THE POSITION OF RESEARCH IN UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
A CASE OF UCU MBALE CAMPUS

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Abstract

Uganda Christian University – Mbale Campus is one of the higher learning institutions in Uganda whose major purpose is to train learners on how to carryout research, developing research policies and also providing solutions to address societal problems. The university policy of optionalisation of research by students seems to undermine the above mentioned purpose thus the need for the study. The main objective of this study was to examine the general issues that face the research department and how they relate to the various stakeholders. The study employed two research designs namely descriptive and case study research design which provided a fair and intensive examination of research issues at

UCU – Mbale Campus. The findings e challenges ranging from research policies, staff recruitment,
human resource development, staff motivation, and infrastructure, attitude towards research by staff learners and the community **and lastly finance issues. Arising** researchers recommended for the development of a research
policy with emphasis on staff recruitment, staff development strategies, research grants, research and publications, motivation strategies such as promotions, infrastructural improvement, non- optionalisation of research by all students and creation of a university consultancy firm.

Keywords: *Research, Research policy, and optionalisation*

Background

The place of research within a contemporary University has never been more pervasive but in two different that research performance or at any rate, research prestige, which is not
necessarily the same, has become the dormant criterion of institutional and individual success. Global league tables are discriminated almost exclusively in terms of research ratings as one national hierarchies of Universities while individual careers are made and unmade by research reputations. Research looms larger in the mass higher education systems of the twenty first century, it seem systems of the past. But the second sense in which research has become pervasive is that it has infiltrated years of undergraduate courses which now expect students to be able to demonstrate "research" skills and ha its applications) has also become the principle channel through which

universities demonstrate their utility to their communities and to wider society; older cultural linkages have atrophied to be replaced by research technology – innovation chains. Teac longer simplify in terms of research training but within the wider arenas
of evaluation and disseminations (Nowotony et al 2001).

The main aim of this research (paper) was to investigate emperically and theoretically the position of research and a phenomenon in Uganda

Christian University with specific
Mbale Campus. The study highlights challenges and contradictions
arising from investigations into different facets of research at Uganda
Christian University – Mbale Campus. It explored what is potentially a
considerable field of study, presen work carried out and rises issues that underscore
research challenges at
this Campus.

Methods/Materials

The study employed two research designs namely descriptive and case study
research design which provided a fair and intensive examination of research
issues at UCU – Mbale Campus. The research instruments used sere
questionnaires for all respondents, oral interviews with lecturers and
students, focus group discussion for students in their respective strata.

Discussion of Results

The study came up with the following results as indicated in the
respective tables.

Table 1: Study and sample population category of respondents, sample size and sampling technique used by researchers:

Sample population	Category of respondents	Sample size	Sample technique
Senior management	Director	1	Purposive sampling
	University College Secretary	1	
	University Academic Registrar	1	
Middle management	H.O.D's	06	Purposive
Teaching staff	Lecturers	92	Simple random
Learners	Students across all departments	219	Stratified random sampling
Total		320	

Source: questionnaires, (2014)

The study applied purposive sampling for the three senior administrators of the University namely: The Director, University College Secretary and University Academic Registrar. They were purposively selected because of their privileged positions, virtue o
This technique was also applied to the six heads of department because of the same reasons mentioned above. Simple random sampling (SRS) using lottery method was also used to sample 92 lecturers for the study.
The sample population was also got u was based on the courses offered by various students and year of study.
This helped in increasing the precision of the study.

Table 2: Factors considered when recruiting staff:

Qualification/Experience	Frequency	Percentage
PhD	00	0.0
Masters	258	80.6
Publication	00	0.0
Lecturing experience	27	8,4
Research expertise	6	2.0
Professional expertise	11	3.4
Others	18	5.6
Total:	320	100

Source: Questionnaires (2014)

The table above shows the study regarding factors which are considered in staff recruitment.

Analysis revealed that the factors considered included majorly qualifications and experience. The the study found out that it was onl others in recruitment of teaching staff with about 81%. The other factors

as found out by the study was experience which constitutes 8.4%, lecturing professional expertise 3.4%, research expertise 2% and others 6%. This revealed that the position of research in the University and the value attached to it in the University programme in general is very wanting as reflected by the experti

Table 3: To establish the existence of a research policy

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	02	0.6
No	215	67.2
I don't know	103	32.2
Total:	320	100

Source: Questionnaires (2014)

Research policy is a very important tool in shaping and positioning research in any credible University. The researchers therefore went out to establish the existence of a research policy at UCU – Mbale Campus. Findings indicated that 0.6% of the respondents were aware of its existence. This response came from only senior administrators of the University. It also established that the majority of the respondents – 67.2% were not aware of the existence of research policy meaning that their research operations were up-hazard thus undermining its position among other programmes.

32.2% of the respondents expressed total ignorance about the policy and this greatly affects the implementation of research work to meet the required standards.

Table 4:   Qualifications for one to h

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
PhD	3	0.9
Masters	309	96.6
Bachelors	8	2.5
Others	00	00
Total:	320	100

Source: Questionnaires (2014)

The interview question asked the aca warrant one to handle research activities at the University. Findings
established that only 0.9% of the staff handle research activities at this University. Further investigations revealed that this was because the University had only 3 PhD holders, 2 of whom were holding administrative positions while 1 was un adjunct lecturer and therefore had very little time for research at this University. The study however noted that the majority of research lecturers and supervisors (96.6%) were Masters' holders which by implication puts the research position at a baseline stage compared to other Universities.

Findings from the study further revealed that 2.5% of staff who handled research were Bachelors degree holders who were also ongoing Masters' students. This state of affair defi of research at this University.

Table 5: Quality of research work produced:

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	11	3.5
Good	67	20.9
Fair	219	68.5
Below standard	23	7.1
Total:	320	100

Source: Questionnaires (2014)

The study focused on the quality of research work produced by both the leaders and their lecturers. The following parameters were used to bring out the quality of research produced, thus excellent, good, fair and below standard. Findings as reflected i 3.5% of the respondents were of the view that the quality of research work produced was excellent. This depicts the quality behind this kind of research work. It also showed the level of commitment to research work at institutional level as being low. The study further indicated that about 21% of the research work pro the position of research at UCU to indicating that the quality of research was simply fair (68.5%). This was

an indication that the position of research was far below average and therefore calls for immediate remedies to revamp the situation.

Table 6: Capacity building programme/support offered by UCU

Programmes	Frequency	Percentage
Research scholarships	-	0.0
Workshops		
Seminars	233	73.0
Paper presentation	71	22.0
Sabbatical leave	9	3.0
Others		
	7	2.0
	-	0.0
Total	320	100

Source: Researcher (2014)

To establish the position of research in Uganda Christian University Mbale Campus, the study also analysed the extent to which various programmes which are meant to promote research are implemented. Findings established that the University had no research scholarship awards for both its students and lect of research at this University at a baseline a phenomenon which is unacceptable of any modern University. However, it was noted that much of the University effort was zeroed on workshops (73%) and seminars (22%). Through interviewers these seminars and workshops were noted to be facilitated by peers having s training and experiences; and theref the improvement of the position of research at this Institution. The study

further established that paper presentation (3%) was a new phenomenon which had just started in the University and therefore had not yet created any significant impact on the positi were also insignificant to the. impro

Table 7: Other factors which hinder/hamper research activities at UCU

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Part time by lecturers	127	40
Ill stocked library	96	30
Internet challenges	32	10
Lack of role model	19	6
Little interaction between lecturers/ students	16	5
Problem identification		skills
	30	9
Total:	320	100

Source: Researcher (2014)

The table above shows the findings envisaged to hinder research in one way of the other at UCU Mbale Campus. The responses above indicated that 40% of the lecturers are part time lecturers or involved in part timing which impacts negatively on research work. The study also established that 30% respondents were of the view that the library was not well stocked to facilitate research work.

Findings also established that 10% of the respondents were of the view that internet challenges also hampered such activities at this Campus in terms of limited computer faciliti the respondents indicated there is other lack of role models in research work which would propel research activities to higher levels. 5% of the respondents expressed the concern that research at UCU Campus is affected by limited interaction opportunities between lecturers and students given that learning is not only in class but also out of class. Lastly, 9% of the respondents were of the view that lack of problem identification skills is a major h focused and solution oriented.

Summary of Findings

The study established that Uganda Christian university-Mbale campus lacked capacity building programs for its staff and as a result most of its academic staff lacks scientific train renders most of the research finding

The study also established that th between the university research department and its lecturers, university

community, government department, NGO's, other universities and research institutions. This disables the university from identifying the basic contempory areas for research.

The university also lacks a university research policy and this results into lack of guidance and motivation by bo of research.

The study further established that the university library lacked copies of old and new government acts, rules, reports and other government publications. This greatly affects the quality and validity of the research findings made by this university as a

The library was also found wanting i as it either had very old text books. It was found to be having management problems amongst its library staff i.e. scholars take a lot of time tracing out books, journals, reports etc.

Finding further discovered that there was no clear staff equipment policy regarding research staff at UCU and yet this key to having a competent research oriented department.

The study further established that lecturers had little time for research since most of them have a teaching load of over sixteen hours, besides handling large classes. It was also established that most lecturers had part time lecturing jobs at the university. This greatly impacts negatively on the status of research at UCU-Mbale campus.

Lastly the study established that promotion of staff at the University was not based on the contribution of research and paper presentations made by its staff, this definitely underm at this campus by staff thus putting the positions of research at a baseline.

Recommendations:

The aim of the study was to bring together work that can provide valuable insights into the complex circumstances and vexing questions impacting on the position of academic research and researchers with a hope that it might come up with important recomm inquiry at UCU Mbale Campus. To revamp the above research trend, the researchers came up with the following recommendations:

- Before undertaking research projects, researchers should be well equipped with all the methodological aspects. The University should provide short duration intensive courses to meet this requirement.

- The University should develop a mechanism of interacting with various stakeholders who are consumers of research such as NGOs, Government, Innovators, etc, so as to come up with relevant areas of research. The research carried out by the University could also be provided to the practitioners to apply.

- The University should also develop research policy to guide the discipline and its activities.

- University grants should be provided to staff towards carrying out research.

- The University should also promote its staff basing on the number of research projects, write-ups and publications. This will encourage research work and people will fee their work is valued.

- UCU Mbale Campus should also make efforts for regular and speedy supply of all government and NGO publications to reach its library.

- There is need to improve on University Library Management staff in terms of training and number.

- University needs to involve research experts such as professors, Doctors and publishers to help in running University workshops and seminars.

- When recruiting staff, the Human Resource Manager should focus on areas of specialty, interests, previous teaching experience, vis-à-vis research and publication experience.

- The university should develop a staff retention policy which promotes retention of its research expatriates.
- The University should also organize seminars and plan for University academic journal.

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