Foreign Students' Perception of the Quality of Service Delivery in Ugandan Universities

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Abstract: *Uganda is a top recipient of foreign university students in the East African region and derives several benefits from them. To sustain these benefits, universities in the country need to ensure that these students are satisfied with the quality of their service delivery. However, hitherto, research had not been conducted into the extent to which the students are satisfied with the quality of the universities' service delivery. To fill this gap, this study delved into the extent to which the students are satisfied with the quality of their universities' service delivery—to point the universities to areas requiring improvement if any. Starting with discussion of literature on the concept and measurement of quality in higher education, focus was put on the satisfactoriness of the quality of the universities' teaching, library, ICT, recreation and health services—because the literature indicated that the universities are obligated to provide them and that students can validly express opinions on the extent to which their delivery is satisfactory. Data were collected from a sample of 775 foreign students drawn from two public universities and two private universities in the country. The findings were that the students are satisfied with most of the attributes of service delivery investigated. Nevertheless, the students in public universities were more satisfied than those from private universities. The students were also more satisfied with the quality of teaching, recreation and health services than with the quality of library and ICT services.*

Key words: Study abroad; Quality assurance; Student services

INTRODUCTION

Each year, an increasing number of students leave their countries to seek higher education abroad (Brooks and Waters, 2009; UNESCO Institute of Statistics [UIS], 2013). For example, Altbach (2006) estimated that over two million higher education students studied outside their countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 205,000 students studied outside their countries that year. In South Africa, around one in every ten postgraduate students is foreign (Macgregor, 2010). According to Jobbins (2012), latest British government statistics show a 1% increase in applications for student visas for university study. In Uganda, the number of foreign university students rose by 21%, from 11,992 in 2006 to 14,535 in 2010 (National

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Council for Higher Education [NCHE], 2006; 2010). In Hong Kong, Sharma (2012) reports that the number of mainland China based universities accepting students from Hong Kong is slated to increase from 60 to 70 in 2013. Citing Kishun (2006), Sanga (2012) also reports that thousands of Nigerian, Kenyan, Senegalese, Batswana, Ghanaian, Mauritian, Egyptian, South African, Tanzanian, Ethiopian, Ugandan and Mozambican university students are enrolled in universities outside their countries. Information from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) (2013) corroborates these sources thus:

> …at least 3.6 million students in 2010 were enrolled in tertiary education abroad, up from 2 million in 2000. East Asia and the Pacific is the largest source of international students, representing 28% of the global total. Students from China make up one-half of this figure…The United States, Australia, and Japan are their main destinations for study. North America and Western Europe follow, accounting for 15% of those going abroad. In relative terms, students from Central Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are the most mobile in the world. About 6 out of 100 tertiary students from Central Asia, and 5 out of 100 from sub-Saharan Africa go away to study. Education hubs are developing in the regions and attracting growing concentrations of mobile students. South Africa, for example, received 17% of mobile students from Sub-Saharan Africa in 2010. Nonetheless, France remains the region's top destination, receiving 19% of students. The Arab States have also seen a steady rise in outbound students over the past ten years, accounting for 7% of the global total. France, the United States and the United Kingdom absorb most of these students; however, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (Dubai) are also popular destinations for high-level studies. Several countries have more students studying abroad than at home. In São Tomé and Principe, for example, fewer than 1,000 students were enrolled in domestic higher education institutions [HEIs], representing 4% of its tertiary-age population; whereas approximately 2,500 students studied abroad, or 14% of tertiary-age population (UIS, 2013).

Citing a host of authors, Ssempebwa *et al.* (2012) affirm that this movement of students is associated with a number of benefits:

> It provides students with an opportunity to attain a higher education that is perceived to be of higher quality, when they attend foreign HEIs that are thought to be better than those at home...provides students that are inadmissible to their choice study programmes at home with an opportunity to gain admission to their preferred study programmes... allows students to study from settings that offer better prospects of post higher education employment opportunities...and, in instances where the cost of tuition and living in the receiving country is lower than that in the sending country, it allows students and/or their benefactors to save on the cost of attaining higher education... Foreign students bring income to their receiving institutions, an important advantage at a time of declining public funding of higher education institutions...They also bring prestige to the institutions, through diversifying their student populations. Foreign student receiving countries also earn foreign income from them. For example, international education contributed US$11 billion to the US economy in 2000, it is one

> of Australia's top-earning exports, contributing over A$4.4 billion annually...and, in the United Kingdom, international students bring about £10 billion to the economy annually... Study abroad also enables sending countries to educate their citizens for whom places or study programmes might not have been available at home. Finally, it contributes to the internationalization of academe, since HEIs teach internationally diverse students, who promote knowledge from their countries abroad and promote the knowledge acquired abroad in their home countries on return (Ssempebwa *et al*., 2012: 140).

However, authors like Ouma *et al*. (2012) and Knight (2007) note that study abroad may also involve challenges that could repulse current and prospective foreign students. It is also noteworthy that foreign higher education is provided in an internationally competitive environment (Sanga, 2012). Prospective foreign students have a multiplicity of HEIs/ countries to choose from. The inference here is that, to attract these students and realize the benefits they bring in a sustainable way, the institutions receiving the students need to: 1) forestall the challenges the students could face; and 2) leverage the competition imposed by institutions in other countries in attracting the students (Sanga, 2012). The institutions could achieve this through maintaining *satisfactory* standards of quality in their service delivery. After all, literature related to motivations for study abroad (e.g. Nicolescu, 2005; Ouma, 2012) suggests that flagship among the attractions to study abroad, is a desire to attain university education of a *higher* level of quality.

In Uganda, the NCHE enforces a checklist of HEI capacity indicators (Appendix I)—to ensure adherence to satisfactory standards of quality in higher education delivery. Also, HEIs in the country are making efforts to assure quality in delivering their services. For instance, most of them have established departments that are responsible for quality assurance; reviewed their teaching programmes and submitted them for (external) accreditation; and joined regional and international quality assurance networks. The institutions' strategic development plans also show concern for quality assurance (see, for example, Planning and Development Department [PDD], 2008; Kyambogo University, 2007).

Nevertheless, review of literature related to foreign students in the country (Businge and Karugaba, 2012; IUCEA, 2009; Kasenene, 2009; Ouma *et al*., 2012) shows that information on the extent to which the students are satisfied with the quality of the institutions' service delivery is generally nonexistent. The aforementioned efforts to improve quality have been aimed at improving quality assurance *generally* rather than informed by feedback from this category of students (. Court, 1999; Nakanyike and Nansozi, 2003; Mayanja, 2007; PDD, 2008; Kasozi, 2003), despite the chance that they have peculiar expectations and challenges. The problem is that, notwithstanding their contribution, these efforts to assure quality may not satisfactorily forestall the challenges foreign students in the country could face let alone leverage the competition HEIs in the country could face from similar institutions in other countries. Cognizant of this possibility, this study delved into the extent to which the students are satisfied with the quality of the institutions' service delivery to identify areas that might require improvement.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK, KNOWLEDGE GAP AND ATTRIBUTES OF SERVICE QUALITY INVESTIGATED

Concept and Measurement of Quality in Higher Education

The study surveyed literature related to the meaning and measurement of quality in higher education—to identify parameters within whose framework to examine students' satisfaction with the quality of their institutions' service delivery. The literature led to the conclusion that the concept of quality in higher education is complex and controversial (Gilroy *et al*., 1999; Finch, 1995; Goodlad, 1995). It is multidimensional (reflecting personal, national, regional and global aspirations), so it is very difficult to conceptualize.

According to Monash University (2001), it has been defined as excellence, zero-error and fitness for the purpose. Quality as excellence relates the delivery of higher education services to a 'gold standard' while quality as zero-error concerns itself with the extent to which the delivery of higher education services deviates from this standard. Against this background, quality assurance in higher education is sometimes considered in terms of the extent to which HEIs meet specified 'standards' of excellence in their management, resources and performance. However, the concept of excellence is relative and may be uncritically defined, yet standards of excellence have little, if any, value in a context where they are misplaced. Similarly, quality as zero-error is a misnomer; it points to quality control rather than quality itself.

In lieu of these definitions, therefore, quality in higher education has been defined in terms of the extent to which delivery of higher education services is fitness for its purpose. UNESCO (1998) endorses the pragmatism of this conceptualization -- citing its cognizance of the fact that the concept of quality in higher education reflects diverse aspirations albeit which may be tied to context. Even then, conceptualization of quality as "fitness for purpose" is problematic. It suggests that *anything* goes, as long as it is fit for its purpose. Accordingly, conceptualization of quality as fitness for purpose raises concerns for the fitness *of* purpose. It also raises concerns for the measurability of the fitness of higher education service delivery for its purpose. Conversely, the concept of quality as standards is straightforward, since standards comprise quantifiable parameters in whose terms the fitness of higher education service delivery for the purposes of higher education may be appraised (Green, 1995).

Concurrent interpretation of the definitions of quality as fitness *for* purpose, fitness *of* purpose and standards points to positions that may be used to measure quality in higher education, notwithstanding the aforementioned controversies. Once a *fitting* purpose has been defined for higher education in a given community, the quality of higher education in the community may be validly defined in terms of the extent to which higher education service delivery is *fit* for that purpose. In turn, standards may be looked at as tangibly verifiable indicators of the extent to which higher education service delivery is fit for its purpose.

The inference here is that, in measuring quality in higher education service delivery, focus should be put on the extent to which HEIs in a given community maintain

specified standards. Authors on quality in higher education (e.g. Salmi, 2009; UNESCO, 2005) suggest that these standards should touch on the quality of students (in terms of their competence, experience and motivations); faculty (in terms of their qualifications, research, community service engagements and teaching); institutional governance, academic freedom and autonomy; funding, facilities and support services; and reputation. Judgment of institutions' performance on these standards should be contextualized, since quality in higher education is relative to context. Beyond the questions of what to measure and why to measure it in evaluating the quality of higher education, therefore, are questions of how and who to do the measurement. Borden and Owens (2001) suggest that, depending on its goal, the measurement could be done by current students, alumni, employers, accreditation agencies or professional organizations who/which may collect/supply qualitative and/or quantitative data about the institutions' performance on specified standards.

Knowledge Gap and Rationale

In Uganda, the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (2001) mandates the country's National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) to promulgate standards of quality assurance in higher education service delivery and enforce them in HEIs. Pursuant to this mandate, the council enforces a checklist of HEI capacity indicators touching on attributes of the institutions' location, infrastructure, facilities and utilities; governance; staffing; funding; gender sensitivity; research productivity; and graduates' university-labour-market transition (Appendix I). The council evaluates each HEI's performance on attributes of these indicators and accredits institutions whose performance is rated as "Ideal", "Good", "Acceptable" or "Improvable". In addition, the council periodically surveys, and reports on, the state of higher education delivery in the country (see, for example, NCHE, 2006; 2010). In 2006, it also surveyed graduates of the HEIs and their employers -- to generate feedback on the graduates' labour market performance (see NCHE, 2006b). National and regional professional bodies (e.g. Uganda Society of Architects, East African Medical and Dental Council and Uganda Law Society) also evaluate and accredit study programmes. Higher Education organizations like the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) also evaluate and provide feedback on quality assurance in HEIs in the country.

However, a gap in the aforementioned efforts to assure quality in higher education service delivery pertains to the fact that feedback on the quality of higher education service delivery has been sought only from alumni, employers, accreditation agencies and professional organizations. Higher education students are generally left out of the evaluation of the satisfactoriness of the quality of higher education service delivery, despite the fact that they are the ones receiving the services. Even if some HEIs invite their students to evaluate the quality of teaching they receive from their lecturers and professors, these evaluations focus mainly on the teaching component of higher education service delivery. Moreover, the value of the information they elicit tends to be very limited, since they are usually very specific to individual lecturers or teaching units. Incidentally, the NCHE and similar agencies enforce standards in HEIs albeit in an abstract manner (cf. Appendix I).

For instance, the NCHE enforces standards of student-book ratios but does not examine the relevance and currency of the books. Often, accreditation agencies do not give sufficient information about the extent to which HEIs *actually* deliver the levels of quality that the standards they maintain promise and, in some instances, the agencies have expressed scepticism about quality assurance in institutions/ programmes that they accredited (Ahimbisibwe, 2012).

Consequently, information on the extent to which students are satisfied with the quality of higher education service delivery in the country is generally nonexistent. Thus, efforts to forestall the challenges foreign students could face and to leverage the competition imposed by other institutions/countries may not be spot-on. This being the case, this study delved into the extent to which foreign students in the country are satisfied with the quality of their HEIs' service delivery.

Attributes of Service Quality Investigated

Conceptualization of the study accepted, as a frame of analysis, the views that: 1) quality in higher education is to be judged in terms of the quality of students, faculty, institutional governance, academic freedom, autonomy, funding, facilities, support services, reputation and contribution to society that judgment of institutions' performance on each of these variables should be tied to context; and 2) that judgment of institutions' performance on each of these variables should be tied to context. Therefore, examination of the extent to which foreign students in Ugandan universities are satisfied with the quality of their universities' service delivery was hinged on the attributes of quality assurance specified by the country's NCHE, namely: institutions' location, infrastructure, facilities and utilities; governance; staffing; financial health; gender sensitivity; research productivity; and graduates' university-labour-market transition. Rather than reinvent the evaluations of the quality of higher education service delivery by the NCHE, alumni, employers, accreditation agencies and professional organizations, however, focus was put only on attributes of services that HEIs are obligated to provide and that are not only crucially relevant to students' satisfaction but also about whose satisfactoriness students could validly express opinions. These included teaching, library, ICT, recreation and health services so the students surveyed were asked to specify whether they found attributes of these services "Very Satisfactory", "Satisfactory", "Dissatisfactory" or "Very Dissatisfactory".

Eleven (11) attributes of the quality of teaching were identified from the literature (Salmi, 2009; Kilpatrick, 1997; Bamiro, 2012; Hopkins *et al*., 1997; Mamdani, 2007; Quddus, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Mullens, Murnance and Willett, 1996; Trigwell and Prosser, 1991; Aaronson, *et al*., 2003; Wenglinsky, 2000; Monk, 1994; Goe, 2007; Borko and Putnam, 1996; Wilson *et al*., 1987; Cavalluzo, 2004; Hanushek *et al.,* 2005). These were: lecturers' masterly of subject matter, encouragement of learners' participation in learning, enhancement of comprehension of course content, sensitivity to individual differences among learners, pedagogical creativity, utilization of learners' pre-course competencies, relation of theory to practice and professionalism; conduciveness of teaching environments and utilization of teaching aids; and evaluation of learning.

Library services were looked at in terms of the size and ergonomic comfort of library areas; conduciveness of opening hours and service quality; quality of e-resources; and the quantity, relevance and currency of resources because authors like Krishna (1996) suggest that these attributes may be used in evaluating the quality of library services. Regarding ICTs, authors like Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) (2001), CoSN (2003), Bakia (2002), Coleman (1998) and Trucano (2005) pointed to the ergonomic comfort ICT labs; availability of computers; ICT accessibility and utilization policies; and the quality of hardware, software, user support and internet connectivity, so perceptions of their satisfactoriness were investigated. On the other hand, recreation services were looked at it terms of the quality of sports facilities and opportunities for involvement in sports that the universities availed to the students. Finally, the quality of health services was examined in terms of the HIEs' health policies as well as first aid and evacuation services because the institutions are obligated to ensure availability of the three, irrespective of whether they run full-scale medical services.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The study followed a cross-sectional survey design. This involved administration of a questionnaire to selected foreign students. The design was most appropriate because it allows collection of data on given variables at a given point in time (Amin, 2005). This ensured that all the data required was collected within a *short* period of time, despite a relatively large sample of respondents. Collecting all the data required in a *short* period of time was useful because perceptions of the satisfactoriness of attributes of the quality of higher education service delivery could vary over *long* periods of time. Another justification for using the design was that a number of studies on higher education management in Uganda (Bakkabulindi *et al*., 2008; Kyaligonza, 2011; Ssegawa, 2006) had been successfully conducted using the design.

Population, Sample and Respondent Selection Procedure

The population of the study included two units of analysis: (1) the 18 universities in Uganda that had foreign students at the time of the study; and (2) the 11,992 foreign students enrolled in these universities (Table 1).

Four of the universities, namely: Kampala International University, Makerere University, Kampala University and Kyambogo University, were purposely selected for the study. Kampala International University and Kampala University are privately owned while Makerere University and Kyambogo University are public. A key justification for the selection is that the four universities are in proximity (see location in Table 1), which made data collection relatively cheap and time efficient. In as much as the sample was based on considerations for convenience, however, the conclusions of the study are offered for possible generalisation to Uganda because the four universities enrolled 8,974 (representing 75%) of the 11,992 foreign students in the country (Table 1). These 8,974 students comprised the target population from which a sample of 915 was drawn, following Krejcie and Morgan (1970)'s Sample Size Estimation Table. Data collection assistants were assigned to

each of the four universities. Working in liaison with student deans, wardens of students' residences, class leaders and leaders of international students' guilds, the assistants identified the foreign students -- mostly through snowball techniques -- and administered the questionnaire to them. Seven hundred and seventy-five (representing 85% of the target population) returned completed questionnaires(Table 2).

Table 1: Population and Sample

	University	**Location**	**Population of Foreign Students[1]**		**Total**	**Sample[2]**
			Male	***Female***		
1	Kampala International University*	Kampala	4853	1862	6715	364
2	Makerere University*[,3]	Kampala	1058	771	1829	317
3	Bugema University	Luwero	240	622	862	-
4	Busoga University	Iganga	389	372	761	-
5	Islamic University in Uganda	Mbale	333	154	487	-
6	Kampala University*	Kampala	204	196	400	196
7	Nkumba University	Wakiso	249	134	383	-
8	Uganda Martyrs University	Mpigi	91	70	161	-
9	Uganda Christian University	Mukono	73	70	143	-
10	Uganda Pentecostal University	Kabarole	51	38	89	-
11	Kumi University	Kumi	0	39	39	-
12	Ndejje University	Luwero	28	9	37	-
13	Kyambogo University*	Kampala	17	13	30	38
14	Nile University	Arua	22	6	28	-
15	Mbarara University	Mbarara	12	7	19	-
16	Gulu University	Gulu	2	2	4	-
17	Kabale University	Kabale	0	3	3	-
18	Mountains of the Moon University	Kabarole	1	1	2	-
Total			**7623**	**4369**	**11992**	**915**

[1]Culled from NCHE (2006); [2]Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970); [3]Includes Makerere University Business School *Included in sample of Universities

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents

Sending Country	**Female**	**Male**	**Count**	**Percentage**

Burundi	39	42	81	10
Kenya	121	207	328	42
Nigeria	22	29	51	7
Rwanda	30	32	62	8
Somalia	74	60	134	17
Sudan	27	50	77	10
Tanzania	11	31	42	5
Total	324	451	775	100

Majority (68%) of the respondents were drawn from private universities

Scope, Instruments and Data Quality

The study delved into the extent to which foreign students in the selected universities are satisfied with the universities' teaching, library, ICT, recreation and health services. Data were collected between August 2010 and June 2011. Using a self-administered questionnaire, the students were asked to specify whether they found attributes of the universities' teaching, library, ICT, recreation and health services "Very Satisfactory", "Satisfactory", "Dissatisfactory" or "Very dissatisfactory". The questionnaire was divided into two main parts: (1) Background Information about the Respondent, eliciting information on the respondents' gender, country of origin and type of university attended; and (2) Satisfactoriness of the Quality of Higher Education Service Delivery, eliciting information on the extent to which the respondents found attributes of their universities' service delivery satisfactory. The validity of the instrument derives from the fact that the attributes of teaching, library, ICT, recreation and health service quality included in the instrument were identified from published literature (cf. 2). Indeed, the validity of the instrument was endorsed by three experienced researchers in the area of quality assurance in higher education. Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient for the (second part of the) instrument was established at .87, the inference being that the instrument was reliable. Cronbach's alpha was used to ascertain the consistency of the instrument because the technique is well suited to Likert-scaled instruments (Amin, 2005).

Procedure

The study progressed through three main stages. During the first stage, the problem and knowledge gap were defined and literature related to them was reviewed. The conclusions derived from the review of the literature provided basis for the preparation of a questionnaire. Thereafter, the questionnaire was validated by three reviewers and revised according to their suggestions. During the second stage, permission to collect data from the selected universities was obtained, prospective respondents were identified and the questionnaire was administered. During the final stage, the data collected were cleaned, entered and analysed.

Analysis

The data collected on the respondents' background particulars were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The respondents' perceptions of attributes of the quality of their universities service delivery were assigned scores. For each of the attributes, the scores were computed into means. Thereafter, the difference between

these means and the best possible mean were subjected to a one-sample student-t test, to establish the significance of the gap between the perceived and ideal levels of quality at the 95% level.

Limitations

This study is limited in five main ways. Firstly, the data collected on the respondents' perceptions of the quality of higher education service delivery were not disaggregated by gender, level of education sought in Uganda and area of academic specialization, despite the fact that different categories of foreign students could view the quality of higher education service delivery differently. Secondly, the study focused only on teaching, library, ICT, recreation and health services, despite the fact that, in higher education, quality is a multifaceted concept that touches on many more attributes. Thirdly, all the universities involved in the study are located in Kampala, so the data could reflect geographical peculiarities that may not be generalized to universities in other parts of the country. Fourthly, data were collected only from foreign students enrolled in traditional face-to-face study programmes. Readers need to note that the experiences of foreign students enrolled in off-campus courses may differ. Finally, for a host of reasons, the data collected from the four universities are reported in aggregates yet individual institutional experiences may vary widely. Therefore, we recognize that there may be a need for further research aimed at addressing these limitations.

Ethical Considerations

Data were collected with the informed consent of the managers of the selected universities. Secondly, the data collected were reported in aggregates, to uphold the universities' and respondents' anonymity.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

To gain insight into the extent to which the students perceived attributes of the quality of teaching, library, ICT, recreation and health services in their universities as being satisfactory, they were asked to specify whether they found the attributes "Very Satisfactory", "Satisfactory", "Dissatisfactory" or "Very dissatisfactory". The levels of satisfaction were assigned scores thus: "Very Satisfactory" = "4", "Satisfactory" = "3", "Dissatisfactory" = "2" and "Very dissatisfactory" = "1". Subsequently, the respondents' scores on each of the attributes were summed up into indices and mean scores on the indices obtained. The mean scores ranged between "1" (meaning that all the respondents found the attribute "Very Dissatisfactory") and "4" (meaning that all the respondents found the attribute "Very Satisfactory"). Therefore, the mean scores were interpreted thus: 1-1.5 = Very Dissatisfactory; 1.6-2.5 = Dissatisfactory; 2.6-3.5 = Satisfactory; 3.6-4 = Very Satisfactory. The respondents' mean scores were compared to 4 (corresponding to "Very Satisfactory") and the significance of the mean difference established. The findings are shown in the following subsections.

Quality of Teaching

The respondents rated the satisfactoriness of twelve (12) attributes of the quality of their universities' teaching (Table 3).

Nine (9) of the attributes were rated as satisfactory. This lends credence to the supposition that the students were happy with the quality of teaching. Nonetheless, none of the attributes was rated as being *very* satisfactory. Rather, for all the attributes, the difference between the respondents' mean scores and this *ideal* level of quality was found to be statistically significant (Sig. = .00). The inference here is that, although the students are not necessarily dissatisfied with the quality of instruction they are given, there is still room for improving it. Moreover, only the respondents from public universities were positive about all the attributes of teaching quality investigated. The respondents from private universities rated their lecturers' professionalism, utilization of teaching aids and feedback from evaluation of their learning as being dissatisfactory. Even on the attributes they rated as being satisfactory, their mean scores were less than those of the respondents from public universities -- farther away from the *ideal* level of quality.

Table 3: Foreign Students' Perception of the Quality of Attributes of their Universities' Teaching

Attribute	Private Universities					Public Universities				
	Mean	Interpretation	Test value[1]	Mean difference	Sig.	Mean	Interpretation	Test value[1]	Mean difference	Sig.
Lecturers' masterly of subject matter	3.18	Satisfactory	4	-0.82	.00	3.21	Satisfactory	4	-0.79	.00
Encouragement of learners' participation in learning	2.93	Satisfactory	4	-1.07	.00	3.26	Satisfactory	4	-0.74	.00
Enhancement of comprehension content	2.91	Satisfactory	4	-1.09	.00	3.06	Satisfactory	4	-0.94	.00
Sensitivity to individual differences among learners	2.79	Satisfactory	4	-1.21	.00	3.10	Satisfactory	4	-0.9	.00
Conduciveness of teaching environment	2.79	Satisfactory	4	-1.21	.00	2.98	Satisfactory	4	-1.02	.00
Utilization of learners' pre-course competencies	2.76	Satisfactory	4	-1.24	.00	2.96	Satisfactory	4	-1.04	.00
Lecturers' pedagogical creativity	2.72	Satisfactory	4	-1.28	.00	3.00	Satisfactory	4	-1	.00
Extent to which lecturers relate theory to practice	2.66	Satisfactory	4	-1.34	.00	3.02	Satisfactory	4	-0.98	.00
Lecturers' professionalism	2.49*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.51	.00	2.84	Satisfactory	4	-1.16	.00
Utilization of teaching aids	2.42*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.58	.00	2.90	Satisfactory	4	-1.1	.00
Evaluation of learning	2.64	Satisfactory	4	-1.36	.00	3.02	Satisfactory	4	-0.98	.00
Feedback from evaluation of learning	2.43*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.57	.00	2.83	Satisfactory	4	-1.17	.00

[1]Test value was established at 4, which corresponded to "Very Satisfactory".
*Dissatisfactory

Quality of Library Services

The respondents rated the size, ergonomic comfort and opening hours of their universities' libraries as being satisfactory (Table 4).

They were also positive about the service quality and currency of resources in the libraries. However, they rated the quantity and relevance of the resources, including electronic resources, as being dissatisfactory. As in the case of the quality of teaching (Table 3), the mean scores of the respondents from public universities were noticeably better than those of the respondents from private universities, except on opening hours and service quality.

Table 4: Foreign Students' Perception of the Quality of Attributes of Their Universities' Library Services

Attributes	Private Universities					Public Universities				
	Mean	Interpretation	Test value[1]	Mean difference	Sig.	Mean	Interpretation	Test value[1]	Mean difference	Sig.
Size	2.99	Satisfactory	4	-1.01	.00	3.10	Satisfactory	4	-0.9	.00
Ergonomic comfort	3.18	Satisfactory	4	-0.82	.00	3.48	Satisfactory	4	-0.52	.00
Opening hours	3.26	Satisfactory	4	-0.74	.00	3.25	Satisfactory	4	-0.75	.00
Service quality	2.77	Satisfactory	4	-1.23	.00	2.76	Satisfactory	4	-1.24	.00
Quantity of resources	2.35*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.65	.00	2.54*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.46	.00
Relevance of resources	2.28*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.72	.00	2.54*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.46	.00
Currency of resources	2.62	Satisfactory	4	-1.38	.00	2.74	Satisfactory	4	-1.26	.00
E-resources	2.18*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.82	.00	2.46*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.54	.00

[1]Test value was established at 4, which corresponded to "Very Satisfactory". *Dissatisfactory

Quality of ICT Services

In the public universities, the respondents were positive about the satisfactoriness of all the attributes of ICT service delivery investigated except availability of computers (Table 5).

Table 5: Foreign Students' Perception of the Quality of Attributes of their Universities' ICT Services

Attributes	Private Universities					Public Universities				
	Mean	Interpretation	Test value[2]	Mean difference	Sig.	Mean	Interpretation	Test value[2]	Mean difference	Sig.
Ergonomic comfort of ICT labs	2.89	Satisfactory	4	-1.11	.00	2.95	Satisfactory	4	-1.05	.00
Availability of computers	2.10*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.9	.00	2.48*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.51	.00
Accessibility policies	2.34*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.66	.00	2.65	Satisfactory	4	-1.35	.00
Quality of hardware	2.79	Satisfactory	4	-1.21	.00	3.13	Satisfactory	4	-0.87	.00

Quality of software	2.30*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.7	.00	2.65	Satisfactory	4	-1.35	.00
ICT support	2.61	Satisfactory	4	-1.39	.00	2.87	Satisfactory	4	-1.13	.00
Internet services	2.32*	Dissatisfactory	4	-1.68	.00	2.79	Satisfactory	4	-1.21	.00

[1]Test value was established at 4, which corresponded to "Very Satisfactory". *Dissatisfactory

Conversely, in the private universities, the respondents rated four of the seven attributes of ICT service delivery investigated as being dissatisfactory. These included availability of computers, ICT services accessibility policies, computer software and Internet services. Although the respondents were positive about the ergonomic comfort of their universities' ICT labs and quality of computer hardware and ICT support, therefore, the findings suggest that this (quality) hardware was neither abundantly available to the students nor complemented by requisite software and connectivity to the internet. This casts doubts on the satisfactoriness of the universities' ICT services.

Quality of Recreation and Health Services

The satisfactoriness of the attributes of recreation services delivery investigated was well rated in both the private and public universities (Table 6).

Table 6: Foreign Students' Perception of the Quality of Attributes of Their Universities' Health Services

Attributes	Private Universities					public universities				
	Mean	Interpretation	Test value[1]	Mean difference	Sig.	Mean	Interpretation	Test value[1]	Mean difference	Sig.
Sports facilities availed	2.87	Satisfactory	4	-1.13	.00	3.09	Satisfactory	4	-0.91	.00
Sporting events availed	3.20	Satisfactory	4	-0.8	.00	3.25	Satisfactory	4	-0.75	.00
Health policy	2.39	Dissatisfactory*	4	-1.61	.00	2.71	Satisfactory	4	-1.29	.00
On-campus infirmary	2.20	Dissatisfactory*	4	-1.8	.00	2.75	Satisfactory	4	-1.25	.00
Ambulance services	2.66	Satisfactory	4	-1.34	.00	2.38*	Dissatisfactory*	4	-1.62	.00

[1]Test value was established at 4, which corresponded to "Very Satisfactory". *Dissatisfactory

However, comparative examination of the findings shows that: (1) the respondents from public universities were more satisfied with their universities' recreation services than their counterparts from private universities; and (2) in both the private and public universities, the respondents were happier with the opportunities for involvement in sports activities their universities availed than they were with the universities' sports facilities. Regarding health services, on the other hand, the respondents from private universities indicated that they were not satisfied with the universities' health policies and infirmaries. However, they rated the universities'

ambulance services as being satisfactory. Conversely, the respondents from the public universities indicated that they were satisfied with the attributes of the universities' health services except ambulance services.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our findings show that overall, the students indicated that they were satisfied with most of the attributes of quality assurance investigated (cf. 4). These findings seem to explain Uganda's success in attracting a notable number of foreign students as is clear from Ouma (2012) and NCHE (2006; 2010).

However, the students were satisfied with the attributes of higher education service delivery to varying degrees. In general, the students in public universities were more satisfied with the quality of higher education service than their counterparts from private universities. As well, the students were more satisfied with the quality of teaching and recreation and health services than with the quality of library and ICT services. Both these findings rhyme well with those of Kasenene (2009:80) who surveyed consumers' perspectives of quality assurance in Ugandan universities with the conclusion that:

> …universities in Uganda are at significantly different levels of excellence. While some are promising to fully become centres of excellence, others are still far below their students' expectations as far as delivering educational services is concerned…particularly in terms of [providing the] information services needed by students [*sic*] to research, enrich knowledge and develop.

Although the country has been quite successful in attracting foreign students, therefore, its ability to retain the students and to attract more of them in an internationally competitive environment requires improvement of the quality of service delivery in its HEIs. Our findings suggest that this improvement is especially required in the private universities and in the areas of library and ICT services. Two observations from related literature support this suggestion. First, private universities enrol majority of the foreign students in the country (cf. NCHE, 2006; 2010), meaning that their ability to satisfy the students' expectations is pivotal to the country's long-term ability to attract the students. Secondly, ICT is an essential tool in the development of higher education (Bisaso, 2006; Loing, 2005; Zhao, 2003). According to NCHE (2010), for example, computers and connectivity to the Internet provide access to vast sources of information for educators and learners. Indeed, in many instances, commitment to the development of ICTs is a condition for accreditation of HEIs; dons are urged to adopt e-teaching and students are urged to adopt e-learning (Baryamureeba, 2004); researchers are encouraged to use e-resources in the processes of conducting their research and to publish their findings electronically; HEI managers are urged to adopt e-management systems; and HEI leavers are expected to be computer savvy. Education that promotes the development and adoption of ICTs is expected to enhance international competitiveness and, in the third world, it is hoped to surmount exclusion and, thus, promote development (Lwakabamba, 2005; Murenzi and Hughes, 2006; Republic of Rwanda, nd; Rodrigo, 2005). In fact, in the more recent years, HEI league table

rankings have placed significant weight to HEIs' possession, and utilisation, of CITs, with some of the rankings considering only the online discoverability of the institutions' publications and volume of traffic on their websites. Indeed, over the last two decades, HEIs have invested heavily in the development of ICTs (Adam, 2003; Czerniewicz and Carr, 2005; Damonse, 2003; Farrell and Isaacs, 2007; Loing, 2005; Muzaki and Mugisa, 2006), the inference being that, in international higher education provision, institutions that have dissatisfactory ICT support are likely to lag behind their competitors.

In the private universities, efforts should be made to improve lecturers' professionalism, utilization of teaching aids and the feedback they give to their learners. Unfortunately, our dataset does not make any indication of specific aspects of these attributes that the students were dissatisfied with and how they may be redressed. Accordingly, improvement may require further research into the three variables. In our view, the research may be conducted by the universities or by the NCHE. In the case of the NCHE, conducting the study would imply a methodological paradigmatic shift, from a quantitative biased approach that focuses on the extent to which the universities maintain specified standards (as in NCHE, 2006; 2010) to a qualitative biased or mixed methods approach that scrutinizes stakeholders' perceptions of the satisfactoriness of these standards.

In the area of library services delivery, the satisfactory standards of service quality and opening hours noted (Table 4) should be complemented with satisfactory availability of relevant resources. There is no point in maintaining large libraries with good customer care and that are opened for long hours but where users cannot find the resources they need (Krishna, 1996). It is noteworthy that the inadequacy of access to relevant library resources noted (Table 4) is corroborated by NCHE (2006; 2010). NCHE (2006) reports that:

> Unfortunately, the student book ratio dropped from 23 books per student [in 2005] to 19 [in 2006]. But one should not forget the possibility of accessing electronic reading materials which has brought indirectly a greater access to reading. If this was so in 2006, it is pleasing but we are not sure if this was the case (NCHE, 2006: 2).

However, contrary to the Council's hope that inadequacies in access to traditional reading resources are being offset by improvements in access to e-resources, our findings indicate that access to e-resources is "dissatisfactory" (Table 4). Thus, our study supports the argument articulated in NCHE (2010:30) that:

> The current number of books in higher education institutions is not impressive. The standard set by the NCHE is 40 books per student… [but] Universities and affiliated colleges had only 10 books per student. It is the hope of the NCHE that universities will put more money on library budgets [*sic*] so that libraries can purchase both electronic and hard copy books

As in the case of library services, the comfortable ICT labs, quality hardware and software and quality internet connectivity noted in public universities (Table 5) should be complemented with satisfactory availability of computers. Investment in

the provision of ICT services should address each of the components of the total cost of operating the services (Loing, 2005). Notwithstanding its importance, the quality of the universities' ICT services means little in a context where access to these services is inadequate. Three possible factors responsible for the inadequate availability of computers to the students are advanced in the literature. Firstly, many of the computers in the universities are not for student use (NCHE, 2010). Secondly, in many of the public universities, gigantic enrolment expansion resulted into a situation where students outstripped the capacity of support services (Mamdani, 2007). Thirdly, a host of authors (e.g. Bakia, 2002; CoSN, 2001) note that in many educational institutions, maintenance and replacement of computers that breakdown or become obsolete is poor. Therefore, checking the institutions' performance on each of these factors may contribute to improvement. The private universities should also check their performance on these factors.

Regarding health services, contrasting inadequacies were noted in the public and private universities. While the respondents from the public universities rated the universities' health policies and infirmaries as being satisfactory, they were negative about the universities' ambulance services. Conversely, the private universities showed an opposite picture. A possible explanation for these findings is that the public universities do not put strong emphasis on ambulance evacuation services because they maintain hospitals while the private universities do not put strong emphasis on their infirmaries because they maintain ambulance services to evacuate patients requiring referral to hospitals. Against this background, it is reasonable to expect that guidance from the NCHE would help the institutions to attain more satisfactory performance in the area of health services delivery. However, the Council's checklist of indicators of institutional capacity to assure quality does not provide any guidance on these services (Appendix I). Therefore, it is recommended that the Council revises the checklist to cater for this and similar gaps.

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Appendix I: National Council for Higher EducationChecklist of Quality and other Tertiary Institutions Capacityindicators for Assessment of otherTertiary Institutions and Programmes Under The Universities And Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001

Item	Unacceptable	Can be improved	Acceptable	Good	Ideal
1. LAND FOR CAMPUS (URBAN)	Less than 1/2 Acres	1 Acre	1 - 2 Acres	2 -3 Acres	3 Acres
2. LAND FOR CAMPUS (RURAL)	Less than 3 Hectares	3-5 Acres	5 - 10 Acres	10 – 15 Acres	20 Acres or over
3. TENANCY AGREEMENT	2 years	4 years	5 years	8 years	10 years
4. GOVERNANCE					
(v) Staff Appointment	Not appointed/elected	Not formally appointed/ elected	In process of formalizing appointment/ election	Appointed/Elected by delegated Authority	Appointed/Elected by legal Authority
(vi) Student Unions	Not appointed/elected	Not formally appointed/elected	In process of formalizing appointment/ election	Appointed/ Elected by delegated Authority	Appointed/Elected by legal Authority
(vii) Management	Does not meet with staff	Meets with staff	Consults with staff and students	Meets and follows up an issue	Respects Administrative structures
5. UTILITIES					
i) Water supply	None at all	In few buildings	In 50% of buildings	In 75% of buildings	In all buildings
ii) Electricity	None at all	In few buildings	In 50% of buildings	In 75% of buildings	In all buildings
iii) Telephone	None at all	In few buildings	In 50% of buildings	In 75% of buildings	In all buildings
6. PLACE OF WORSHIP	Off campus more than 2 km	Off campus accessible within 2 km	Off campus accessible within 1 km	On campus 1 denomination	On campus more than 1 denominations
7. WORKSHOP	1m2 per student	2m2 per student	3m2 per student	4m2 per student	5m2 per student
8. INFRASTRUCTURE					
(i) Classroom space	0.8m2 per over 5 students	0.8m2 per 4 students	0.8m2 per 1 student	1.6m2 per one student	2.0m2 per one student
(ii) Library space	1m2 per over 5 students	0.8m2 per 4	0.8m2 per 1 student	1.6m2 per one student	2.0m2 per one student
(iii) Science laboratories	0.8m2 per over 5 students	0.8m2 per 4 students	0.8m2 per 1 student	2.0m2 per one student	2.4m2 per one student
(iv) Computer laboratory	0.8m2 per over 5 students	0.8m2 per 4 students	0.8m2 per 1 student	2.0m2 per one student	2.4m2 per one student
(v) Administrative Staff	1 or less m2 per staff	2m2 per staff	3m2 per one staff	4m2 per administrative staff	5m2 per one staff

(vi) Academic Staff	1 or less m2 per staff	2m2 per staff	3m2 per staff	4m2 per one staff	5m2 per one staff
(vii) Sports field	1 field for 3000 or more	1 field for 2400 students	1 field for 1800 students	1 field for 1200 students	1 field for 600 registered students
(viii) Facilities for the disabled	No plan at all	Planning to have	Only on a few	All Classrooms	All Buildings
(ix) Tennis Court, Swimming pool, Volleyball, Hockey and Cricket	1 of each field for over 3000 students	1 of each field for 3000 students	1 of each field for 2400 students	1 of each field for each 1800 students	1 field for each sport for 1200 students
(x) Conference hall	One for over 2000 registered students	One for 1500 registered students	One for 1000 registered students	One for 750 registered students	One for 500 registered students
(xi) Student union offices	20m2 for over 1500 registered students	20m2 for 1200 students	20m2 for 1000 students	20m2 for 500 students	20 m2 for 300 registered students
9. ACADEMIC STAFF					
(a) Staff/student ratio					
General	1:60 or more	1:50	1:40	1:30	1:20
Arts/Social Sciences/Business	1:70 or more	1:60	1:50	1:40	1:30
Medicine, Veterinary, Pharmacy Dentist	1:32 or more	1:26	1:24	1:18	1:10
Science based profession Agriculture, Forestry, Technology	1:40 or more	1:30	1:24	1:18	1:12
Other professions – Law, Education, Statistics	1:40 or more	1:36	1:30	1:24	1:18
(b) Qualifications					
PhD Holders	Not applicable	None	2% of staff	2-5% of staff	5% of staff
Masters Holders	Not applicable	2% of staff	5% of staff	10% of staff	30% or more of staff
Bachelors	Less than 20%	20 – 30%	30 – 40%	40 – 50%	50% of staff
Higher Diploma	More than 50%	40 – 50%	30 – 40%	20 -30%	0-20% of staff
(c) Contact hours for academic staff	30 hrs or more a week	25 hrs/week	20 hrs/week	15 hrs/week	10 hrs/week
(d) Percentage of part-timers	Over 50%	40%	35%	30%	20% of staff
10. EDUCATION FACILITIES					
Student: Library book ratio (relevance and diversity)	Less than 1:5	1:5	1:10	1:20	1:30

Computer: Student ratio	More than 1:40	1:30	1:20	1:15	1:10
Access to Internet; 1 student: hrs/ week	Not applicable	1:15 Min/week	1:30 Min/week	1:1 hr/week	1:2 hrs/week
11. FINANCIAL STATUS					
Percentage of budget received	Less than 50%	70%	75%	80%	100%
Percentage of deficit over expenditure	Over 30%	Less than 25%	Less than 20%	Less than 10%	NIL
Proportion of budget spent on salaries	Over 60%	55%	50%	45%	40%
% of income derived from fees	Over 75%	50%	45%	40%	25-35% of budget
12. GENDER SENSITIVITY	Nothing is being planned	Council Committee has drafted rules and regulations	Council has approved a comprehensive list of the rules and regulations	75% of the needed rules and regulations in place	Comprehensive affirmative action regulation to increase access for women and other disadvantaged groups in place
13. STRATEGIC PLAN	None is being worked on	Being drafted	Is before Senate or Council	Has been approved by governing Council	Being implemented
14. PUBLICATIONS BY STAFF	No publication at all	One article in 4 years	1 – 5 articles in 3 years	5 – 10 articles in two years	Over 10 articles a year
15. RESEARCH PROJECTS WON BY STAFF	No consultancy or research a year	One project won a year	1 – 5 projects won a year	5 – 10 projects won a year	Over 10 projects won a year
16. % OF INST. GRADUATES EMPLOYED IN YEAR OF GRADUATION	15	20	30	50	100