Global Educational Research Journal: ISSN-2360-7963: Vol. 5(1): pp 536-561, January, 2017.

Regular Research Paper

Assessment of Quality and Relevance of Africa's Higher Education and the Quest to Meet Society's Needs in the 21st Century.

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Accepted 19th January, 2017

The present study analyzed survey data of university stakeholders' views on Tanzania's recent massive university enrollments to determine why quality and relevance are problematic in higher education. Further, the study scrutinized instances of ineptitude that undermine quality assurance. In addition, the study examined missed opportunities to make higher education relevant to the African context. Researchers discussed the possibilities to enhance and develop quality research and the need to search for solutions to long-neglected problems that permit Africans to become healthier, wealthier, and smarter. Evidence drawn from survey data suggests that complex factors confound quality and relevance of higher education in Tanzania; factors that find roots in part, in commercialization of higher education, general funding, poor teaching, and rapid population growth. Attention to relevant policies and homegrown professionals and researchers (both academic and administrative) emerged as possible clues for improving the quality and relevance of higher education.

Keywords: quality assessment, relevance of education, quality assurance, African universities.

INTRODUCTION

The *pursuit of quality* and *quest for relevance* of African universities are not contradictory terms. This paper argues that it is possible to pursue both, for the well-being and development of the African people. For this reason, quality and relevance in higher education and research in African universities deserve a critical discussion. It is imperative to examine the variations of "good" or "quality" education. While there is no single measure to assess quality university teaching and rigorous research quality across all disciplines, regions, and cultures of the world, this predicament does not make the question of quality irrelevant. Therefore, the issues of quality higher education continue to fuel debate.

Recent media commentaries have judged African universities to be guilty of "Massification" of higher education in most countries (Hornsby and Osman, 2014), perpetrating the assumption that quality of teaching and research is becoming endangered, and predictably compromised (Maringe and Sing, 2014; Teichler and Yağci, 2009). Similarly, although more students are prepared for and motivated by quality education, governments seem less willing to maintain average expenditures per student at high level, a situation that has given rise to protests and disruption of regular classes and the university calendar (Makoni and MacGregor, 2016; Hall, 2016). The underlying question of the present study is: Can African universities and academics reverse these tensions of discontent at a time of global economic expansion?

The wave of reporting and the recent student riots contrast (1) the call to *quality* education marked on the top of national agendas of African governments (Vessuri and Teichler, 2008), as well as (2) the improvement of

academic quality as one of the most important tasks facing African higher education institutions in modern times (Sallis, 2002). The overarching assumption is that high quality and relevant higher education can meet the essential needs of students and equip them with knowledge, skills, and "core" transferable competencies they require in a global world to succeed after graduation. Quality assurance allows individuals to have confidence in the excellence of higher education they received or paid for.

Since the 1990s, higher education's importance for socioeconomic development has come to the forefront, becoming part of the political agenda in many African countries including the African Union (Kigotho, 2015; Jegede, 2012; Materu, 2011; Woldegiorgis, 2013). With this agenda, there is a growing consensus among scholars that Africa needs many more medical doctors and doctorate holders to develop the robust knowledge economy needed to promote development and address society's essential needs, particularly those problems that distress Africans (Friesenhahn, 2014).

For this reason, the education system cannot avoid *quality* principles in educational practice at present. The initiatives that institutions can take to ensure quality turn out to be the most important of all efforts and priorities (Mahajan, 2016). Politicians in Tanzania believe that higher education institutions should have a rigorous system of internal quality assurance to provide internal and external mechanisms to ensure that Tanzanian universities and colleges do not compromise standards. Efforts aim to make external checks from a variety of agencies: for instance, the National Quality Standards Authority (NQSA), National Council for Technical Education (NACTE), Tanzania Commission of Universities (TCU), Institute of Adult Education (IAE), and National Library Service (URT, 2005; UER, 2014).

TCU, for instance, has developed guidelines, parameters, benchmarks, and minimum academic standards to assist the academic planning process and to ensure its interest in and quality of Tanzanian universities. But, the surge in interest of "*private*" providers of higher education, coupled with crying voices of declining government funding to public institutions, are a response to the increasing demand for higher education that has seemingly caused decline in the quality of graduates (Drape et al., 2016; Jegede, 2012).

Currently, doctoral candidates seek higher education because university graduates are more likely to find high-paying jobs than people with lower level qualifications are. However, this assumption is not always true. Higher education curricula are often slow to respond to changing needs in the wider economy, and likely fail to anticipate or help shape the African careers of tomorrow (Jegede, 2012). Therefore, there is a strong need for flexible, innovative learning and teaching approaches as well as delivery methods to improve quality and relevance while expanding student numbers. Some researchers believe that one way of achieving this goal is to exploit the transformational benefits of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and other new technologies to enrich teaching, improve learning experiences, and support personalized learning (Drape et al, 2016). Clearly, ICTs open up opportunities for distance education and research, and help Open University models of all kinds to flourish. The assumption is that those universities with state-of-the-art ICTs are likely to excel in teaching and research—the hallmarks of quality higher education (Drape et al., 2016; Jegede, 2012).

Generally, the quality and relevance of Africa's higher education depend on the competence and motivation of teachers and researchers, yet staffing levels have often not kept pace with expanding student numbers, putting further pressure on already strained capacities—financial, physical plant, teaching staff, and so on. Better working conditions, including transparent and fair recruitment procedures, better initial and continuing professional development, and better recognition of excellence and rewards of teaching and research quality are essential to ensure that African universities produce, attract, and retain the high-quality academic staff the disciplines require (Kahsay, 2012; European Commission, 2016).

It is common knowledge that there is a short supply of professionals with science, technology, and engineering qualifications to meet the current demands and projected needs of Africa's growing industries. Africa needs to produce future leaders who will promote better governance and management in all sectors, and facilitate innovative solutions to society's problems. But the responsibility of offering quality and relevant university education that produces the next generation of doctors, lawyers, engineers, IT professionals, and researchers persists as an ominous task for most African countries, and yet the yield remains insufficient for the needs of the emerging *knowledge society* of the 21st century (Jarvis, 2008; Sawyer, 2004). For example, in the past decade, scholars documented the variety of problems African universities face in the 21st century regarding research capacity (Friesenhahn, 2014), quality assurance (Materu, 2011), knowledge society (World Bank, 2002), inputs of tertiary education to people's development (Ogom, 2007), and the prospects of severed relations with metropolitan universities (Bollag, 2004). Collectively, these studies sounded the alarm that African universities are failing to meet the demands of quality of education and relevance for the 21st century (Okpanachi and Okpara, 2014).

Other studies have focused on quality assurance and internationalization in African higher education

(Teferra, and Altbach, 2004). With varying quality and relevance, a consensus among these scholars encompasses views that Africa's chief higher education concerns are finances, efficiency, equity, and governance. What may be thus far unclear is how stakeholders can address these concerns, and where stakeholders should start to address them.

In general, the sub-Saharan Africa's higher education sector has expanded massively since the 1970s, and it is widely believed that, perhaps, the rapid expansion could have contributed to the current problems of quality of education and relevance. Student enrollments across all levels grew from roughly 200,000 about 40 years ago to an estimated ten million currently (Sawyer, 2006). Only a minority of the estimated 1,500 public and private universities across Africa offer graduate programs. Therefore, what does it take to make higher education relevant for Africa? In particular, what makes producing more (i.e., quality) doctorates difficult, and how should doctoral training change so as to better support the continent's immediate needs (i.e., relevance)?

The capacity to produce doctorates and excellent researchers depends upon efforts to create an African university of academic excellence with functioning and adequate infrastructures--laboratories, libraries, and access to digital and computational resources. In the pedagogic category, experts seek to emphasize teaching skills and classroom practices of the faculty. This aspect is strongly associated with staff training and professional development. In this approach, a lot of emphasis is on the delivery aspect rather than to content. However, the overriding question is: how do we know these inputs? Subsequent sections of this paper will address these considerations.

Brain Drain

In many parts of Africa, as well as elsewhere in the world, capable researchers find themselves at the crossroads between the brain drain and brain-gain dilemma in the global migration wave of intellectuals (Miguma, 2010; Odhiambo, 2013). The absence or inadequacy of available infrastructures to support research thoroughly frustrate researchers (Weiler et al., 2006). Such reality in African universities has resulted in scholars leaving their posts and migrating to other African universities or moving to European, American, or Canadian universities. Consequently, efforts to boost advanced degrees in African universities have been fraught with problems of outsourcing and migration.

Although investments into higher education have increased, in both public and private universities, budgets are not enough to support the burgeoning numbers of students due to the rapid population growth. For most African universities, the dearth of qualified university leaders and scarce funding seem to thwart or limit a country's capacity to implement quality graduate programs. A relentless shortage of personnel, such as faculty members with advanced degrees, serves as a major contributing factor and is easily compounded by demographics: often, less than 40 percent of all university staff are under 40 years old (Friesenhahn, 2014). The brain drain of scholars with the best minds from the continent who migrate to the global North where salaries and benefits are more attractive exacerbates the problem.

Tight budgets make it difficult for African universities to afford an effective learning infrastructure — improvements have been modest in the past few decades. Nevertheless, many students still work with inadequate Internet access, books, science equipment, laboratories, and libraries. Inadequate Internet access and email systems drive faculty and students to employ Yahoo and Gmail accounts (Friesenhahn, 2014). Although professors may retrieve some online resources on campus, an experience that may be torturous due to very slow Internet, students must go to cybercafés to access the Internet (Bollag, 2004). This situation slows down faculty and student productivity, and inevitably lowers the quality of education and learning, which in turn hinders the production of relevant, high-quality research.

Obviously, these encumbrances and shortages, namely, shortage of human, financial, and material resources; inept managerial and administrative machinery; political turbulence; blind ideological commitments; and a lack of clear vision or direction, have led to problems of access, equity, quality, and relevance (Kipesha, and Msigwa, 2013; Materu, 2011; Mosha, 1986). Furthermore, the diversification of senseless categories of types of institutions on the market today continue to complicate higher education systems. These categories include private vs. public; single-sex vs. co-educational; and the kinds of specializations or knowledge relevant to national or ideological inclinations: religious education vs. liberal arts, language arts, science education, cooperatives and agricultural education, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and so forth.

Sub-Saharan African higher education is of limited relevance in its current form, design, and academic content. In the context of rapid social and economic changes taking place in the region, university education bears little connection to the local economy and society (Mbeki, 2015). Modeled after European higher education, it has evolved from educating only a few highly qualified students into mass systems of lower quality (Bollag, 2004). According to Bollag, this

expansion, unfortunately, has not been accompanied by a grounded redevelopment of curricula that reflects, or is better suited, to the realities of the sub-Saharan African environment and development needs, in spite of the calls from several African leaders (e.g., Nyerere of Tanzania (Mosha, 1986); and Mbeki of South Africa (Mbeki, 2015). A re-think and re-design of the mission of higher education away from the current curricula of theoretical sophistication, mismatch, and irrelevance, to one that holistically aligns the educational system with the local industry and overall social development needs, is long overdue (Mbeki, 2015).

In the convergence of these challenges, and taking into account efforts undertaken in the past decade to expand enrollments or provide students with bursaries and government-subsidized loans, this article exposes the fault lines of *quality* and *relevance* of higher education in African universities. The discussion sheds light on the question—why quality and relevance are problematic in African higher education? Using the case of Tanzania as focus of the investigation, this inquiry examines the dimensions of quality higher education within a national system. The goal is to discern the challenges of implementing, monitoring, and establishing indicators that assure quality, particularly in the areas of university leadership, academic curriculum, teaching, faculty recruitment, financing of the physical plant, and the supply of financial aid (bursaries) to support students. The overarching goal of this study however, is to instill skepticism or doubt for the assumptions and presuppositions of the nature of quality higher education, and through critical analysis, assess the trajectory of how higher education might play a central role in the next 50 years of development of the African continent.

Next Steps

First, this article examines the dynamics, opportunities, and challenges of attending an African university and inclines to ask more questions than provide answers. However, the impetus that drives this study is straightforward though complex and complicated. The question is: what do stakeholders (instructors, graduates, and current students) think about the quality and relevance of African university education (e.g., Tanzanian universities)? The rationale is: just like marketers and service providers want to know what customers and clientele think about the product they buy, it is equally important and timely to scrutinize the quality of university education and its relevance to employment, as well as its "value for the buck." The goal is to understand where the African university stands amid recent expansions. What are the relevance, meaning, vision, spirit, and authenticity of the African university? Does the current vision and mission sustain the veneer or threshold of quality higher education for Africans in an increasingly globalizing knowledge society?

Second, the study aims to capture a curious historical moment that is an awakening to higher education everywhere, with particular attention to large enrollments and rapid expansion of private and public universities. For example, Tanzania has experienced this expansion in higher education, having grown from one university college in 1961 to 52 universities and colleges in 2013 (TCU, 2012). What impacts or consequences has the expansion brought to the nation? This moment, which is like no other in a century, moves to impart and inspire every intellectual, educator, and politician in Africa to finding indigenous solutions to endemic and persistent problems that have plagued the continent for a long time (Semali, Hristova and Owiny, 2015). Thus, if the African university does not apply its resources, technology, discoveries, and research to seek solutions that benefit its African people, who will?

Third, this article speaks to our common interest, goal, vision, and hope of an African *university* purposely couched in the metaphor "intellectual commons." This metaphor refers to a university that strives to deliver quality higher education in the context of a world-class university. The vision of "intellectual commons" is committed to and aspires in every way, no matter the hardships or circumstances, to view the African university that lights its way to progress and hold the torch (*Mwenge*) for others. *Mwenge*—from which the name *Mwenge Catholic University* in Tanzania derives its mission—is a metaphor that shows the goals of the African university. This mission points to the goals: (1) to shine where there is darkness; (2) light up the minds and hearts of citizens; (3) overcome the gloom of ignorance, (4) eliminate the scourge of disease and incidences of extreme poverty; (5) pursue every opportunity in search of truth; and (6) engineer every prospect of the "common good" to solve the most treacherous problems that continue to distress and rob Africans of their heritage in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa.

Currently, it is common knowledge that a litany of maladies persist: famine, genocide, poverty, disasters resulting from extreme vagaries of weather, and the biggest scourge of all, HIV/AIDS (Kelly, 2001), as well as, more recently, the Ebola epidemic (Ogunniyi, 2014). Many stories tell about Africa's heritage in these dispiriting words and newscasts. Yet, Africa has other stories to tell in far more hopeful words: vibrant youth, fledgling democracy, a mineral-rich continent, home to ancient discoveries and correspondingly inundated with natural resources, and emerging economies. African universities are and must be champions or central actors

in these untold narratives—as they work to change the lives of Africans and the futures of their countries.

DILEMMAS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

To establish and maintain an African university that produces world-class researchers, innovators, professors, and scientists, it is imperative to understand the various agendas of diverse constituencies and stakeholders that demand standards that bear on quality (UNESCO, 2012). Some of the known indicators that account for the rationale for quality assurance include:

1) To describe the conditions and performance of universities and of the educational system.
2) To set targets, benchmarks, and standards for measuring or assessing progress toward achievement of educational goals.
3) To monitor and compare progress from implementing educational plans among geographical areas and targeted populations, and to signal shortfalls, gaps, imbalances, and disparities.
4) To identify and highlight issues, problems, and possible solutions for better management of the educational system.
5) To provide information identifying causes and factors affecting achievement of the desired educational outcomes, and to enable decision-makers to realistically plan and manage changes.
6) To inform stakeholders of schools and educational systems to generate greater understanding of, and support for, education (UNESCO, 2012).

While these questions beg for answers, it is important to state from the outset that it is virtually impossible to forge a single explanation of quality assurance in African higher education where the culture of self-assessment with a view of identifying and eliminating weaknesses is yet to be fully embraced (Okpanachi and Okpara, 2014). Conversely, it is untenable to find an all-encompassing definition inclusive of all the aforementioned indicators of quality. For example, quality assurance can be defined in terms of perfection, excellence, and value for money; fitness of purpose; or transformation (Harvey, 2005; Harvey and Green, 1993). Thus, quality as value for money is about accountability (Biggs, 2003). Okebukola (2008) summed up quality assurance as the "policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to satisfy itself that its quality requirements and standards are being met" (p. 9). However, even with these stipulations the goal falls short of an all-encompassing understanding of what it means to establish and manage a world-class university of high reputation (Salmi, 2009; Kipesha, and Msigwa, 2013).

Unclear explanations of "world-class" university education

There is no unanimous consensus among scholars on the appropriate strategy to take in, assure, and manage quality within higher education (Becket and Brookes, 2006). In this respect therefore, defining quality in higher education becomes a challenging task, specifically because there is no consensus on how best to manage quality within higher education (Becket and Brookes, 2006). Perhaps the best way to characterize quality and relevance in African higher education in the era of *knowledge economy* is to view quality higher education as a multidimensional construct with varying components (World Bank, 2002). In this instance, knowledge economy becomes the knowledge *capability* and *capacity* rather than natural resources as the greatest determinant of a country's entry into, and effective participation in, global competition (Jarvis, 2007; Jegede, 2012, p. 2). Consequently, the speed of change in the knowledge economy means that skills depreciate much more rapidly than they once did. Therefore, to compete effectively in this constantly changing environment, stakeholders—professors, staff, researchers, and other experts—need to be able to upgrade their skills on a continuing basis. Clearly, universities can achieve the excellent position to provide opportunities for the trained labor force needed for economic and social development and lead as the driver for knowledge-based economies on the African continent.

Notably, a *knowledge-based* economy relies primarily on the use of ideas rather than physical abilities and on the application of technology rather than the transformation of raw materials or the exploitation of cheap labor. Precisely, it is an economy that creates knowledge that acquires, transmits, and uses individuals, enterprises, organizations, and communities more effectively, to promote economic and social development (World Bank, 2001).

The 1998/99 *World Development Report: Knowledge for Development* (World Bank (1999) proposed an analytical framework emphasizing the complementary role of four key strategic dimensions to guide countries in the transition to a knowledge-based economy: (1) an appropriate economic and institutional regime, (2) a strong human capital base, (3) a dynamic information infrastructure, and (4) an efficient national innovation system—spurred by research (Salmi, 2009).

Conceivably, tertiary education at universities is central to all four pillars of this analytical framework, as outlined by Salmi, but its role is particularly crucial in support of building a strong human capital base and contributing to an efficient national innovation system. The assumption is that tertiary education helps countries

build globally competitive economies by developing a skilled, productive, and flexible labor force and by creating, applying, and spreading new ideas and technologies through research. Therefore, quality and relevance must be linked to the *capability* and *capacity* of universities to execute these imperatives.

CONTEXT OF AFRICA'S UNIVERSITIES AND ISSUES OF "RELEVANCE"

There are many important questions to ask that pertain to issues of "relevance" and the widespread advancement toward world-class status of universities around the world (Salmi, 2009), and Africa in particular. For example, why is "world-class" the standard to which a nation should aspire to build at least a subset of its tertiary education system? Might many countries progress faster by developing the most locally relevant systems possible, without concern for its relative merits in a global comparison? Is the definition of "world class" synonymous with "elite Western" and therefore inherently biased against the cultural traditions of tertiary education in non-Western countries? Are only research universities world class, or can other types of tertiary educational institutions (such as colleges, polytechnic schools, etc.) aspire to be among the best of their kind in an international perspective (Salmi, 2009, p. 3)? Given the quandary of these demands that underpin the imperatives of quality assurance, African scholars wonder and ask: Why is quality higher education problematic at African universities? The present study aims to shed light on this quandary.

The rise of private universities in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa is celebrated as beneficial to developing countries. Scholars applaud the move and claim that higher education ought to play a vital role in the development of every society (Mustard, 1998; Teferra and Altbach, 2004). In addition, these scholars have suggested that higher education is critical and essential to economic growth and development. Higher levels of education provide the necessary skills in economic, political, and cultural social cohesion that is critical for the growth and development of societies (World Bank, 2002). Likewise, politicians see many quests behind such burgeoning of private institutions of higher learning, including a discussion of opportunities and sometimes challenges to leadership qualities necessary to manage such universities in a volatile environment. The *relevance* question that persists is, are the establishments of private universities beneficial to the societies they are meant to serve? Why does this matter? What opportunities might reinforce such establishments and what challenges must leaders face in the aftermath of rapid expansions? These questions echo some of the dilemmas the higher education establishment continues to face in Tanzania.

New dawn and different questions

As the new century dawned in Africa, democratic ideals and an eagerness for a more robust higher education system deepened in a number of nations seeking African solutions to African problems (Cogburn and Levinson, 2003). In the past two decades, the new awakening had fresh partnerships emerging between African leaders, politicians, and the private sector, including NGOs (local and foreign) focused on strategic planning, decentralization, innovation, and experimentation, in efforts to expand and revitalize African universities (Jowett, and Dyer, 2012). For example, in the course of their brief history, the thinking about the role of universities has also evolved. In Francophone Africa, the early classical academic approach is giving way to a more utilitarian orientation (Harmita, 2011; Semali, Baker, and Freer, 2013).

This wave of positive change has captured the attention of many stakeholders who recognize that universities can play a critical role in the efforts to reduce poverty, restore ethical practices, and eliminate corruption, as well as stimulate economic and social development. The rise of private universities in Tanzania since the late 1990s has been celebrated as beneficial but it is critical to developing countries and to transition economies (see Table 2). Scholars defend the revitalization and expansion of universities, particularly through the involvement of the private sector as a move in the right direction (Mustard, 1998; Teferra and Altbach, 2004). In addition, these scholars argue that higher education is critical and beneficial to economic growth and social development. Recent efforts to rank African universities demonstrate the cry for quality and relevance. For example, the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings*, 2015–2016, shows the University of Cape Town at the top of the list based on its academic faculty's scholarly productivity and ability to attract external research dollars (see Table 1).

Besides, some politicians see many opportunities behind such burgeoning of private institutions of higher learning, including a discussion of prospects and occasional challenges to leadership qualities necessary to manage such universities in a volatile environment (Kelly, 2001). However, questions persist. For example: (1) to what extent is the establishment of private universities advantageous to societies the universities claim to serve? (2) What opportunities might offer such higher education establishments and expansions? (3) What challenges must leaders face in the pursuit of quality assurance—fiscal strength, resistance to cultural

Table 1: Best universities in Africa 2016: top 15

Rank	Institution	Country
1	University of Cape Town	South Africa
2	University of the Witwatersrand	South Africa
3	Stellenbosch University	South Africa
4	Makerere University	Uganda
5	University of KwaZulu-Natal	South Africa
6	University of Pretoria	South Africa
7	University of Ghana	Ghana
8	University of Nairobi	Kenya
9	Suez Canal University	Egypt
10	Alexandria University	Egypt
11	Cairo University	Egypt
12	University of Marrakech Cadi Ayyad	Morocco
13	University of South Africa	South Africa
14	University of Ibadan	Nigeria
15	Mohammed V University of Rabat	Morocco

Source: *The Times Higher Education World University Rankings, 2015-2016* (Baty, *2014)*

invasion—in the aftermath of the rapid expansions of tertiary education?

These questions, however, are short term and only scratch the surface of the broader problems, which are epistemological and existential. New questions touch the core existence and relevance of the African university with questions that point to its existence and survival as an institution as we have known it. A critique of common institutional practices in Africa of copying models of curriculum and management styles from European universities, which end up being marginally relevant to the local people and the African context, may be timely and appropriate at this time. The question to ask is not whether an African university is public or private, but whether the vision and quality of higher education is a viable enterprise for the 21st century. In order to change the narrative, perhaps of particular significance would be to ask *different* sets of questions:

1. Why is it that Tanzanian universities find "quality" of higher education such a slippery slope to navigate?
2. Taking into account recent student riots in several African countries, why has the university establishment become so intricate and difficult to lead at a time of global economic expansion?
3. Why do governments, policymakers, and entrepreneurs who advocate for higher education for national development find it problematic to support quality institutions that are fiscally responsible, structurally sound, and fully equipped to provide for the development of communities, solve society's problems, and discover innovations that improve, facilitate, and yield solutions that make labor lighter, and people healthier, wealthier, and smarter?
4. How can universities, particularly new institutions or campuses that have recently joined the ranks, make a difference for the *common good*?
5. How can universities gainfully engage recent graduates and put fire in the belly to aspire and strive for the *common good*?
6. If universities do not stand up for the *common good*, who will?

The African University as "Intellectual Commons"

The previously listed questions move the discussion of the African university in a different direction. Namely, at the heart of the African university is the prospect and hope of a robust institution framed as the academy, the house of knowledge, a seat of learning and "*intellectual commons*." For example, from its inception, the first African university of East Africa, Makerere University in Uganda, began in 1922. It once stood as the most prestigious university in Africa. In its heyday, debates and public lectures about the common good left a mark on graduates who later became leaders of the early political movements for African independence in the 1960s.

This article is partly inspired by the hope enshrined in the rich history of these vibrant intellectual beginnings,

and hence these discussions use the metaphor "intellectual commons" as the basis for an argument of shared African values, identities, and our "common interests" (Commission for Africa, 2005). However, in the current era of knowledge economy (World Bank, 2002), the idea of intellectual "commons" is no longer a geographical space or simply an attempt to arrive at consensus or a unitary view. The standardized organizational arrangements that universities have upheld to administer this "intellectual commons" have also served to impede adaptive efforts (Daloz, et al., 1996). However, in the present study, the idea of knowledge "commons" is envisioned as a place to build upon past formulations and perspectives of professions and practices while also providing contemporary contextual frameworks and *relevance* that suggest new understandings of learning, innovative practices, and new challenges.

The idea of knowledge "commons" is rooted in the English town-planning concept (Daloz et al., 1996). Historically, universities have sought to enforce universities' historic commitment to create and sustain an "intellectual commons" for the benefit of society. The idea derives from the historic Central Square or village green that all townsfolk shared. For example, in Africa, the Chagga of Tanzania revere the concept of the public square because it is understood from legends as *Menge*, meaning a public place for the commons to meet—namely a square designated and vested with the power of convening the common folk. When the village crier sounds the horn, everyone must assemble because, as the Chagga say, *kuna jambo*, that is, *there is big news*. Similar metaphors or practices existed everywhere in Africa, representing such a call for the commons.

More recently, writers have appropriated the term "commons" to signify an ideal of shared community commitments and identify the construct as outside of geographical limitations. For example, in keeping with this view, Daloz and his colleagues defined the "commons" as a shared public space of a sort that anchored the vision of "democracy" (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 2). This idea builds on the notion that modern, complex societies entail engagement with a plethora of communities on a daily basis. The "commons" therefore becomes the central place where differing communities can interact, initiate dialogue, and engage—an idea that should align well with the vision of the African university.

The task for the "commons" is to present the diversity of views and approaches present in the contemporary university as it manifests its functions, leadership, and intellectual exchanges within an emerging sphere ("Public Square") of ideas, innovations, and discoveries that benefit its people. These elements remind us of another ancient African University, the University of Alexandria, Egypt, in North Africa (Canfora, 1990).

The University of Alexandria is another one of the earliest universities in Africa that embraced the notion of *public square* and public good. It is famously known for its library, originally built to house the massive collection of books accumulated by the Ptolemaic Kingdom and which was burned down under Aurelian, in A.D. 272 (Mostafa, 1990). International accounts report the University of Alexandria had at least thirteen lecture halls and could have held as many as 5,000 students at one time. All of the classrooms had rows of benches running around three sides of the room, stepping up higher toward the back so that everybody could see. In the middle of the room, there was a high seat, probably for the professor. These classrooms were near a big theater and an open square that were probably part of the university—maybe the theater was used for bigger classes.

Among the scholars who worked at the University of Alexandria while the Greeks ruled Egypt were Euclid, who wrote a book about geometry; Archimedes; Aristarchus, who figured out that the earth went around the sun; and Eratosthenes, who calculated the diameter of the earth (Marcellinus, 1862). Obviously, we can observe the remnants of the ancient University of Alexandria in our African universities today—but what is missing in contemporary African universities in varying degrees is perhaps the art of discovery (e.g., Archimedes, Aristarchus), entrepreneurship, and quest for innovations. Can the current universities recoup the spirit of intellectual commons identifiable in the University of Alexandria at this era of increasingly globalized society and knowledge economy? What role must private universities play in the global arena of knowledge economy and of preparing the next cadre of Nobel laureates?

The Case of Tanzania

To shed light on the questions raised previously about the quality and relevance of higher education, we take on the case of Tanzania. In Tanzania, as in most African countries, the educational system is complex, with hundreds of schools and thousands of teachers, including 11 public universities, over 20 private universities, 17 university colleges, and hundreds of thousands of students throughout the country. The educational system also has intricate and far-reaching links to the development of human beings, society, and the nation.

Tanzania has experienced a phenomenal expansion of universities—from one university college in 1961, to 52 universities and counting, in 2013 (TCU,

2014). Specifically, a steady expansion is visible since 1995, when Parliament enacted the Tanzania Universities Act, 2005. Table 2 A-C presents a list of private and public universities and highlights the mix of fully-fledged universities, college, public and private

Table 2: Clusters of Tanzania Universities by Year of Establishment, 1961-2015

A. Public Universities

Year	Universities Established	Public / Private	Social Science / Humanities	Stem Science	Status
1961-1970	1	Public = 1	✓	✓	University
1971-1980	-	-	-	-	
1981-1990	-	-	-	-	
1991-2000	2	Public = 2	-	-	University
2001-2010	6	Public = 6	✓	✓	
2011-2015	2	Public = 2	✓	✓	

B. Private Universities

Year	Universities Established	Public / Private	Social Science / Humanities	Stem Science	Status
1961-1970		Private = 1	✓	✓	University
1971-1980		-	-		-
1981-1990		-	-	-	-
1991-2000	4	Private = 4	✓		University
2001-2010	13	Private = 13	✓	✓	-
2011-2015	5	Private = 5	✓	✓	-

C. Private University Colleges

Year	Universities Established	Private	Social Science / Humanities	Stem Science	Status
1961-1970				✓	University
1971-1980					
1981-1990					
1991-2000	3	3	✓		
2001-2010	7	7	✓	✓	
2011-2015	2	2	✓		

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The rise of private universities

The idea of public versus private institutions in Tanzania is sometimes confusing. Essentially, the difference lies in the leadership and ownership status of the institution. Whereas the government owns public institutions, non-government organizations (NGOs) own private institutions that include religious or faith-based organizations (e.g., the Catholic Church, Lutheran Church, and Methodist Church).

Equally, many examples exist to show universities owned by foreign foundations (e.g., Aga Khan Foundation, International Medical and Technological University) and foreign universities (e.g., Daystar University) (Vumilia, 2015). However, the notion that private universities are separate and independent from the obligations of public institutions by virtue of their funding sources could be misleading since such institutions continue to be regulated by the government's regulatory body, namely, the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) and the Tanzania Universities Act (2005). Varghese (2004) observes that the classification of such institutions depends on the level or degree of ownership relationship that might exist. For this reason, this study distinguishes private higher education in the following different types:

1. State-supported private institutions—some private institutions of higher education receive funding support from the government. Government more specifically regulates these.
2. Not-for-profit private institutions—private non-profit institutions are owned and operated by trusts and students pay fees. Most of them are self-financing institutions.
3. For-profit higher education institutions—some private institutions operate and produce profit. They are by

design seen as institutions established to make profit (Varghese (2004).

Although private university education is new in Tanzania, it has contributed to the ever-increasing number of enrollments in higher education. The current structure of private universities reflects a unique management system that is partly overshadowed by government regulations and partly set within the purview of the proprietors who established the institutions and guarantee its avowed mission and vision (Vumilia, 2015).

The establishment of private universities in Tanzania gained its foothold in the development and expansion of formal primary and secondary education in Tanzania among other factors. Since Tanzania gained its independence in 1961, its education system has undergone many reforms. For example, the Education Act of 1962 abolished racial discrimination in access to education and streamlined the curriculum, examinations, financing, and administration of education (Education and Training Policy, 1995, p. I). Hence, in theory, every citizen had access to education.

In addition, the Education Act established the expansion of four-year primary schools to seven years, while emphasizing increased enrollment for primary and secondary education (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1979). Global economic recession severely impacted Tanzania in the late 1970s and 1980s—pushing the government to introduce drastic economic austerity measures. In 1986 under the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), along with the Strategy of Economic Programs, Tanzania shifted from a centralized government controlled economy (Education and Training Policy, 1995) to a liberalized economy (Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2003). Consequently, the national budge reduced its allocation for education spending from 20 percent in 1970s to only 4 percent by the early 1990s (Kipesha, and Msigwa, 2013; Rajani and Robinson, 1999; Chachage, 2000).

Tanzania's governmental efforts to equip Tanzanian society with basic education led to the introduction of the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) and the Secondary Development Programme (SEDP), which aimed to guide and direct implementation of such policies. These developments saw a rapid growth of primary schools, from 14,257 in 2005 to 16,343 in 2014, with enrollments soaring from 7.54 million to 8.23 million. The number of secondary schools increased from 1,745 in 2005 to 4,576 in 2014, with enrollments jumping from 524,325 to 1,804,056 (Kikwete, 2015).

This changing nature of education in Tanzania has challenged the state with regard to the provision of quality higher education, since the secondary school expansion consequentially pushed for an increase in higher education enrollments. According to the World Bank Report *Accelerating Catch-up: Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2009), between 1991 and 2005, tertiary enrollments in sub-Saharan Africa tripled, while in Tanzania, enrollments in higher education soared from 40,719 in 2005 to 200,986 in 2014 (Kikwete, 2015).

Internal and external pressures on universities

Private higher education is rapidly expanding in many parts of the world (Altbach and Levy, 2005). This phenomenon has exposed Tanzania's public universities to internal and external pressures to enroll more students—beyond their capacities—resulting in expanded burst of expansion in secondary education. Residual external pressures loom large following several years of colonial rule and from borrowing foreign models of higher education. Thus, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, higher education was offered primarily by public institutions, and therefore financed by the state.

The increased demand by society for higher education ushered in a new era that prompted alternative solutions to address the challenge of university expansion. The shift to allow private institutions to run higher education marked a fundamental change in the policy and operations of the education sector in Tanzania. Because of the increasing demand for access to higher education , universities have shifted from being a service for the elite that they were, to a service open to everyone. Yet, the expansion of the secondary school sector was only one among many other factors that attribute to the rapid growth of private universities in Africa, and Tanzania in particular. Thus, quality is and has been an issue, and therefore it cannot be avoided in education at present; what institutions do to assure quality turns out to be perhaps the most important of all efforts and initiatives. However, the entry of "private" providers of higher education, coupled with crying voices of declining government funding to public institutions, is a response to the increasing demand for higher education that has caused a decline in the quality of graduates (Mahajan, 2016).

Ahemba (2006) attributes the pressures instigating the increase of private universities to the failure of Africa's once-glorious public universities. According to Varghese (2004), among the reasons prompting the rapid expansion of private universities is the inability of public universities to satisfy the social demand for places in higher education. While the Tanzanian government previously had a monopoly over higher education since independence in 1961, including its growth and expansion, economic crisis and the resulting financial

Table 3: Distribution of higher education institutions in Tanzania based on ownership

S/N	REGION	NUMBER OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS		
PRIVATE			GOVERNMENT	TOTAL
1.	Dar es Salaam	5	16	21
2.	Morogoro	1	2	3
3.	Arusha	3	2	5
4.	Iringa	2	2	4
5.	Dodoma	1	2	3
6.	Mwanza	2	-	2
7.	Mjini Magharibi (Zanzibar)	1	1	2
8.	Kusini Unguja (Zanzibar)	1	1	2
9.	Kigoma	1	-	1
10.	Tanga	1	-	1
11.	Kilimanjaro	4	1	5
12.	Mbeya	1	1	2
TOTAL		23	28	51

Source: TCU 2009).

squeeze, as well as the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s, reduced the government's ability to provide continued and adequate funding support to permit the expansion of the higher education sector.

Othman (2009) associated this expansion with the country's dependence on international institutions that recommended budget cuts for institutions, which in turn led to less funding to run higher education institutions. One ought to recall that the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s focused on measures to reduce fiscal deficit through reduced social sector investments. The structural adjustment program imposed on Tanzania by the IMF in the 1980s brought about a chain of events including the need for the government of Tanzania to initiate policy measures to accommodate the liberalization of education. The 1995 Education and Training Policy in its Education Supplementary Act no. 10 of 1995 opened the doors for private sector participation in the provision of education (Ishengoma, 2007).

Thus, a move away from dependence on the state to fund higher education, and the fiscal incapacity of the state to finance adequately the rapidly expanding higher education system, encouraged the rapid growth of private higher education. This rise of private universities in Tanzania was a welcome development since it provides increasing access to higher education, as evidenced by the rapid expansion of such institutions from 1995 in the aftermath of the liberalization of education.

Consequently, the liberalization of the economy and the privatization of higher education in Tanzania were part of the condition for receiving external funding support during this period of transition and economic crunch (Ishengoma, 2010). Some of these external pressures on education reform measures encouraged private education providers to invest in mass education, where they became welcome partners with the government in the financing of higher education. Private higher education providers (foreign and domestic) who settled in and established new private universities quickly reciprocated this open door policy. According to data recently obtained from the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU), (see Table 3), there are 23 private universities, with enrollments of 26,191 students, of whom 10,400 are female (Kipesha and Msigwa, 2013, p. 49; TCU, 2013).

These enrolment figures contrast with student admissions in nine public universities totaling 75,031, of whom 23,613 are female (TCU, 2014). Female enrolments have usually lagged behind in spite of arduous implementation of Affirmative Action strategies introduced and designed to increase female students' enrolment trends at the University of Dar es Salaam. (Lihambaa et al. 2006).

THEORIES OF QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Two constructs on which the present study benefits

draw from the theories of *quality* and *relevance*. The literature tends to interpret "quality" as an obsession with management, efficiency, and effectiveness. Relevance in higher education seems to gravitate around concepts of teaching, curriculum, academics, and delivery systems.

Components of educational quality and relevance

Cheng and Tam (1997) suggested *seven* components of *educational quality* to include: (1) goal, (2) mission and vision, (3) resource—input and outputs, (4) process, (5) students and staff satisfaction, (6) legitimacy—absence of problems, and (7) organizational learning. Embedded in this multidimensional construct—*educational quality*—is the notion of maintenance of quality at all times and the indicators or measures that assure quality. Cheng and Tam believe that *quality assurance* (QA) in higher education mirrors a systematic process of assessing and verifying inputs, outputs, and outcomes against standardized benchmarks of quality, to maintain and enhance quality, ensure greater accountability, and facilitate harmonization of standards across academic programs, institutions, and systems (Harvey and Green, 1993). However, Okebukola, (2004; 2008) perceived quality of assurance in terms of university input, process, and output. (See Table 4).

Table 4: The paradigm representation of the input (Quality assurance)

University input	Process	University output
Students, teachers, non-teaching staff, managers, curriculum, facilities, finance, institutional materials, other resources.	Teaching and learning, research, use of time and space, student services, administration, leadership, community participation, quality assurance.	Skilled and employable graduates, responsible citizens, economic development, production of knowledge.

Source: Okebukola (2004; 2008.)

Collectively, these varieties of perspectives show that QA can take many forms, ranging from monitoring or simple self-assessment to more inspection, accreditation, review, or audit(s) supported by external and independent peer reviews. Harvey and Green (1993) believe that building capacity for quality assurance that meets international standards requires significant investment in technical assistance, training, knowledge sharing, analysis, and coordination, which are costly and time-consuming.

Concurrently, the QA imperatives are an all-embracing context that reference an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (i.e., assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programs (UNESCO, 2007). In this sense, the literature underscores *assurance* as a system established to support fitness to purpose and *performance* according to conventional standards. The system in place implies a methodical way of establishing and maintaining quality improvement activities as an integral and sustainable part of systems or organizations (Harvey, 2007).

In higher education, and for the purposes of the present study, quality assurance includes all activities that contribute to the design, assessment, monitoring of standards agreed upon by all stakeholders, improving quality of service delivery, client satisfaction, and effective utilization of resources (Martin and Stella, 2007). In sum, it is a process of establishing stakeholders' confidence that the provision of higher education (i.e., input, process and outcomes) fulfills expectations or measures up to threshold (established) minimum requirements.

Rationales for quality assurance

Several rationales support and explain why African universities should take matters of quality and relevance seriously. Scholars of quality management, for example, recognize that much of the discourse on quality, relevance, and quality assurance underscores issues of values and power relations between and among the different stakeholders in higher education institutions (Cheng and Tam, 1997; Harvey, 2007; UNESCO, 2007). Such ways of thinking determine the quality assurance types adopted by certain higher education institutions.

In this discussion, therefore, the present study distinguishes the varied ways of thinking that underlie the diverse quality assurance types and models in higher education. Since the 1980s, two factors have dominated the discourse on quality higher education: (1)

improvement: that is, the extent to which graduates learn the knowledge and skills necessary for a changing economy; and (2) accountability: the extent to which higher education institutions are spending tax money properly (Westerheijden, Stensaker and Rosa, 2007). These two constructs—*improvement* and *accountability*—situate the dominant discourse of quality assurance within business administration and management. As Williams (1993) noted, the occurrence of quality management approaches in higher education is a product of the market ideologies of the 1980s and the managerialism that accompanied this movement. During this period, management of quality was central to the new discourse on governance of higher education institutions (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2003).

Subsequently, many higher education institutions adopted the quality management models that originated in the world of business and industrial production, such as *Total Quality Management* (TQM). Brennan and Shah (2000) argued that the propositions supporting quality adopted this business model and rationale to reflect the central question of power. They insisted that the introduction of systems of quality assurance involved shifting the balance of power between institutional power and system levels. That is, conceptions of quality, in particular higher education institutions and countries, may entail several types of values. This view suggests that the adoption of an approach to quality assurance is contingent upon quality conceptions and values of a certain type, for example, managerial.

Brennan and Shah (2000, p. 14) identified four principal forms of quality values that underlie different approaches to quality assurance, namely, *academic, managerial, pedagogic, and employment-focus*. In the *academic* approach, criteria of quality stem from the characteristics of the subject matter, which is the focal point. This type of quality assurance is associated with strong professional authority and *academic values*. Conceptions of quality are based on subject affiliation and vary across the higher education institution, which has limited ability to define and assess quality.

The *managerial* category is grounded on the assumption that good management can produce quality. Hence, it is associated with institutional focus of assessment. The institutional policies, procedures, and structures are the spotlight of the assessment. Quality characteristics are regarded as unchanging across the entire institution. According to Brennan and Shah (2000), the principles of TQM provide the underlying ideological justification for this type of approach.

In the *pedagogic* category, teaching skills and classroom practices of the faculty are emphasized. This is strongly associated with staff training and development. Quality characteristics are considered constant across the institution. In this approach, much emphasis is given to *the delivery aspect* rather than the content or subject matter.

In the *employment-focused* category, more attention is given to graduate output characteristics, standards, and learning outcomes. This approach is normally associated with customer satisfaction, in which employers of graduates are usually regarded as customers. It takes into account elements of both subject-specific and core characteristics of high-quality education based on TQM.

These four categories—*academic*, *managerial*, *pedagogic,* and *employment-focus*—are elaborated further and applied by Luckett (2006). Luckett argued that quality assurance systems are replete with power tensions; thus, the focus in analyzing any quality assurance system should not be directed at how quality is formally defined, but at identifying whose interest is served. Key questions to ask are the following: Who is in control of the evaluation? Who initiates and who owns it? Is the ownership internal or external to the academic community? Scholars ought to ask these questions when analyzing any quality assurance system. Adopting the four quality values, Luckett proposed four ways of thinking about quality assurance in universities: *collegial rationality, managerial rationality, facilitative rationality,* and *bureaucratic rationality* (Luckett, 2006). A summary of each of these types of quality assurance will be in order.

First, quality assurance of the *collegial rationality* type is conducted within the norms and value systems of the academics. This type presupposes that academics are in control of the conditions of their professional work. The purpose of a collegial rationality type of quality assurance is to enlighten academics and to improve the environment in which academics learn more about their teaching and determine how to improve and overcome weaknesses to ensure the integrity of their teaching. The models of quality assurance in this type are typically controlled and owned internally within the institution, and locally. The academic staff initiates and designs the evaluation of their programs and determines the criteria for making context-specific judgments about quality programs. The criteria for quality are usually implicit, founded in shared meanings with interpretive and inter-subjective methodology.

Luckett claimed that the most utilized method in the collegial type is self-evaluation, wherein the academics themselves are the key agents of the evaluation. Students are not considered as customers, and their opinions of instructors' performance evaluations are subject to triangulation with opinion data from other sources such as external peers and staff themselves. The academics own the evaluation results, and they are the primary audience of the findings. Thus, results of this

evaluation serve a formative purpose never linked to any extrinsic reward or punishment.

Second, the *managerial* type of quality assurance is grounded in the belief that good management is the key factor in the productivity of successful organizations. Corporate management, explicit systems and procedures, strategic planning, and greater centralization and regulation by management characterize this category. In essence, quality assurance is viewed as a management tool to strengthen the institution and the central authority, at the expense of professional power. The purpose of the managerial type of quality assurance is to enlighten senior management. The institution as a whole is the focus of evaluation, and the senior managers are the primary audiences as well as the owners of the model of quality assurance. Lockett believed that the definition of quality as “fitness-for-purpose” fits this type because the focus is precisely on improving effectiveness and efficiency. The managerial approach may be useful in facilitating the accountability culture in universities. In sum, this approach coincides with students as customers.

Third, in the *facilitative* type, external authorities or agencies play a facilitative or supportive role in quality assurance. Lockett viewed the typical method to reflect quality assurance as external audit, where the external agency validates the internal quality assurance system, but does not make judgments about quality as such. The evaluators are peer experts who operate on behalf of the external agency, but those under review mostly approve their appointment. This type of quality assurance is useful to stimulate systematic internal self-evaluation and improvement processes. It helps to make institutional quality assurance processes more explicit and institutionalized (e.g., an appointment of a special task force to evaluate the institution—whole or parts of it).

Fourth, the *bureaucratic rationale* type is based on norms and values that are external to the institutions on which they are imposed. Lockett believed that such norms and values are related to governance and control, such as administrative efficiency and system building priorities, typically grounded in the instrumental view of higher education. In this type, quality assurance models have accountability and compliance purposes and are externally controlled and owned by a government that funds and appoints an agency with legal status. The government usually initiates quality assurance, and reflects the interests of the external quality agency.

Quality and relevance of teaching

Quality and relevance of teaching are constructs that have become central issues of debate as the landscape of higher education faces continuous changes: fierce international competition, increasing social and geographical diversity of the student body, greater demands of value for money, introduction of information technologies, and institutional competitions (Goh, 1996; Gibbs, 1995). Internal and external pressures impinge upon the institution to examine its mission, existence, delivery systems, and outcomes to make sure institutions continue to become relevant.

As discussed previously in this essay, the student body has considerably expanded and diversified, both socially and geographically. New students call for new teaching methods. Modern technologies, including hand-held devices and social media, have entered the classroom, thus altering the nature of the interactions between students and professors, faculty members, staff, and administrators. Governments, students, and their families, employers, and bursary (tuition) providers increasingly demand value for their money and desire more *efficiency* through teaching (Green, 1993), to ensure the integrity of programs and the credibility of the certificates issued by the institutions of the university.

Relevance, on the other hand, is a concept that refers to the condition of being relevant or "important to the matter at hand." For example, artists and politicians are constantly worried about their relevance. That is, if they are no longer relevant, they may not keep their jobs. Therefore, relevance in academic teaching accounts for the information generated by teaching or instructional systems. The concept involves the content of the instruction or information and/or its timeliness, both of which can impact decision making or other outcomes (e.g., job-readiness).

The challenges surrounding “teaching quality” are numerous and immensely problematic, perhaps because the construct lacks clarity of disciplinary definition and to some extent cannot be disconnected from debates on TQM or “quality culture” in the business management of higher education (Harvey and Green, 1993). Some scholars regard quality of higher education primarily as an “outcome,” others as a “property” (Skelton, 2005). Teaching is considered as the never-ending process of reduction of weaknesses (Maragakis et al. 2016); Opkanachi and Opkara, 2014). Thus, “quality teaching” can never be totally grasped and appraised. In fact, conceptions of teaching quality happen to be stakeholder-relative: Students, teachers, or evaluation agencies do not share the definition of what “good” teaching or “good” teachers are or might be (Shulman, 1993).

Research points out that *quality teaching* is necessarily student-centered; its aim is primarily student learning. This means that attention should be given not simply to the teacher’s pedagogical skills, but also to the learning environment that will address students’

essential needs or the relevance of what students learn. Students should know why they are learning, should be able to relate what they learn to the environment they live in (e.g., their communities or geographical /ethnic area) and to other students and instructors. Adequate support to staff and students (financial support, social and academic support, support to ethnic or remote-area minority students, counseling services, etc.) is also known to improve learning outcomes (Harvey and Green, 1993). Learning communities—groups of students and/or teachers who learn collaboratively and build knowledge through intellectual interaction—are judged to enhance student learning by increasing students and teachers' satisfaction. Collectively, these diverse conceptions of learning and teaching have embellished the notion of *quality teaching.*

Clearly, the challenge that persists is "How can teaching concretely be enhanced or improved in African universities?" Scholars have warned that *quality-teaching* initiatives are very diverse both in nature and in function (Skelton, 2005). Some quality teaching initiatives are undertaken at the teachers' level, others at departmental, institutional, or country levels. Initiatives are of different varieties and come to institutions at varied times. The most currently used quality initiatives seem to aim to enhance collaborative teaching between teachers in goal setting and course plans. However, scholars have developed holistic theoretical models of how *quality-teaching* initiatives should unfold (Trigwell et al., 2000). However, Trigwell and colleagues insisted that gathering information and reading the literature—looking outside the classroom—are important tools to improve teaching quality, but these strategies are often under-employed.

Another important point to keep in mind is that in order for student learning to be enhanced, the onus or focus of quality teaching initiatives should not always be on the teacher. Rather, it should encompass the whole institution and the learning environment (Madu and Kuei, 1993). The challenge is how to implement such initiatives. One of the major drivers for enhancement of quality teaching concerns teachers' leadership—most quality teaching initiatives are actually launched by professors. However, the role of the department, educational support divisions, or the central university—which can make quality culture part of its mission statement—are central to the implementation of quality teaching (Madu, and Kuei, 1993). In sum, quality-teaching initiatives must seem legitimate to peers in order to succeed or expand.

Nevertheless, how can African universities make sure quality teaching is effective? Scholars have insisted that it is essential to measure the impact of the quality teaching initiatives in order to be able to improve these initiatives (Schönwetter et al., 2002). However, assessing the quality of instructors' teaching remains challenging. This difficulty may explain in part why the two most famous international rankings rely heavily on research as a yardstick of universities' value and leave aside teaching quality even though many universities will admit that teaching and research are central to the delivery of higher education (Boyer, 1996; Gibbs, 1995). This view, however, may change in the future, as concerns about teaching quality and students' essential learning needs increase and are pushed to the forefront for attention. In this enterprise, therefore, the choice of indicators to measure teaching quality is crucial, because it has been shown that assessment drives learning. That is, how the teacher is judged will undoubtedly impact his or her teaching methods (Gibbs, 1995).

However, many teachers give little credence to the answers of students, and they perceive them as biased. Student-respondents tend to blame teachers for all problems, forgetting the role of the administration or the infrastructures (Webbstock, 1999). This type of measurement should clarify its own aims (improvement or punishment?) before implementation. Other ways include focusing on the outcomes through peer reviews, in-class evaluations, or using teaching portfolios to evaluate teaching quality, which seems fairer as more sources of evidence are considered (Seldin, 1993), but then a question remains: How much should each source of evidence be weighted? Assessing the results of quality teaching initiatives has proven to be difficult, and this issue has received increasing attention in the literature (Webbstock, 1999).

Emerging propositions

Authors conclude this theory section by summarizing two propositions that emerge from the study. First, that our understanding of quality in higher education borrows heavily from theories in business management, and both the terminology and the rationales favor business-like settings and ignore the intricacies of higher education, particularly its contextual factors related to structure, curriculum, teaching, and students' achievement or job-readiness.

Second, the scan of the literature examined in this study is neither comprehensive nor conclusive. Clearly, there remain unresolved dilemmas related to quality and relevance of teaching in higher education. For example, the means with which to measure or evaluate TQM in higher education teaching are inconclusive. Quality teaching is problematic since there is no consensus as to how to evaluate or determine "good" teaching quality. However, there is consensus that teachers who follow

up on quality assurance schemes are also the ones who believe that it is in their interest and power to improve students' learning, while most teachers will try to improve the quality of their teaching only if they believe that the university cares about teaching. Therefore, if a university institution wants its teaching to be of good quality, it must give concrete, tangible signs that teaching matters.

RESEARCH METHODS

In this cross-sectional research survey design, stakeholders' perceptions of quality and relevance of higher education were explored. Purposefully selected stakeholders consisted of (1) university students at diverse institutions who are pursuing different disciplines; (2) recent graduates from a variety of disciplines currently employed at different job sites; and (3) individual lecturers employed at several universities. Questions in the data-gathering instrument were directed to probe the perceptions stakeholders have on quality and relevance of higher education and how university education was instrumental or helpful in solving existing societal problems.

The structure of this questionnaire borrows from Brennan and Shah's (2000) forms of quality values discussed previously under different foci that are attentive to: *academic, managerial, pedagogic,* and *employment*. The main interest is not about how quality is "formally defined" in African higher education, but rather attention is directed to analyze the quality assurance system and identify whose interests are served.

Data collection comprised surveys that included a variety of questions and response formats such as multiple-choice questions and Likert-style rating scale responses. Survey questions in this study followed Luckett's rationalities to examine norms and values that characterize quality assurance. For example, questions examined the *collegial* rationale by investigating how academics control the conditions of their professional work to meet certain benchmarks or deliver results. Other questions examined *managerial* rationality, *facilitative* rationality, and *bureaucratic* rationality (Luckett, 2006).

Respondents were asked to explain whether their higher education was beneficial in terms of solving problems, enhancing quality of life, or escaping the poverty trap. Items consisted of Likert-scale questions designed to collect stakeholders' opinions about quality and relevance of education offered at universities in the country.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section presents analysis and interpretation of the findings of the study. Table 5 summarizes the demographic characteristics of participants. There were 29 (58%) male respondents and 21 (42%) female respondents. Participants were drawn from different programs at universities where 11 (22%) respondents pursued education programs and 10 (20%) respondents pursued doctoral programs. Students pursuing nursing accounted for 10 (20%) of the respondents; library science 9 (18%) respondents; while the remaining 10 (20%) respondents pursued other disciplines. University affiliation was determined by 27 (54%) students who attended public universities, while 23 (46%) respondents attended private institutions. Overall, there was 16% more male respondents than female respondents who participated in the study.

Respondents were asked about their transition from school to work and whether the university programs they pursued provided them with the competence to get a job in the same year after graduation. A total of 23 (46%) graduates indicated that they secured a job the same year after graduation. Regarding the type of job graduates secured, 39 (78%) respondents found jobs that were directly related to the field of study they pursued at the university; while 27 (54%) graduates could not find jobs in the same year after graduation. A small number of students (22%) accepted jobs that were available to them even though they were not related to the disciplines they pursued in the universities they attended in Tanzania.

A series of questions in the questionnaire asked stakeholders to rate the extent to which participants found their university education to be relevant. Thus, some questions asked students about (a) whether their university education was a catalyst to the job challenges they encountered in the workplace; (b) meeting students' ambitions; and (c) relevance of university education to meet the needs of society. Tables 6, 7 and Figures 1 and 2 reflect students' responses.

Challenges facing university students at institutions

University students were asked to indicate the challenges facing students at their institutions. The responses are summarized in Table 6.

A list of 14 challenges were presented, and 30% of respondents said the major challenges facing them were "little support from the government (loans)," while 30 (60%) identified minor challenges including "Unethical practices among lecturers," and 18 (36%) indicated that

Table 5: Demographic Data of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
GENDER		
Male	29	58%
Female	21	42%
TOTAL	50	100%
INSTITUTION		
Private	23	46%
Public	27	54%
TOTAL	50	100%
PROGRAM		
Education	11	22%
Doctor	10	20%
Nursing	10	20%
Librarian	9	18%
Other	10	20%
TOTAL	50	100%

Table 6: Challenges facing university students at institutions

Variables	Major Challenge	Minor Challenge	Not challenge	Total
Unfair assessments	26%	52%	22%	100%
Inadequate resources	48%	42%	10%	100%
Too little time allotted for consultations	36%	50%	14%	100%
Little support from the government (loans)	60%	24%	16%	100%
Low level of technology	52%	30%	18%	100%
Low or no accessibility to internet	32%	42%	26%	100%
Irrelevant subject matter of courses taught	14%	50%	36%	100%
Unethical practices among lecturers	14%	60%	26%	100%
Large class size	24%	54%	22%	100%
Subjects being too theoretical	46%	40%	14%	100%
Political influence on higher education	30%	44%	26%	100%
Incompetent lecturers	14%	58%	28%	100%
Too little time allocated for field practice	38%	30%	32%	100%
Forces of globalization and modernization of higher education	44%	34%	22%	100%

“Irrelevant subject matter of courses taught” was not a challenge facing at their institutions. (See Table 6).

Table 7: Suitability of the program that students pursued at institutions

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Option	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
• I believe that the program I am pursuing will make me a competent professional	52%	48%	0%	0%	0%	100%
• The program I am pursuing will help me to address the needs of my society	42%	54%	2%	0%	2%	100%
• The courses offered at this institution are relevant to the needs of the society	42%	50%	6%	0%	2%	100%
• I have learned relevant things as student at this institution	46%	50%	2%	0%	2%	100%
• Courses offered at this institution are sufficient to enable a person to be employed	50%	34%	8%	6%	2%	100%
• Courses offered at this institution are sufficient to make a person self-employed	32%	42%	8%	6%	12%	100%
• Upon completion of my studies, I am sure I will be a better person	48%	48%	2%	2%	0%	100%
• Courses I am pursuing at this institution will open up doors for me in the global world	42%	42%	6%	8%	2%	100%
• Courses offered at this institution will give me a leg up (advantage) in the labor market	40%	42%	10%	4%	4%	100%
• Courses offered at this institution will make me a useful member of society	38%	54%	4%	0%	4%	100%
• I can solve a lot of problems in my society using the useful education I obtained at this institution	28%	66%	4%	2%	0%	100%
• The education that I have received from this institution has made me understand my society	40%	50%	6%	4%	0%	100%
• I can solve community problems through systematic collection of data	26%	64%	8%	2%	0%	100%
• The program I have pursued will make me a better researcher	26%	60%	14%	0%	0%	100%
• I am sure of providing community services that related to the program I am pursuing	34%	56%	4%	2%	4%	100%
• This program will make me have a better job	26%	52%	10%	10%	2%	100%
• This education will differentiate me from other individuals who never took the program	44%	46%	8%	2%	0%	100%
• Education offered in Tanzanian's institutions is of higher value than of any other country	6%	26%	18%	32%	18%	100%
• The education I received from this institution is likely to make me able to work anywhere in Tanzania effectively	36%	48%	12%	2%	2%	100%
• The program(s) pursued is taught in such a way that makes me a competent professional	30%	50%	12%	4%	4%	100%

The suitability of the program students pursued at institutions

Stakeholders were asked to express their opinions by indicating whether they agree or disagree to given statements. Options ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Responses for each statement are shown in Table 7.

Out of 50 respondents, 26 (52%) strongly agreed with the statement "I believe that the program I am pursuing will make me a competent professional," and 33 (66%) respondents agreed with the statement "I can solve a lot of problems in my society using the useful

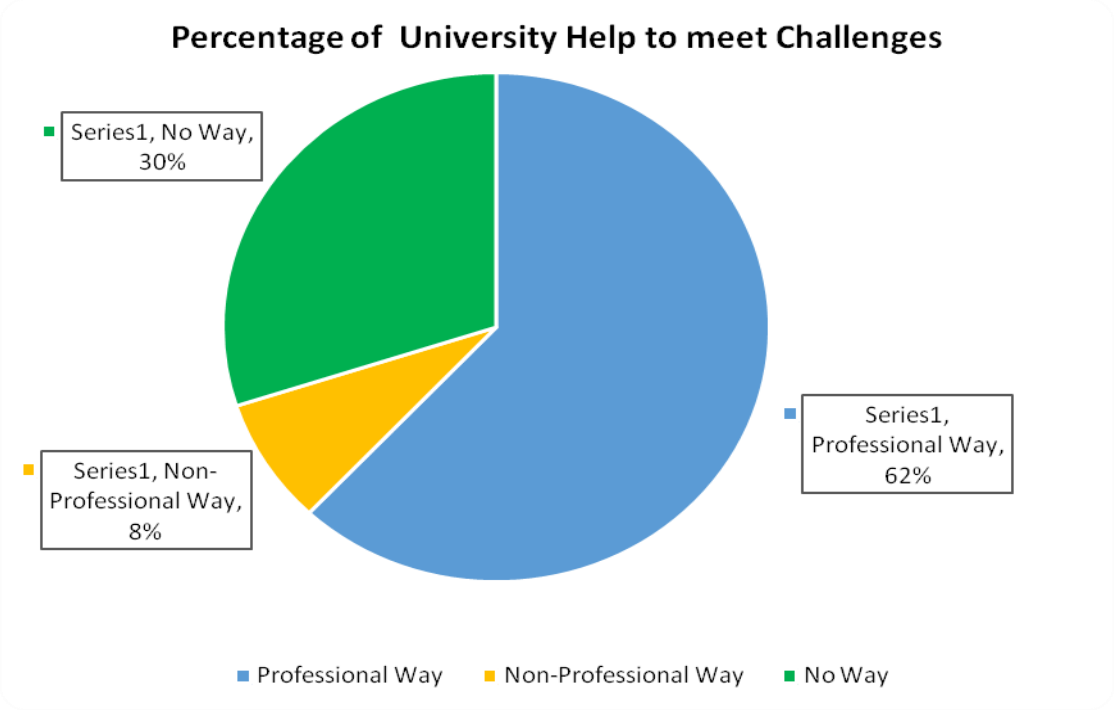

Figure 1: Graduates' responses to the question: "*In what ways could the university best help you to meet job-related challenges?*"

education I obtained at this institution." About one-third (16, or 32%) of respondents disagree with the statement "Education offered in Tanzanian's institutions is of higher value than of any other country," while 6 (12%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement "Courses offered at this institution are sufficient to make a person self-employed." See Table 7.

General perceptions about suitability of higher education in meeting essential needs

Respondents were asked to rate their transition from school to work and whether the university programs they pursued provided them with competencies to get hired in the same year of graduation. A total of 23 (46%) graduates indicated that they secured a job the same year they graduated. Regarding the type of job graduates found, 39 (78%) respondents found jobs that were directly related to the field of study they pursued at the university, while 27 (54%) graduates could not find jobs in the same year of their graduation. A small number of students (22%) accepted jobs that were available to them even though they were not related to the disciplines they pursued in the universities they attended in Tanzania.

A series of questions in the questionnaire asked students to rate the extent to which participants found their university education to be relevant or helped them to address or cope with job-related challenges. Questions probed students regarding (a) whether their university education was a catalyst to job challenges they encountered in the workplace; (b) whether education helped them to meet students' ambitions; and (c) whether university education was relevant in meeting the needs of society. Almost half of university graduates (48%) were of the opinion that university education was to a large extent helpful when coping with their job's challenges, while 4% of respondents said that their university education did not help them cope with their job challenges. Ten (20%) university graduates said that university education helped a little to cope with job challenges, and 9 (18%) graduates thought that university education helped them cope to a very large extent with the job's challenges.

In contrast, 62% of respondents confirmed that university education met ambitions they had as students before enrollment. However, some students (38%) were not as convinced. Overall, there was a sense that university education in Tanzania helps graduates to a large extent cope with their job-related challenges. See Figure 1.

Relevance of university education to the needs of society

The questionnaire utilized a Likert scale to obtain views on the extent to which participants agreed with statements on the relevance of university education. See Table 8. Opinions showed that 50% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement "The work I am doing is related to the disciplinary program I pursued." About 68% of respondents agreed with the statement "University education has exposed me to the labor market," while 38% of graduates disagreed with the statement "Lecturers had enough time to provide assistance to students with problems," and 26% of graduates strongly disagreed with the statement "Lecturers dealt with each student individually." See Table 8.

Table 8: Statements on relevance of university education to the needs of the society

Variables	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
University education has made me more competent on this job	32%	64%		2%	2%	100%
The work I am doing is related to the program I pursued	50%	24%	6%	14%	6%	100%
University education made me better adapted to the African problems	24%	44%	12%	14%	6%	100%
Lecturers had enough time to provide assistance to students with problems		36%	24%	38%	2%	100%
Lecturers dealt with each student individually	2%	10%	28%	34%	26%	100%
Teaching methods used enabled me to acquire all the skills I needed	12%	54%	12%	22%		100%
The number of students in my class allowed lecturers to use learner centered methods	12%	34%	12%	36%	6%	100%
I understand the situation of my society better than before joining university	16%	44%	14%	24%	2%	100%
I learned a lot of things concerning this job by observing my university lecturers	14%	56%	12%	16%	2%	100%
My lecturers were competent and equipped me with all the skills I needed	14%	54%	8%	24%		100%
I am earning a good money because of the university education I have	4%	36%	16%	28%	16%	100%
University education has allowed me to live a good life	10%	54%	8%	14%	14%	100%
University education has increased my opportunity for employment	14%	66%	8%	8%	4%	100%
University education has exposed me to the labor market	14%	68%	12%	6%		100%
University education has improved my effectiveness on the job	18%	66%	10%	4%	2%	100%
University education has made me very efficient in my job	22%	64%	6%	4%	4%	100%

Does university education quality enable students to meet Tanzanian societal needs?

There were 26 (52%) respondents who indicated that the quality of university education is considered *fair* for meeting the needs of Tanzanian society. See Table 9,10 and Figure 2. Only 2% of respondents indicated that the quality of university education is *very poor* in meeting the needs of society. Eighteen (36%) respondents agreed that the quality of the university education is *good* with respect to meeting the needs of society, but 3 (6%) respondents stated that the quality of university education is *poor* in meeting the needs of Tanzanian society, and 4% viewed the quality of the university

Table 9: Degree of university's contributions to society

Variables	Very Large extent	Large extent	Some extent	Not at all	Total
Understanding your job	34%	56%	8%	2%	100%
Understanding the needs of your society	34%	34%	32%		100%
Getting employment	30%	34%	32%	4%	100%
Solving societal problems	14%	40%	46%		100%
Conducting research	20%	48%	26%	6%	100%
Making publications	6%	44%	38%	12%	100%
Executing community services	8%	50%	36%	6%	100%
Getting a better paying job	8%	34%	44%	14%	100%
Improving living standards	8%	42%	44%	6%	100%
Improving perceptual income	12%	26%	52%	10%	100%
Improving your health	18%	42%	34%	6%	100%
Improving your wealth	10%	32%	44%	14%	100%
Improving the quality of education	24%	42%	32%	2%	100%
Availability of social services	6%	40%	46%	8%	100%
Improving industry sector	2%	30%	42%	26%	100%
Improving food production	4%	28%	38%	30%	100%
Creating awareness to the society	10%	58%	30%	2%	100%

Table 10: Extent to which university education has made graduates adaptive to different life situations

Variables	Very helpful	Helpful	Somehow helpful	Not helpful at all	Total
Unemployment	6%	44%	36%	14%	100%
Global competition	12%	44%	32%	12%	100%
Technological advancements	12%	40%	40%	8%	100%
Poverty	10%	48%	36%	6%	100%
Education reforms	4%	52%	36%	8%	100%
Global warming	4%	42%	44%	10%	100%
Mortality rates	12%	48%	36%	4%	100%
Pandemic diseases	14%	52%	30%	4%	100%
Epidemic diseases	14%	60%	22%	4%	100%
Corruption	8%	36	26%	30%	100%

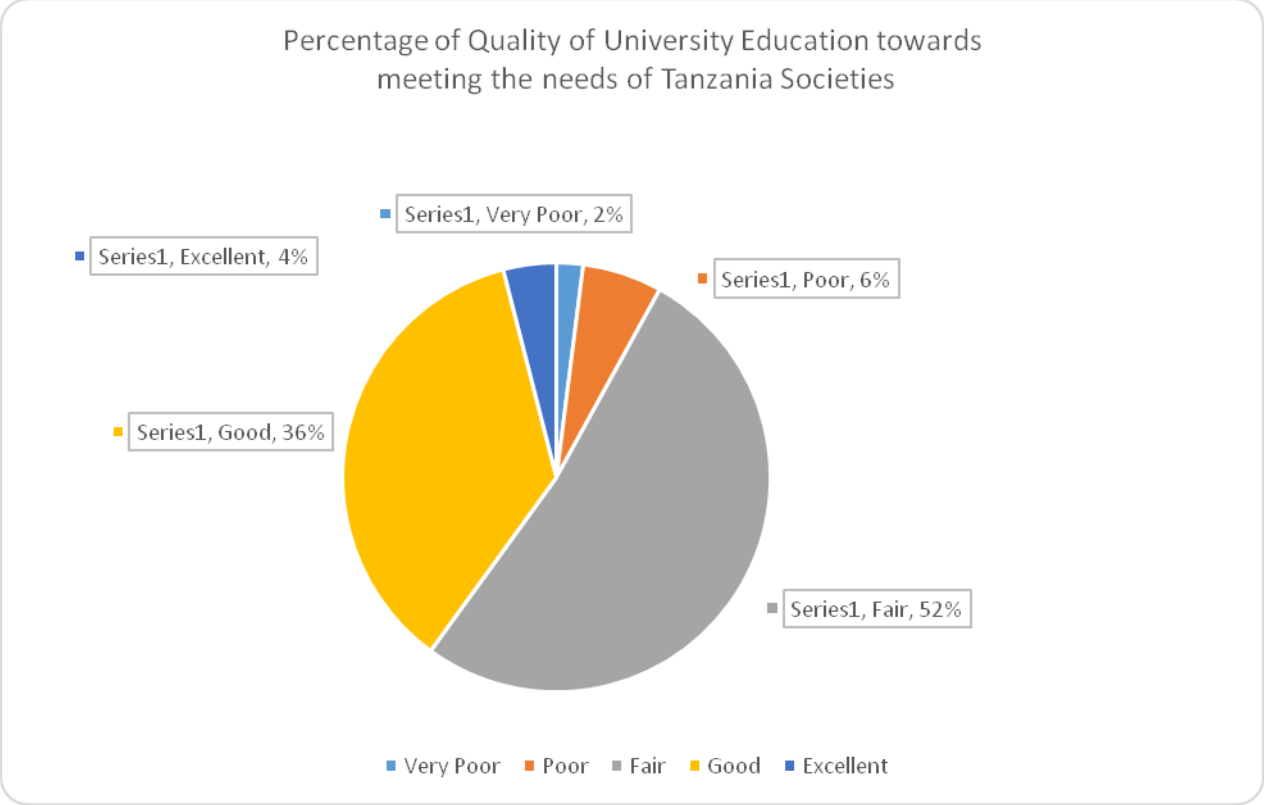

Figure 2: Distribution of responses to the question: *How do you generally rate the quality of university education with respect to meeting the needs of Tanzanian society?*

education as *excellent* for meeting the needs of Tanzanian society. In sum, the quality of Tanzania's university education is perceived as *fair* when it comes to meeting the needs of society.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study analyzed survey data on quality and relevance of higher education in Tanzania, raising the question: Why is quality and relevance so problematic in African higher education? Researchers critically examined in the current literature instances of ineptitude that undermined quality assurance. Equally, the study appraised missed opportunities for making higher education relevant within the African context. Possibilities for developing quality research, and the quest for outreach scholarship to find solutions for enduring problems preventing Africans from becoming healthier, wealthier, and smarter emerged as critical areas of concern. Evidence drawn from the literature and survey data were mixed and not definitive, suggesting that key features of quality and relevance of higher education in Tanzania are forfeited by complex factors that have their roots, in part, in commercialization of higher education, general funding, poor teaching, and rapid population growth.

In particular, almost half of the university graduates polled (48%) were of the opinion that university education was to some extent helpful when coping with their job's challenges, while only 4% of respondents said that their university education did not help them at all. Even though 62% of respondents suggested that university education met ambitions students had in mind before enrollment, some students (38%) were disappointed with instructors' teaching styles and inattentiveness to learning needs. Overall, university education in Tanzania helps graduates to cope with their job-related challenges, and the work they do relates to the disciplinary program they pursued taking into account the labor markets. In sum, stakeholders perceived the quality of Tanzania's university education as "fair" in meeting the needs of society.

These partial findings of the present study offer an opportunity to take stock of important areas of higher education—namely, examining quality and relevance of higher education in the post-Massification surge of higher education. The most significant finding of this

study was the realization that scholars know very little about the quality and relevance of higher education. In part, the reason for this impasse has to do with the lack of extensive and rigorous research in higher education and the availability of data that spell out quality and relevant education. The small sample of the present study barely scratches the surface of the problem, and thus the data were not robust enough to provide a definitive answer to the central question of the study. Availability of robust data on quality and relevance will reveal ways of improving higher education's teaching, research, and community-related scholarship.

In this discussion, attention to relevant policies and homegrown professionals and researchers (both academic and administrative) emerge as possible clues for improving the quality and relevance of higher education. This trajectory is critical for the new cadre of scholars who are joining the ranks in recent years. Expectations and hopes placed on the new generation of researchers, doctors, IT personnel, and professors are high, and these professions must deliver their expertise in order for African higher education to flourish.

The current literature shows there is no consensus among scholars on the definitions and measurements of quality and relevant higher education. Quality attributes of higher education were found to be illusive because there is little agreement on how to assess quality and relevance. The conception of quality education means different things to different disciplines. Equally, the literature revealed that quality education discourse is dominated by "quality assurance" perspectives (Kahsay, 2012), and input and output measures (Cheng and Tam, 1997). In sum, there is a gap in the understanding of quality and relevance of Africa's higher education, particularly in areas of teaching and the quest to meet the essential needs of students and society. Over the years, several models of higher education that dominated the higher education landscape in Africa were borrowed from management science and from countries in the Global North, and therefore tend to lean heavily on quality assurance perspectives that lack cultural adaptations to reflect the African context.

In large measure, such persistent borrowing of university models from overseas explains the current impasse of teaching, financial structures, accreditation, certification, and the structure of degree programs at local universities. Outsiders dominate research endeavors within countries and funding of research is not widespread among African researchers except through a few consultancies within the private sector. This further explains the persistent gap of aligning what professors teach in classrooms with the discoveries that emerge from empirical research or discoveries expected to improve the livelihoods of Africans. Quality and relevant higher education is key to stimulating advanced innovations in new varieties of crops, new materials, or sources of energy that would facilitate progress toward reducing poverty, achieving food security, and improving health so that Africans can live better, healthier, smarter, and wealthier lives.

As noted by the 2012 World Bank report, financial support for African universities is unstable and unsustainable. Without stable sources of financial support to uphold the African model of universities, the supply of higher education is unlikely to meet the social demands for higher education in most African universities. Concurrently, in 2008, the World Bank published *Accelerating Catch Up—Tertiary Education for Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa*, which spelled out the case for more knowledge-intensive growth in Africa and described the critical role of higher education in this endeavor. The Bank's report demonstrated that the key for success in a globalized world lies increasingly in how effectively a country can assimilate the available knowledge and build comparative advantages in areas with good growth prospects; and how it can use technology to address the most pressing environmental, social, and economic development challenges for Africa. The report underscored that higher-level institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa that are equipped to impart quality education and conduct relevant applied research can play a critical role in producing workers with the skills to assimilate technology and make effective decisions that help governments, industry, and society at large to diversify into a broader range of products, services, and innovations. In sum, the World Bank report aligns with the present study by painting a vision for the future of African higher education by drawing attention to the task of establishing the proper infrastructure and qualified personnel—an agenda that has yet to be fully accomplished.

Further, it is important to note that endogenous approaches to "Education for Sustainable Development" advocate for an educational process that is based on holistic perspectives, practically based, and therefore conceptualized to fit the local, national, and international essential needs of students (Ogunniyi, 2007). The goal ought to be to establish an appropriate balance between African cultures, knowledge, values, economic needs, social pressures, and demands of national, local, and global development strategies. UNESCO (2006) expressed the need for a more participatory approach to education that involves communities in decision-making based on the understanding of the principles of sustainable development. These strategies stress, in part, the incorporation of cultural heritage and values as the grounding for education, perpetuated through indigenous languages and transmission of indigenous ways of knowing and practice. These perspectives and

the unresolved issues of quality and relevance open up future possibilities for further research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank to all persons who assisted in the data collection and data entry procedures; and those other individuals for their advice and valuable suggestions to improve the quality of the manuscript.

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