discussing the values that the school should promote, the preamble specifies values grounded in ethics borne by Christian tradition and Western humanism. The central importance given to Christian traditional values raises questions about the significance of the Christian tradition in relationship to other religions. Doesn't this suggest that the Christian religious tradition is the privileged and preferred religious tradition? If so, where does this leave other religious traditions and the neutrality of the school system?

In an interview of Viola (HE 2), she said, 'The current syllabus for comprehensive and upper secondary says that pupils are to gain insight into life problems and thoughts in Christianity and other world religions'. Christianity is the only religion spelled out, there is a tendency for teachers to concentrate on it and give less attention to other religions.' The challenge in the Swedish model of religious education is that it renders Christianity a privileged religious tradition much in similar way to the British multi-faith model that expects the syllabuses to reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking into account other principle religions represented in Britain (Mannitz, 2004). The radical position of removing religion from the curriculum in France in order to ensure 'ultimate religious neutrality' can be

appreciated from this perspective. Nonetheless, the Swedish and British models may be commended for being mindful of the historical and current importance of religion - and specifically Christianity - to the social and cultural lives of people.

Views in support of multi-faith Religious Education in a Secular Swedish Society

Although Sweden is referred to as one of the most secular countries in the world (Petterson, 2006, p 140; Osbeck & Petterson, 2009), there is overwhelming support for the teaching of religion in schools expressed by the two historical experts on religious education, two current experts on religious education curriculum, two teachers and eight students. Although six students out of eight said they do not believe in God or belong to any religion, all of them supported the teaching of religion in schools for different reasons but mainly citing the emergence of a multi-cultural society and the need to know what religion means to its adherents and how they can interface with them. Some of the student's responses to the question whether it is good to continue teaching religion in a secular country were hinged on the growth of a multi-cultural and multi-religious society (Jackson, 2004). Nancy, #3 said: *It is good to have knowledge about religions, know the differences and why people do certain things.*

A similar response by Ken Student #5 was: *There is a need to read about the biggest religions, you meet a lot of people, you need to understand about other people.*

One interesting response was a student who viewed the need to study about other religions in light of the role of religion in conflict in modern times, an indicator of the negative role of religion, if in a secular society, the only major association people may have of religion is conflict.

Judith, Student 6 said, 'In my opinion there have been a lot of wars because of religion, it is important to know why they started.'

Only one student out of the eight argued that the teaching of religion in schools might enable some students to choose a religion to live by.

Alice Student 8 said: *It is possible if you don't have a religion, neutral you can pick a religion you like.'*

It was interesting to note that her colleagues did not agree with Judith, Student 6, arguing that: *I don't agree, we know the Christian religion very well, but I am not a Christian, we have a good teacher but…*

The responses of the students largely indicate that religious education is viewed as an avenue of learning about religion thereby enabling them to appreciate religion as a phenomenon of human experience and not to promote Christianity, the dominant religious tradition. In this respect, the Swedish model of religious education can be described as neutral and objective. However, the research findings reveal that some text-books and some teachers' approaches seem to compromise the expected objectivity and neutrality of the curriculum and the secular nature of the school system.

Short-Falls in Teachers' approaches, Textbooks and recommendations

The most challenging aspect of the Swedish non-confessional and expected objective and neutral religious education curriculum, according to interviews, is the tendency among some teachers to stick to 'the tradition' while implementing the curriculum as well as the promotion of deeply held society values such as the celebrating of Christmas festivals without due observance of non-Christian religious festivals in similar manner. In addition, through earlier research done in Sweden and interviews, some text-books used in teaching about religions, other than Christianity, portray a negative picture about such religions thereby possibly causing dislike of those religions among Swedish students.

In an interview with Viola (HE 2) she argued that most teachers still teach as though the non-confessional multi-faith and multi-value religious education syllabus is centered on Christianity. She said: *Not all teachers will look at the curriculum, teachers tend to say we do as we've always done it, meaning how they were taught. Many of the practices of 1930's and 1940's will be seen in Swedish schools. For example, a friend of mine had 7th and 8th grade and told me that she taught the Bible and mainly the New Testament in the 7th grade and history of Christianity and different churches in 8th grade and in 9th grade covered some other religions. The syllabus we have today is quite open, they will learn about Christianity and maybe the world religions in 9th grade Hinduism and 2 or 3 lessons and a lot about Christianity.*

The privileged position of Christianity as indicated is a result of the teacher's lack of initiative to interpret fully the syllabus that would guarantee adequate time to different religions. The reference to an open syllabus by the expert on religious education suggests that there are no proper guidelines on a syllabus coverage schedule that would ensure equity among religions. This position can be confirmed by Martin, Teacher RE 1, in a response to a question as to whether all religions are treated fairly in syllabus coverage and she said, *'I start with Christianity, our tradition, if they have Christian tradition, if they are familiar with it, you can look at other religions and compare…*' The response of this teacher expresses bias towards Christianity, 'our tradition' and this attitude can defeat the purpose of an objective and neutral Swedish multi-faith and multi-value religious education. Sharon, Teacher RE 2 expressed the difficulty of achieving the concept of fairness to all religions by arguing thus: *There are so many religions, in the little time you have to make sure we teach well but emphasis is on the big five but am aware it could be the big six otherwise you end up not finishing. You can't neglect Hinduism and Budhism, they are too big, Judaism is the basis for Christianity and Islam.*

Sharon, Teacher RE 2, expressed the example of an objective and neutral approach to teaching about religion since she emphasized the importance and coverage of the big five. In fact, she further revealed to me that in their school, Hinduism and Budhism is taught by a teacher from India in October and November while later Judaism, Christianity and Islam are taught plus also other secular philosophies like humanism and existentialism.

Another key area that has short-falls in addressing the expected objectivity and neutrality of the school system is the importance attached to Christian festivals in most of the public schools. There is a continued relationship between the school and church and while this shouldn't be a problem in itself, since there is an expectation of the school to interact with the community (and church is part of community) there is an extent to which it compromises the neutrality of the state school system especially in favour of the dominant Church of Sweden. Ann (NAE 1) an expert on religious education said: *It is strange, very strange in a secular country, that very often when schools are breaking off for summer the closing ceremony is held in church, may be Easter and of course most schools are Church of Sweden but in my locality there is another local Christian Church that is where they go normally. They can go to the Church to see the event (maybe Easter) but the Church has no influence on what is taught.*

Whilst it would be unrealistic to expect churches not to have a relationship with the schools, the preference of a Church to any other place of worship or hall raises questions on neutrality and yet according to my formal and informal interviews in Karlstad, Uppsala and Lund indicated that this continues to be a common practice. Another expert on religious education indicated that due to the compromise in neutrality, many schools now are trying to move away from churches to halls whenever organizing festivals or school functions.

In areas where other religions are represented it is imperative that important religious festivals are given due attention if the concept of neutrality of the school system is to be upheld. Similarly, as earlier confirmed from Swedish research on RE text-books, some of the text-books on religions, other than Christianity that are used in Swedish schools have limitations since they do not reflect objectivity and neutrality. In addition, an interview carried out with both teachers of religious education, they consented to this view. Martin, Teacher RE 1, while praising the text-book he uses on Islam said: *A colleague recommended this text-book on Islam to me. Yes this one's illustrations are really good because even a photograph can alienate people or connect people to the subject e.g In Hinduism many texts show photos of widows that are ugly and bad looking, this can cause dislike for the images and the religion.*

The reference to ugly images of Hinduism in some text-books is an indicator of the possible turn off to Hinduism as a religion among Swedish students since the writers did not exercise some sensitivity in the representation of Hinduism as a religion. A similar response from Sharon, Teacher RE 2, was elicited when asked if the text-books give fair coverage to all religions. She said: *No. No. Some parts are wrong. I don't use those materials, my pupils find update materials on religion but I want them to think about, to be aware of the sources, not only wikipedia.'*

The teacher expresses dissatisfaction about the content of text-books on religions and this is a subject that was extensively investigated by Härenstam in a study whose theme was to compare the picture of Islam in Swedish text-books with Islamic self-understanding. Härenstam (1993) established that most text-books on Islam selected negative material on Islam such as portraying Islam as a fanatical religion whose spread is a result of violence and some present Islam from a historical, out-moded and not current perspective. Härenstam further argues that for text-books published after the National syllabus of 1980 for comprehensive school and after the National curriculum for upper secondary: *The interesting*

thing is that the book which really has the most aggressive image of God in Islam is the book that is most widespread in the Swedish school, Religion och liv, högstadiet (Härenstam, 1993, p. 285).

What Härenstam is suggesting here is that Swedish students are bound to develop an image of Islam as a religion of violence instead of a religion of peace as it is often referred to. This raises the question though of whether it is proper to selectively choose information that students are given? Perhaps the problem is with there being lack of a balance between the reality of negative representations of Islam and the positive representatives of Islam. It is important that Islam as a religion is represented positively and the negative images of Islam accruing from modern militant Islam be explained in context. In his article on the place of religion in four civil cultures, Maintz (2004) argues that it is only France that treats all religions in a value neutral manner, the major problem being presenting it from a historical perspective. Germany and Netherlands are presented by Maintz as portraying Islam in text-books as an inferior religion and/or a violent religion. The approach discussed concerning representation of other religions in text-books compromises neutrality and raises questions on the achievement of the objective of a multi-faith Swedish religious education.

Immigrophobia: Challenge to Multi-Faith Swedish Religious Education

In my interviews of experts on religious education, teachers and students, I was able to establish that there are some Swedish citizens who have a negative attitude to people of other ethnicities who come to work or settle in Sweden. However statistically insignificant this problem may be, it is an indicator of the short-comings in fulfilling the goals of the multi-faith the Religious Education whose key objective is to enable students to appreciate the multi-religious and multi-value Swedish society. In a secular school system, which should uphold the concept of neutrality and

fairness to all religions, races or cultures, there is a need to deliberately address these possible loopholes for promoting religious or ethnic hatred.

One of the key interview observations is that both sets of students expressed their experience with acts that can be described as religious and/or ethnic intolerance. The secondary school students mainly associated such negative acts of social relations with primary school age when they were still 'youths.' When asked if some students are harassed for their religious beliefs in school, Tom, Student 2, said: *When you are young you are stupid and ignorant-mostly verbal when I was a kid they had a hard time, a lot of racism but when we grow we mature no longer an issue.'*

Fred, Student 1, similarly said: *When I was in 7th grade I was against people of religion, even Christians.*

Fred's statement is quite revealing since it indicates that students in Swedish schools have no strong attachment even to Christianity. In other words the majority seem to hold secular views. In another school, two girls: Judith, Student 6, and Kate, Student 7, referred to incidences that reflect intolerance of a teacher towards students of other religions and/ or ethnicities while another cited an example of her own problems since she is a self-proclaimed member of Jehovah's witnesses. In response to the question whether some students are harassed for their religious beliefs, Kate, Student 7, said: *I haven't seen it either but I know that older teachers have something against some people, not very obvious, people who are not from here, I can feel it, older teachers have something against foreign students. I don't know if it is about their religion or skin colour*.

Although non-committal, Kate refers to teachers having something against 'people who are not from here' and this is a bold statement made in the presence of her Religious Education teacher. This is an indicator first of the independence of mind of students but second the reality of uneasiness on part of what she refers to as old teachers, a possible reference to 'conservative attitudes' as

opposed to the youthful teachers who may be a product of modernity and therefore more tolerant of people of other religions or races. Kate, Student 7, who is a Jehovah's Witness said: *I think it happens but it has not happened to me, it depends on who you are, if you explain, there are many prejudices against many religions, Jehovah's Witnesses, many others too, because most of the pupils don't believe in anything, they don't know anything…*

The Jehovah's Witness girl reveals how majority students hold secular views and not religious views. The Jehovah's Witness girl had a lot to complain about since even in the presence of her teacher she said the teacher normally distributes tracts which contain distorted information about her religion although she said the teacher actually teaches different things (or nice things).

In informal conversation with students, I was told that Jehovah's Witness is regarded as a dangerous cult and school administration makes attempts to warn students about it and other cults. While it is true that the teachings of Jehovah's Witness present some unpatriotic teachings (not serving in the army etc) and what is described as anti-social beliefs (say of cutting ties with whoever leaves the church), in a secular country that exercises neutrality to religion, there is a need to listen more to Jehovah's Witness than is the case today. Apparently the Jehovah's Witness girl is the single most self-proclaimed believer in God and religion among the eight students I interviewed.

Religious tensions were expressed in interviews, especially in relationship with the growing Muslim community that is apt to promote its Islamic and Arabic cultural values such as women's *burqa*. While the students expressed worry about the increased numbers of immigrants and the four experts admitted religious and/or racial tensions mainly in some cities, all the four experts on religious education, the two teachers of Religious Education and the eight students did not support Moslem wearing of the *burqa*, in their view for practical reasons and not as a sign of religious intolerance. Agnes, Student 4, in the interview painted a grim

picture of the disproportionate increase in foreigners by saying: *We talked about it a few weeks ago (for me I am fifteen years older than these three colleagues of mine (in folkhögskolan) when I was young we had a few people from different countries in 1980's but now a friend of mine said for every 600 students there were 3 foreign students but now 19 of 22 students are from different cultures!*

Although the statistics of the students were out of the blue, they make a point of the worry about 'excessive' increase in immigrants and this can be a recipe for religious and ethnic intolerance or even discrimination. It is important that religious education curriculum addresses itself to such aspects since students may need to appreciate the real statistics and the realities of globalization whereby even Swedish citizens may be found in big numbers in other foreign countries. It is possible that some of these negative attitudes perhaps even based on un-researched information may be responsible for cases cited by experts of religious education and students of religious and/or racial discrimination.

While responding to the question, do you think there is religious discrimination in Sweden? One student said: *We have a lot of discrimination getting a job, religion does not matter-veil is not religion, it doesn't fit in Sweden, what matters is the colour of your skin and how good you are looking is what matters. If you are good looking, pretty, attractive it is easier to get a job, it is not religion.*

The student fails to acknowledge that Islam is a way of life and not restricted to Islam the religion. In other words, he thinks the matter of the veil is not a religious issue and yet the Muslim women greatly view it so. In this respect, there is a clash of cultures and civilizations and it is a test of the values of multi-faith and value religious education that stresses promotion of understanding, sensitivity, and empathy with the other (Watson, 1993; Jackson, 1997). On the other hand, the practical realities of a veiled woman school teacher or shopkeeper in a secular public enterprise does not seem rational. Nonetheless, it is these areas that the curriculum and

teachers need to engage with in a growing multi-cultural and multi-religious society.

Conclusion

The discussion has shown that a non-confessional multi-faith religious education is supported by all the interviewees despite the majority indicating that they do not believe in God, attend regular worship or strictly observe religious festivals. This seems to confirm a generally accepted view that Sweden is a highly secular society. The main reason why the multi-faith religious education is supported is that it enables students without religious background (since for the majority their parents do not introduce them to religion) to study about what it means for people who believe in God and belong to different religions and in the process, they can empathize with them and relate to them well.

The interviews reveal that there is no expectation on the part of teachers to affirm students within the Christian Religious Tradition, nor, the dominant Lutheran church, an indicator of the concept of neutrality and objectivity. On the other hand, earlier research mainly by Härenstam and interviews with teachers revealed that some text-books in use portray other religions in bad light thus possibly causing dislike to the Swedish learners. In addition, the interview of students expressed the problem of some teachers who exhibit traits of religious and/or ethnic intolerance.

Interviews of secondary school students revealed that they mistreated pupils (mainly immigrant children) who belonged to religious faith traditions while in primary schools and this shows that in lower primary schools there seems to be some experience of anti-religious and/ or ethnic tensions.

The challenge of signs of *immigrophobia* in the community as expressed by some secondary school students, teachers and experts on religious education curriculum is an indicator of possible challenge to the goals of a multi-faith religious education

curriculum. Cognizant of the aforementioned challenges and mindful of the overwhelming support for a multi-faith religious education curriculum whose goals would address the short-comings, I recommend that teachers should take great care in choosing text-books on other religions and perhaps the Education Agencies could recommend key text-books that meet the concept of fairness to the integrity of the religions.

The government can also be charged with the task of heightening different programmes that are meant to address facts about immigration, attitudes to ethnicity and religion through mass media and other forum that can ensure the growth of a harmonious multi-cultural and multi-religious society.

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PROGRAM PROGRESSION AND COMPLETION AMONG POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AT BISHOP STUART UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper was generated from findings of a survey that was done involving postgraduate students and lecturers of Bishop Stuart University to find out the status of course progression and completion among Masters and PhD students. The study sought to establish the factors impacting program progression and completion among postgraduate students at Bishop Stuart University. The data for the study was collected through online questionnaires and interviews with Masters and PhD postgraduate students that were registered between the years 2015 and 2018. The findings indicated that the majority of students spend more than twice the amount of the minimum time allowed for the programs registered for. It was established that after the completion of the first academic year of class work, there is little follow up on the students. As a result, most students graduate well behind schedule while others drop out. Financial constraints were mentioned by students as the main challenge causing delay in program progression and completion. Other key challenges mentioned were the Covid-19 induced lockdown, disagreement between supervisors, personal health challenges and inaccessible or unresponsive supervisors that take a very long time to provide feedback when they are given work for review. Some students also

mentioned that they were unable to access most online journals that required a subscription.

Introduction

Many students across the world are enrolling for post graduate education. Most of the post graduate students are staff in higher education institutions on professional development but there are also other students employed in other institutions. There are also many students progressing to do post graduate studies immediately after their undergraduate courses, especially in light of the reality that it is becoming increasingly difficult to get employed after getting the first degree due to acute competition for the few jobs available.

According to UNESCO (2020) in the last twenty years, higher education enrolment worldwide almost doubled, going from 19% to 38% between 2000 and 2018. In Uganda, according to the National Council for Higher Education (2018), a total of 1885 staff in higher education institutions were enrolled for Masters programs compared to 748 for PhD programs. Post graduate education offers a more specialized focus on specific study areas. This is likely to equip graduates with expertise which is very necessary especially in the modern world where the job market is flooded with many qualified people, thereby making the competition very stiff. A post graduate education is also very likely to add value to the name of the graduate thereby earning them more respect from employees and the society at large. Post graduate qualifications are also most likely to come with better earnings thereby making the return on investment more worthwhile for an individual.

Moreover, some careers require postgraduate qualification. For example, according to Olara (2023), Makerere university lecturers were ordered to acquire PhDs or lose their jobs. Apart from career progression, postgraduate education may also benefit those who may wish to change their careers and those who may just

wish to take on a personal intellectual challenge which may lead to personal material and psychological gratification.

Post graduate education at Bishop Stuart University is coordinated by the directorate of post graduate studies and there are many courses at post graduate diploma, Masters degree programs and PhD programs. This study mainly focused on the Masters and PhD courses, considering that many diploma courses do not involve research which appears to be the main cause of slow progression or drop out.

Problem Statement

Although the demand for post graduate education is increasing everywhere in the world including Uganda, there appears to be a problem of slow progression and completion especially in developing countries.

According the University post graduate hand book, Masters Degrees and PhD students are expected to graduate in 2 and 3 calendar years respectively. However, only a small percentage of students of students are able to complete their post graduate courses. For example, only 2 out 19 students registered for the Master of Education program at Bishop Stuart University were able to graduate on time while none of the 15 PhD students registered were able to graduate on time. Many of these students usually complete the taught programs on time but the delay in most of the cases starts when the students start on research. The majority of students end up spending more time than the minimum prescribed period while others end up dropping out of the courses completely.

For example, according to Monton *et. al* (2015), on average 16% of Masters graduates in South Africa continue to enroll for a PhD within 5-years of completing their masters studies. Of these, only 39% complete their doctoral studies within 7 years. Approximately 60% of all Masters students are still enrolled four years after their first entrance. This means that the corresponding

attrition rate (or dropout rate) is 40%, and this pattern has not changed significantly from analyses of earlier masters cohorts. Between 34% and 45% of masters students take three to five years to complete their degree. c. With regards to doctoral retention, approximately 60% of all doctoral students are still enrolled by the fifth year after their first entry (i.e. have completed or are in the process of completing). This means that the corresponding attrition rate (or drop-out rate) is 40%. The same study found that the average completion time for Masters and PhD students was 5 and 7 years respectively, even though the minimum time allowable for the courses is 2 and 3 years respectively.

The same study (Monton et.al 2015) reported much better completion rates for Universities in the developed countries.

Data for students in the United States who entered doctoral programs in 1992-93 to 1994-95 found that the overall cumulative 10-year completion rate was 57%. At Canada's 15 research-intensive universities 70.6% of the students who entered PhD studies in 2001 successfully completed within nine years across disciplines. British students who enrolled in 1996-97 for a period of seven years up to 2002-03 had a completion rate of 71% for full-time and 34% for part-time PhD students.

A comparative analysis of the doctoral students in South Africa who commenced their studies in 2003, 2004 and 2005 illustrated an average completion rate of 35% after five years and 42% after six years. The 2006 cohort showed a 48% completion rate after seven years.

Failing to complete the program on time by many students is a problem to the students themselves but also to the institutions. Other potential students who would like to enroll are likely to be demotivated to enroll when they see those ahead of them not progressing as they should. Timely progression and completion would also help to free up time and resources for institutions and supervisors to take on new students. Finishing programs in time is also likely to improve the reputation of an academic institution.

Students who finish their programs in time can also be encouraged to start on other more advanced courses. Failure to progress or finish in time also makes students spend more money on top of losing time that they would be spending working for more money, thus slow progression leads to a double loss to the student. Spending more time than was originally planned also leads to fatigue and this may affect the quality of the work. At some point, students and supervisors end up turning in work that is not as good as it should be, just for the sake of finishing the course.

Moreover, slow progression may even render the study irrelevant since the problem that the researcher may have identified may have since mutated or evolved or may require other solutions other than those suggested by the researcher. Slow progression also often times results into a bad relationship between the supervisor and the student because many times the student begins to put the blame on the supervisor, claiming that the supervisor is intentionally and maliciously causing the delay. On the other hand, the supervisor may also begin to blame the student, claiming that the student is not doing enough to progress as quickly as they should.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

This study was intended to find out factors affecting course progression and completion among post graduate students at Bishop Stuart University so as to identify measures that may be taken to improve the rate of completion. The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

I. To find out the status of program progression among post graduate students (Masters and PhD) at Bishop Stuart University
II. To find out factors that affect program progression and completion among Postgraduate students

III. To suggest measures that may lead to improvement in program progression and completion

Literature Review

Many studies that have been done across the world show that factors that affect progression and completion of postgraduate studies are many and varied. De Zoysa (2008), in a study done to investigate the factors affecting the completion of postgraduate degrees for students using the long distance mode in Sri-Lanka reported that in a group of 51 post graduate students, 48% had completed on time, 36% were still progressing while 20% had dropped out. Some of the factors identified that affected progression included language barrier (for the non-English speaking students), financial difficulties, lack of sufficient knowledge in research methods, lack of support by university authorities and supervisors, poor program structure, insufficient library and ICT facilities, and poor time management by supervisors and university facilities.

In a study by Rachel Brooks, Kate Byford, and Janet Batsleer (2014) it was reported that academic and personal support, funding, and clear expectations and feedback were important factors in postgraduate student success.

Similarly, in a study by Pasha-Zaidi and Andrew W. Kemp (2018) the literature review analyzed 64 studies on postgraduate program completion rates from around the world. The review found that personal and academic factors, such as motivation, time management skills, academic preparation, and supervisory support, were key factors in postgraduate program completion.

A survey of postgraduate students in the United Kingdom, UK Higher Education Academy. (2019). found that academic support, supervision, and feedback were important factors in postgraduate student success. The survey also found that students who reported

higher levels of satisfaction with their postgraduate experience were more likely to progress to further study or employment.

A review of the literature by Lesley Pugsley and Roger Davis (2018). Which analyzed studies on postgraduate program completion and progression from around the world found that factors such as student motivation, program structure, supervision, and support services were important predictors of postgraduate program success.

Meanwhile, Kylie Shaw, Helen Partridge, and Gillian Hallam (2013) in a study that examined the factors that contribute to postgraduate coursework completion and non-completion in Australia, found that personal factors, such as motivation and time management skills, were important predictors of completion, along with program structure and support services.

In another study, Hommadai (1990) pointed out absence of adequate policy and programming of research work by university departments as a major cause of poor progression. Ismail (1997) found out that poor progression was attributed to the students' home and institutional environment such as students' economic background demographic variable and distance from the students' home to the university. Similarly Muthukrishnan et. al (2022) reported that key factors influencing graduation on time were student research skills and institutional support.

In a study done in Pakistan, Muhammad (2021) identified personal factors, supervisory factors, social support and institutional factors as major factors affecting course progression among post graduate students. Similarly, Ferrer de Valero (2009) attributed poor progression and low completion rates to institutional bureaucracies. Meanwhile, in a study done to establish individual and institutional factors that influence completion rates in a medical education Master's program in Germany, difficulty in choosing a research topic and lack of timely feedback from supervisors were the major factors.

Businge (2019) reported that student dropout rate in Uganda were alarming. It was reported that according to the 2016 Africa Higher Education student survey report, almost 30% of all students in Uganda who join University education never finish their courses n time or end up dropping out. Some of the factors identified include pregnancy, alcoholism, misappropriation of tuition fees by students and financial difficulties. Similarly, Eyangu *et. al* (2014) noted that completion rates among Masters students was very low. The delays and dropouts were attributed to delays in returning research comments by both internal and external supervisors, personal student weaknesses such as lack of commitment, lack of time due to commitments at home or at work and delays caused by institutional bureaucracy. Other factors identified include disagreements or failure to move at the same pace by co-supervisors, relaxed or unclear university policies on enforcing timely completion, health challenges, lack of funds and lack of commitment of the supervisors.

Stella Mbabazi and James Arinaitwe (2019) examined the factors that influence postgraduate completion rates in Ugandan universities and offers recommendations for improving academic success. The study found that funding, supervision, time management, research skills, and personal factors were all important factors in postgraduate program completion.

Justus Mugaju and Grace B. Nanyonga (2018) discussed the state of postgraduate education in Uganda, including enrollment, completion, and quality. The authors highlight challenges such as funding, research capacity, and infrastructure, and suggest strategies for improving postgraduate education in Uganda.

Suzan Nakacwa and Anthony Mugagga (2017) examined the factors that influence postgraduate student retention and attrition in Uganda, using data from a survey of postgraduate students at Makerere University. The study found that academic factors, such as supervision and course quality, were important predictors of

retention, as were personal factors such as motivation and time management skills.

Muhairwe Immaculate, Kigongo-Mueller Joyce, and Ronald Bisaso (2017), discussed the challenges of postgraduate education at Makerere University, including funding, supervision, and quality. The authors suggest strategies for addressing these challenges, such as enhancing supervision and support services for students.

While the foregoing literature from around the world and Uganda in particular identifies the common causes of poor program completion and progression, most of the studies are done in environments that are different from the context of the current study, which was done in a young private university in a developing country with very little experience in running post graduate courses.

Postgraduate Programs at Bishop Stuart University

The University has been offering postgraduate courses in various disciplines since 2007. These include post graduate diplomas, Masters degrees and PhD programs. This study focused mainly on Masters and PhD students, since these are the ones that are required to do classwork and research.

Research Design and Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The data for the study was collected through online questionnaires and interviews with Masters and PhD postgraduate students that were registered between the years 2015 and 2018. All the 15 students who had enrolled for various PhD programs and all 19 students who had enrolled for Masters in Education during the period 2015-2018 were involved in the study.

The questionnaire for the participants was used to elicit responses from participants on specific areas regarding students' experiences especially factors that impacted their program progression. The questionnaire was followed up with one-on-one interviews in order to be able to ask follow up questions to enable the researcher to understand the views of respondents. Participants who could not be reached physically were interviewed on phone.

Findings

Out of the 15 students that registered for PhD in the period 2015-2018, none had been able to graduate in the minimum period of 3 years. One student was able to graduate after 6 years in 2022 while another 2 graduated after 7 years in 2023. This means that based on the number that had completed, the average completion time for PhDs was 6.5 years. The remaining 10 students were still doing research while 2 students said they had abandoned the course. One of the students who had abandoned the PhD course cited financial difficulties while another said he had lost interest in the course when he realized that the program did not rhyme well with his previous qualifications.

Of the 19 Masters students who had enrolled from 2016-2018 and participated in this study, none had been able to graduate in the minimum period of 2 years. Only 2 students were able to graduate 1 year late while 5 students graduated 3 years late. 2 students graduated 4 years late. This means the average completion time for Masters was 5 years. The remaining 10 students out of the 19 (53%) were still progressing or had dropped out of the course.

The findings also showed that of the 19 participants who were Masters Students that had registered from 2016-2018, none of the students were able to graduate in the minimum period of 2 years. 3 students had graduated 1 year late, 4 students graduated 2 years late, 3 graduated 3 years late while 10 students were either still progressing or had dropped out of the course.

Students were asked whether they felt that they had enough time to do their research work and 80% said they indeed had enough time while 20% felt that they were too busy at their work place to be able to progress and complete their course in time.

Asked whether they had enough funds to enable them to progress and complete on time, 48% said they had enough funds. On the other hand, 35% said they did not have enough funds while 16% gave a neutral response.

The students were asked whether they had enough access to their supervisors. 63% of the respondents said they had access to their supervisors while 21% gave a neutral response and 12% said they did not have sufficient access to their supervisors.

57% of the respondents said they had access to both their supervisors while 20% said only one of their supervisors were accessible. 21% of the respondents gave a neutral answer to the question about accessibility to both supervisors.

When asked to rate their supervisors knowledge of research methods, 57% of the respondents agreed that their supervisors were knowledgeable compared to 10% who disagreed and 8% who gave a neutral response.

Asked whether they sometimes received contradictory guidance from their supervisors, 48% of the respondents said they did not face such a problem compared to 27% who gave a neutral answer. 23% of the respondents said they faced the problem of getting contradictory guidance from their supervisors.

The study also sought to find out whether the students felt they had enough knowledge and access to ICT facilities. The majority of the students (80%) said they felt they were not challenged as far as knowledge and access of ICT. The remaining 20% talked of problems like poor internet connectivity in their areas, printing facilities and lack of or unreliable electricity.

Asked about the support they get from the University especially in terms of clear timelines for progression and completion of research work, 58% said they felt the University

provided clear timelines. However, 42% said the University did not provide clear timelines. Asked whether they were regularly contacted by the University authorities to encourage them to progress with their research work, 50% of the students said they were never contacted and 10% gave a neutral answer. Only 40% said they were contacted.

Some Factors that have Helped Students to Progress

The students were asked to mention some factors that may have helped them to progress with their work. Some of the factors mentioned include encouragement from the supervisors, personal determination, peer support and a conducive learning environment at the University.

Some Factors that have Hindered Course Progression and Completion

However, the students mentioned financial constraints as the main challenge. Over 50% said they did not have enough funds to cover all costs, considering that they were using their meager salaries to finance their programs. One of the participants said the salary was hardly enough to cover his personal and domestic needs and leave enough to cater for the needs of the program.

Other key challenges mentioned were the Covid-19 induced lockdown. Most respondents said the onset of the Covid lockdown left them hopeless and unsure of when normal life would resume. The lockdown also meant that they could not travel to meet supervisors or access material in the university and other libraries.

Another factor mentioned was disagreement between supervisors. Participants mentioned that disagreements often times left them stranded, failing to decide which advice to follow. Personal health challenges were also mentioned by some

participants. Another problem mentioned was inaccessible or unresponsive supervisors that take a very long time to provide feedback when they are given work for review.

Some students also mentioned that they were unable to access most online journals that required subscription. This problem was made worse by lack of sufficient funds on the part of individual students but also lack of sufficient knowledge on how to subscribe to such journals. One student for example said that most journals required one to have a credit card and the student confessed that neither did he have a credit card nor did he know how he would use it to subscribe.

Suggestion for Improvement

According to the students, allocating one key supervisor may ensure quicker progression than the current practice of two supervisors who sometimes give contradictory guidance or fail to move at the same speed while reviewing students' work. It was also suggested that the University should subscribe to online journals to enable students to access them.

Students also suggested that the University should help students to identify alternative sources of funding and sponsorship because post graduate education is very expensive and many students do not earn enough to enable them to finance their education.

In addition, students also mentioned that the University should follow up on the supervisors to ensure that they do their work punctually and with commitment. Students also suggested that the University needs to do more as far as following up and encouraging students. They also suggested that there should be regular student seminars and presentations. It was also suggested that the University should come up with clear and strict timelines which students should be reminded about from time to time. It was also suggested that students should be provided with an opportunity to

give their feedback about the challenges they may be facing from time to time. This they said could be through questionnaires or regular meetings.

Views from Supervisors

Apart from the data collected from students, data was also collected from 10 University staff who had been research supervisors in the period 2016-2020. 75% of these were at the rank of Lecturer while 25% were at the rank of Senior Lecturer. 60% of these supervisors said students did not appear to be too busy to be too busy to have time to progress and complete their research work compared to 20% who gave a neutral answer and 20% who said students appeared to be too busy. However, 60% of the supervisors said students did not come for regular consultation, compared to 20% who gave a neutral answer and 20% who were satisfied with the number of times students came for consultation.

On whether students appeared to have good knowledge of research methods, 40% of the lecturers said students did not appear to have sufficient knowledge of research methods while 40% gave a neutral answer. Only 20% agreed that students appeared to have good knowledge of research methods. Similarly, 40% of the supervisors said students did not appear to have good knowledge of academic writing skills compared to 40% who gave a neutral answer and 20% who were satisfied with the students' knowledge of academic writing skills.

On whether the University gives clear guidelines and time lines for progression and completion of research, 60% 0f the lecturers agreed that clear time lines were given compared to 40% who disagreed. Meanwhile, 60% of the lecturers said they had enough time to handle students doing research while the remaining 40% disagreed.

Regarding supervisors remuneration, 60% of them said they were not satisfied with the amount and the frequency of payments

compared to 20% who were satisfied and 20% who gave a neutral answer. Considering the speed at which the university handles students' research to enable them to progress and complete their research work, 60% were satisfied with the speed compared to 20% who gave a neutral answer and 20% who were not satisfied.

On factors that may be slowing down students' progression and completion, supervisors observed that many students were not committing enough time to research while others appeared to be having challenges as far as knowledge of research methods was concerned. One of the supervisors mentioned that some students insist on doing research topics that are not easily manageable. Other challenges identified included students' work schedules and financial challenges.

The supervisors suggested that as measures to bring about improvement in progression and completion of post graduate courses, the university should issue clearer and stricter timelines and institute sanctions such as surcharges for students who fail to meet the deadlines. I was also suggested by the supervisors that students should be compelled to give timely progress reports about their work.

Discussion and Key Emerging Issues

The study established progression and completion rates among post graduate students at Bishop Stuart University that are far from desirable. With no students completing their courses in the minimum time and the majority taking twice as much time as they should to graduate, the situation is a matter of urgent concern.

More effort needs to be put in preparing the students by giving them not only enough knowledge but also enough information about what they need to do and when they need to do it. It was found out that while the majority of students who enroll for Masters and PhD courses tend to complete the initial class work which is done in the first academic year on time, delays usually start to set in as

soon as students embark on research work. Students are often left to work at their own pace and because they are no longer required to be physically at the University, many disappear from the university and their supervisors' radar. The students, the university and the supervisors need to review their strategies and work methods in order to ensure more regular and timely course progression and completion.

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WORK-RELATED MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS FROM GENDER PERSPECTIVE AMONG STAFF OF BISHOP STUART UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

In this work, various work-related musculoskeletal disorders were conscientiously studied from a gender perspective among the staff of Bishop Stuart University. A total of 112 staff members consented to participate in the study. 62 were females and 50 were males. The majority of our participants were within the age range of 30-39. The academic staff were 68 and the non-academic staff were 44. The Krejcie and Morgan Table of 1970 was used to determine the sample size. The supporting staff members, visiting lecturers, and part-time staff were excluded from the study. The study was cross sectional and the tool of data collection was Self structured, validated questionnaire. The data collection exercise lasted for 6

weeks, after which the collected data were analysed with SPSS version 25. The results revealed Low back pain, blurred vision, upper back pain, neck pain and shoulder/wrist pain were the common work-related musculoskeletal disorders suffered by the staff members. The study findings revealed that more male academic staff members suffered from work-related musculoskeletal disorders than their female counterparts. Conversely, the result of the study showed also that among the non-academic staff, there were more female sufferers of work-related musculoskeletal disorders than their male counterparts. Nevertheless, it was also noted that there was a concatenation of factors among other things that brought about the work-related musculoskeletal disorders, among staff members judging from Ergonomics standpoint. Such concatenation of factors was poor ergonomic knowledge application at workstation practices, lack of orientation on ergonomics, ergonomically designed working environment, etc.

Keywords: *Ergonomics, Musculoskeletal disorders, Staff, Environment.*

Background: From an ergonomics point of view, the teaching profession is gradually turning into the most hazardous profession in the world. The situation is worse in developing countries, especially in the private sectors and more so, in the hands of few bourgeois of the Africa society, who own private institutions. In most institutions across Africa, it appears as if priority attention is not given to health and safety of employees that its ergonomics significance truly deserves.

Methodology: Self structured, validated questionnaire were administered to both academic and non-academic staff, using the convenience and snowball sampling techniques. The questionnaire was designed to gather data pertaining to ergonomic principles and

its application in workstation practices, ergonomics fit of the workstations and work-related injuries. SPSS software for windows version 25 was used for statistical analysis for the research data. Descriptive statistic consisting of mean, standard deviation, number and frequency were used. Relationship between research variables were assessed using the Kendall's correlation and the null hypothesis tested using Paired sign test. The significance level (p) was set at <0.05

Results: Generally, the study results revealed that at least one work-related disorder was being suffered by either academic staff or non-academic staff at any given time. The most commonly suffered musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) among the employees was lower back pain. The least suffered MSD was blurred vision among the academic staff, and upper back pain among the nonacademic staff. It revealed that there were more males in most age groups suffering from musculoskeletal disorders than their female counterparts of the same age group.

Conclusion: All staff whether academic or nonacademic suffer from work related musculoskeletal disorders. It is therefore recommended that management should put in place the right state of the art ergonomic office furniture and gadgets and orient the employees about proper workplace place ergonomics. The staff in turn should utilize respectfully and beneficially the provided state of the art ergonomic facilities to promote their social, physical and academic wellbeing.

Introduction

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders among university workers are gradually gaining popularity among experts in all ramifications. It is so, because the problems of musculoskeletal disorders give a fair share to all workers from other sectors of life (Ndejjo et al.,

2015) Work being a universal aspect of mankind, this paper therefore, explored the work-related musculoskeletal disorders suffered by both academic and nonacademic staff of BSU in relation to gender distribution.

In the context of ergonomics as well as medical parlance, work-related musculoskeletal disorders denote the groups of injuries or disorders affecting the musculoskeletal system, which consist of the muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, blood vessels and cartilages((Kumari & Kaur, 2018). Within the purview of occupational ergonomics, common musculoskeletal disorders suffered are low back pain, neck pain, wrist and shoulder pain, with characteristic symptoms like numbness, fatigue, psychosocial stress and burn out, (Ojoawo et al., 2016).

At the tertiary institution level, work-related musculoskeletal disorders have both individualistic and management consequences. Generally, an academic institutional performance level is measured based on specific academic key milestones of achievements that set it apart from other institutions of similar goals and more so, if the institution is facing stiff competition. These academic milestones speak volume of its historical odyssey, as well predict the future direction the institution is taking. Collectively, this can be affected by the ergonomic hazards her staff members face.

In the event where attention is not given to the problem of MDS which it rightly deserves, individual complaints of work-related musculoskeletal disorders will continue to be on the increase (Woo et al., 2015). Hence, for a tertiary institution to effectively put into actions, her proposed plans or activities, it is imperative, first to identify and prioritize strategic means of improving staff performance, from the ergonomic point of view. That being said, the working environment, the ability of the individual staff, the safety and health condition of the workers must be put into consideration (Susihono & Gunawan, 2018).

With the advent of digital learning, the societal awareness of environmental, socio-cultural, ethical as well as academic needs has

sky rocketed. Consequently, this has sharpened focus on strategies for safe ergonomic practices among mentors and mentees either at home during online learning or in the offices (Chandwani et al., 2019). The aim of the study was to minimize work-related musculoskeletal disorders both on the side of the learners and the lecturers alike.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Settings: This was a cross-sectional, quantitative and descriptive study conducted to study work-related musculoskeletal disorders academic and nonacademic staff of BSU in relation to age and gender distributions. The study was carried out in the main campus of the University in Kakoba including the Law Faculty and Faculty of Nursing and Biomedical Sciences in Ruharo, all in Mbarara city, Southwestern Uganda.

Participants: A total of 112 staff members were sampled, of which 62 were females and 50 males, with majority of them aging from 30-39. The supporting staff members, visiting lecturers, and part-time staff were excluded from the study.

Tools for Data Collection: A structured questionnaire was designed to elicit the required data. The questionnaire basically consisted of 4 sections with a total of 41 questions which were put in form of closed and open ended format, with the focus on the work-related musculoskeletal challenges faced by the employees, as well as possible causes from an ergonomic point of view. The instrument captured socio-demographics, awareness of ergonomic principles, ergonomics fit of the working environment as well as work-related health injuries.

Method of Data Collection: The data was collected with the help of a physically administered questionnaire. Consent was obtained

from all the respondents before administering the questionnaire. The filled information on the questionnaire was cross-checked, inspected, scrutinized to ensure they were relevant to the questions asked, accurate, and complete. Generally, a gift of pen was given to participants for their time. An ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethic committee of the institution, (BSU REC-2022-3) and the consent to collect data from the staff members of the university was obtained from the office of the public relation office of the University.

Results

Table 1: Table of MSDs among academic and Non-academic staff in relation to Gender distribution

Variable (MSDs)	Academic Staff N=68	Gender of academic staff		Non-academic Staff N=44	Gender of Nonacademic staff	
		Male	Female		Male	Female
Low Back Pain	36	20	16	22	6	16
Blurred Vision	13	7	6	10	1	9
Upper Back Pain	21	13	8	6	3	3
Neck Pain	29	19	10	21	4	17
Shoulder/ Wrist Pain	31	18	13	16	3	13

Data Analysis: The collected quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages, were presented in the above table. The table presents

the results of the MSDs among the BSU employees, in relation to gender distribution.

Among the academic staff, n=36 (52.9%), had low back pain; while among the non-academic staff, n=22 (50.0%), had low back pain. In terms of gender distribution among academic staff with low back pain, n=20 (55.5%) were males and n=16 (44.4%) were females, while among the non-academic staff, n=6 (27.3%) were males and n=16 (72.7%) were females.

The result revealed that more males among the academic staff, suffer from low back pain than their nonacademic counterpart. However, with the females, there is no difference in number of sufferers of MSDs between academic and non-academic staff. Within the academic staff group, there are more male sufferers than female, while within the non-academic staff group, there are more female sufferers than male sufferers.

With blurred vision, n=13 (19.2%) claimed to have developed it among the academic staff and n=10 (22.7%) developed the same among the nonacademic staff. Gender wise, n=7 (53.8%) were males and n=6 (46.2%) were females among the academic staff. Among the non-academic staff n=1 (10%) was a male and n=9 (90%) were females. Within the academic staff group, there are more male sufferers than female. Conversely, in the nonacademic group, there are more female sufferers than male sufferers.

The result showed that more male academic staff suffered from blurred vision than their nonacademic counterpart, and similar trend is noted among the females of academic and nonacademic employees.

The upper back pain musculoskeletal disorder, had n=21 (30.8%) and n=6 (13.6%) among academic and non-academic staff respectively. From the perspective of gender distribution, n=13 (61.9%) and n=8 (38.1%) among academic staff were males and females respectively. On the aspect of non-academic staff, n=3 (50%) and n=3 (50%), were males and females respectively.

The results revealed more males sufferers among the academic staff than the non-academic staff, and more female sufferers of blurred vision among the academic staff than the non-academic staff.

Neck pain musculoskeletal disorder had n=29 (42.6%) among the academic staff and n=21 (47.7%) among the non-academic staff. On the aspect of gender distribution among academic staff, sufferers of neck pain, had n=19 (65.5%) males and n=10 (34.5%) females. Gender distribution among nonacademic staff, revealed n=4 (19.0%) males and n=17 (81.0%) females.

Generally, the results on neck pain musculoskeletal disorder showed that there are more academic staff members suffering from this MSD than the nonacademic staff. On gender ground, there are more female sufferers among the non-academic staff than the female academic staff. Among the male employees, there are more sufferers among the academic staff, than the non-academic staff.

On shoulder and wrist pain, this study finding revealed n=31 (45.6%) and n=16 (36.4%) among the academic and non-academic staff respectively. Of these 31 positive respondents of the academic staff, n=18 (58.1%) and n=13 (49.1%) were males and females respectively. On the side of the non-academic staff, n=3 (18.8%) and n=13 (81.3%) were males and females respectively.

On a general note, there are more employees among the academic staff who suffer from shoulder and wrist pain than the employees who are non-academic staff. On gender basis, there are more cases of shoulder and wrist pain among male academic staff than non-academic staff. However, there was no difference in the frequency of the results noted among the females of the academic and nonacademic staff.

Discussion

The study findings revealed a higher frequency rate of low back pain among academic staff than the non-academic staff. Additionally, there were more cases of male sufferers than female among the academic staff and a reverse trend among the academic staff.

Here it implies that academic male staff are at ergonomically disadvantageous position, when compared with their male nonacademic counterpart, as a result of the dynamic nature of their work of sitting down for a long time to do their work of preparing materials to teach the students, supervise research, both physically and online, give online lectures, and examine students. when compared with their female academic colleagues, the study revealed again more male sufferers and this could be explained in the light of most male academic staff tending to be active and dynamic compared to their female colleagues. But among the nonacademic staff, low back pain was reported more among the female staff than their male non-teaching colleagues.

Conversely, this study finding tuned out to be in contrast with the finding of (Meaza et al., 2020), where it was reported that the most common MSD suffered by academic staff was neck pain (41.5%), which was followed by low back pain (40.3%), besides, their study revealed more female sufferers than males. The difference in the findings could be explained in light of difference in sample size, body habits of the female respondents, staff-work ratio, level of economic and infrastructural state of the setting in which the studies were carried out.

The result of our study showed that blurred vision was suffered more by academic staff than non-academic staff. Additionally, academic staff had more male sufferers than in the nonacademic and more female sufferers among the nonacademic staff, than the males. Also, within the academic staff group, there were more male sufferers than the female. While, within the

nonacademic staff group, there were more female sufferers than the male.

The implication here is that, more female nonacademic staff, in the era of digitalization tend to spend more time on the computer than their female academic counterparts, and similar explanation holds true for the male academic staff. Generally, developing blurred vision and eye fatigue-asthenopia is both individual and institutional based poor ergonomic compliance and practices, due to poor knowledge and low level of awareness. The finding of this study, aligned with the finding of (Nwokedi, 2019), where it was reported that n=18 (50%) respondents admitted having experienced asthenopia and stress in using the computer to perform desk task for a period of 7-8 hours.

Upper back pain (UBP) was another common MSD suffered by workers in all phases of work. This study finding among BSU employees revealed that more academic staff suffered from upper back pain than their nonacademic counterpart. Additionally, more male academic staff than nonacademic staff suffer from upper back pain and more female academic staff than their nonacademic counterpart. Within the academic staff family, more males than females suffer from U.B.P than their female colleagues. Among the nonacademic staff, there was no difference in number of cases of sufferers between the male and female.

This revealed that prolonged standing or sitting while academic could be a risk factor associated with the development of upper back pain among lecturers, thus, the higher frequency noted among the academic staff. The result of this study however, agrees with the work of (Alias et al., 2020), where it was reported that prevalence of upper back pain was higher among school teachers who taught while standing for between 1 and 2 hours ($p<0.05$).

Gender wise, this study result showed that there are more male suffers than female from upper back pain within the academic staff group, while among the nonacademic staff, there was no difference between male sufferers and female. This finding was in contrast

with the finding of (Alias et al., 2020) and (Souza et al., 2021), where more female than male sufferers were reported respectively. The difference noted could be attributed to differences in sample sizes, difference in level of awareness and knowledge of work station ergonomics.

Neck pain in the present context, had more sufferers among the academic staff than the nonacademic staff. Within the academic staff group, more male staff members suffer neck pain than female staff members. Conversely, more female staff from nonacademic group suffer more neck pain than male staff members within the nonacademic group. Between the groups, neck pain was noted to be higher among the male academic staff than the male nonacademic staff.

On the other hand, the study finding showed that more females among the nonacademic staff suffered from neck pain than the females in the academic staff class. This can be attributed to multi-tasking within the ambit of the office on the part of the female nonacademic staff, with little or no time to rest, which can rarely be seen among academic female staff on regular basis.

The dynamic nature of male staff member often predisposes them to MSDs in the neck region. Similarly, the female nonacademic staff at times, try to multi-task the body to make ends meet in terms of income generation. The finding from our study within the academic staff group, turned out to be in disharmony with previous work done by (Vega-fernández et al., 2022), where it was reported that more females than males suffered from neck pain. This could be explained in the light of epidemiological differences between their study and our study.

From our study, it was revealed that there were more cases of shoulder and wrist pain among the academic staff than the nonacademic staff. From the perspective of gender distribution within the academic group, our results showed that more males than females suffer from shoulder and wrist pain. A reversed trend was noted within the nonacademic group, where there were more female

staff members suffering from shoulder and wrist pain compared to their male colleagues.

Still on gender, more males in the academic group than the nonacademic group were noted to be suffering from shoulder and wrist pain. With the females, a tie was noted, as the number of female academic staff suffering from shoulder and wrist pain, doubled that of the nonacademic staff. The variations noted within the academic group as per gender, could be explained in light of the fact that most male teaching staff tend to expend more energy in the usage of their body parts especially the hands than their female colleagues, which could result in MSDs of the upper limb over a short period of time, While the variation in gender noted among the female nonacademic staff members could be due to the nature of most office work, which is often static and repetitive.

Our finding of having more shoulder pain sufferers among the academic staff than the nonacademic staff came to be in unison with previous work done by (Ibrahim and Syed 2020), where it was reported that 69.4% of the respondents, claimed to have shoulder pain. The higher outcome of female sufferers among the nonacademic staff could not be compared with previous research findings because of non-availability of conducted studies on university female nonacademic staff. However, finding abound on female nonacademic staff of secondary and primary schools.

Conclusion

The findings from the present study in regards to the gender distributions among the academic and nonacademic staff exposed the nature and types of work related musculoskeletal disorders suffered by the staff members. Thus, to avert these musculoskeletal problems, both the staff and management should make a critical evaluation of the different workstations, to identify the baseline causes of the common MSDs among the employees. That being said, an ergonomically fit working environment can reduce work

related musculoskeletal disorders among the academic and nonacademic staff. Besides, with an ergonomically fit workstation, job satisfaction, safety and staff welfare will improve. Applying ergonomic principles in daily workstation practices will also go a long way in preventing and even reducing the problem of MSDs among BSU employees.

Authors' Contributions

Conceptualization: Ogbe Alex, and Emelonye Amaka Doris
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Writing- review and editing: Ogbe Alex and Emelonye Amaka Doris

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EFFECT OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ON THE ADOPTION OF AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES BY FARMERS IN UGANDA:
A Case of SNV-TIDE Project in Isingiro District

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed how stakeholder engagement strategies used by SNV-TIDE project in planning, capacity building and resource mobilisation influenced the adoption of improved forages in Isingiro District, Southwestern Uganda. A cross sectional survey

design was adopted for the study, which covered five purposively selected SNV-TIDE project cooperatives. The data were collected from 50 active cattle farmers and three field supervisors using both a semi-structured questionnaire and an interview guide. Descriptive and inferential analysis including multiple regression techniques were employed to analyse the data. The findings revealed that stakeholder engagement in planning and capacity building contributed 35 and 14.3 percent change respectively, in the adoption of improved forages. Stakeholder engagement in planning and capacity building had a positive significant ($p<0.05$) influence on the adoption of improved forages among the SNV-TIDE project members. But stakeholder engagement in resource mobilisation had no influence ($p>0.05$) on the adoption of improved forages. Thus based on the study, it was concluded that engaging stakeholders in planning and in capacity building contributes to the adoption of improved forages. To achieve better results, therefore, stakeholder engagement strategies should put more emphasis on involving stakeholders in the project planning activities and capacity building.

Keywords*: Adoption, Capacity building, Improved forages, Resource mobilization, Stakeholders.*

1. Introduction

Governments, farmers and individuals are yearning for improved agricultural technologies and innovations to reposition farming in their national development endeavors. Adoption of agricultural technologies for improving agricultural production is a puzzling issue for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers globally (OECD, 2001). In the context of developing world where majority of the people derive their livelihood from agriculture, agricultural technologies become a more critical issue attracting attention from

the politicians, public managers and development economists (Feder *et al*., 2017). For many years, the main concern of agriculture extension was the delivery of technical expertise to farmers (Seevers & Graham, 2012).

Over the years, the approach for agriculture extension services kept evolving to involve and engage various stakeholders, and thereby take care of the complex and dynamic interests and needs of these players (Peters, 2002). This was expected to cater for the technological requirements and interests of livestock keepers. Cattle keepers, for example, should participate in a range of activities including the selection and delivery of a variety of forage species (Andy *et al*., 2008). The presumption is that full engagement of the beneficiaries promotes successful project implementation (Silvius & Schipper, 2019). Concisely, better understanding of user-centered project design practices, and greater collaboration with all stakeholders are required for successful adoption of agriculture innovations.

In Uganda, efforts to address the challenge of poor quality and quantity of forage have been made by various stakeholders including development agencies through introducing different pasture improvement technologies (Grimaud *et al.*, 2007). Since late 1980s and early 1990s, various pasture improvement interventions by government and other agencies have been undertaken. Whereas in 1995 – 1999 for example, efforts centered on both local and research stations, in 1999 to 2004 the focus was on sensitization and piloting production of improved forages in Uganda (Sabiiti *et al*., 2004). Since 2007 to date, various livestock development interventions including the East Africa Dairy Development Project as well as other agencies focused on value chain improvement in the dairy sector have been tried while engaging all stakeholders (Wambugu *et al*., 2011).

In spite the excitement and rhetoric about it, low adoption of agricultural technologies remains a critical hindrance to improved livestock productivity in Uganda. According to the Ministry of

Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) adoption of livestock technologies is less than 20% (Feder *et al*., 2017); with adoption of improved forages carried out on a small scale (MAAIF, 2018). Despite carrying out several trials in Southwestern Uganda to demonstrate to farmers how pasture productivity could be improved by introduction of improved forages, majority of the farmers still have not adopted improved forages (Katuromunda *et al*., 2017).

At present, only 25% of the cattle keepers in Southwestern Uganda grow improved forages in their pastureland and only 5% of the cattle keepers conserve forage for feeding animals during dry season (UNDP, 2018). Extant studies done on adoption of improved forages have focused on farm and institutional specific factors including farm resource and farming systems, market-related factors, and extension services (FAO, 2017; Grimaud *et al*., 2007; MAAIF, 2018; Nkuruziza *et al*., 2016; Nsubuga, 2017; Roschinsky, 2016). As a result, there is insufficient evidence on the extent to which stakeholder engagement has influenced adoption of improved forages with particular focus on SNV-TIDE project in Isingiro District.

This study therefore examined the influence of stakeholder engagement on the adoption of improved forages in Isingiro District, Southwestern Uganda. Specifically, the study examined the influence of stakeholder engagement in planning, capacity building and resource mobilization on adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE cooperative society members in Isingiro District. This present study was anchored on three hypothetical predictions:

H_1: There is a positive and significant influence between stakeholder engagement in planning and the adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE cooperative members in Isingiro District.

H_2: There is a positive and significant influence between stakeholder engagement in capacity building and adoption

of improved forages among SNV-TIDE cooperative members in Isingiro District.

H_3: There is a positive and significant influence between stakeholder engagement in resource mobilization and adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE cooperative members in Isingiro District.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Stakeholder engagement

The key concepts in the study are stakeholder engagement and adoption of improved forages simply put, stakeholders as individuals or groups that have a stake in the organization. Hewlett (1997) provides a broader definition of stakeholders as people or institutions that are interested in the successful design, implementation, and sustainability of a project. However, the above definitions center on the organization and yet the concept of stakeholders goes beyond organizations. The more inclusive description of stakeholders by Freeman (1984) to the effect that a stakeholder is any person or a group of people who can affect or can be affected by the accomplishments or objectives of a project.

The manifestation of "can affect or can be affected by" takes care of all individuals such as farmers who are outside the organization and groups such as local leaders, who may be stakeholders of a project, when the firm does not consider them as such. By extension, stakeholder engagement in this study was understood as the different communication responsibilities that must be performed by a facilitator to involve all stakeholders (Bourne, 2016). Some stakeholders influence project performance by providing or not providing funds, social support, or other resources, while others decide to be saboteurs or demonstrators or resist against authorities. Stakeholder engagement was

operationalized as engagement in planning, capacity building and resource mobilization.

2.2 Adoption

Rogers (1995) defines adoption as a mental process a person goes through after getting information about new technology until the time, he/she implements the technology. Sträub (2020) asserts that adoption does not refer to just taking a decision to accept a technology but the degree to which a technology is put in practice. While the first definition of adoption emphasizes decision making over time the second definition of adoption focuses on the amount of a new technology put into practice. Feder *et al*., 2017 contends that for new technologies which are divisible like improved forages the intensity of adoption can be quantified at both farmer's level for a certain period based on the extent or part of farm area using the technology and equivalent measures may well be used at the cumulative level for a given region.

However, a comprehensive definition of distinguishing between adoption at farm level and regional level was adopted from (Feder *et al*., 2017). Final adoption at farm level is defined as the amount of a new technologies used from the time a farmer has known about the new technology while regional adoption is defined as a quantity of a technology used by a given community or within a certain population. Using a quantifiable definition enabled the study to measure adoption of improved forages in terms of the type of improved species grown, acreage under improved forages and amount of improved forages preserved as hay or silage.

2.3 Theoretical review

To understand the influence of stakeholder engagement on adoption of improved forages, the study was guided by Stakeholder Theory authored by Freeman (1984). The theory postulates that considering stakeholder interests is important in change processes and focuses

on searching for proactive ways for effective change process in relation to its surroundings (Brønn & Brønn, 2003). Contextual factors exist among both the internal and external stakeholders. Hence, Freeman (1984) cautioned that managers need to consider all those persons that can affect or are affected by the project. Stakeholder theory involves setting guidelines to follow, while designing a project plan. It also involves procedures agreed upon by the communities' involvement to succeed. Stakeholder theory offers a variety of viewpoints and potentials and inclines around the concept of impartiality, fairness and influence on the mode stakeholders exercise ethical influence over the enterprises which at the end may affect the overall performance of the project.

For all its wide appeal to both scholars and practitioners, the theory is not without criticisms. Basing on its simplicity and generalizability, some scholars submit that the notion remains vague (Plard *et al*., 2019).

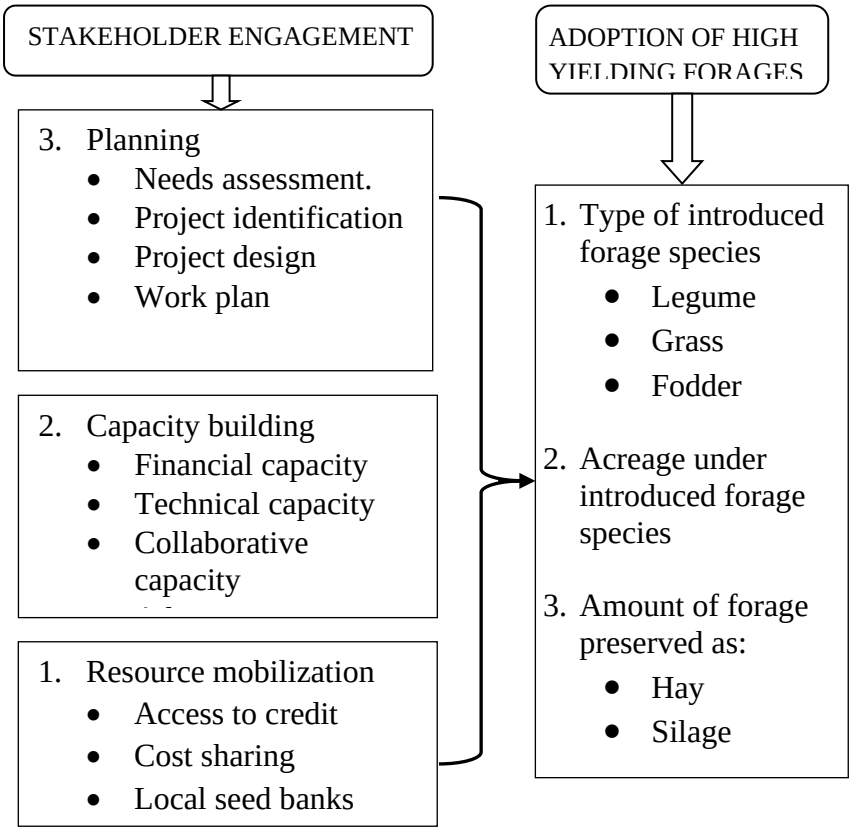
The foregoing is in respect with defining stakeholder as any group or individual who can affect or be affected by the organizational objectives. This definition of "whom can be affected by the project implies social and ethical implications that extend management responsibility to the entire society as well as legitimizing any social actor concerned with organizational objectives.

The critique above notwithstanding, the Stakeholder theory was still deemed fit for this study. From the context of pasture improvement program by SNV-TIDE project, the theory informed this study from the view point that stakeholders' behavior in terms of adoption of improved forages is influenced by motivations resulting from their engagement in planning for their interests, capacity building and cost sharing the needed resources (Figure 1).

This is true in the sense that stakeholder engagement in planning, capacity building (taking care of members' identity, skills and experiences) and resource mobilization influence the stakeholders' behavior by motivating them to adopt improved

forages in terms of different types of improved forages grown, increasing land acreage under improved forages and practicing different methods of utilizing improved forages as shown in Figure 1 below.

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework illustrating the influence of stakeholder engagement on adoption of improved forages.



3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a cross sectional research design to enable undertaking the study within one point at a time and to gather information from a relatively large number of respondents (Sekaran, 2003). The research design employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches to conduct the study. The methodological triangulation enables either approach to compliment the other by comparing the variety of information to carry out this study exhaustively (Amin, 2005). Whereas qualitative approach enabled in depth investigation of the problem capturing respondent's views, feelings, knowledge and opinions, quantitative approach captured quantifiable responses thereby enabling generalization of findings (ibid).

3.2 Population and Sampling

The study population was generated from SNV-Tide project in Isingiro District. The population categories included ninety-five (95) cattle keepers selected from the members of the five cooperatives societies formed by SNV-TIDE project in Isingiro District. However, the target population for the study was only eighty (80) dairy farmers randomly selected based on their active membership from five (5) cooperatives and purposive selection of five (5) SNV-TIDE project field supervisors. Overall, the target population for the study was eighty-five (85). From this, the sample size was 70 determined using statistical tables by (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

3.3 Data collection methods and instruments

The study used both the questionnaire survey and interview guide methods of data collection. A semi structured questionnaire that was used consisted of a series of questions and for the purpose collecting information from respondents (Amin, 2005). The semi-structured questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions was administered to targeted cattle keepers and because they were widely scattered over a wide area, the use of a questionnaire helped to collect data quickly and cheaply. Closed ended questions used had a five-point Likert scale with 1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Not sure 4- Agree and 5- Strongly Agree

An interview guide on the other hand as a qualitative tool of collecting data was used by asking respondents questions as a follow up or probing and prompting their answers (Kothari, 2004). The study prepared a semi structured interview guide that was used to engage respondents in the interview with key stakeholders that included local leaders and SNV-TIDE project field staff in Isingiro District. SNV-TIDE project field workers and local leaders were in position to provide key information that helped to exhaust the study.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analysed by using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviation for each of the items in the questionnaire. Data were first processed by editing, coding, and entered in SPSS version 16.0. A correlation technique based on Pearson's coefficient (+ or -) was employed to ascertain the direction of the relationship between variables under study. Pearson correlation coefficient was preferred because it analyses variables that are expressed in figures. In order to fulfil the sufficient condition, a multiple linear regression model was used to determine the magnitude of influence of independent variables on

the dependent variable (Amin, 2005). The multiple linear regression is as follows:

$$Y_i = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + e \quad \text{---------- (1)}$$

Whereby Y_i is the level of adoption of improved forages regarded as the dependent variable, X_1 is the stakeholder engagement in planning, X_2 is the stakeholder engagement in capacity building and X_3 is the stakeholder engagement in resource mobilization, $b_{0\ is}$ the constant value, b_1, b_2 and b_3 are the estimated regression coefficient and error term *e* that captures other factors that influence adoption of improved forages.

Qualitative data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis, this involved transcribing audio data that were saved on phone into handwritten transcripts and then reading and re-reading the transcripts looking for similarities and differences to find out themes and to develop categories. To avoid leaving out anything of importance related to the study objectives, paragraphs with similar topics, themes, or categories were coded with an appropriate word in the margin. Using highlighter pens with different colors, bits with different themes were marked in paragraphs, sentences, or phrases. This increased objectivity and reduced the risk of only selecting bits that conform to researcher's preconceptions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Findings on adoption of improved forages

In this study, adoption of improved forages was measured using three (3) dimensions of: type of introduced forage species, acreage under introduced forages and amount of introduced forage preserved as hay or silage. For all item statements were

administered to respondents to establish the extent to which they agreed with them.

The responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 = strongly agree (SA), 4 = agree (A), 3 = neutral (N), 2 = disagree (D) and 1 = strongly disagree (SD). Additionally, descriptive statistics as a technique of analysis was used with mean and standard deviation, where the mean value greater than 3 indicates an agreement by respondents, the mean value of 3 shows neutrality of respondents, while the mean value less than 3 indicates disagreement by respondents.

On the other hand, a standard deviation of close to 1.0 shows agreement, while a standard deviation of close to 0 (zero) indicates disagreement by respondents. In this study, strongly agree and agree were grouped to mean agree and strongly disagree and disagree to mean disagree.

An item-by-item analysis of the results in Table 1 indicated that for all the six items asked on the adoption of improved forages in the questionnaire for respondents, the mean values were above 3, while four items had standard deviation above 0.5 and only two items had standard deviation below 0.5.

Table 1. The adoption of improved forages among the SNV-TIDE project cooperative members

Item	Responses of adopters of improved forages	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1.	I have increased my grazing land under high yield forages	–		1 (2%)	11 (22%)	37 (74%)	4.72	0.497
2.	I have grown more high yield legume forages	–	1 (2%)	–	11 (22%)	38 (76%)	4.72	0.573

3.	I have grown more high yield grass forages	–	3 (6%)	–	14 (28%)	33 (96%)	4.54	0.778
4.	I have grown more high yield fodder forages	–	2 (4%)	–	14 (28%)	34 (68%)	4.60	0.700
5.	I now preserve forage as hay	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	–	13 (26%)	33(66%)	4.48	0.931
6.	I now preserve forage as silage	9 (18%)	10 (20%)	–	4 (8%)	27 (54%)	3.60	0.239

Source: Primary data 2021

This means that all participants agreed to have been facilitated by SNV-TIDE project to grow improved forages on their grazing lands. These findings reveal that most of the responses given were in agreement with the item statement that they increased their grazing land under improved forages (mean = 4.72 and SD = 0.497), had grown more improved legume forages (mean = 4.72 and SD = 0.573), had grown more improved pasture grasses (mean = 4.54 and SD = 0.778) while others had grown more improved fodder forages (mean = 4.60 and SD = 0.700). The implication from these findings is that SNV-TIDE project had assisted most of the cooperative members to grow improved forages. Relatedly, during the interview with one of the field extension workers for the selected cooperatives in Masha sub-county had this to say:

SNV provided cooperative members with seeds for improved forages including legumes like Sun hemp and Calliandra; fodder grass species like Napier grass, Panicum spp, Brachiaria spp and Rhodes grass; and fertilizers among others.

The findings in the verbatim imply that SNV-TIDE project cooperative members were facilitated with free planting materials of improved forages legume, fodder grasses and grass pastures as

well as fertilizers for growing improved forages. Another field extension worker in Kabuyanda sub-county said that:

One to three (1-3) lead farmers are selected from each cooperative and facilitated to grow improved forages and because farmers are trained not to be selfish, when improved forages produce seeds, other farmers freely get planting seeds from lead farmers.

This clearly indicates that accessibility for planting materials for improved forages was made easy and free of charge for the cooperative members which promoted growing of improved forages.

The findings in Table 1 indicate that 66% of the respondents strongly agreed that they preserved forage in form of hay (Mean= 4.48). The mean of 4.48 and standard deviation of 0.931 implies that most of the respondents preserved pasture as hay. These findings were supported by one of the field supervisors in Endizi sub-county who noted that:

Cooperative members were trained on how to harvest forage that is abundant during rainy season, dry it and tie it in bales. Most farmers were also facilitated to construct sheds for preserving pasture in form of hay. In addition to forage farmers preserve crop remains like sorghum and maize stalk and remains of other crops like beans and peelings that are dried properly and fed to animals during time of scarcity of feeds especially during drought season.

The above findings imply that cooperative members were facilitated to preserve improved forages available during rainy season for use in dry season.

The findings in Table 1 further indicate that 18 % of the respondents strongly disagreed, 20 % disagreed, 8% of the respondents agreed and 54% of the respondents strongly agreed that they preserved forage in form of silage (Mean = 3.60 and SD = 0.239). The mean of 3.60 and standard deviation of 0.239 imply that those who preserve forages as silage were few. This finding

was further explained by one of the field supervisors in Kabuyanda sub-county who noted that.

Although most of the cooperative members were trying to preserve forages as silage other farmers preferred preserving forages as hay because silage making is more tiresome and needs capital to buy the required ingredients such as molasses.

These findings imply that farmers find it easier and cheap to preserve forage in form of hay compared to silage that needs a lot of labor and capital.

4.2 Stakeholder engagement in planning and adoption of improved forages

This study set out to find out to establish how stakeholder engagement in planning influences adoption of improved forages. Stakeholder engagement in planning plays an important role in the success and management of project implementation. The dimensions of stakeholder engagement in planning included needs assessment, project identification, project design and work plan. Respondents were asked whether they strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D) or strongly disagree (SD) using a five-point Likert scale. Additionally, descriptive statistics technique was used with mean and standard deviation.

The findings presented in Table 2 indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that they participated in sharing their views before project implementation (Mean = 4.76 and SD = 0.431). The findings indicated that 76% of the respondents strongly agreed, while 24% were in agreement with the statement. The mean of 4.76 and standard deviation of 0.431 imply that most of respondents agreed that indeed members were given time to share their views before project implementation.

Table 2. Stakeholder engagement in the planning project activities

Item	Stakeholder engagement in planning project activities	SD 1	D 2	N 3	A 4	SA 5	Mean	SD
1.	Sharing views before project implementation	–	–	–	12 (24%)	38 (76%)	4.76	0.431
2.	Participating in needs assessment	–	–	–	6 (12%)	44 (88%)	4.88	0.328
3.	Members interests in the project considered	–	–	–	8 (16%)	42 (84%)	4.84	0.370
4.	Participation in designing project activities	–	–	3 (6%)	7 (14%)	40 (80%)	4.74	0.418
5.	Participation in assigning members roles and responsibilities	–	–	–	11 (22%)	39 (78%)	4.80	0.451
6.	Participation in election of project committees	–	–	1 (2%)	8 (16%)	41 (82%)	4.74	0.564

Source: Primary data 2021

This finding was further confirmed by one of the project field supervisors from Masha sub-county, who had this to say:

Before introducing any innovation, interactive meetings were held to ensure that the innovation is fully discussed, and farmers' views related to the innovation are respected in the implementation of the innovation.

The above verbatim implies that SNV project innovations identification was done collectively with thorough consultations with all stakeholders and innovation were identified based on the needs and interests of stakeholders.

The findings in Table 2 further indicate that that 12 % of the respondents agreed and 88 % strongly agreed that their needs were adequately taken care of while planning for the project implementation (Mean= 4.88 and SD = 0.328). The findings also indicate that 16 % of the respondents agreed and 84 % strongly agreed that their interests were considered while planning for the project (mean 4.84 and SD = 0.370). Both the mean and standard deviation for needs and interests respectively imply that most of respondents agreed that indeed their needs and interests were adequately addressed while planning for the project activities. This finding is further confirmed by one of the project field supervisors Endizi sub county, who had this to say:

The project team carries out needs assessment using a participatory approach which helps the project team to take care of cooperative members' needs and interests as a basis for all the innovations introduced through the project. When it's found out that members need training arrangements are made to make sure that farmers are trained before an innovation is implemented.

She further added that even individual needs and interests are taken care of. For instance, farmers with no land that could be used for growing improved pastures were advised to plant such pastures along trenches in their banana plantation or planting them as hedge around their land or home steads.

The above verbatim implies that cooperative members were involved in needs assessment and the project was properly communicated to farmers before it was implemented.

The findings in Table 2 that that 6% of the respondents were undecided, 14 % of the respondents agreed and 80 % strongly agreed that they took part in designing project activities while planning for the project implementation (Mean = 4.74 and SD = 0.564). The findings of the study indicate that 22 % of the respondents agreed and 78 % were strongly agreed that they participate in assigning roles and responsibilities to members while planning for the project implementation (mean 4.80 and SD = 0.451). The mean and standard deviation for designing project activities and assigning roles and responsibilities to members respectively imply that most of respondents agreed that they take part in designing project activities and assigning roles and responsibilities to members while planning for the project. This finding is further confirmed by one of the project field supervisors, who had this to say:

The findings in Table 2 that 2% of the respondents were undecided, 16 % of the respondents agreed and 82 % strongly agreed that they fully participated in election of their project committees for managing project implementation (Mean= 4.74 and SD = 0.564). This finding is further confirmed by one of the project field supervisors Endizi sub county, who had this to say:

Cooperative members are allowed to elect committee members themselves and the committee members manage most of the project activities with the supervision of the SNV field supervisors.

The above verbatim implies that cooperative members were actively involved in the day-to-day management of their cooperatives.

4.3 Stakeholder engagement in capacity building and adoption of improved forages

This study set out to find how stakeholder engagement in capacity building influenced adoption of improved forages. The

dimensions under stakeholder engagement in capacity building included financial capacity, technical capacity, collaborative capacity and adaptive capacity. Respondents were asked whether they strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree using a 5- Likert scale where 5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neutral, 2= disagree and 1=strongly disagree.

Additionally, descriptive statistics as a technique of analysis was used. The descriptive results are shown in the Table 3 below.

An item-by-item analysis of the results in Table 3 above indicated that all the 7-items of stakeholder engagement in capacity building asked in the questionnaire for respondents to answer yielded means above 3.

This thus statistically means that all participants generally agreed to have taken part in stakeholder capacity building activities of the project.

Table 3. Stakeholder engagement in the capacity building

Item	Stakeholder engagement in capacity building	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1.	Trained in identifying improved forages	–	–	3 (6%)	16 (32%)	31 (62%)	4.74	0.456
2.	Trained in pasture establishment agronomic skills	–	–	1 (2%)	17 (34%)	32 (64%)	4.56	0.611
3.	Adequate training on forage harvesting and preservation	–	–	1 (2%)	10 (20%)	39 (78%)	4.62	0.530
4.	Taking part in establishment of a demo plot of improved forages	–	–	1 (2%)	8 (16%)	41 (82%)	4.76	0.476
5.	Trained in marketing improved forages	–	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	8 (16%)	39 (78%)	4.80	0.452

6.	Trained on how to feed animals on improved forages	–	–	3 (6%)	7 (14%)	40 (80%)	4.70	0.647
7.	Trained on monitoring and evaluation of pasture production and preservation	–	1 (2%)	–	9 (18%)	40 (80%)	4.76	0.555

Source: Primary data 2021

These finding reveal that the most respondents agreed with the statement that they were trained in identification of improved forages (mean = 4.74 and SD = 0.456), trained in pasture establishment agronomic skills (mean = 4.56 and SD = 0.611), got adequate training on forage harvesting and preservation (mean = 4.62 and SD = 0.530), took part in establishment of a demonstration plot for improved forages (mean = 4.76 and SD = 0.476), trained in marketing of improved forages (mean = 4.80), trained in how to feed animals on improved forages (mean = 4.70 and SD = 0.647) and those who trained on monitoring and evaluation of pasture production and preservation had mean of 4.76 and SD of 0.555.

The findings from the interviews with project field supervisors concurred with the questionnaire findings as all the three interviewees narrated on how the project sponsored workshop trainings at local level, district, and regional level for farmers, as one project field supervisor note that.

The findings in Table 3 indicate that that 6% of the respondents were undecided, 32 % of the respondents agreed and 62 % strongly agreed that they trained in identifying improved forages forage species through SNV project (Mean= 4.74 and SD = 0.456). The mean of 4.74 and 4.80 for identification of improved forages and agronomic skills for pasture management respectively imply that most of respondents agreed that they took part in the training for

identification of improved forages and agronomic activities for growing pasture through SNV project. These findings were further confirmed by one of the project field supervisors in Masha sub-county, who noted that.

Cooperative members are periodically taken to model farms like Mbarara Zonal Agriculture Research Development (MBAZARD), Mutanonga farm and Nsangano farm in Kashari for 2 to 6 days training workshops. These farms are selected by SNV management for training because they are modernized and grow improved forages which enables farmers to learn practically while seeing and touching everything taught to them

The above verbatim statements suggest that SNV-TIDE project endeavours to train cooperative members through exposure to modern farms which is done through field trips and this help to change their attitudes towards improved forages.

Additionally, the findings further indicate that 2 % of the respondents were undecided, 16% agreed and 82 % strongly agreed that they participated in establishment demonstration plots for improved pasture management facilitated by SNV project (mean 4.76 and SD = 0.476). The mean of 4.76 and standard deviation of 0.476 for establishment of demonstration plots implies that most of respondents agreed that they took part in the training for establishment of demonstration plot through SNV project. These findings were further confirmed by one of the project field supervisors in Kabuyanda sub-county, who noted that:

For every cooperative a demonstration plots had been established which is used in training farmers on pasture management activities. Cooperative members had themselves selected a day in a month for meeting at the demonstration plot and carry out the necessary agronomic activities as they learn.

The above verbatim statements suggest cooperative members were provided with continuous learning opportunities through active participation in management of demonstration plots.

The findings in table 3 further indicate that that 2% of the respondents were undecided, 20 % of the respondents agreed and 78 % strongly agreed that they were trained in modern techniques for pasture harvesting and preservation through SNV project (Mean= 4.62 and SD = 0.530). The findings further indicate that 6 % of the respondents were undecided, 14% agreed and 80 % strongly agreed that they participated in trainings for feeding animals on improved forages f through SNV project (mean 4.70 and SD = 0.647). Additionally, one of the field workers in Endizi sub-county noted that:

Cooperative members are trained on how harvest forages for feeding, reducing moisture content using a drying rack and how chop forages and feed their cows on adlib feeds thus cows have to eat throughout the day as well as at night for farmers to get a lot of milk from those cows.

The findings above indicate that SNV project has facilitated cooperative members to acquire some skill and knowledge in forage preservation. The findings in table 3 further indicate that that 2% of the respondents were disagreed, 18 % of the respondents agreed and 80 % strongly agreed that they were trained in monitoring and preservation pastures through SNV project (Mean= 4.76 and SD = 0.555). The mean of 4.76 and standard deviation of and 0.555 implies that most of respondents agreed that they took part in the training monitoring and preservation of improved forages through SNV project. These findings were further confirmed by one of the project field supervisors from Endizi sub-county, who noted that:

The one of the objectives of SNV project was to train dairy farmers in the six pillars of pasture management namely, pasture establishment and management, pasture harvesting techniques,

pasture preservation methods, feeding infrastructure, paddocking and water supply.

The above narrative further reveals that cooperative members are equipped with the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude related to improving feeding of their cows for high production results.

4.4 The influence of stakeholder engagement in planning, capacity building and resource mobilization on the adoption of improved forages

In order to ascertain the contribution of stakeholder engagement in planning, capacity building and resource mobilization on the adoption of improved forages, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed (Table 4).

Table 4. Model Summary

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	S.E. of the estimate	Change statistics				
					R-Square change	F-Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F-Change
1	0.591[a]	0.350	0.336	0.533	**0.350**	25.830	1	48	<.0001
2	0.702[b]	0.493	0.471	0.476	**0.143**	13.257	1	47	0.001
3	0.702[c]	0.493	**0.460**	0.481	<.0001	0.008	1	46	0.931

Key: a = Predictors: (Constant), planning
b = Predictors: (Constant), planning, capacity building
c = RECS Predictors: (Constant), planning capacity building, resource mobilization

Source: Primary data 2021

Results in Table 4 indicate that the three variables (planning, capacity building and resource mobilization) explain 46.0% (Adjusted R Square = 0.460) of the adoption of improved forages implying that the remaining 54.0% was due to other factors not considered in this study. However, in terms of individual contributions to the adoption of improved forages the SNV-TIDE project cooperative members, stakeholder engagement in planning contributed 35.0% (R Square change = 0.350) (Model 1), while the engagement in capacity building contributed 14.3% (R Square change = 0.143) (Model 2) (Table 4). Thus, stakeholder engagement in planning explains much of the variations in the adoption of improved forages among the SNV-TIDE project cooperative members, followed by engagement in capacity building, while stakeholder in resource mobilization did not contribute anything (Table 4).

Table 5. Coefficient matrix of variables influencing the adoption of improved forages

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-Stat	Signif.	Collinearity Statistics	
	β	SE	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	-2.646	1.430	-	-1.851	0.071	-	-
Stakeholder engagement in planning	0.799	0.342	0.324	2.340	0.024	0.576	1.737
Stakeholder engagement in capacity building	0.716	0.311	0.475	2.302	0.026	0.259	3.859
Stakeholder engagement in resource mobilization	-0.023	0.258	-0.015	-0.088	0.931	0.365	2.742

Source: Primary data 2021

The study hypothesis that stakeholder engagement in planning has a positive and significant influence on the adoption of improved forages among the SNV-TIDE cooperative members in Isingiro District was examined and verified. Based on the results in Table 5, we failed to reject the hypothesis that stakeholder engagement in planning has a positive and significant influence on the adoption of improved forages at 5 percent level ($p<0.05$).

The result in Table 5 implies that for a one unit change in stakeholder engagement in planning would improve adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE project cooperative members in Isingiro District by 0.799 holding other factors constant. The results further show that stakeholder engagement in planning is a significant predictor of adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE project cooperative members in Isingiro District at 5 percent level ($\beta = 0.799$, $p=0.024$).

The study hypothesis that stakeholder engagement in capacity building has a positive and significant influence on the adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE cooperative members in Isingiro District was also examined and verified. Based on the results in Table 5, we failed to reject the hypothesis that stakeholder engagement in capacity building has a positive and significant influence on adoption of improved forages at 5 percent level. Table 5 indicates that for a unit change in stakeholder engagement in capacity building would improve adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE project cooperative members in Isingiro District by 0.716 holding other factors constant. The results in Table 5 further show that stakeholder engagement in capacity building is a significant predictor of adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE project cooperative members in Isingiro District ($\beta = 0.716$, $p= 0.026$).

The study hypothesis that stakeholder engagement in resource mobilization has a positive and significant influence on the adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE cooperative members in Isingiro District was further examined and verified.

Based on the results in Table 5, we reject the hypothesis that stakeholder engagement in resource mobilization capacity building has a significant positive influence on adoption of improved forages at 5 percent level. Results in Table 5, show stakeholder engagement in resource mobilization has a negative and insignificant influence on adoption of improved forages suggesting that for any change in stakeholder engagement in resource mobilization would negatively affect the adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE project cooperative members in Isingiro District, since the p-value is greater than the acceptable level of significance at 5 % (β = -0.23, p=0.931).

5. General Discussion

5.1 The influence of stakeholder engagement in planning on the adoption of improved forages among the SNV-TIDE project cooperative members in Isingiro District

The study results indicated that stakeholder engagement in planning was a significant contributor to adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE project cooperative members in Isingiro District at 5 percent level. The findings of this study are in agreement with those Johnson and Christensen (2008) whose study found out that stakeholder engagement in planning promoted successful project implementation.

Furthermore, similar findings were reported by Olusanya *et al*. (2012) study in Nigeria who found out a significant influence of effective stakeholder engagement in planning on project performance. These findings seem to demonstrate that stakeholder engagement in planning before project implementation enhance the project to achieve its goals.

Relatedly, Mintzberg (2004) argues that successful project implementation depends on the needs and interests of stakeholders

who are the true foot soldiers of project implementation. Stakeholder theory articulates that considering stakeholder interests is important in change process and focuses on searching for proactive ways for effective change process in relation to its surroundings (Brønn and Brønn, 2003). Understanding stakeholders' needs and interests requires emphasis on openness, collaboration, equity, trust and continuous involvement. In order to attain this, there is need for adapting of changing needs and interests of stakeholders attainable under good project team leadership that generates clear communication to the stakeholders.

Furthermore, the findings of the study also showed general contentedness with the level of their involvement in planning for all the innovations and activities before their implementation. This was evident in the qualitative data collected where one key informant confirmed that before introducing any innovation interactive meetings were held to ensure that the innovation was fully discussed and training about it took place.

Therefore, the findings seem to indicate that the level of stakeholder engagement in planning depends on and is greatly influenced by the decisions made by stakeholder themselves. This is because through decision making, managers get a better sense of what stakeholders intend to accomplish and the best way of doing so and becomes easy for the organization such as SNV to focus on needs and interests of their stakeholders which increases chances of project implementation (Obi & Agwu, 2017).

This assertion was further supported by James (2000), who noted that stakeholder engagement in planning is seen as a particular kind of decision making that addresses the needs and interests of stakeholders. He further posits that planning is not a single event with a clear beginning and end. Systematic efforts are thus needed to carry out stakeholder engagement in planning in project management.

5.2 The influence of stakeholder engagement in capacity building on adoption of improved forages

The findings of the study indicate a positive and significant relationship between stakeholder engagement and adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE project cooperative members ($\beta = .716$, $p = .026$). This means that improvements in the elements of stakeholder engagement in capacity building such as financial capacity, technical capacity, collaborative capacity and adaptive capacity is associated with a significant relationship with adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE project cooperative members in Isingiro District.

Stakeholder engagement in capacity building consists of a process of developing knowledge, skills and operational capacity of stakeholders so that they may achieve their project objectives. Angeles and Gurstein (2000) argue that the goal for using participatory learning in capacity building is not only human resource development, but a larger capacity building program with the following components. Peters (2002) noted that one form of stakeholder engagement in capacity building as training which according to him it equips stakeholders with leadership skill, builds civic capacity and promotes learning through mutual relationship and identifying, deliberating about the project, as well as acting on important public issues and problems.

These studies concluded that high quality of human capital resources can lead to increased levels of successful project implementation, accumulation and knowledge sharing as well as enhanced workforce flexibility and efficiency (Evans and Davis, 2005; Felin *et al*., 2009).

Similarly, Nkuruziza *et al*. (2016) contend that divergent flow of information among stakeholders done in an open and relaxed environment helps in reaching consensus democratically as the basis for social learning and capacity building. Participatory learning process facilitates stakeholders to discuss their varying

interests, values and opinions leading to capacity building. This study has therefore demonstrated that stakeholder engagement through training and development has an influence on the overall adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE project cooperative members. The findings from this study therefore suggest that an increase in the acquisition of the skills and knowledge acquired during training and development stakeholders can lead to an increased adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE project cooperative members.

6. Conclusion

Based on the study findings, stakeholder engagement in planning played a vital role in SNV-TIDE project in terms of needs assessment, project identification, project design and work plan. The findings indicated that a positive and significant influence of stakeholder engagement in planning and capacity building on adoption of improved forages.

The study concludes that in order for a project like SNV-TIDE project to enhance its performance it should engage stakeholders in planning project activities whilst strengthening the capacity building of stakeholders through financial, technical, collaborative and adaptive capacity to improve on efficiency and productivity of the stakeholders, this translates into improved adoption of improved forages among SNV-TIDE project cooperative members.

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends SNV top management to invest more funds in stakeholder engagement in planning compared to the other strategies for stakeholder engagement. The findings call for improvements on strategies used in stakeholder engagement in the area of capacity building by using farmer field schools (FFS) approach to enable farmers learn from each other, because farmers learn much better from their peers, the

approach facilitates faster adoption of improved forages and hence high yields.

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IT'S TIME AFRICAN COUNTRIES UTILIZED THE WTO, DISPUTE SETTLEMENT UNDERSTANDING MORE TO LEVERAGE THEIR INTERNATIONAL TRADE INTERESTS

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ABSTRACT

The paper deconstructs the law relating to WTO, Dispute Settlement Mechanisms (DSMs) to establish why African Countries have failed to harness it to leverage their international trade Interests. There is compelling evidence to affirm that many African Countries are marginalized in international trade because many odds including failure to harness the WTO Dispute Settlement are stacked against them. The ability of African Countries in international trade has been saddled by many factors that characterize Less Developed Countries. The Uruguay Round (1986-94) introduced many changes such as the reduced timelines (from when disputes are initiated to when they are disposed of), admission of third parties to represent poor Countries which may

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be deficient in requisite capacity to handle the complexity of the World trade disputes mechanisms. This paper posits that the marginalization of African Countries in the World trade system is partly caused by inherent factors that saddle them as Less Developed Economies. We adopted hybrid doctrinal and qualitative methodological approaches by way of reviewing WTO relevant Agreements, existing literature and evaluating evidence in the context of objectives for writing the paper. The findings corroborate that African Countries have been sidelined in international trade system because they have not utilized the Dispute Settlement Understanding Agreement to leverage their international trade interest well.

I. Introduction

The success of any international trade system depends to a great extent on the effectiveness of its ability to settle emerging international trade disputes. It was precisely because of the skewed Dispute Settlement Understanding under GATT, 1947 and failure to solve trade disputes that made some Countries to shun it. The GATTS had a small membership of twenty-three countries which grew to one hundred twenty three (123) by the time of the Uruguay trade round in 1986.[8] Today, many stakeholders have expressed their displeasure over WTO's failure to use its Dispute Settlement Understanding mandate to prevent the abuse of WTO rules, principles and procedures by member countries.

The Dispute Settlement mechanisms (DSMs) were designed to settle emerging trade disputes between countries from time to time. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to evaluate how particularly African Countries have utilized the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanisms to leverage their trade in goods and services across member Countries.

[8] Today, the World Trade Organisation is made up of one hundred, sixty four member countries.

This study has found out that the extent African Countries have utilized the WTO in settling emerging trade disputes has been appallingly low, presumably explaining why they have lagged behind other countries in economic development. The paper has examined the DSM procedures and implementation of rulings by the Panel and Appellant Body (AB) of the WTO adjudicated cases to establish the extent African Countries have harnessed the DSM Mechanisms. We noted that the process of settling international trade disputes starts with consultations, followed by implementation of rulings and recommendations by the Panel and Appellate Body which may drag on for years.[9] In all these stages, African Countries are disadvantaged either by the nature and intricacies of the system or inherent disadvantages are developing countries.

II. Methodology

We adopted a hybrid methodology, involving elements of doctrinal and a qualitative research methodologies. In terms of doctrinal methodology, the Marrakesh Agreement on Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) creates a mechanism for settling emerging trade disputes between member countries. However, it was evident that the rules and procedures for settling international trade disputes are complicated and naturally tend to favour developed countries more than it does for developing countries.[10] The rules and

[9] There are three main stages to the WTO dispute settlement process: (i) consultations between the parties; (ii) adjudication by panels and, if applicable, by the Appellate Body; and (iii) the implementation of the ruling, which includes the possibility of countermeasures in the event of failure by the losing party.

[10] Bilateral consultations between the parties are the first stage of formal dispute settlement process (Article 4 of the DSU). They give parties the latitude to discuss the matter and find a satisfactory solution amicably. After such mandatory consultations have failed to produce a satisfactory outcome

procedures of WTO are mandatory and apply to all Members based on the covered Agreements listed in Appendix 1 to the DSU regardless of their varying levels of development. Once a country has ratified the WTO founding treaty, it will be bound by the Single undertaking principle—virtually, whereby every item of the negotiation is part of a whole and indivisible package and nothing can be agreed separately. Ideally this means that nothing is negotiated and agreed until everything is and has negotiated agreed. Article 2 mandates the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) to establish panels, to adopt panel and Appellate Body reports, maintain surveillance of implementation of rulings and recommendations, and authorize suspension of concessions and other obligations under the covered agreements.

Article 3 of the DSU provides a mechanism for settling emerging trade disputes between member countries from the covered agreements in a transparent fair and impartial manner. This same mechanism is what has endeared countries to accede to the WTO, increasing its membership from 23 at the time of GATT 1947 to 123 by the time of Marrakesh Agreement (1995) to 164 members by 2016, making it one of the fastest growing international organizations today.[11] It is also worth noting that 46% of the WTO membership is comprised of Least Developed Countries (LDC's), of which 25% are African countries whose export trade is mainly of mining, fuel and primary agricultural Products. Apart from participating as third parties, there is no African country which has lodged a complaint under the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) and benefited directly from a ruling under

within 60 days may the complainant request adjudication by a panel (Article 4.7 of the DSU). Parties to a dispute can decide to refuse consultations through mutual agreement under Article 25.2 of the DSU if they resort to arbitration as an alternative means of dispute settlement.

[11] See the WTO Website at http://www.wto.org/accession of member Countries (accessed 15th April 2022.

the covered agreements even though their exports face trade barriers from their trading partners compared to countries such as Brazil, India and Mexico which have filed cases and won some of them.[12]

Bilateral Consultations are considered the first litigation stage under Article 4 of the DSU, it is a compulsory procedure to all WTO members whenever a dispute arises and binding to parties within sixty (60) days. The request for consultation must be done in writing highlighting specific provisions that have been violated under the covered agreements by the respondents. In cases were parties fail to amicably settle their disputes under consultation which are closed to only parties to the dispute, they are mandated to request for the establishment of a panel (composed of three panelists) who have to first be approved by the members under Article 4.8 of the DSU before presenting their submissions unless by consensus the DSB agrees not for the panel establishment.[13] The panel is thereafter mandated to give its findings, recommendations and conclusion on the given case at hand in a final report in less than six months' subject to adoption by all WTO members in the DSU. "Unless there is negative consensus among the DSB not to adopt the report" as per Article 16.4 of the DSU or there is a notification for appeal from either party to the dispute, the adoption of the panel report by the DSB should be done in less than sixty

[12] Brazil won a case against Indonesia that was filed with the World Trade Organization (WTO) regarding an "undue delay" by Indonesia in recognizing Brazil's health certification process for exports of chicken meat to the Asian country. See, https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/dispu_by_country_e.htm#complainant to discern how African Countries are conspicuously missing in action unlike other developing Countries.

[13] Panagariya A, 'EU Preferential Trade Policies and Developing Countries' (2002) 25(10) *World Economy* <https://www.repec.org> accessed 19 July 2020.

days from the date of its circulation to the members. The Appellate Body is mandated by Article 17.6 of the DSU to handle all appeals from the DSB under the WTO jurisdiction.[14] The proceedings are confidential and are preceded by seven independent panel members asked to interpret issues of law covered in the panel report. The final stage deals with the ruling phase dealing with the implementation and recommendations of the available remedies.

A review of the literature on African Countries propensity to harness the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding has corroborated that they have been disadvantaged with the jurisprudence of the Panel and Appellate Body (AB) in dispensing rules of treaty interpretation under Article 3.2 of the DSU. The panel and the AB allow limited time for Least Developed Countries to be able to address required recommendations and rulings.

Pursuant to authorized consultation among disputant parties, the panelists are mandated under Article 4.3 of the DSU to determine whether there is a violation of the defendant rights based on the covered agreements (Panagariya, 2002:16-20). The plaintiff is also mandated to "identify and provide a brief summary of the legal basis and provisions violated "by the defendant. This requirement is often very cumbersome and costly for many African countries that lack the technical capacity on WTO laws and jurisprudence. The unfortunate part of it also is that law does not provide a comprehensive and clear reference of cases to be considered by panelists in disposition of cases in the covered agreements. This lacuna in the law, is challenging for both the panel and the parties in making an objective assessment of the facts and applicability of

[14] Brenton P (2003), 'Integrating the Least Developed Countries into the World Trading System: The Current Impact of EU Preferences under Everything but Arms'WPS3018 *Policy Research Working Paper* <https://www.elibrary.worldank.org> accessed 12 July 2018.

the matter brought before it as a way of assisting the DSB in providing rulings and recommendations in conformity with the WTO it is deterred from applying and examining provisions outside what was cited by the complainant (Panagariya, 2002).

Article 3.12 of the DSU allows countries (developing) acting as complainants to invoke article 4, 5 and 6 of the DSU in cases initiated against developed countries. Developing countries are further entitled to use the good office of the Director General (DG) of the WTO in Geneva as a form of diplomacy to their benefit. However, the litigation process under the DSU is lengthy, taking over two (2) to four (4) years on average from consultation to the implementation of rulings.[15] In cases where there is failure to amicably settle the dispute through consultations within two months, Article 12.10 of the DSU allows the chairmanship of the DSB after consulting with the relevant parties to give a further extension. However, this doesn't deter other countries involved in consultation to slow down the process until the stipulated time expires as provided by the provisions on tie lapse. The defect in this provision is that it doesn't guarantee and give raise to a developing country to raise S&DT provision as part of its pleading submissions and also does not clearly state the obligations to be undertaken by a developed country in arguments or pleading in line with S&DT provisions brought forth by a developing country making it ambiguous.

[15] If a request for consultations is made pursuant to a covered agreement, the Member to which the request is made shall, unless otherwise mutually agreed, reply to the request within 10 days after the date of its receipt and shall enter into consultations in good faith within a period of no more than 30 days after the date of receipt of the request, with a view to reaching a mutually satisfactory solution. If the Member does not respond within 10 days after the date of receipt of the request, or does not enter into consultations within a period of no more than 30 days, or a period otherwise mutually agreed, after the date of receipt of the request, then the Member that requested the holding of consultations may proceed directly to request the establishment of a panel.

With the good office provision offer of the Director General (currently, Ms. **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**), the majority of African countries have no permanent representation in Geneva since they cannot afford the logistics for their technical team during the consultation process which take approximately two to nine months. Apparently, lack of adequate financial resources is what translates of African Countries to harness the complicated DSM of the WTO[16].

Third party involvement under Article 10.2 DSU requires the first meetings to be confidential and closed off only to parties and third parties that are required to demonstrate "substantial trade interest" in the matter before the panel and informed its concerns to the DSB.[17] However, the challenges arise on the definition and interpretation of the term "Substantive trade interest," which the DSU never defined or gave a definite meaning. This has left a number of countries request to participate in consultations as third parties rejected due to failure to demonstrate a "substantial trade interest" in their cases. Further, the preliminary assessment requirement in regards to a legitimate and sufficient interest in the disputes in issue calls for governments to gathering and scrutinizing trade data observing reports and checking internal regulations in connection with the affected industry that are challenging to most African countries due to limited resources to enable them

[16] Adank, J. (2017 edn), *WTO Dispute Settlement: One-Page Case Summaries 1995-2016* accessed on 4th June 2018 at.<https://www.wto.org/disputes>

[17] In the event that consultations have failed to settle the dispute, the complaining party may request the establishment of a panel to adjudicate the dispute. The complainant may do so any time 60 days after the date of receipt by the respondent of the request for consultations, but also earlier if the respondent either did not respect the deadlines for responding to the request for consultations or if the consulting parties jointly consider that consultations have failed to settle the dispute (Article 4.7 of the DSU).

demonstrate substantive trade interest in the disputes (Brenton P, 2003).

The Special and Differential Treatment (hereinafter S & DT) provisions do not seem to take into account the challenges of Less developed Countries which inhibit their capacity to implement the rulings and recommendations of the panelist in a timely manner.[18] Article 4:10 DSU provides that, "members should give special attention to particular problems and interests of developing countries during consultations" although this provision aims to assist poor countries by taking notice of their challenges faced during the pre-panel stage of the DSU, it doesn't clearly specify the extent to how" special attention" and the level of compliance to be extended to developing countries during the consultation phrase. Therefore, developed countries are not mandated to mention their submissions to the panel on the nature of special attention rendered to the developing country and thus the panel cannot determine if the challenges facing developing countries have been taken into consideration by the developed country basing on their submissions or not. The obligations provided in article 4.10 are not mandatory as indicated by the wording of the drafter whereby using "should" instead of: shall" was suggested, causing avoidance in implementation.

III. Discussion and Findings

We reviewed data to establish why African Countries have not utilized the DSM of the WTO. We found that African Countries

[18] The WTO agreements contain special provisions which give developing countries special rights and allow other members to treat them more favourably. These are "special and differential treatment provisions" (abbreviated as S&D or SDT).

have only initiated 23 cases as respondent and appeared in 129 cases as a third parties since 2019. Lower- middle income countries such as South Africa and Egypt have also utilized the DSU even though would have expected them to have some requisite capacity. Contrast this with Thailand which is also at the same level of Development as Egypt but has managed to 'file 13 cases as complainant 4 cases as respondent and 73 as third party while Egypt has been involved in 4 cases as respondent and 11 cases as third party. Even though African countries have showed an increase in their participation in the DSU as third parties, the number is still low compared to other developing countries.

It must be noted that the poor are sometimes denied justice and by the very nature of poverty and its constraining effect, poor countries lack the capacity to effectively pursue their cases. Poor countries are already faced with resources constraints, which make them lame ducks and unable to litigate in foreign countries.

To effectively identify disputes, countries must have the resources and expertise to regularly conduct research, monitor and scrutinize activities of trade partners. The challenge is that most African countries do not have the financial, human and technical resources to harness the advantages of international trade. Most African Countries disputes are in relation to barriers such as Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (SPS), Technical Barriers to Trade (TE3T) cases which regularly involve hiring of technical expert provided under Article 4.5 agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM) since they highly involve scientific evidence under article 11.2 of SPS Agreement are limited to most African countries in terms of research and proof to support their cases which cover hundreds of pages.

The stages and procedures to initiate a complaint at the WTO DSM require thorough background research and information to yield positive results. However, countries with limited resources are made sometimes to let go because they are not able to mobilize the required resources to pursue a case that may drag on for over three

years. The legal costs at the WTO are astronomical for African countries to foot and eviscerate their capacity to initiate cases. In the Japan-Photographic Film case, their lawyers claimed over $ 10 million for their services rendered in the case of which few African countries can afford compared to the trade interest at stake. This is compounded by the fact that most African Countries export low quality goods (raw materials) to the World Market compared to what they buy from Developed Countries are thus marginalized.

It was found that most cases on average at the World Trade Centre are initiated by developing countries whose median GOP is $5,864 that have high income compared to the $ 4,895 developing countries that have never filed a case (WTO (2003e: WT/L/521).

There no African country which falls in a high-income economy cohort because of the high debt burden apart from Namibia, the only African country that is not highly indebted. Thus, African countries tend to undertake "survival" litigation which is tactical and barely yields no precedent and benefits than other developing countries that are being strategic to contribute to the jurisprudence and accrue benefits from the DSM arid trade regime (WTO (2003e: WT/L/521).

African Countries suffer diminished capacity, coupled with reduced representation in Geneva create an environment for further marginalization of these Countries.[19] The foregoing environment has degraded the capacity of some countries to train staff and boost stock of talented staff with knowledge on WTO, international trade relations. This leaves majority of African countries with a task of performing all the necessary ground work needed in terms of litigation and fact-finding during consultation pre-panel and panel phase. A and Simmons B.A (2002) unlike some countries like USA which have representatives that are lawyers from different

[19] Ramsay, D. (13 August 2018), "Comoros making scents", Trade for Development News, also available at https:// trade4devnews.enhancedif.org/en/photoessay/comoros-making-scents.

departments (for example agriculture trade, environment) over thirty lawyers that are specifically specialized in litigation with also a support of from 123 Professors 1-5 years' experience on WTO as their area of specificity" making it easier and cost effective in research and providing information on specific laws compared to the African countries that don't have the specific capacity and institutional development to take advantage and seize all aspects of WTO covered agreement (Ramsay, D, 2018).

There are limited timeframes for implementation of rulings creates another hurdle for African countries especially when the respondent has to adopt desired conforming measures to address breached agreement. This therefore gives developed countries an upper hand to drag cases at the expense of less developed countries. By the time the panels pronounce themselves on the matter, the former countries will have already benefited from reforms of the particular measure without any consequences. The WTO has no jail house, no bondsmen, no blue helmets and no tear gas...the WTO initially relies upon voluntary compliance of states (Bello, J. 2016). This has created difficulties with regard to implementation of the WTO agreements since there is no outside body to monitor and enforce the rulings and recommendations in cases where there is deviation ((Ramsay, D, 2018).

Compensation is a voluntary and temporary measure to the complainant has only been awarded twice by Japan to Canada, in Japan-Alcoholic Beverages II case and by the United States to the European communities in the EC -US Copyright case. After the panel has made a ruling, Article 19 of the DSU mandates the AB to recommend the DSB to invite all respondents and direct them to bring the measure in dispute into conformity under the covered agreement.[20] The way in which the respondent could implement the

[20] Ikiara M M and Ndirangu K L (2003), 'Prospects of Kenya's Clothing Exports under AGOA 24 *Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis* <https://www.researchgate.net> accessed 18 July 2018.

AB or panel's recommendations and the ruling gives an option for non-compliance or retaliation within the broad creation of such endorsement leaves the interpretation at the hands of any country as some may wish to propose a very high threshold of over 10% in accordance with the GATT market shares leaving African countries at a disadvantage since they make up less 3.5% of world trade and two thirds is comprised of mineral fuel (crude), precious stones (platinum and diamond), iron and steel. It further necessitates and calls for African countries to carefully scrutinize and gather more trade data and regulations in accordance with the affected industries in dispute which is financially expensive and costly.[21]

The shortcomings of the DSM procedure notwithstanding, the ability of African Countries to take advantage of the WTO DSM has also been caused by insufficient human resource capacity which makes them over reliant on hiring foreign experts and as result weak measures put in place that cannot ensure compliance and implementation of DSU rulings.[22] There is a need for African Countries to grow their internal capacity to ensure sustainability but also independence. It is mind boggling for a person or a country for that matter to seek assistance from another with who they are competitors.

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[21] Fergusson F I (2008), 'World Trade Organization Negotiations: The Doha Development Agenda' *Library of Congress Washington DC Congressional Research Services, last* accessed on 12th June 2018 at: https://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a486294.PDF.

[22] Martin Khor (2008), argues that the WTO does not manage the global economy impartially, but in its operation has a systematic bias toward rich countries and multinational corporations, harming smaller countries that have less negotiation power. Martin Khor was the executive director of the South Centre, an intergovernmental organisation of developing countries based in Geneva, from 1 March 2009 to 2018.

Some scholars have contended that the rules and procedures for settling trade disputes are designed to favour of Developed Countries against the weaker ones. In the WTO, DSM its traditional that rights always prevail over power.[23] This was brought about by the new legalized system and procedure, reducing the bargaining power among member states in the wrong ran. Power is still a powerful instrument used as by the powerful against the weak and most African countries are still subjected to global power asymmetries partly as a result of the aid received from the developed countries. Developing Countries are constrained from filing cases against their donors for fear of losing substantial aid they depend upon to balance their budgets (Ramsay, D, 2018: 24).

It must also be pointed out that most of African Countries' National Development Budgets are donors funded. This by its very nature constrains their independence to engage in international trade disputes against their donors.[24] Most of African trade falls under preferential trade arrangements, such as the US African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) program and the EU's Everything but Arms EBA\ Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) arrangements that are less likely to be litigated at the WTO level. Consequently, complaints are regularly resolved bilaterally beneath the preferential schemes as a form inbuilt discrimination against developing and least developed African countries that have low market shares in international trade hence low retaliatory powers being restrained by economic implications of a WTO-dispute. Large countries are better off because of their ability to impose tariffs as a means of improving their terms of trade through increasing their welfare at the expense of the defendants compared

[23] Ramsay, D (13 August 2018), "Comoros making scents", Trade for Development News

[24] Financing Global and Regional Public Goods through ODA (2004): Analysis and Evidence from the OECD Creditor Reporting System. Paris, OECD.

to the small and weak countries that lack the capacity (Ramsay, D, 2018: 30-31).

In April this year, the WTO gave a grim forecast based on two possible scenarios for world trade in 2020. One was an optimistic scenario in which the volume of world merchandise trade would fall by 13 per cent; and the pessimistic scenario envisaging a fall of 32 per cent.[25] As of October 2020, the WTO modified this forecast to a 9.2 per cent decline in merchandise trade for 2020, followed by an increase of 7.2 per cent in 2021. On both the foregoing accounts, African countries are more at a disadvantage since many odds are stacked against them. African Countries suffer capacity deprivation and cost constrains that are to a greater extent are an offshoot of the absence of a credible mechanism to ensure implementation and compliance of the DSU rulings among member states giving developed and powerful countries more options than they do for less developed countries (WTO: July 2022).

Therefore, the rules and procedures authorized by the DSU on retaliation favor countries that are economically stable at the expense of the weak countries that cannot retaliate even though allowed to sanction a developed country by the DSU for fear of jeopardizing economic benefits they receive from those countries. There is also the fear of trade wars that will arise between the disputant countries making it difficult for weaker countries to succeed. The higher the asymmetry between the two countries the lower the chances of success on the part of the small and weak country.[26]

To avoid alienating international trade interests of complainant states and avoid further damages over inconsistent measures undertaken by a member state, the panel or Appellant Body (AB)

[25] WTO Website at http://www.wto.org (accessed 2oth July 2022).
[26] WTO/OECD (2005), Report on Trade-Related Technical Assistance and Capacity Building, available at: https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news18.

shall direct the losing party to withdraw or remove those measure in question that are inconsistent with the covered agreements. However, the WTO rules do not provide for retrospective remedy and any right to compensation to the losing party unless bilaterally offered and "mutually agreed" upon between the parties. Thus, the absence of monetary compensation at the WTO DSM has acted as a factor hindering African countries from effectively filing cases for their economic loss which calls for attention and consideration by the WTO.[27]

During the dispute settlement process, there is no interim relief to protect trade interests of complaints and no award or compensation is given to the complainant during that period the respondent is supposed to implement the rulings. Furthermore, there is no reimbursement for the winning party in regards to the legal expenses incurred during the proceedings. Therefore, making it impossible for Less Developed Countries to resort to suspensions of their obligations as per WTO founding Agreements (Ramsay, D, 2018:30-31). The authority of WTO DSM has been undermined by insufficient mechanisms to enforce the panel and AB rulings which forms the basis for retaliation through suspension of concessions by the losing party. This allows the shift from "the legal context and procedures to the arena of international politics which are economically aid-dependent, poor and small countries are not given the opportunity to prevent measures of continuous infringement by a strong country within the framework provided by the WTO Agreements ((Ramsay, D, 2018).

However, under the WTO economic strength of a country does not necessarily bring about compliance since retaliation cannot be used to enforce negotiated WTO agreements. "Powerful countries

[27] *Annual Report on WTO (2018),* accessed 16 June 2018, *at* <https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news18_e/anrp_30may18_e.htm>

have been seen complying voluntarily with negative ruling of the panel and AB at the expense of the economically weak countries" as clearly illustrated in the case of United States - Standard for Reformulated and Conventional Gasoline ((Ramsay, D, 2018). African Countries ability to file cases under the WTO DSU can be inferred their performance in international trade.

Although there has been a marked improvement in Africa's economic performance since 2003, there are still challenges to increasing Africa's export per capita income (Adank, J, 2017). "African countries are still marginal participants, commanding less than 3.5% of world trade--two thirds mineral fuel (crude), precious stones (platinum and diamond), iron and steel." Some African countries such as Libya, Nigeria and Angola (with exception to Tunisia, South Africa and Mauritius who have a high level of export diversification) largely depend on oil as their major source of export earnings and trade while other African countries largely depend on exportation of unprocessed primary agricultural products such (as cocoa beans cotton and coffee) with few manufactured products thus leaving many African countries vulnerable to external shocks 52 compared to other LDC's (Adank, J, 2017). European Union and USA are the major destinations for Africa's export products. In 2015, sub-Saharan Africa exports to USA accounted for over 0.8% of total goods imported" according to the GSP annual product review53 Few players account for Africa's export trade especially those with minerals and oil (Adank, J, 2017)

African countries argue that the WTO DSU system would only entice the likes of United States (So far, the only one to "buy" non-retaliation by the complainant) 54 that may be able to spend millions of dollars to claim victory in the WJ0 dispute settlement process due to their strong economic power and superiority. However, this does not inevitably equate with economic victory since the implementation or compliance process is often too long,

complex for African countries that rely on a few numbers of export products and markets.

It must be noted that the poor are sometimes denied justice and by the very nature of poverty and its constraining effect, poor countries lack the capacity to effectively pursue their cases before the WTO Dispute Settement Mechanism ((Adank, J, 2017). Poor countries are already faced with resources constraints, which make them lame ducks and unable to litigate in foreign countries. To effectively identify disputes, countries must have the resources and expertise to regularly conduct research, monitor and scrutinize activities of trade partners. The challenge is that most African countries do not have the financial, human and technical resources to harness the advantages of international trade. Most African Countries disputes are in relation to barriers such as Sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS), Technical Barriers to Trade (TE3T) cases which regularly involve hiring of technical expert provided under Article 4.5 agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM) since they highly involve scientific evidence under article 11.2 of SPS Agreement are limited to most African countries in terms of research and proof to support their cases which cover hundreds of pages.

The stages and procedures to initiate complaints at the WTO DSM require thorough background research and information to yield positive results. However, countries with limited resources are made sometimes to let go because they are not able to mobilize the required resources to pursue a case that may drag on for over three years. The legal costs at the WTO are astronomical for African countries to foot and eviscerate their capacity to initiate cases. In the Japan-Photographic Film case, their lawyers claimed over $ 10 million for their services rendered in the case of which few African countries can afford compared to the trade interest at stake. This is compounded by the fact that most African Countries export low quality goods (raw materials) to the World Market compared to

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African Countries lack requisite capacity, coupled with reduced representation in Geneva create an environment for further marginalization of these Countries ((Adank, J, 2017) The foregoing environment has degraded the capacity of some countries to train staff and boost stock of talented staff with knowledge on WTO, international trade relations. According to Meagher "one quarter of WTO member countries by 2007 didn't not have missions in Geneva." 40

This leaves majority of African countries with a task of performing all the necessary ground work needed in terms of litigation and fact-finding during consultation pre-panel and panel phase. A and Simmons B.A (2002) unlike some countries like USA which have representatives that are lawyers from different departments (for example agriculture trade, environment) over thirty lawyers that are specifically specialized in litigation with also a support of from 123 Professors 1-5 years' experience on WTO as their area of specificity" making it easier and cost effective in research and providing information on specific laws compared to the African countries that don't have the specific capacity and institutional development to take advantage and seize all aspects of WTO covered agreement (Ramsay, D, 2018).

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Some scholars have contended that the rules and procedures for settling trade disputes are lopsided in favour of Developed Countries against the weaker ones. In the WTO, DSM its traditional that rights always prevail over power.[30] This was brought about by the new legalized system and procedure, reducing the bargaining power among member states in the wrong ran. Power is still a

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Consequently, complaints are regularly resolved bilaterally beneath the preferential schemes as a form inbuilt discrimination against developing and least developed African countries that have low market shares in international trade hence low retaliatory powers being restrained by economic implications of a WTO-dispute. Large countries are better off because of their ability to impose tariffs as a means of improving their terms of trade through increasing their welfare at the expense of the defendants compared to the small and weak countries that lack the capacity (WTO, July 2022). The long-term retaliation process by a small country is very low to influence the terms of trade against the defendant large country.

In April this year, the WTO gave a grim forecast based on two possible scenarios for world trade in 2020. One was an optimistic scenario in which the volume of world merchandise trade would

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To protect the complainant's trade interests and mitigate further damages over inconsistent measures, the panel or AB shall direct the losing party to withdraw or remove those measure in question that are inconsistent with the covered agreements. However, the WTO rules do not provide for retrospective remedy and any right to compensation to the losing party unless bilaterally offered and "mutually agreed" upon between the parties. Thus, the

[32] WTO Website at http://www.wto.org (accessed 2oth July 2022).
[33] WTO/OECD (2005), Report on Trade-Related Technical Assistance and Capacity Building, available at: https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news18.

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The authority of WTO DSM has been undermined by insufficient mechanisms to enforce the panel and AB rulings which forms the basis for retaliation through suspension of concessions by the losing party. This allows the shift from "the legal context and procedures to the arena of international politics which are economically aid-dependent, poor and small countries are not given the opportunity to prevent measures of continuous infringement by a strong country within the framework provided by the WTO Agreements (Ramsay, D: 2018).

However, under the WTO economic strength of a country does not necessarily bring about compliance since retaliation cannot be used to enforce negotiated WTO agreements. "Powerful countries have been seen complying voluntarily with negative ruling of the panel and AB at the expense of the economically weak countries" as clearly illustrated in the case of United States - Standard for Reformulated and Conventional Gasoline (Ramsay, D: 2018).

African Countries ability to file cases under the WTO DSU can be inferred their performance in international trade. Although there has been a marked improvement in Africa's economic performance since 2003, there are still challenges to increasing Africa's export per capita income. "African countries are still marginal participants,

commanding less than 3.5% of world trade--two thirds mineral fuel (crude), precious stones (platinum and diamond), iron and steel." Some African countries such as Libya, Nigeria and Angola (with exception to Tunisia, South Africa and Mauritius who have a high level of export diversification) largely depend on oil as their major source of export earnings and trade while other African countries largely depend on exportation of unprocessed primary agricultural products such (as cocoa beans cotton and coffee) with few manufactured products thus leaving many African countries vulnerable to external shocks 52 compared to other LDC's.[34]

European Union and USA are the major destinations for Africa's export products. It is bad to noted that in 2015, sub-Saharan Africa countries only managed to exports to USA 0.8% of total goods. According to the GSP Annual Product Review53, few players account for Africa's export trade especially those with minerals and oil (WTO, Doha Work Programme, 2004).

African countries argue that the WTO DSU system would only entice the likes of United States (So far, the only one to "buy" non-retaliation by the complainant)54 that may be able to spend millions of dollars to claim victory in the WJ0 dispute settlement process due to their strong economic power and superiority. However, this does not inevitably equate with economic victory since the implementation or compliance process is often too long, complex for African countries that rely on a few numbers of export products and markets (Ibid).

It is also worth noting that although African countries have not been keen on utilizing the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding, they need to take a leaf from other developing Countries which have successfully won cases against developed countries, winning against strong actors like the European Union and the United States

[34] WTO, Doha Work Programme, Decision Adopted by the General Council on 1 August 2004, WT/L/579 #04- 3297.

of America. For that matter, non-participation of African countries will not enhance their international trade prospects but will continue to get sidelined by the rulings and decisions adopted by the WTO upon its members. Thirdly, the cases will also show that lodging a case is not based on either a country being developed, least developed or developing but rather the potential and willingness to initiate a case and wait for the ruling.

Egypt and South Africa are the two major African countries that have been involved in the WTO dispute settlement as respondents; Egypt was party to four cases and South Africa five cases to which the process ended before the Panel stage. It must also be noted that consensus decision-making procedure in the WTO is a collective decision on specific jurisprudence and erodes the degree of circumspection the Appellate Body wisely demonstrated in its early years. The judicial independence of the Appellate Body doesn't exist in a vacuum but depends upon the dynamic interaction between effective rule making and adjudicative bodies. The relatively weaker rule making function of the WTO magnifies the power of the adjudicators, along with the implications of their rulings. The Appellate Body's tendency to pronounce themselves on every rule brought before it, even when not necessary to resolve a dispute, has contributed to the difficulty in agreeing to new rules in the WTO.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

Bearing in mind the importance of multilateral trade system in economic development of Countries, African Countries cannot afford to slack, they will need to utilize the World trade system more like China has done to leverage its development interests. They cannot afford to continue dropping their guards and literally get punched in the face. They will need to regularly need to harness requisite research in areas where they have been at a disadvantage in trade and policy to leverage their capacity to harness and benefit

from international trade. The blame game must stop for some Countries to make progress because some Countries such as China have utilized the Dispute Settlement Understanding Mechanisms better, won cases and progressed. We urge African Countries to continue their positive efforts in the fight against corruption because it has sidelined their development efforts at many levels.

Financial and technical assistance is needed from donor agencies to leverage African Countries ability, in terms of market access, increased productivity, quality, volume and value of their export trade to benefit from international trade. Specifically, more resources are needed such as Aid for Trade, to enable African countries overcome some impediments to trade. Regional approaches for infrastructure development such as transport, energy, standards and quality management would be more cost effective and beneficial both to intra- and extra-regional trade in Africa.

In many African Countries, a lot still needs to be done to overcome their artificial impediments to economic development such as tackling widespread corruption and its offshoot challenges. The best researchers and consultants (who would carry out requisite research for countries to leverage their capacity on trade and development policy issues) in some Countries cannot be hired to leverage economies capacity shortfall because they are not connected to people in high Government offices. Meanwhile, those who are hired because they are connected lack requisite capacity--skills and knowledge to perform at the expected level of they are hired to do. This becomes the conundrum most African Countries are caught in!