
Involvement of the Private Sector in the Financing of Academic Programmes at the Primogenial University in Uganda

By

JUDITH RABWONI
*Makerere University,
Uganda.*

And

PETER NEEMA-ABOOKI, Ph.D
*Makerere University,
Uganda.*

Abstract

The scenario that Makerere University, before 1992, enrolled less than three thousand students and on full government scholarships witnessed not only financial constraints and its manifold consequences but also grossly affected the quality of academic programs being offered in the university. Ultimately, the stance has led to the emergence of the private sector participation in public higher education. To this effect, Makerere University has established a linkage with the community through the Makerere University Private Sector Forum (MUPSF). This study was therefore informed by the Equity theory. The Deans and Heads of Departments of the Faculties of Technology, Agriculture, Social Sciences and Computing and Information Communications Technology served as respondents. Suffice to elucidate that after data had been collected, these Faculties joined with two or three others to form Colleges. The study investigated the nature of and limited the scope of private sector to the donor community, the local industry, NGOs, and Civil Society Organizations. It employed the qualitative approach and specifically took an exploratory design; and partly employed ethnography. The available relevant documents also studied to supplement on the interview findings. The study posits that the more the private sector is involved in the university-functions, the higher the chances towards the general improvement of the university. The study therefore surmises that the financing of university education requires both public and private resources to ensure efficiency and effectiveness; and the maintenance of her quality and relevancy. Recommended is a university-

financial management committee that includes members from the private sector.

Key words: Academic programmes, equity theory, financing, private sector, quality

Makerere University, established as early as 1922, had for decades enrolled fewer than three thousand students, all on full government scholarships. This trend changed in 1992 when for the first time government liberalized the education system, thereby making a major shift from the decade's old colonial approach. Ten times the usual number of students was admitted, with only a small percentage being government sponsored. The bulk of students paid their own fees and this provided the University with much needed funds (Nakanyike, and Nansozi, 2003). Coinciding with this increased enrolment was the transformation in the financial relationship between public universities and the state; leading the former to raising larger shares of revenue from the private sources as state support lost pace with the increased enrolment and rising costs (Owuma, 2003; cited by Rabwoni, 2011). The implementation of academic programs before then was hampered by financial constraints, out-dated curricular, institutional inability to recruit and retain qualified staff, lack of adequate instruction materials and adequate physical facilities (National Council for Higher Education, 2006). The foregoing affected the quality of academic programs being offered in the university and has led to the emergence of the private sector participation in public higher education. The private sector has been involved in the management and planning of public university education in all aspects, and this situation has facilitated the public private interface.

Private Sector is defined as part of national economy made up of private enterprises including the personal sector and corporate companies and is responsible for allocating most of the resources within an economy (<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/private-sector.html#ixzz31FrN5HQO>). It is therefore distinct from Public Sector, defined as part of the economy concerned with providing basic governmentservices (http://www.investorwords.com/3947/public_sector.html#ixzz31FxKL1ud).

This paper surmises “private sector” to embosom funders (both the donor community and the local industry) and administrators of programs, staff, program participants, and the wider community that benefit from university education. Accordingly, Makerere University has established a linkage with the community through the Makerere University Private Sector Forum. Makerere University Private Sector Forum (MUPSF) is a deliberate strategy and a centered means for the stakeholders' collaboration in addressing the Private Sector needs. The private sector being one of the engines of growth for Uganda's economy and a beneficiary of the University products has not been at the forefront to influence the policy agenda and

practice in higher educational institutions with respect to market dynamics. (MUPSF, 2006) in this regard, some scholars however express their distrust in the idea of involving the private sector in the provision of public university education in relation to the issue of quality of education being offered. Ssesanga (2004) articulates that in most tertiary institutions in Uganda there is a shift, whereby a political ideology that legitimizes a conception of education which emphasizes the development of the whole person is being replaced by a political ideology sustaining conception of education that emphasizes its economic role. He further adds that market orientation reforms in higher education in Uganda serve the business and industrial purpose at the expense of educational goals and purpose. Hence for university's efficiency and effectiveness to serve the development needs of the society, it has to continuously be checked and monitored in its operations by all the beneficiaries and the government in order to safe guard against diversion from its mission and vision.

Methodology

The study was underpinned by the Equity theory, developed in 1962 by John Stacey Adams, who asserted that employees seek to maintain equity between the inputs that they bring to a job and the outcomes that they receive from it against the perceived inputs and outcomes of others (Adams, 1965). The study employed the equity theory because it clearly brought out the relationship between two parties working together for the common good (Rabwoni, 2011). It primarily focused on Makerere, the Primogenial University in the country. The Deans and Heads of Departments of the then Faculties of Technology, Agriculture, Social Sciences and Computing and Information Communications Technology served as respondents. The study investigated the nature of and limited the scope of the scope of private sector to the donor community, the local industry, NGOs, and Civil Society Organizations. The study therefore calls Universities to put more effort on involving the private sector.

The study employed the qualitative approach and specifically took an exploratory design that was based on qualitative data gathering procedures; and partly employed ethnography. Deans and Heads of Departments were targeted and where four Faculties were purposively sampled, following the available information on where the private sector was participating most. To these were added the Planning and Development Department and the Makerere University Private Sector Forum owing to their positions of responsibility in their respective offices.

The interview was considered as an appropriate tool that would facilitate an open forum where the interviewer would be in tête-à-tête with the respondents. The available documents on the private sector participation in Makerere University were also studied to supplement and verify the data gathered through interviews. The study employed

content analysis, triangulation and threading or narrative summary as techniques in analyzing the data.

Results

Discussion of findings

The Private Sector in Uganda has become a partner in the financing of public university education. With the increased demand for university education in the 21st century, government has been overwhelmed and thus cannot finance education alone in the Public Universities. This has seen the emergence of the private sector in financing of public university education (Rabwoni, 2011).

Faculties, now Colleges, in Makerere University are trying to do their best to market themselves to the private sector. In those Faculties where the private sector has participated most there is a great improvement; a sign that the private sector participation in the Faculties vary greatly in Makerere University means that if the private sector is considered and treated as a real partner, the quality of academic programs and general education in a University or Faculty will greatly improve. For instance, in the Faculties of Agriculture, Technology and the Faculty of Computing and Information Communications Technology, there is a lot of improvement in terms of buildings, internet connection, teaching and learning facilities, and equipment among others; all attributed to the involvement of the private sectors.

The study discovered that the local industry has contributed finances to university education mainly through scholarships awarded to students, and grants and donations given to the University. The private sector has also contributed finances through the partnerships with the University Personnel for research. An interviewee at the Faculty of Computing and Information Communications Technology noted that the private sector especially the local industry has been so redundant in the financing of education, hence the Faculty has only depended greatly on students' fees and donations and grants from the development partners.

The Faculty of Technology has been blessed by the goodwill from the donor community; the Faculty also receives one million dollars every academic year for research from the private sector, mainly the donor community. Donors also do give scholarships to PhD students who happen to be the University staff and this has improved on the quality of the lecturers in terms of scholarship.

The Faculty of Social Sciences got a donation of a CISCO Program which has helped the Department of Gender to raise some money to help in the running of the Department. During the interviews with the respondent from the Department of Gender, it was reported that funds raised from the SISCO Program has helped the

Department to purchase computers that are being used in the Department. From these funds the Department has also managed to purchase a double cabin vehicle which helps as means of transport.

With the support from the donors, the building of the Department of Gender was erected. Similarly the Faculty of Technology has managed to acquire a number of computers from donor support, the expansion of the Faculty is also attributed to the private sector especially the international organizations.

Furthermore, the study found out that the University development budget is fully financed by the private sector. There are a number of scholarships from the private sector specifically for post graduates and the beneficiaries are mainly the staff of the university. The University also gets research grants from the private sector and most of the research that is being done in the university is not government financed.

To the inquiry about how relevant the research funded by the development partners and the private sector is to the community, one respondent from the Faculty of Computing and Information Communications Technology reported that the donors hardly restrict the beneficiary on the type of research. The procedure is that Faculties do write proposals and when the donors are in position to give, they do. The private sector and mainly the donor community have funded research up to a tune of 100% as revealed by one respondent from the Planning and Development Department during the interviews; adding that the challenge of the University has been the dissemination of information to the community where the research has been done. This implies that there is a lot of research which has but remained just in the academic circles. However, the Head of Department of Food Science in the Faculty of Agriculture contended the Private Sector has as well helped in identifying areas of research. This paper is cognizant of the fact that "there are several forms of research: scientific, humanities, artistic, economic, social, business, marketing, practitioner" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research>), just to mention but a few.

The interview with the Executive Director of the Makerere University Private Sector Forum revealed that the forum identifies the research areas and link the public to the Private Sector, and also monitor on the quality of research that is being done in the University.

The financial contributions given to Faculties by the private sector have greatly improved the quality of the academic programs in the university. Research, being one of the core functions of the university, has been facilitated mainly by the private sector. Without research the university cannot be worth the name. Hence the role of the private

sector in promoting and improving the academic programs in Makerere University cannot go unnoticed.

According to Makerere University Strategic Plan 2001-2006/07, cited by Rabwoni (2011), institutional achievements are facilitated by governments, internally generated income and development partners. Whereas Government support and internally generated income cover current costs, the Private Sector is involved in the funding of research. For example, the SIDA and SAREC give support to the Faculty of Social Sciences, Technology and Agriculture for the implementation of National Environmental Development Research, related to environmental management. Furthermore, the reviewed University documents revealed that on August 24th, 2005 the Vice Chancellor officially endorsed a Ford Foundation funded grant of 135,000\$ to support activities of Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPEC) in establishing programs on economic, social and cultural rights. This indicates that the private sector involvement in financing the University is improving the academic programs being offered in the University. Sensitizing and teaching the community about their rights remains a very fundamental program for the well being of the community which helps in drawing boundaries between individuals in their day to day operations (Planning and Development Department Annual Report, 2006; quoted by Rabwoni, 2011).

The private sector is also involved in infrastructural development at the University. Examples to this effect include: the three storied building for the Department of Gender, the five storied building of the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology, the four storied building of the Faculty of Technology and the new building of Food Science. It was further noted that the Development Programs of the University are covered by the development partners under the following four major programs: The NORAD Institutional Development Program, the SIDA/ SAREC Collaborative Research Program, the Carnegie Institutional Development Program, the Capacity Building Program for Decentralization funded by Rockefeller Foundation, and the World Bank.

Failure of the local private sector to participate in a public university could otherwise be an indicator that the University has not done its best to involve or the private sector is ipso facto limited financially, or both. However the respondent from Makerere University Private Sector Forum remarked that the University should be on the look out to safeguard against the need to solicit money from the private sector, but rather aim at creating the mutual partnerships.

This study has considered the comment made by the Executive Director as a warning in the dealings between the private sector and the public university. This means that collaborations and partnerships should aim at improving the quality and relevance of university education, or else the quality will be compromised. This further

means that Faculties should not look at money as a solution to all the problems being met but aim at marketing what they already have and build reputation by producing competent graduates.

Muyingo (2004), in his study on the incorporated financial contributions of the private sector and its implications, noted that if Universities in Uganda are to perform effectively and efficiently, the business sector has to be fully incorporated into the management dynamics of these universities. The above assertion concurs with this study. However, Obienchina, Chikuemeka, and Anenechukwu, (1996). Express their discomfort about the issue of donors giving assistance to the university. They argue that the financial contributions from donors can lead to compromising with university principles. In contrariety, this study learnt that the financial contribution by the private sector does not negatively influence the quality of the academic programs being offered by the university. This status quo as it were rendered credence, at least implicitly, to Blankstein (1996), cited by Neema-Abooki (1999), who contends that quality requires all individuals to work co-operatively for the benefit of every one.

Ultimately, the study posits that the more the private sector is involved in the University functioning, the higher the chances towards the general improvement of the university. Implied is that if the private sector is actively involved in the running of the university, there would be significant improvement on the quality of the academic programs which could also improve on the quality of graduates.

Conclusions and Recommendation

This study surmises that the financing of university education requires both public and private Resources. The involvement of the private sector into the financing of University education is apt to increasing efficiency and maintenance of quality and relevancy of a university. Following the discussion of the results and the foregoing conclusion, this study recommends, as a measure and strategy, that the University endeavours to fully involve the private sector especially the local industry in the area of financing, through directly involving them in the university management. This can be achieved through marketing the University to all the stakeholders, and creating awareness that the University is faced with a challenge related to financing. A strong financial management committee that includes members from the private sector should be established to ensure efficiency in the use of the available finances. The government together with the University and the private sector can design a policy to the due effect.

Regarding Areas for further Research, this study suggests a replication to be done, defining the private sector in terms of other stakeholders, for instance the parents. There is also need to replicate the study in view of the selsame Makerere University under the operational Collegiate System.

References

- Adams, J.S. (1965) "Inequity in social exchange": in Berkowitz, Leonard (Ed), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, Academic Press, New York.
- Makerere University Private Sector Forum (2006). *A Smart Partnership: Makerere University Printing*
- Muyingo, J. C. (2004). *The financial contributions of the private sector and its implications to management of university education in Uganda*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Makerere University, Kampala.
- Nakanyike, M. B. & Nansozi, M. (2003). *Makerere University in Transition, 1993-2000*: Oxford, James Currey, Kampala: Fountain Publishers
- Neema-Abooki, P. (2009). *Total quality management and the governance of Uganda Martyrs University*. Unpublished M. A. (Ed. Mgt.) Dissertation, Makerere University, Kampala.
- Obienchina, E., Chikuemeka, I. & Anenechukwu, H. (1996). *Experiments on higher education*. Lagos: The University of Nigeria – Ranfurly Library Service.
- Rabwoni, J. (2011). *Private sector participation and the quality of academic programs in Makerere University*. Unpublished M. A. (Higher Education) Dissertation, Makerere University, Kampala.
- .Ssesanga, K. (2004). Ethical issues in marketization of educational: .The Case for Social Justice and Markert Oriented Reforms in Uganda Higher Education. *Makerere Journal of Higher Education*. Kampala: Uganda.
- The National Council for Higher Education (2006). The state of higher education and training in Uganda. A report on Higher Education Delivery and Institutions.
- <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/private-sector.html#ixzz31FrN5HQO>
Retrieved 09-05-2014
- http://www.investorwords.com/3947/public_sector.html#ixzz31FxKL1ud
- Retrieved 09-05-2014
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research> Retrieved 09-05-2014