

ADEQUATE FUNDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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For any institution to provide the desired quality higher education, adequate funding is a must. It is only when funds are adequately available that the institution, be it public or private, is able to facilitate the implementation of its core educational function. In the face of the increasing inability of the state and parents to adequately fund higher education, how then can an institution of higher learning realize adequate funding? This paper proposes other sources and means, other than the state and parents, can be used to realize adequate funding for higher education. The paper is organized in three parts. The first part is devoted to the desired quality of higher education. The second part focuses on how funding facilitates the achievement of this quality and the third part is about means and sources that institutions of higher learning can use to raise adequate funding.

Introduction

Adequate funding of higher education has been and continues to be a major challenge in Africa generally and in Uganda in particular (Bitamazire, 2005; Malinga, 2002; Getler & Glewwe, 1999; Glewwe & Jacoby, 1993). African states are finding it increasingly difficult to provide public educational institutions with subventions required to adequately finance the budgets to facilitate the realization of the desired quality of education (Muyimbwa, 2004; Saint, 1995; Woodhall, 1995). At the same time, due to abject poverty generally and the small household incomes in most of the African countries, the financial ability of most of the parents is also critically strained by the burgeoning costs incurred in supporting their children pursuing higher education (Hanushek & Harbison, 1997). As a result, many institutions of higher learning are finding it difficult to perform their core functions in a manner that enables them to achieve the desired quality of education (Ablo & Reinikka, 1999; Muyimbwa, 2004).

In Uganda, this has already been witnessed in a number of public and private universities and tertiary institutions such as Makerere University (Muyimbwa, 2004; Tibarimbasa, 1989), Kyambogo University (Okoth-Ogola, 1995), Ndejje

University, Nkumba University, Nkozi National Teachers College, to mention but a few. In particular, according to the Audit Report that appeared in *The Monitor* (May, 2005), the unit cost required to provide quality education at Makerere University is estimated at Uganda shillings 1.7 million but neither government nor most parents can afford to meet this cost. At Ndejje University, a similar unit cost is estimated at 1.5 million Uganda shillings but squeezing it out of parents and students' benefactors is harder than a camel going through the eye of the needle.

Given the increasing inability of governments to adequately fund public higher educational institutions and the heavy financial strain felt by parents in supporting their children pursuing higher education, any proposal to raise adequate funds based on these two sources will simply not yield the best results. In addition, because many institution's alumni are often the parents at the same time, looking to the alumni as source for realizing adequate institutional funding may not be sustainable. It may instead be doubling the financial strain already felt by parents.

Quality of Higher Education

Generally, quality is conceived of as having two dimensions: a qualitative and a quantitative dimension (Malick & Grisay, 2000). The qualitative dimension considers quality as a value judgment assigned to a product by its consumer.

Value judgments describe the extent to which a product meets its consumers' expectations. They therefore indicate the level of fulfillment of consumers' expectation or their contentment or satisfaction with the product. In higher education, consumers are the enrolled students and their expectations include gaining skills required to be competently productive and for career development and employability (Malick & Grisay, 2000). The product consists of the academic and non-academic services offered to students in the form of lecturing, library and laboratory services, lecture room learning climate, and recreational and other upkeep services (Jamil, 1992; Kajubi, 1992). When students are able to meet their expectations through such delivered services, then the services are said to be of desired educational quality, and vice versa.

The quantitative dimension of quality refers to the capacity of an institution to produce and deliver a product in accordance with criteria set either by the institution itself or by the technical body within its line Ministry. This type of quality reflects the technical capacity of an institution (Kayongo, 2006). For higher education, it is the National Council for Higher Education that sets the criteria used to determine institutional capacity required to deliver the desired quality of higher educational services. The criteria include academic and non-academic services. The academic capacity includes the available academic buildings such as lecture rooms, laboratories, libraries, and the teaching staff (professors, senior lecturers, junior lecturers and teaching assistants) (Kayongo, 2006). It also includes availability of scholastic materials and equipment such as textbooks and reference materials, equipment and facilities such as computers, laboratory equipment and chemicals that facilitate the delivery of academic services to students. The non-academic capacity includes recreational, sports and upkeep facilities, equipment and materials available to facilitate the delivery of non-academic services to students (Kayongo, 2006). In general, the technical capacity of a higher educational institution should be commensurate with the number of enrolled students. Otherwise, it will be overstretched, thereby falling short of providing students with the expected quality of education.

Funding and Quality Higher Education

The funding of higher education refers to the provision of resources needed to facilitate an institution of higher learning as it performs its core functions, and in the process deliver desired educational services (Muyimbwa, 2004; Kajubi, 1992; Jamil, 1992; Ablo & Reinikka, 1999). This means that without adequate funding, higher education institutions cannot effectively perform their functions and deliver the desired quality education. In particular, the size and quality of the teaching staff depends on an institution's staff development programme whose effectiveness is, according to Wamala (2000), largely dependent on the adequacy of funding. As an illustration, it has been established that Makerere University cannot fill its staff establishment largely because of inadequate funding.

A number of scholars have conducted studies and found out that funding is a very significant determinant of the extent to which universities and tertiary institutions realize their physical academic capacity in the form of construction and equipping of lecture theatres, libraries, laboratories, recreational grounds, and student upkeep facilities. Some of these scholars point out a number of sources of funding higher education, including a number of public and private sources such as government, private sponsorship and internally generated resources. Unfortunately, although these sources are used by most of the higher educational institutions in Africa generally and Uganda in particular, they have proved unviable as far as yielding adequate funding is concerned. Other alternatives are therefore needed.

Alternative Sources and Means of Funding Higher Education

(i) Research and consultancy

All institutions of higher learning are expected to be centres of research and consultancy. Regarding research, these institutions are expected to be innovative in the realm of creating, promoting and selling scientific, technological, and artistic knowledge and skills required in the socioeconomic development of society. Many universities have fully fledged research centres that create and publish knowledge, thereby generating income to fund their core functions. Unfortunately, in Uganda, most of the higher education institutions emphasize research merely as a training component. They consequently, fail to recognize and exploit the potential of research as a money generating source.

With regard to consultancy, institutions of higher learning are expected to be centres of knowledge and guidance that is critically needed and sought for by many people in the political, legal, cultural, social, economic, and a variety of other spheres of society and business. They are expected to provide valuable services in the area of technical consultancy, counseling and guidance, legislation, political direction, computer programming and engineering, statistical and econometric policy making, and many other technical and social aspects of life.

The tendency of private business organizations and government departments to use consultancy services of these institutions by contracting their skilled human resources on individual basis (as is mostly done at Makerere University) should be discouraged. Private business organizations and government departments should be encouraged to make their consultancy contracts directly with the institutions so that money earned is proportionately shared between the contracted individual(s) and the institution.

(ii) Social Responsibility

Social responsibility refers to the duty of private business organizations to set aside a part of their profits and give it back to the community. Institutions of higher learning should consider themselves as organizations playing an important role in nurturing and shaping the development of community. They can therefore be considered as community developers and use this as an opportunity to convince other private business organizations to consider them when fulfilling their social responsibility. This will help them generate more funds for providing the desired quality of education.

(iii) Forming partnerships with private business organizations

The essence of any partnership is to enable the partnering entities to achieve what they cannot achieve as individuals. Based on the principle of the whole is more than the sum of its parts, a partnership strengthens and helps partners to sum deliver better educational services than would have been delivered without a partnership.

This is because a partnership means pooling resources together to generate a funding capacity needed to provide the desired quality of educational services. Institutions of higher learning can form partnerships with business organizations on the basis of their strengths. These strengths include having training facilities, physical space and human resources (Staff and students) which business organizations can access at a fee so as to conduct staff training, and to establish branches, market and promote their businesses. Institutions of higher learning can also provide human resource skills that private business organizations need to effectively manage and operate their businesses.

(iv) Establishing

however, works in countries where there is a large formal employment sector and where it is therefore easy to track students even after graduation. In countries such as Uganda, such a system may not be effective and can be adopted at the institution's own risk.

(vii) Fundraising

This source is usually used to acquire funds at a point in time by organizing charity walks, auctioning, and short term fundraising drives. It is therefore not sustainable since it is applicable for a short time. It however has potential to generate funds, especially those needed to boost an institution's physical, capital or technical capacity.