PROGRAMME DELIVERY QUALITY BENCHMARKS AND OUTCOMES BASED EDUCATION AT UGANDA MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE: A CORRELATIONAL APPROACH

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Abstract

Quality assurance has been identified as a proactive way to help improve the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of an institution [Knight, 2001) and the kind of graduates that a university produces depends on the content of the education and also the structure of the degrees (Ajayi, et al, 1996). What institutions do to ascertain quality turns out to be the most important and effective of all the quality efforts and initiatives; suggesting that institutions with high quality are likely to survive in a market environment where market forces adjudicate on matters of quality and those institutions with poor quality are threatened with extinction (Michael, 2004). While quality assurance can be measured from a number of perspectives, this paper only looks at programme delivery benchmarks from the perspective of students. The paper derives its results from a correlation study conducted at Uganda Management Institute. From the sample size of 1111 students at Uganda Management institute for the period covered, a sample size of 294 and of these 279 students returned the survey instrument, (a response rate of 94.5%). Using a 5-likert-scale survey instrument, which had a reliability coefficient of 0.974, the study found a very statistically significant relationship between programme

delivery benchmarks and outcomes-based education. Suggestions for policy and practice are presented. The results compare well with existing literature.

1. Introduction

Quality is an issue that cannot be avoided in education at present (Botha, 2002]. The role of the students and the institutional commitment to offer programmes with an appeal to a variety of conceptual, technical, and behavioural skills demanded of the 21st century student who is an adult learner, is top on the agenda of policy makers, researchers and academics in both developed and developing countries. This papers, derived from a study conducted among the students to examine the relationship between programme quality assurance systems and outcome based education at Uganda Management institute. The world over, the increasing interest and involvement of students in quality enhancement has been supported because: - (13 Students are the largest group within any higher educational institution (HEI, and therefore are the main stakeholders who have a much stronger voice than any other stakeholders;(2) Students are quite well informed, committed, participative, motivated and curious, and this provides for valuable contributions;(3) The several dimensions of student participation often surpass the four walls of the institution and other academic frontiers, following the trend that induces or obliges the institutions to open up to the society; and C4] of late the world over, there is a wide and positive attitude towards increased student influence in higher education governance including the role of student activism in social changes.

As elsewhere in the world, the quest for quality has always been a priority in higher education in Africa. Until recently, however, tension between political pressure to expand access and the desire by academics in HEIs to maintain quality did not allow a healthy culture of quality to evolve. Changes in quality assurance mechanisms over the years were driven by factors such as rapid enrolment growth to meet increasing social demand, significantly decreased public funding of higher education amidst

rising enrolment and the effects of the brain drain (Materu, 2007). A focus on quality, access and relevance of higher education to achieve the required social transformation for sustainable economic development of nation states has received increasing attention in a number of countries and Uganda cannot be an exception. Higher education in Uganda has a lot of expectations from a number of stakeholders. But these cannot be met unless substantial reforms are undertaken to make the systems flexible enough to adjust to global and domestic forces (Kasozi, 2003).

Uganda's higher education system is now under a new legal and institutional framework. This is the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001. educTc(system) Tj0 Tc(s) Tj0 Tc(c) Tj1.21'ot4 Tc(m) Tj1.909 TwhTj0.834 Tw0.367 Tc2 the

documented; albeit with mixed responses. OBE has been practiced in many countries with mixed stories of success and failure around the world. Countries that have implemented the tenets of outcomes based education in their curricula usually face problems in mass education similar to those of Uganda but it cannot be concluded that its system is universally accepted among different countries that have adopted the model (Watkins 1997: 165).

OBE system originated in the USA where educationists in the USA realized that its schooling system was producing too few high performing maths, science and technology learners and that basic literacy was falling (Watkins 1997: 166). As each state in the USA, to a significant degree implements its own educational system, some states did not consider OBE, while other states rejected, modified or accepted OBE as the norm. Maryland, for example, a state that has consistently supported reform, is one of the many states that has adopted the OBE approach, and subsequently has demonstrated significant progress in student learning (Manno 1995a: 720 - 721). Meanwhile, Botha, (2002:364) writing from a South African context contends that the concept of outcomes-based education began with a common sense idea, namely that the quality of education should be judged by focusing on learner outcomes or results.

This means that OBE is primarily concerned with focusing on what learners actually learn, and how

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