

## **An Analysis of Central Admission System (CAS) in Students' Choice of College and Course of Study in Tanzania**

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### **Abstract**

*The major objective of this study was to analyse the Central Admission System (CAS) in Student's Choice of College and Course of Study. The study adopted the qualitative approach. The study found that different factors have varying degree of importance in influencing student's choice of college and course of study. Major factors in choice of colleges are such as good learning environment including presence of good library and modern computer laboratory, availability of the course that students like in a particular college and availability of enough and competent lecturers. Advertising, proximity to home and parental influences have low importance in college choice.*

*Major factors in choice of course of study are such as previous results like those of advanced level, opportunities for self-employment and high availability of employment opportunities and availability of competent lecturers to mention few. Factor which have little influence were role of media, recommendation by parents. After applying colleges and course of study, majority of students were satisfied with what and where they are studying though there some complaints on CAS on failure to meet some of their expectations which is the result of indirect constraints that have challenged the effectiveness of Central Admission System. Some of the challenges which were revealed include: limited student's knowledge on the system, lack of computers or smartphones to access the system, slow network, etc. Various solutions were proposed including the need for educating applicants on the system. It is recommended that continued survey has to be done in order to improve CAS effectiveness.*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Tanzania education sector is divided under various levels. The school system is a 2-7-4-2-3+ consisting of pre-primary, primary school (basic education), ordinary level secondary education, advanced level secondary, Technical and Higher Education. As indicated above the basic education consists of 2 years pre-primary education and 7 years primary Education. Admission into these levels is solely done by the schools receiving students. A pupil goes to a secondary education level after passing the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). Secondary Education has two stages Ordinary level - form I up to Form IV (4

years). Advanced level Form V up to Form VI (2 years). A National Examination is administered at the end of each level. Technical and Higher Education Level consists of 3+ years leading to various occupations (URT, 2000). The formal education however starts from primary education to university (Wedgwood, 2005).

The number of universities and colleges in Tanzania is increasing year after year. According to Economic Survey (2014), In 2013/14, the number of universities was 50, of which 13 were government universities and 37 were non-government universities. The number of vocational training colleges was 896 compared to 759 colleges in 2012/13, equivalent to an increase of 18.1 percent (URT, 2014). With the growing number of Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) particularly privately owned ones, and the internationalisation of higher education, it became necessary for Tanzania to strengthen its regulatory body and ensure it complies with current quality assurance requirements. The Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) was established under the Universities Act of 2005 for the supervision of universities and university colleges, in replacement of the Higher Education Accreditation Council (HEAC) (UNESCO, 2012). The TCU is responsible for coordinating undergraduate student admissions to HEIs. It does this via the different activities which are primarily the responsibility of the Admissions and Documentation Department including providing a Central Admission System (CAS) for university institutions (Bailey, 2014).

Before academic year 2010/2011, students applying for bachelor degree (undergraduate awards) were applying directly to institutions of their choice and the institutions did the selection

process. However since the academic year 2010/2011, students were supposed to apply via Central Admission System (CAS) coordinated by Tanzania Commission of Universities (TCU) in collaboration with other bodies including National Council for Technical Education (NACTE), and Higher Student's Loan Board (HELSEB). From the year 2015 applicants with form IV, Technician Certificate (NTA level 5) and ordinary diploma (NTA level 6) or equivalent, (e.g. FTC, Teachers diploma form IV, Form VI) were also supposed to apply via CAS (TCU, 2015). The TCU established the CAS with funding from the World Bank Science, Technology and Higher Education project, which enabled the TCU to engage experts in the development of the system (TCU, 2015).

Through the CAS, applicants who want to apply for admission into higher education institutions are able to lodge applications online and be selected to programmes of and college of their choice centrally. The selection processing is based on the minimum programme entry and other requirements of each institution in the country including admission capacity and other parameters. The decision on the actual admission of applicants is then made by the individual institutions through their Governing Boards and Senates (TCU, 2015). It is unknown to what extent are factors influencing students' choices of institutions and course of studies are in line with the CAS results. Few researches (e.g. Bailey, 2014 and EP-Nuffic, 2014) in Tanzania have been carried out in relation to Central Admission System. This therefore creates a room for study to examine whether students institutions and course of studies are those applied via CAS or otherwise.

The major objective of this study was therefore to analyse the Central Admission System (CAS) in Students' Choice of College and Course of Study. Specifically this study intended to fulfill the following objectives. To identify the factors influencing students' choice of college and course of study; to assess students' views and on the effectiveness of CAS; to identify the challenges that students face in utilising CAS; and to identify proposed solutions in making the system more effective.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

In order to gain more understanding perspective on the topic under study, it is important to have a look on various literature that have been done on the related area.

### **2.1 Studies on Central Admission System**

The Central Admission System has proven to be more effective in solving certain issues that were dominant in old system such as certain institutions tend to experience under enrollment though they were capable of offering certain courses, moreover there were duplication of loans given to students since there were multiple applications to different institutions, for instance in 2009 there were about 7000 applicants who turned to be multiple applicants amounting to 19.7% of all applicants. These multiple applications of candidates resulted in some institutions being under capacity because the applicants did not join. The CAS is comparably less costly to the old system, in the old system applicants were to pay for every application of any Higher Education Institutions. Furthermore, before usage of CAS, applications were manually done which reduced the flexibility since not all institutions had on line forms that applicants could access. Therefore, at times it required traveling from distant places

so as to access the application forms to increase the scope of selection which was excessively expensive (Bailey, 2014; TCU 2010).

Mahundu (2015) argues that through CAS, applicants are provided with explanation or evidence of not being selected at the same time alternative options are provided for applicants from different institutions something that was not possible at the time when applications were done manually. CAS has brought control of corruption which may have easily prevailed when there is personal interaction between the admission officers and the applicants. The bottleneck behind effective implementation and execution of CAS such as resistance from different higher learning institutions, poor knowledge of ICT by applicants which at times may result in missing opportunities of selection. Since utilisation of CAS requires efficient infrastructure such as Internet connection which requires funding at times that may still be costly to those who cannot afford especially to those from poor families.

Kumar, Desale and Puri (2013), presented their web based admission system. In this system, all the solutions were included to help students related best college search and avoid some headaches. The authors of this paper are desirous of seeing Tanzania's CAS performing beyond this system. To have such kind of performance is however difficult unless a specific study on CAS is carried out to capture various insights from the users.

A study by European Parliament (2014) which compared admission systems to higher education across ten countries on three axes, the equity of admissions, their quality and their ability to encourage students' mobility. In relation to one aspect of "the

equity of admissions”, the study found that admission systems are an important component of equity in access to higher education, however admission systems are limited in what they can achieve, and policy needs to take processes unfolding before the point of admissions and after enrollment in higher education into account. Furthermore, admission systems are not just limited to entry to higher education. They should also contribute to helping students have a successful academic career and graduate by matching them to relevant courses of degree. Such findings represent many dilemmas around the central admission systems which created a need for specific study on already implemented systems in order to get the views of the users.

## **2.2 Students’ criteria in college and course of study selection**

Brown (1991) found that students tend to select those higher learning institutions in relation to their criteria, that is, the financial criteria, academic ones and social based criteria. Plank and Chiagouris (1998) highlighted the kind of academic programmes that are offered, presentable job opportunities presented from finishing the studies, the kind of financial support received during studies and the cost vis a vis the benefits obtained are the key issues that are considered by the candidates when applying for the higher learning institutions.

Joseph and Ford (1997) came up with findings related to the criteria priorities of students when selecting institutions choices for their self-enrollment; the kind of academic programs that are offered by institutions may trigger one into opting for an institute, how reputable the institution is being ranked, the possibility of the degree being marketable after finishing the studies, the accreditation/certification status that entails recognition of the

institution within and outside the borders, the financial support, the tenure of completing the course, the physical studying environment such as the library, places for recreation, the accommodation like hostel status also the location of the institutions to where they are living was among the influencing factors, in addition to that parental influences may reflect the kind of higher learning path that students choose (Shumba & Naong, 2012; Kusumawati, 2013).

Mpehongwa (2014) indicated the need of upgrading facilities such as science studying environment which may boost up their choices of enrolling to those specialisations and extending other incentives that are facilitative to these candidates. Moreover, his observation was in regard to the increased number of enrollment in Arts courses that is from 2006 to 2011 is due to financial support such as study loans and direct placement after finishing their studies.

Semela (2008) found that the rate of enrolment in physics is the lowest and applicants who were assigned to the physics undergraduate programmes were those whose mean score in Ethiopian National Higher Education Entrance Examination was the lowest compared to any other group. Further, the findings show unprecedented gender gap in enrollment and graduation rates. The explanations given for the low enrollment rate were inadequate pre-university preparation, weak mathematics background (Omondi, 2013), and lack of job opportunity outside the teaching profession, and poor teacher qualification and pedagogical content knowledge.



Onu and Ikehi (2013) found that government and societal poor view of agriculture in the country is an inhibiting factor to the increase in the number of students opting to study the course at the university level while the presence of other payable jobs in the zone is discouraging the youths from engaging in agricultural profession as a means of livelihood.

Addison, Antwi and Amissah (2014) found that teachers in the schools played a major role in the programme choice. However, parents' contribution to the selection process was minimal as most parents do not have much knowledge about the programmes and opportunities available for pursuing such programmes. This view is contrary to that of Walaba and Kiboss (2013) which seem to suggest that the influential factors could have come from their peers, teachers or parents, assertions that religious education is viewed as a means to restore moral and social order in society. Perhaps the aim of teaching Christian Religious Education (CRE) to inculcate spiritual and moral values in our youth is not unrelated to this view (Itolondo, 2012).

### **3.0 Methodology**

The study adopted mainly qualitative approach. Mainly primary data were utilised in this study which was obtained through a well-designed questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions as it has been attached at the end of the paper. The sample size for this study was 50 students studying Higher Diploma (NTA 7 - I and II) and Bachelor's Degree students. Purposive sampling which combined both convenient and judgmental sampling was used in this study whereby the number of students was selected basing on easy of access and proved ability to provide reliable information in relation to the objectives

of the study. Data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

## **4.0 Study Findings**

### **4.1 About Respondents**

The findings revealed that 58.3 per cent of the respondents were male and 41.7 per cent were female. Regarding education level of the respondents 70 per cent were bachelor degree students and 30 per cent were studying NTA Level 7-I.

### **4.2 CAS and Students' Choice of College of Study**

In the course of undertaking Analysis of Central Admission System in student's choice of college and course of study, different questions were posed to the students. In the first questions, the students were supposed to rate the degree of importance of different factors which influenced them to choose the current colleges of study. Factors were assumed to influence a student if they were ranked as either extremely important or very important.

In the mentioned factors 88.3 per cent of the respondents said good learning environment including presence of good library and modern computer laboratory is very important factor in making them choose a college of study. The remaining respondents 11.7 per cent said the factor is extremely important. Another factor which was rated very important by 70 per cent of the respondents was availability of the course that students like in a particular college. In this factor 30 per cent of the respondents said this is extremely important factor. Students had different views on how availability of enough and competent lecturers influence them to choose a particular college. Sixty per cent (60%) of the

respondents said this is very important factor, 23.3 per cent were neutral and 16.7 per cent rate this factor as extremely important. Whether a college being connected with the government influences the students, 58.3 per cent said this factor is extremely important, 15 per cent very important, 15 per cent were neutral and 11.7 per cent said this factor has low importance.

Reputation of the course and employability of the graduates were rated extremely important by 53.3 per cent of the respondents; and very important by 46.7 per cent of the respondents. Role of college management were ranked by 31.7 per cent of the respondents as extremely important and small fees, availability of hostels, parental influence, and friend's influence were ranked by 30 per cent of the respondents as very important. Other factors which influenced students to choose a college of study were geographical location especially where there are opportunities for students like working, farming or trading, reputation of the college itself, and uniqueness of the course offered. Factors which either do not influence at all to join a particular college or have low importance were advertising (46.7 per cent), proximity to home and parental influences (30 per cent of the respondents each).

After this question, the students who rated the factor which either were extremely important or very important in choosing a college of study, were asked to talk of the reality after applying via central admission system and arriving at the college where they were selected. The following are the responses. All students agreed that their intention of studying at the government institution materialised. Among, the respondents 76.7 per cent agreed that after applying via CAS they went to the college they liked, and

23.3 per cent disagreed that where they are not what they applied. Seventy three point two per cent (73.2%) agreed that the college where they are studying, the course is reputable and the graduates are employable. Also, 61.7 per cent said that where they were selected via CAS there is enough and competent lecturers, 53.3 said the college has proximity to their home, and 41.7 per cent said yes that the college they are studying is where their parents were influencing them to go. On the other side 61.7 per cent of the respondents said that where they were selected via CAS had no good learning environment, 46.7 said there are no enough hostel facilities, 30 per cent said that what was advertised and applied is not what CAS gave them and 23.3 per cent said they currently study the course they did not choose.

#### **4.3 CAS and Students' Choice of Course of Study**

In another attempt to undertake the analysis of central admission system in students' choice of course of study, a question was posed to the students. The students were also supposed to rate the degree of importance of different factors which influences/d them to choose the current course of study. In the results, 85 per cent said that personal interest is extremely important factor in choosing a course of study and the remaining 15 per cent this is very important factor. While 83.3 per cent said that previous results like those of advanced level are very important towards choice of course of study and 16.7 per cent said this factor is extremely important. In regard to opportunities for self-employment 58.3 per cent of the respondents indicated as a very important factor and 41.7 said this is extremely important factor. On the other side 53.3 of the respondents said that high availability of employment opportunities is very important factor and 31.7 said it is extremely important factor. Role of media was ranked as very important by

41.7 per of the respondents, recommendation by parents very important by 38.3 per cent of the respondents and availability of competent lecturers extremely important by 31.7 per cent. Other factor which influences a student to choose a particular course is its uniqueness. Factors which have little influence were role of media (low importance by 31.7 per cent of the respondents), recommendation by parents and availability of competent lecturers (low importance by 30 per cent each).

After this question, the students who rated the factor in choosing a course of study as either extremely important or important, were asked to talk of the reality after applying via central admission system and arriving at the college where they were selected. The following were the responses:

All students agreed that what they study currently is as per their previous personal interest in the course. Eighty five per cent (85%), of the respondents agreed that what was studied as applied via CAS relates with their advanced level performance and 15 per cent said do not relates. Seventy per cent (70%) believe that the course they are studying lead to high availability of employment opportunities as they got feedback from graduates who are in the market. On the other hand, 68.3 per cent agreed that the course offer opportunities for self-employment while 31.7 per cent said the course do not offer such opportunities. In addition to that 26.7 per cent agreed that what they are studying is what was recommended by their parents. Few students disagreed on a number of factors such as availability of competent lecturers (31.7 per cent) and the fact that the course offers opportunities for self-employment (31.7 per cent) and what they are studying is what was recommended by their parents (26.7 per cent).

#### **4.4 CAS's overall Effectiveness and Challenges**

After above questions, the respondents were asked to rate the overall effectiveness of CAS where 56.7 per cent of the respondents said that the system is not effective due to different challenges including limited students' knowledge on the system, lack of computers or smartphones to access the system, difficult to change course after initial login, slow network, not user friendly, high costs including accessing areas with internet café and failure to select students to the college and course of study. On the other hand, 43.3 per cent of the respondents said that the system is effective as it helps most of them to get the college and course of study though it has some weaknesses.

#### **4.5 Measures for Improving CAS's Effectiveness**

The respondents were asked to propose some measures which will make CAS more effective. Various measures were given including going to secondary schools and educate students on CAS operation, improving the speed of CAS network, make it user-friendly by for example putting option for language to be used by the students in using CAS and improving it to make sure students get what they applied for.

#### **5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The major objective of this study was to analyse the Central Admission System (CAS) in Students' Choice of College and Course of Study. The study adopted the qualitative approach. The study found that different factors have varying degree of importance in influencing students' choice of college and course of study. After applying colleges and course of study, majority of study were satisfied with what and where they are studying though there some complaints on CAS on failure to meet their

expectations. Various challenges were revealed in relation to the system, including limited students' knowledge on the system, lack of computers or smartphones to access the system, slow network, etc. Various solutions were proposed including the need for educating applicants on the system. It is recommended that continued survey to be done in order to improve CAS effectiveness.

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## **Appendix**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

We are lecturers at National Institute of Transport (NIT). We are conducting a research titled “**Analysis of Central Admission System (CAS) in Student’s Choice of College and Course of Study**” in Tanzania. Therefore we kindly request you to spend few minutes of your valuable time to answer the questions provided in this questionnaire.

We thank you in advance

#### **A. GENERAL INFORMATION (tick the appropriate answer)**

##### 1. Age

- i. Below 25 Years ( )
- ii. 25 – 35 Years ( )
- iii. 36 – 46 ( )
- iv. Above 46 Years ( )

##### 2. Gender

- i. Male ( )
- ii. Female ( )

##### 3. Education Level

- i. NTA level 7-I ( )
- ii. NTA level 7-II ( )
- iii. Bachelor Degree ( )

##### 4. Where are you studying

- i. NIT
- ii. Ardhi University
- iii. College of Business Education
- iv. Institute of Social Work

## **B. SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON THE STUDY**

5. The following is the lists of factors which make student join a particular college of study. Please rate them by assigning 1- Not at all important, 2-Low importance, 3-Neutral, 4-Very important and 5-Extremely important.

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>	<b>Low importance</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Extremely important</b>
1. Availability of course you like					
2. Small school fees					
3. Availability of Hostels					
4. Availability of Enough and Competent lecturers					
5. Good learning environment including presence of good library and computer lab					
6. Proximity to home					
7. Being a government institution					

8. Good management
  9. Reputation of the courses and employability of students
  10. Advertising
  11. Influence by parents
  12. Influence of friends
  13. Others (state them here)
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6. After applying via CAS and arriving at this institution, rate the extent to which the above factor which influenced your choice of a college of study are in line with the reality at where you're studying currently.

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1. Studying/Availability of course you like		
2. Small school fees		
3. Availability of Hostels		
4. Availability of Enough and Competent lecturers		
5. Good learning environment including presence of good library and computer lab		
6. Proximity to home		
7. Being a government institution		
8. Good management		

9. Reputation of the courses and employability of students
10. Advertising
11. Influence by parents (is where you are what your parents recommended?)
12. Influence of friends (is where you are, is what recommended by your friends?)
- 13.

7. The following is the lists of factors which make student choose a course of study. Please rate them by assigning, 1-Not at all important, 2-Low importance, 3-Neutral, 4-Very important and 5-Extremely important.

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>	<b>Low importance</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Extremely important</b>
Level of performance in previous results-O level or A-level					
Competent teachers					
High availability of employment					
Opportunity for self-employment					
Recommendation by parent					
Recommendation					



tion by friend  
Role of media  
Personal  
Interest in the  
course  
Others

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8. After applying via CAS and arriving at this institution, rate the extent to which the above factors which influenced your choice of a course of study are in line with the reality on what you're studying currently.

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1. Level of performance in previous results-O level or A-level towards a course of study		
2. Competent teachers		
3. High availability of employment		
4. Opportunity for self-employment		
5. Recommendation by parent		
6. Recommendation by friend		
7. Role of media		
8. Personal Interest in the course		

8. What is your overall rating on the effectiveness of CAS?  
**(Circle the answer).**  
a. Effective?    b. Not Effective
9. Identify the challenges your encountered in applying via CAS

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10. If CAS is not effective propose some solutions which can help to make it more effective

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**Thank you for your Cooperate**