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## PATHWAYS FOR DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS AMONG MIDDLE LEVEL ACADEMICS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN UGANDA

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*Abstract/*

*Pathways for developing leadership skills among middle level academics in private universities is a study that has examined the challenges faced by private universities in Uganda, by looking at documents, reports and data sets including participant observation. The role of middle level academics and administrators has become a focal point in higher education owing to the state of change in education sector and the very important tasks and functions middle level management perform in universities. The rapid growth of private universities in Uganda since 1988 presents enough and adequate reason for this study as maintenance of standards and proper refocusing of higher educational goals becomes important. The questions this study answered are: what are the staffing levels and quality of middle level academics in private universities in Uganda, in terms of their number and qualification; what are the determinants of best practices in leadership at middle level academics in private universities in Uganda? In the course of reviewing available literature, data sets and collaborating with participant observation, findings show that private universities in Uganda engage quite a number of unqualified middle level academics with little or no experience because most of them either possess Master's degree or are fresh graduates. Private universities in Sub-Saharan African countries generally and those in Uganda particularly seem to rely on inexperienced middle level administrators and academics lacking capacity in leadership and therefore lacking leadership skills because of the gap in experience for such challenging positions. Also observed is that most private universities in Uganda do not adhere to standards set by National Council for Higher Education rules and guidelines. It is also most likely, from the findings, that they do not refer to Universities and Other Tertiary Education Act, 2001, (revised 2014), in their practices even though the structures, indicators and regulations are specified in their university charter. The study recommends interventions in form of leadership skills training for middle level academics and administrators in private universities by NCHE, Uganda. Close monitoring is also recommended in order to maintain quality and standards for global competitiveness This is very crucial for private sector particularly, considering the rate of proliferation of private universities in Uganda*

**Keywords: Leadership, Leadership skills, Middle level academics, Private universities**

## Introduction

The importance of quality academic leadership in tertiary education cannot be overemphasized. This is because of the recognition that quality and progressive academic leadership is one of the hallmarks of a world-class university (Salmi 2009). And yet the subject of academic leadership in Africa is largely under-explored. One should concede that there is a burgeoning literature on the dimensions and forms of leadership in both developed and developing countries. There is, however, a lacuna on academic leadership particularly in Africa even though the literature on the subject has begun to emerge, albeit slowly (Cipriano 2011; Bolman and Gallos 2011; Paul 2011). The reason is that most academics consider academic leadership positions as an afterthought given that taking up administrative positions is seen as changing careers (Moore and Sagaria 1982; Moore 1983). Private universities in Uganda emerged in 1988 and their proliferation has been accelerated by quite a number of factors which include increase in population of students and requirements of World Bank and International Monetary Fund for countries like Uganda and other African countries to adopt certain policies called structural adjustment (Ochwa-Echel 2016:8). Owing to this development, there appears to be growing willingness in Africa to provide better oversight to higher education institutions. But academics, including vice-chancellors, are not taking up the challenge to domesticate and harness the spaces they are given. This was one of the lessons learned at a convening of higher education leaders and researchers from across the continent. Three recommendations flowed from the convening. One was for a continental summit on higher education, the second was for higher education to embrace an open data policy, and the third was to strengthen the role and effectiveness of higher education councils. The “Higher Education Policy, Leadership and Governance Grantee Convening”, held from 14-15 May in Nairobi, brought together grantee organizations of the Carnegie Corporation of New York working in higher education in Africa. A report on the meeting was recently produced by Funmi Olonisakin, director of the African Leadership Centre and of the Conflict, Security and Development Group at King's College in London. The Carnegie Corporation, the report noted, had come to realize that people were entering leadership positions in higher education with little or no background in management. Support was needed in the area of academic leadership and policy research in African universities. From 2007 to this year, among its other work in Africa, Carnegie grants were allocated under the theme “Leadership, Policy and Governance”. Leadership training grants worth US\$4.2 million, including to higher education councils in Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda. Research and policy grant worth US\$2.8 million to the Centre for Higher Education Transformation in South Africa, and Trust Africa and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa – CODESRIA – in Senegal. Dissemination grants worth US\$231,100 to the Boston College Center for International Higher Education, and to *University*

*World News* for an article series on African university leader. During the sessions, grantees among other things shared research, practices and findings, examined emerging trends, described how their work had contributed to the transformation of higher education, and identified key learning points, which included the following: There appeared to be more willingness on the part of governance to provide better oversight to institutions. Academics – faculty and vice-chancellors – were however not taking up the challenge to domesticate and harness the spaces they are given. Some reforms had created spaces for alumni to engage in university governance and to become members of oversight bodies. In some countries, there was no comprehensive, coherent national higher education policy. As a result: some institutions had veered from their missions; higher education spaces in terms of policy were primarily dominated by government with other actors marginalized; and there was a need to initiate and institutionalize national platforms for interaction. There was growing realization of the wealth of experience in institutions, which could be harnessed. Evidence from Ghana is that properly designed higher education programs will yield participation and results the report further said. There was an absence of qualified faculty to take active part in facilitation. Participation from early-career individuals is crucial because hierarchical structures and varied functions within universities have generated confusion about who has the capacity-responsibility to effect and commit to change in higher education institutions. There was “shared ignorance” among university governance agents of the history of universities and characteristics of the higher education area. University leaders needed to be jointly responsible for the performance of the institution, and to initiate regular dialogue between the different layers of the institution. Most discussions revolved around a debilitating lack of funding for higher education institutions. But debate should also be about providing solutions. There was a limited pool of scholars in higher education available for training in critical areas. “Women especially have strong voices and clear ideas.” There had been a paradigm shift, because those placed to effect change – vice-chancellors and others – were “now part of the narrative on higher education transformation”. The discussions identified a range of significant challenges facing higher education in Africa .One was that while new patterns of funding were emerging within universities, “at the same time there is too much engagement in funding. Funding is being engaged as an end in itself, with no real strategic knowledge of what the funds will be committed to,” the report said.

Second, there was too much focus on providing external oversight to universities, while “not enough is being done to cultivate the capacity for evaluation and accountability from within. The role of councils in transformation has not been properly crystallized.”

Third, while frameworks had been created to provide oversight, “research shows that the status quo is still being maintained. And there is no new leadership (external or internal) emerging,” noted the report. Fourth, there was consistent conflict between management and staff unions. Fifth, there were high expectations about what organizations and regulatory bodies should do, but little understanding of the challenges they faced. “Capacities of regulatory and umbrella bodies need to be enhanced.” Finally, although this was slowly changing, there was not a well-developed and sustained body of higher education scholarship. “There are pockets of expertise” Participants however noted that most available data were in English, which limited Francophone and Lusophone actors in the higher education sector. The use of multimedia applications such as images, sounds and documentaries was encouraged as a way of engaging different audiences and influencing policy development.

Finally, it was recommended that the role and effectiveness of higher education councils be strengthened, and that technical and financial assistance be made available to councils to enable them to enhance their impact in the higher education sector. It was agreed that moving councils forward was a priority, the report concluded.

### **Emerging Issues and challenges in Uganda Higher education**

The organizational structure of private universities in Uganda, their academic programmes and management were copied from Makerere University, the only university in Uganda until 1988. Due to shortage of staff and fewer higher academic and professional development programmes in the new universities, Makerere continues to be the training ground of academics who teach and assume leadership roles in private universities in Uganda. However, some of these universities may recruit fresh graduates to occupy middle-level positions, which is not in line with the provisions of National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) as stipulated in Quality Assurance Legal Framework for Universities in Uganda, 2011 (Revised in 2014). NCHE is responsible for ensuring institutional quality and compliance with standards in all tertiary institutions in Uganda. Though this task seems enormous for NCHE, due to the speed at which new universities are springing up. Most deans (and even heads of departments) are under-prepared for their position, which may have accounted for some stress associated with the quality, since many have not taken up this type of leadership role before and lack experience in coordination and management required (Gmelch, Scott, Coares and Anderson 2008; Wolverton et al 2001 In De Boer, Geodegebuure, Meek 2009).

University administrative structure has divided the leadership levels into top, middle and lower levels. Middle level academics comprise the largest group of administrative personnel in private universities today. They contribute significantly to overall university ratings in terms of quality resource and governance (Clegg and McAuley 2005:20). Research in the area of middle level academics has been fruitful in pointing out the dilemmas middle level managers face as they deal with colleagues on one hand and senior management on the other. Middle level academics refer to the cadre of academics who do not participate directly in senior university management and leadership roles. They are those involved in designing, and coordinating academic programmes and teaching at department and faculty levels. They include those with doctoral level qualifications, heads of department, deans of faculty, officials of academic unions and course coordinators. (CODESRIA HEPII :2017). These category of staff are either appointed or elected into these positions and their method of induction into these positions are either specific, defined or most times not really defined in private sector. As stated in article 2.3 of the Quality Assurance Framework for Universities (2014:11), there are levels of academic attainment used to describe and measure academic requirements for academic positions (see table 1). Such standards have also been set in Statutory Instrument of Higher Education No. 50 of 2010. NCHE states that the quality of academic staff is key to the quality of a university (NCHE, QAFU 2014:11). Report of “The State of Higher Education and Training in Uganda 2015-16 shows that most private universities do not stick to these guidelines as over 70 percent of departmental heads are Assistant lectures positions with Master’s Degree and most of them not even on PhD track. One wonders if such heads of department have been properly inducted or trained to perform the very tasking and demanding roles of middle level leadership.

Academic qualification required for academic leadership expected of Deans and Heads of department are those with experience from the lecturer level and on PhD track, since leadership here requires a level of experience in program development and coordination. The role of such middle level managers involves teaching, policies, planning, leadership and innovations as part of major work of middle level academics (Mande and Nsereko 2015:25). Innovations in higher education means finding ways to use higher education to solve societal problems and not using societal problems to solve issues of higher education. Mamdani (2007:236) warns academia that the danger of responding to market demands uncritically and across the board can harm academia by undermining research.:

- What are the staffing levels and quality of middle level academics in private universities in Uganda in terms of their number and qualification?
- What are the determinants of best practices in leadership at the middle level leadership in private universities in Uganda?

What interventions are necessary for developing leadership skills for effective leadership of middle level academics in private universities in Uganda?

### **Method and Technique**

A thematic and systematic review of existing data sets and related literature were used in this study. Research visits were made to the National Council on Higher Education (NCHE), to review reports on the state of higher education and compare statistics on staffing with what are held in institutions especially the private sector. These visits provided most of the documents reviewed in this study. A number of reports were reviewed which included but not limited to reports from “The state of Higher Education, National Council for Higher Education and Training in Uganda 2004/5 up to 2015/16. The existing data sets on university staffing levels, academic qualification of university lecturers as stipulated by Quality Assurance Framework for Universities in 2011 ( revised 2014) and “NCHE Checklist of Quality and Universities Capacity Indicators for Assessment of Universities under the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act,2001,Regulation 9” were very relevant in this study. Participant observation also played a vital role in contributing life experiences in this study. The limitation is the difficulty in getting appropriate primary data from private universities directly, as they claimed that their records change frequently. This review therefore relied more on existing secondary data and participant firsthand information. Interactions with some officials of NCHE Uganda also revealed that data and information delay experienced from failure of some private universities in providing data required for reports, created gaps in information.

## Results and Discussions

### Staffing Challenges: The Quality of Middle Level Academics

One of the issues that hinder educational policy implementation is manpower and material resources to ensure that the goals and objectives are achieved within the specified time frame. In the report of SHE-and Training -in – Uganda (2015/16:13) on qualification, it states:

*The number of academic staff with PhD increased from 1579 in 2014/15 to 1,755 in 2015/16. This as aforementioned, includes part timers from various fields. There is need for a deliberate effort to train and retain staff in the universities and to create a pool of academicians to meet the growing demand for higher education.*

A look at the recent report of the qualifications of universities middle academics and administrators reveal that gap still exist in the area of staff qualification in all universities whether they are public or private (see Table 1).

Table 1: showing the number distribution of academic staff qualifications 2004/5 to 2015/16

Year	PhD	Masters	Bachelors	PGD	Others	Total
2004/5	549	2221	1715	0	764	5249
2005/6	558	2167	1694	153	686	5258
2006/7	746	2651	1949	224	895	6465

2010/11	858	2967	2621	209	1214	7785
2011/12	914	3657	2923	269	939	8594
2012/13	973	3455	2585	264	2187	9464
2013/14	1096	3793	3885	332	1067	10173
2014/15	1579	5384	3220	299	984	12845
2015/16	1755	5386	3155	299	2890	13485

Source: The State of Higher Education and Training in Uganda 2015/16; National Council for Higher Education, 2018, pp39

The table shows a yearly increase on the number of graduates at different levels of education with 2014 ,2015 and 2015 experiencing a rapid growth in population of PhDs. Masters also grew from 2221 in 2004/5 up to 5386 in 2015/16. Bachelor's degree level grew from 1715 in 2004/5 up to 3155 in 2015/16, even those who improved from their former qualification with PGD increased in number rapidly. This result will be better explained using the percentage table. (Table 2)

**Table 2: Showing percentage increase in academic staff qualifications 2004/5 to 2015/16;**

**Available latest compilation&Publicationasat as at 2019**

Year	PhD	Masters	Bachelors	PGD	Others	Total
2004/5	10%	42%	33%	0	15%	100%
2005/6	11%	41%	32%	3%	14%	100%
2006/7	12%	41%	30%	3%	14%	100%
2010/11	11%	38%	34%	3%	16%	100%

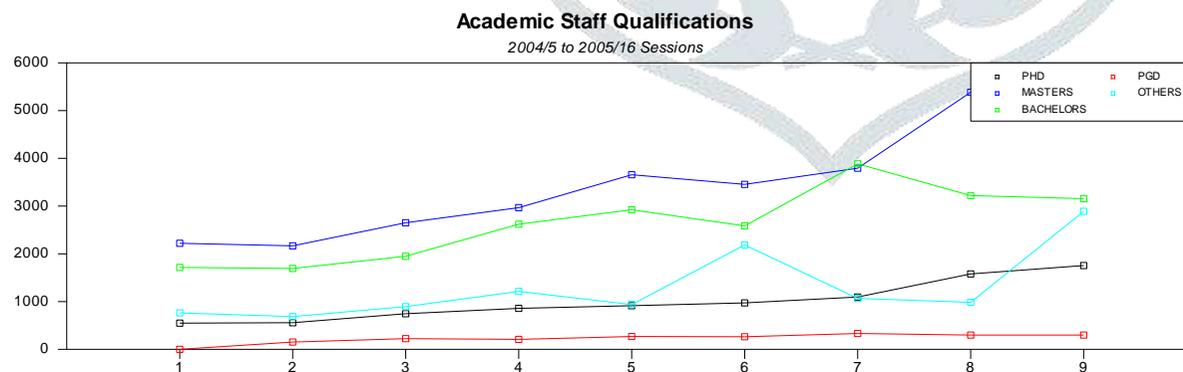
2011/12	11%	42%	34%	3%	11%	100%
2012/13	10%	37%	27%	3%	24%	100%
2013/14	10%	37%	27%	3%	24%	100%
2014/15	12%	42%	25%	2%	8%	100%
2015/16	13%	39.90%	23.40%	2.20%	21.40%	100%

**Source:** The State of Higher Education and Training in Uganda 2015/16; National Council for Higher Education, 2018, pp39

A steady increase is observed with a corresponding increase in the number at all the levels. There is no significant different made over the years in all the categories. PhD remain at same corresponding increase for 9years. In 2015 the percentage rose from 12% of previous year to 13% showing only 1% addition in the number of candidates who qualified for PhD. This same trend is observed at Masters level between 375,38% and 42% and 41%.

A graphical representation here will show that there is no major rise in number of administrators and academics in all the universities and this demonstrates the reason why private university may not in actual sense compete with the public universities for the limited number of PhDs available in academia in Uganda.

**Fig1 showing a graphical representation of increase in academic qualification of staff I Ugandan Universities.**



The response to market demand, especially in the context of Africa becomes problematic in two areas. One, there is not enough qualified staff to appoint into positions, but anyone available is picked. Two, universities, especially private ones do not want to invest in leadership and academic development programs. They want to employ what is available and what can be cheaply found. This is the case, especially with private universities that do not have staff development programs. It is possible that market demand seems to be the reason private universities use unqualified staff in middle academic positions. Mushemeza (2016: 242) in his studies found that one of the challenges of middle level leadership and academics is limited time allocated to research and publication because the middle level academics do more teaching than any of the other roles. Academic development also entails leadership skills expected of the middle level academics who are saddled with responsibility of playing leadership roles as well as teaching and research in private universities just like their counterparts in public universities. Middle level academic and administration also have difficulties executing their duties as they face pressure from senior colleagues and the demand of the top level administration.

Middle level administrators are largely responsible for cultivation of new and emerging professionals within organization, Middle level academics are also under preparation. They have not achieved the apex of their career. Yet, instead of being given time to mature, they are given the academic and leadership responsibilities of full-time professors. As a consequence of this, unqualified and low performing middle level administrators have negative effect on development and retention of staff. One of the consequences of underfunding of higher education in Uganda is shortage of required qualified staff and training (Opuda-Asibo 2014:viii). To buttress the point here that Private Universities use inexperienced and lower level qualification to fill middle level administrative positions, one of the private universities in Kampala, visited by the researcher revealed that 13% of those appointed into the position of Head of department have PhD, while 88% hold Masters degree level and only 5% had previous administrative experience. One of the head of department with Masters degree in a private university in Kampala confessed:

*Initially I feared to take up this position, because I have little or no experience in administration in Higher education and thought it will take up my time, but when they told me that I will receive allowance which will enhance my emolument, I just agreed. I am six months now in this position and it had been really hectic with no internal in-service training at all.*

This submission is enough to explain why private universities need to train their middle level administrators-a pathway to developing a better university management. Most of the lecturers are moonlighting, jumping from one university to another even at the position of head of department. One wonders when they can settle and be mentored or learn on the job.

In the context of growing number of private universities in Uganda, public higher institutions enrollment is placed at 49 percent as compared to 51 percent in private universities ,retention of staff is still a problem in private universities including lack of staff development (Basheka 2015:4).From observation, it seems private universities are more profit oriented because the number of unqualified staff and number of student has skewed the stipulated ideal staff/student ration from 1:15 to 1:50 or more, which is unacceptable (NCHE,Capacity Indicator Assessment, Regulation 9). The purpose of study therefore was to examine the leadership-skills, capability and the challenges faced by middle level academics in private universities. Pertinent questions to address were

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE),had started a program to train existing and potential managers of institutions of Higher Learning with the help of Carnegie of New York.The aim was to improve and create a pool of potential administrators who can be called upon to take future leadership positions in institutions of higher learning. About 150 beneficiaries were trained which included deans of faculty, heads of department, and senior administrators, although it was not indicated if those trained included private universities, but that they were selected from different universities.However,this number is quite insignificant and makes very little impact because it is not even a good sample of all universities .So many up springing private universities were not catered for.

This data reveals that many private universities are understaffed in terms of qualifications of middle level academics. This report may not have portrayed the actual or real state of data but it still shows the poor level of qualification in most private universities. The implication is that middle level academics occupying leadership positions of heads of departments, deans, principals, directors ,registrar and programme coordinators might possess only Masters and Bachelor's degree and most probably with academic positions of Teaching assistant, Assistant lecturer or Lecturer. This data also reveals hidden cases where some private universities appoint individuals to leadership positions with no reference to NCHE guidelines. Middle level academics who occupy such positions should possess the appropriate and adequate qualifications. University and Other Tertiary Institution Act 2001, Regulation 9, recommends that 60 percent of staff in a university should be PhD holders, less than 10 percent is unacceptable,70 percent should

have Masters degree, less than 30 percent is unacceptable. Table 4 clearly shows that the recommended qualification for academic levels has not been met, compared to the growth in number of private universities in Uganda. In a report published by NCHE on ‘The State of Higher Education and Training in Uganda 2014’, it was obvious that some universities have less qualified staff especially at the middle level academics as seen by the report, although some of the data needs further verification.

Kasozi (2016 :142) reported that private universities tend to display features not in line with acceptable standards for higher education and have no good practices in developing middle-level academics mainly because of lower startup costs, and end up employing more part-time academic staff. This makes it difficult to retain quality leadership in middle-level academics, because they do more teaching than research and offer little or no mentorship to junior academics in private universities.

### **Determinants of good or bad practices in middle level leadership in private universities in Uganda**

In a research by Denis, Rensburg and Venter (2014), on the impact of managerialism on the strategy work of university middle managers, findings show that middle managers at a chosen institution are constrained by the effects or influence of managerialism. This effect has culminated into bureaucratic cramps which usually translates into disempowerment. Another issue is conformance over collegiality and controlling the cost of innovation and experimentation. It is possible for an experienced middle level manpower to create his own system of achieving the expected departmental goals while still keeping the bureaucratic bottlenecks and earn the support of peers and subordinates. According to Watson (2000:6), Rosemary Deem posits that a radical alternative of femocracy, stressing collaborative and facilitative management which focuses on concern for people rather than focusing on tasks, combined with lack of personal interest and competition, could prove a successful modern practice and a better pathway to effective departmental management. She also concludes that such practice may not necessarily be gender inspired. It is however believed by most managers that gender has less weight in effective management than age and experience. The selection of appointment of inexperienced middle level administrators in universities whether private or public negates the fact that experience in managing administrative bureaucracy and controlled collegiality is quite hectic and needs training and adequate experience. The current problem facing higher education has become more complex due to population explosion in exponential measures and without corresponding growth in quality of university administrators especially the middle level strata in growing number of private universities in Sub-Saharan African countries. Universities are moving into “managed professional public organizations model” (Hinings, Greenwood

and Copper In Boer, Geodegebuure and Meek,2009). In this type of model, productivity, client service, executive leadership, competition, marketing and growth strategies are common concepts and differ across institutions. The NCHE function in respect to monitoring and evaluation will mean different things to different universities and policy framework becomes obsolete because higher institutions are becoming more of profit oriented and capital-based organizations instead of change agents in terms of educational outcomes. The new practice is the negligence of qualification and experience in appointing middle level administrators in most private universities in Uganda.

In a typical private university, those who occupy the middle level administrators are inexperienced Masters degree administrators and even some had not completed their Masters degree and has never worked in any higher educational setting before being appointed or selected. For ethical reasons, the name of the university is withheld here but the table here disclosed the qualifications of heads of department and years of experience, reflecting same scenario in most private universities in Uganda.

Table 3: showing Faculties, Heads of Departments and their Qualifications -2019

Faculty/Schools/Colleges	Departments	Qualification of the Head of department	Years of experience on Appointment
College of Humanities and Social Science	-Journalism and Media studies	Masters degree	No previous experirnce
	-Development, Peace and conflict studies	PhD	No previous experience
	-Applied Psychology	Masters	No previous experience
	-Political and Administrative studies	PhD	No previous experience
College of Education	- Foundations	Masters Degree	No previous Experience
	- Arts & Sciece Education	Masters	No pevious Experience
	- Access Program	Masters	No previous experience
	- Open and Disatnce Education	Masters	No previous Experience
School of Law	-Diploma in law	Masters	No previous Experience
	HoD Law & Jurisprudence	Masters	No previous Experience
	HoD Commercial Law	Masters	No previous Experience
	Public and Cooperative law	PhD	Worked 2years at law council as Admin
College of Economics and Management Sciences	Economics and Applied Statistics	PhD	No previous Experience

	Accounting and Finance Human resource and supply management Business Management Leisure and Hospitality	Masters Masters Masters Masters	No previous Experience  No previous Experience No previous Experience No previous Experience
School of Engineering and Applied sciences	Mechanical Engineering Electrical engineering Chemical and Environmental sciences	Masters PhD PhD PhD	No previous Experience Hod at previous university for 2years No previous university
College of Computing & Information Technology	Computer Science Information Technology & Information Systems	PhD Masters	No previous experience No previous experience
			Without previous experience (87%)

**Source: Primary Source; Data collected from the Colleges and Schools of a Private University in Kampala(2019)**

The table shows the current state of the qualifications and level of experience of those who occupy the position of heads of departments in a selected private university in Kampala. Out of 23 heads of department, 20 out of 23 (87%) has no previous experience on appointment. My attention is not on how many years they have spent, but how they were appointed and the criteria for being selected or appointed as middle level administrators. Out of this number 5 are on PhD track on inquiry while the rest with Masters claimed that they could not cope with running the department and also pursuing a Doctorate. 4 of them claimed that they enrolled for PhD but dropped off the program because of limited fund and time on task as head of department. It is obvious that most people who occupy other categories of middle level administration in private universities are not experienced and are not being mentored by senior colleagues. Most of them are at the cadre of Assistant Lecturers and has a lot of lecture workloads and at the same time lecture in other universities - a phenomenon they refer to as moonlighting. Leadership skills can be learnt on the job only if the individual gives adequate attention to effectiveness and efficiency while on the task.

Leadership skills involve the ability to direct, coach, delegate and mentor individuals and teams depending on employee's need. In private universities, attracting the right type of academics is a challenge because they just recruit with no reference to recruitment policies nor do they follow any consistent procedures. Tibarimbasa (2010:44) observed that private universities in Uganda hardly

advertise vacant academic positions, noting that better choices are made through recruitment channels which attract reasonable pool of applicants to choose from. In his studies, Tibarimbasa (Ibid) found that Kampala International University prefers expatriates believing that they get quality academics. They use electronic media and foreign media like radios and newspapers for advertising for middle level academics and most times the heads of departments and deans are not part of the recruitment team. This is a challenge to the various departments and faculties, because the best practice is to give the middle level administrator the opportunity to participate in choosing from a pool of applicants and for vacant positions to be both internally and externally advertised. Vacant academic positions are first noticed at the departmental level as gaps to be filled, which the head should report and also participate in filling appropriately. The best practice gives middle level academics and administrators the confidence for possible upward mobility in private universities especially when they are inclusive in recruitment processes..

In another study Edabu (2014:82) found that level of remuneration and terms of engagement is affected by the way academics are recruited, thus leading to low motivation and attrition. He also found that most private university do not promote their staff and there is lack of commitment, no training, bad working conditions, no recognition and employee benefits are very low resulting in low morale thereby making the work of middle level administrator more challenging. The challenge of remuneration and lack of quality staff in both public and private universities in Uganda gave rise to a phenomenon called moonlighting. This is when lecturers teach or work in more than one university and in most private universities, this phenomenon is common in Uganda. Where majority of the lectures are moonlighting, the head of department or dean may find his roles and duties too challenging and difficult to accomplish any reasonable task outside teaching. Lindner (1998:3) found that there is no significant relationship between perception of good working conditions and gender and that good working condition is ranked as a high motivator for middle level academics and administrators. This implies that a good working condition is panacea to effectiveness and efficiency of productivity on the part of middle level academics.

The structure of private universities and private universities do not really differ except in adherence of procedures and line of command (Lapworth 2004:299). Though the structures are found in the charter of most private universities show no difference from that of public sector meaning that there is no particular pattern followed by private universities. Most scholars with highly specialized knowledge disagree with commands from top down but prefer commands nurtured from bottom up. This is where feedbacks from bottom drives decisions made at the top. In the structure of private universities, which is not different from that of public, top level

leadership means enactment of policies and also provision of purpose, clarity of strategic direction and control to manage programmes and outcomes (Kennedy 2003:67). From participant observation, the existing structure specifies and delineates lines of authority and procedures, which is not adhered to in private universities. In most private universities, power and authority in governance depends on who owns the university and they do not follow stipulated governance pattern furnished under the University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001, which contains the mandates. This type of governance makes the middle level academics to work in fear and intimidation. Middle level leadership are coerced into taking certain decisions, which is not in any way best practices. One common example is advertising and then admitting students into programmes not yet accredited and at the same time preparing the curriculum, while the program is already running. The head of department must produce this curriculum using one or two voluntary lecturers who turns out to be overtasked. About 80 percent of the private universities in Uganda have been observed to use this practice to add certain programmes in high public demand.

Some practices in most private universities make them portray ‘for-profit’ objective. Therefore, certain practices affect commitment and efficiency in the middle level cadre. Cliques exist among the members of staff at various levels and with such, other behaviours such as apathy, lack of team work, micromanagement and acrimony among other practices such as favoritism and malice are found also in public universities (The Inspectorate of Government 2015:18). A cue is also taken from this report where a staff claimed to have been sexually harassed and marginalized by the University’s Vice Chancellor. From such reports, we clearly observe that unacceptable practices also affect outcomes of private universities in Uganda (Kasozi 2013:13), and stifles the quality of university outcomes. The general lamentation is that our educational system does not encourage knowledge through research and knowledge generation, debate or innovation because of these bad practices coupled with the academics viewing private universities as teaching rather than research institutions. Kasozi(2013:4) listed seven functions of higher education including strengthening lower levels of education by training the needed teaching personnel and “Triggering” relevant curriculum changes. This study will not delve into those functions because it is not within the scope of this study. However, he advocates that universities need “massive improvement” and also observed that middle level academics are not in position to define what the universities need without participation of all stakeholders. He therefore suggests that interventions should include making higher education producer of knowledge, skills and good behavior. In addition, he recommends a shift in the way universities are structured especially the type of curriculum.

From the foregoing, it is very obvious that middle level academics and administrators in private universities face so many challenges and the overall knowledge on higher education sector (especially private universities in Uganda) is incomplete because their success rate is based on incomplete data (Kasozi 2013: 13). This review has therefore been based on available data and literature.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

This study revealed that the rules and standards provided by the national Council for Higher Education for structuring and managing private universities in Uganda are not being followed. It has also been observed that leadership and governance at middle level academics and administration do not comply with regulations and legal framework especially as stipulated by the Universities and Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001. It was even observed that appointments are made arbitrarily and engagement can happen at any time even in the middle of a semester without the consultation of the head of department or the dean of faculty. We also see that some middle level academics, who are also offering leadership as administrator lack quality because of their level of experience and academic qualification therefore may not possess leadership skills needed for facing the challenges of leadership. None of the private universities reviewed had the required number of PhDs but they have greater percentage of academics staff as Master's Degree holders. Most of the middle level academics, who act as administrators have Master's Degree and are as Assistant Lecturers cadre. However, NCHE's Universities and other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001, Regulation, requires that heads of departments and deans of faculties in Uganda universities should hold PhD. It has also been revealed that enrollment has increased but without corresponding increase in quality and number of qualified staff (Liang 2004:15, Kasozi 2011:9). Participant observation has also revealed that best practices are not in place such as concentration of power at the top echelon of the governing council or board of trustees, poor governance causing fear and intimidation at middle level leadership, and poor recruitment procedure have made the work of middle level academics and administrators a herculean task, leading to attrition and lower rate of retention of academics in private universities in Uganda.

The study has shown that private universities do not meet the standards set by NCHE for operating as a university and fulfilling the purpose of higher education in Uganda. Based on the findings and the objectives of this study, NCHE should assist private universities in organizing leadership skills training for the middle level leadership, to strengthen outcomes from private universities, especially the newer ones. They should also organize mentorship programs by the well-performing public universities for the younger private

ones. Private universities are not-for-profit organizations and this should be made clear from inception and strictly adhered to by close monitoring by national Council for Higher Education's monitoring team. The contributions of the middle level leadership in universities has been found to be at 54 percent of the quality of education in universities (Mande and Nsereko 2015:31) but this is quite low when we consider the roles played by middle level academics and administrators. This can be improved when attention is paid to private universities leadership and governance practices to ensure best practices are being put in place and adhered to. This responsibility still lies on NCHE capacity to enforce compliance and insist on consistency in presenting actual reports. It is also possible that some information provided by some of these universities may differ from what may have been submitted in order to get NCHE approval. Interventions therefore should include trainings and closer monitoring despite financial constraints.

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