The Minutiae in evaluating and recompensing academics' activities in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Uganda

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Abstract

This article confronts the most heated debate regarding the assessment and evaluation of academics in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Uganda, by arguing that, indisputably, 'Performance Evaluation' serves a dual purpose that entails; 1) institutional performance, and 2) career growth of staff. The author argues that whereas the intent of performance evaluation is to unravel academics' contributions as they pursue their mandate of teaching, research and community service to facilitate objective evaluation, numerous academic contributions have remained uncaptured, leaving many academics in total anguish and despair. In order to interrogate the challenge at hand, two theories; The Motivational theory of Life Span Development by Heckhausen (1995) and The Social Exchange Theory by Gouldner (1960) were adopted. The author used an integrative synthesis together with systematic reviews to achieve two study objectives namely; analysis of reasons for omitting some activities in the assessment and evaluation of academics in HEIs and, assessment of the implications of omitting such activities in the evaluation of academic staff in HEIs. It was established that institutions lacked effective, valid and comprehensive evaluation tools to capture critical facets of academics' activities, which could potentially diminish academics' enthusiasm and emotional engagement, as well as institutional productivity, visibility and quality. The paper recommends that in measuring effective teaching, assessors should focus on multiple pieces of evidence directly linked to suitability of materials and cases, preparedness, depth and level of engagement in class as well as learning activities to achieve the learning outcomes. Further research achievement should not be limited to paper publication but rather, to all research-related activities including supervision, completion rates of research students and research projects completed.

Key Words: **Higher Education Mandate, Performance Evaluation, Psychological Contract, Integrative Synthesis, Learning outcomes**

Introduction

Higher Education Institutions use a number of measures in the evaluation of academics' performance in research, teaching and service to community. Chen and Hoshower (2003) & Miller (2009) added two more and made them five consistent measures as the basis for such judgments. They include; research and publications; student ratings; classroom observation; services provided to the community; and leadership and administration. The article explores challenges in the performance evaluation of academics' activities in the fulfillment of their core functions of teaching, research and community service. The author argues that omissions in the evaluation of their contributions are likely to affect graduate competences, academics' enthusiasm and at worst, their retention. While teaching is the main reason academics are hired, research is often given more weight in the evaluation for promotional purposes (Barifaijo, Namara, Bongomin, Bigabwenkya and Andama, 2017). This imbalance in the assessment

of the core functions was also observed by Jenkins, Breen, Lindsay and Brew (2012) who explained how such omission's had the potential to diminish the rigor of teaching, as well as academics' enthusiasm. In fact, Lourtie (2010) such omissions may destroy institutional image and repute. Given the academics' dominant preoccupation of teaching activities, more focus should be placed on recognizing and rewarding excellent performers in teaching using comprehensive evaluation systems (Arreola, 2000).

It is acknowledged that performance evaluation has an impact on the performance of the institution and on individual staff as they progress in their careers. In this regard therefore, the measures and tools for evaluating academics' activities should be skillfully thought through so as not to jeopardize their career opportunities. Basing on this argument, Mezrich and Nagy (2007) found that most tools were either incomplete or ambiguous. They argue that due to the multiple roles these academics perform, it is not surprising that majority suffer from job burnout, which has often led to frustration and despair. In the same vein, Barifaijo et al (2016) found that apart from the mandatory research requirement, academics were constantly faced with pressure for workload (teaching load), which has penetrated the world of academia. Amidst unrealistic demand for teaching load therefore, majority have continued to fall short of basic requirements for career progression as more than 80% of teaching staff had stagnated at the level of 'lecturer' which the American HE system calls '*the junior academic*' (Mezrich and Nagy, 2007). This means that only 20% of academics in Uganda have been able to climb the academic ladder. In fact, Mezrich and Nagy (2007), found that 18% of the 20% who have crossed the line retire immediately after this achievement, meaning that majority of academics spend close to three quarters of their working life striving to cross the academic line, only to retire shortly after. In a similar finding, Kwak (2006), found that evaluations for academic promotions in India had generated intense pressure and retention challenges especially since contract renewal or even confirmation in service were based on the ability to meet the minimum teaching load, yet career growth was hinged on journal publications which is an activity of research.

Sadly, Archibong et al (2017) lament about the way academics get 'harassed' year-in-year-out with performance appraisals which do not seem to yield any results. In fact French (2012) and O'Connor and Carvalho (2014) also question the usefulness of the routine assessment exercise yet evaluations for promotion focus mainly on journal articles. Hattie and Marsh (2016) conclude that the quality of graduates had declined because of the skewed evaluations that favored research which was beneficial for institutional profiling at the expense of teaching which targets student's achievements. Consequently, considering the dynamics in assessment of academics' activities, Gautier (2015) and Rousseau (2004) advise institutions to rely more on ethical consciousness to make decisions concerning staff.

Problem statement and objectives

The mandate of higher education institutions is teaching, research and community service and it is where institutions derive measures for evaluating staff for promotions, further training, transfers or even demotion (Bell & Kozlowski, 2008). Evaluation of each of the above mandate poses peculiar challenges given the different parameters, complexity, tenacity and sometimes

different evaluators. Notably, most HEIs have used a journal article as a performance measure of research and "in-class' delivery as determined by students' evaluation for the teaching function. Yet, delivery or instructional performance involves a multitude of activities – before, during and after class, which comprise planning, preparation, actual delivery and assessment. On the other hand, measures of community service remain utterly mysterious since they are neither visible in the long term of career growth or applicable in the short term workload compensation (Barifaijo et al 2016). Moreover, while computing workload allowance, the minutiae activities that academics spend so much time on, such as preparation of materials for teaching, supervising students, assessing students' work, developing academic programs, mentoring and counseling students, writing partnership proposals and building institutional image - through the provision of community service such as external examination, attending professional meetings etc. are never taken seriously into consideration. After going through so much hassle to provide the best and keep institutions visible, only a journal article and face time or class-time are ranked the highest. Notably, teaching has been for long been known as the reason HEIs exist, and the basis for which society judges their performance, yet, research has been used as the major determination for career growth for academics. Consequently, the omission of critical measures for teaching in the evaluation of academics has affected their enthusiasm, emotional engagement and institutional performance, productivity and quality of graduates since what is never measured and rewarded is never repeated (Lourtie, 2010).

To resolve the issues at hand, two objectives were set:

i. To establish academics' activities that are omitted in the evaluation of their performance; and,
ii. To assess the implication of omitting such activities for higher education institutions.

Methodology

To address two objectives, the author employed an integrative synthesis given its ability to summarize the existing research literature and observe situations. It is also most suitable for investigating patterns across primary and secondary research studies and also critical as it compensates for single-study weaknesses (Creswell, 2013). This approach was supplemented by review summaries which is very useful in the analysis of documents. Ball, 1994; Bryman, 2004 and Kothari, 2006S argue that review summaries ensure internal and external validity of the various research findings. Hence, both integrative synthesis and review summaries were employed given their power to enable the researcher fully engage the texts and make critical judgement regarding the question at hand. Data collection included analyses of documents such as; performance evaluation tool, student's evaluation tool, statutory instruments, university/institutional policies, published scientific articles on the topic, students' evaluation reports and committee reports. Interview guides and prompt questions were used to solicit information from key informants. Data were analyzed by use of thematic, content and narrative techniques which is highly recommended by Creswell (2013).

Theoretical exploration and Literature Review

In order to address the questions at hand, two theories were adopted; the theory of motivation of life-span development by Heckhausen (1995); and the social exchange theory (SET) by Gouldner (1960). The theory of motivation of life-span development was adopted to explain the role of career planning, development and fulfillment. The theory guides organizations on the importance of employees' various career prospects and how these employees progressively develop higher level needs that correspond to specific stages of their development. Hence, the theory assumes that individuals follow developmental paths that are coherent in terms of identifying and effectively pursuing long-term goals, and do persist to the end (Heckhausen et al, 2001). Consequently, the theory proposes that, employees often select, pursue, and adapt goals that match their life desires to enable them stay on course, and failure to achieve their goals will lead employees to replace them with more appropriate and gratifying goals that may not be significant to the organization. This assumption explains how academics are active agents and ready to pursue the most desired goals that are developmental in nature and will potentially lead them to self-actualization. Particularly, academics set targets and milestones for every stage and will stay on course so long as such goals are attainable, or else their aspirations and enthusiasm may irreversibly diminish (Heckhausen et al, 2008).

The Social Exchange theory was adopted to explain implications of goal disengagement, which the theory of the motivation of life-span development did not clearly cover. The social exchange theory proposes that individuals make decisions based on outcomes such as rewards, positive outcomes and long-term benefits and will prefer the exchange that results in the most professional growth such as upward mobility and independence to research and publish (Rousseau, 2016). Conversely, employees will choose low cost, socially approved alternatives with minimal consequences which means that every social exchange decision may be complex and require the person to evaluate different costs and rewards. Hence, the social exchange theory is a direct theoretical explanation of the psychological contract (Gouldner, 1960 and Blau, 1964) hence, the social exchange theory advances three aspects that seem to be of particular relevance to conceptualizing psychological contracts, namely social exchange vs. economic exchange, reciprocity and inequalities (Robinson, 2016). Ultimately, both theories can explain the causes of the omission of academics' activities in evaluation, recompensing of academic activities as well as the implications of such omissions.

Nearly two decades ago, the process of academic evaluation experienced few tremors that characterized contemporary evaluation practices (Miller and Seldin, 2009) but as the few academics to be chosen for promotion become fewer and faculty mobility decreases, the decision to promote has had an enormous impact on one's career that leads to commitment to work (Chen & Hoshower, 2003). By implication therefore, academics' activities are too complex, too diverse, too dynamic and with unending minutiae that lender any credible scholar to objectively evaluate. Hence, since HEI leaders are not in position to evaluate academics' work justly because they may not know how to, they should devise a comprehensive performance evaluation tool to determine performance standards (Achtziger and Gollwitzer, 2008). Revell and Wainwright (2009) found that although some institutions have initiated performance standards, they have failed to incorporate a number of critical measures to

exhaustively evaluate academic activities to their satisfaction. Consequently, because academics' anguish in terms of career growth has reached limits, majority have maintained the physical presence in workplaces but emotionally and psychologically disengaged (Rajani, 2011). Disappointingly however, their complaints with respect to the assessment of their worth have remained unattended to, largely due to ignorance on the part of the evaluators, because those who pass judgement seldom witness the performance of these academics.

In fact, Clarke (2012) notes that whereas research had clear measures that guide academics' performance evaluations, measures for teaching and service to community have remained ambiguous. Yet, according to Rajani (2011), teaching is the sole reason why HEIs do exist, hence, what makes teaching complete should be very clear, well documented and with clear evaluation measures. Rajani's (2011) argument supports Clarke's (2012:98) definition thus, "*teaching is a social process that involves a range of activities with interaction between the teacher and the learner, whose end result should lead to improved students' achievement, with their outcomes contributing to learners' future success"*. Yet the minutiae that merit attention for quality purposes do not seem to get measures, hence never get evaluated, which affects academics' upward mobility. This concern was also shared by Brew (2006), Chen and Hoshower (2003) and Clarke (2012), regarding the importance of a comprehensive evaluation tool, that measures all the attributes of teaching, research and community work. In fact, in support of this argument, Biggs and Tang (2007), explain how teaching goes beyond classroom time, yet, what is often evaluated is just a small fraction of what the teacher does in making teaching successful. Oddly, although institutions demand for effectiveness in teaching, the evaluators themselves may fail to define it, since they cannot provide measures for it. Instead, institutions use students' evaluations and hours an academic spends in class teaching to evaluate the teaching. What remains puzzling however, is that staff are punished for not stepping in class or not able to meet the requirement for teaching load, yet those who teach poorly are rewarded to going beyond the required load (Barifaijo and Namubiru, 2017).

Scholars found that measuring teaching was not an easy task (Biggs and Tang, 2007; Brew, 2006; Chen and Hoshower, 2003). It is not easy to measure top-rate teaching because, other than students' evaluations, there is no better way to judge top-rate teaching. In this regard therefore, Cartwright et al (2009) conclude that although assessing great teaching might be a 'titanic' task, explicit students' performance could be the starting point for evaluation of their understanding. Hence, considering the complexity in measuring teaching activities, Cullinane et al (2006) proposed psychological contracts, as the only remedy in a scenario where the technocrats are expected to perform their roles in the best way possible and the executives fulfill theirs of recompensing the technocrats as honestly, promptly, and equitably as possible. Debates on psychological contracts have prompted numerous studies, especially on the part of HE Leaders, who often expect a lot from their followers, but often fail to reciprocate (Archibong, 2017; Miller and Seldin, 2005; Rajani, 2011). Since the psychological contract develops and evolves constantly based on communication, or lack thereof, it is feared that the lack of reciprocation between parties in areas such as transparent performance evaluations, merit promotions, salary increments and other forms of recognition, might jeopardize the status quo of HEIs (Robbins and Judge, 2008). Nonetheless, Spector (2008) espoused how managing expectations was a complex function that sometimes gave employees

the wrong perception of action that did not often materialize, and might lead to both parties managing wrong expectations, which situation is very difficult and could lead to adverse personal circumstances, thereby affecting productivity. Yet, perceived breaches of contracts have severely damaged relationships, leading to disengagement, reduced productivity and workplace defiance (Chapman, 2016).

Findings and discussion

The mandate of academics has been found to be extremely exacting, and necessitating comprehensive measures of performance evaluation of all activities in the essential tasks of teaching, research and community service (Biggs & Tang, 2007). These tasks have been confirmed to be critical because they lead to quality, visibility and excellence of an educational institution. Yet, Clarke (2012) found that performance evaluation tools have often missed critical measures that boost greater performance, quality, productivity and emotional engagement. Although academic evaluation has existed since the Bologna process, and was intended to strengthen quality and guide management's decisions, its emphasis has become more prominent with the more pressing need of value for money, career prospects and merit increase (Griffiths, 2004). These demands have made the evaluation of such functions change academics' work behaviour and overall expectations (Griffiths, 2004).

Omitted academics' activities

The first objective of this paper was to investigate the kinds of academic's activities often omitted. Research by Brew (2006), Hattie and Marsh (1996) and Zamorski (2002) found that both research and teaching had gaps. Those in research were not as significant as teaching given that most activities behind successful teaching would only be witnessed by the individual instructor. The two major evaluation measures of teaching were: 1) In-class and students' evaluations, although some institutions have used other assessments such as peer evaluation; and 2) self-evaluations which also have their peculiar challenges. Other than those measures mentioned above, there were numerous and critical activities that were omitted during performance evaluations. These included: planning, organization, researching material for teaching, curriculum development, mentoring students, writing students' reference letters, setting continuous assessment exercises and examinations; and assessing students' learning. All these tasks were found to enhance competences and standards among students yet they are never considered in the evaluation of academics (French, 2012 & Baxamusa, 2016). Their argument was supported by Beckers et al (2008) who also critique 'academic qualifications' as a promotional criterion, which they find redundant because one gets appointed to specific positions on the basis of one's academic qualifications. Nonetheless, academic qualification was found to be key, especially in gaining upward mobility, because it takes years of sacrifice, mental distress and physical stress to earn. Correspondingly, the following sub-sections highlight academics' activities that are omitted in performance evaluations and provides all the activities performed by academics in the teaching function but which remain uncaptured.

Planning and Organization

It is indisputable that teaching is a critical role in HEIs, and unlike other functions you need sufficient amount of time to prepare the content, the best methods of delivery, reviewing up to date information to fascinate students, which effort does not attract any recognition of any sort (Barifaijo, et al, 2015). Scholars such as Svinicki and McKeachie (2011), SigalBarsade (2015) and Shin and Cummings (2010) have found that teaching is indeed difficult and developing assessment measures is even more complex. In fact they affirm that great and successful teaching takes time, passion, high-quality materials and tailored feedback designed to help build students' competences and increase their self-efficacy (Ramsden, 2001). French (2012) found that teaching required not only thinking but critical thinking. Biggs and Tang (2007) further underscore effective preparation for effective teaching, because it enables the facilitator sufficient time to research valuable resources, without sticking to the tried and tested format, week in, week out. Institutions have long taken pride in the high caliber of teaching offered by their faculties, a fact borne out by institutions' almost unanimous citation of classroom teaching as the most important factor in evaluating overall faculty performance. However, in his book *Scholars in the Market Place*, Mamdani (2007) found that higher education institutions no longer teach for deeper understanding but rather for students to pass, which passing does not leave 'hallmarks' for them to reminisce. Mamdani (2007) decried the way lecturers handled the once glorified task of university teaching which he equated to 'education for those who can pay and return home'. Barifaijo and Namubiru (2017) too found that most instructors in HEIs lacked the honesty to decline teaching subjects they did not know well. They found that the majority went to class without sufficient preparation yet lack of preparation and organization affected what students learned and how they learned it. More so, the current measure of teaching omits preparation and organization, an oversight Boyer (1990) found detrimental to institutional quality and image. In this regard, Jenkins et al (2002) found that most instructors held the titles but lacked mastery in their fields and could only enable students cram and memorize information, but not provide them with deeper understanding. This was attributed to lack of adequate preparation, unclear learning outcomes, negative attitude and impatience with the learners.

Nonetheless O'Connor and Carvalho (2014) question how lecture organization and preparation can be actually measured and evaluated. Relatedly, Clarke (2012) recommends three evaluation measures for preparation and organization thus: 1) appropriateness of the level and content of the course; 2) learning outcomes with specific course activities; and, 3) whether the outcomes stimulate intellectual growth and enjoyment of learning. He explains that without adequate preparation, teaching remains shallow. Barifaijo and Namubiru (2017) too found no logical sequencing, which was attributed to lack of mastery of curriculum design. In fact, Bligh (2000) found that lack of adequate preparation affected great teaching. Essentially, Cartwright, et al (2009) found a very high correlation between the ability to develop a teaching curriculum and presenting an exhilarating lecture; yet, even this endeavour is never considered in the performance evaluation for academic promotion.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum development was found to be one of the jobs described for academics in their offer letters, yet some had never taught. Biggs and Tang (2007) and Revell and Wainwright (2009) found this requirement strange considering that the activity was even more complex than teaching itself, but no reward was attached to such a hectic exercise. Wiles (2009) found that despite its enigmatic nature, curriculum development does not attract any attention for recognition. Hence, inability to recognize curriculum development effort was not only a problem in Ugandan HEIs, but also in Asian and European HEIs (Vardi, 2009). What was more disheartening was that there was neither penalty for those who never developed them, nor a reward for such an engaging activity. In their research Cartwright et al. (2009) found so much frustration among academics who felt they deserved recognition for their continued pursuit in curriculum development endeavors. In fact, Wiles (2009) found that of all teaching activities, curriculum development was indeed a gigantic task, with numerous demands, from internal and external stakeholders. The author found developing an academic programmes very demanding and engaging as it involved numerous stages, each of which presents new challenges and disagreements among multiple stakeholders. The task was found demanding since a **newly developed curriculum becomes obsolete quickly, and gives rise to numerous needs that necessitate revision of the existing curriculum to meet the day-to-day challenges of the society (**Lindsay et al, 2002**).**

Assessment and evaluation of students' learning

Assessment has long been recognized as maintaining a central position in students' learning (Craddock and Mathias, 2009), and the mode of assessment can also have a powerful influence on their learning behavior (Biggs and Tang, 2007). Consequently, assessing the performance of students is one of the most important activities of instructors (Trotter, 2006) and perhaps the most overlooked factor in the evaluation of academics. This finding is perplexing, especially when the ultimate goal of teaching is to assess how well they are accomplishing this goal, and contemplating possible answers to several questions helpful in their teaching. Assessment was found to be very critical because the nature of assessment is often informed by the type of examination which in turn has a bearing on the quality of graduates (Biggs and Tang, 2007). In fact, Svinicki and McKeachie (2011) found that effective teaching required regular assessment and feedback, which they said was critical to helping students reflect on the potentials; and of course, the lack of it impeded students' learning. Apparently, academics were found to fall short in offering such peculiar competences, which according to Mezrich and Nagy (2007) affected students' overall performance. Cartwright et al, 2009) found that different circumstances required different assessment strategies, for different kinds of learning processes, catering for differences in students' learning preferences and styles, as well as enhancing learners' psychological approaches to learning (Connolly, 2004). Like a tip of an iceberg, assessors remain silent on this activity when evaluating academics' activities.

Although assessments should reveal how well students have learned, what instructors want them to learn, these attributes must be measured and assessed in tandem with the learning objectives, as well as instructional strategies. In fact, studies by Miller et al (2009) and

Norton (2007) have shown that assessment was one of the most important activities of higher education instructors. This finding was supported by Cartwright et al, 2009) who affirmed the three stages of the assessment outcomes as: (1) defining the most important goals for students to achieve as a result of participating in an academic experience; (2) evaluating how well students are actually achieving those goals; and (3) using the results to improve the academic experience. Consequently, the main purpose of students' assessment is to provide feedback for academic progress (Clarke, 2012). Considering that assessment provides information for decision making at various levels, it is surprising that HEIs have not come up with measures to tap the practice so that it can be repeated.

Student counselling, guidance and mentorship

Academics spend reasonable time counseling undergraduate and graduate students yet the assessors may not even know that such an activity exists in HEIs. In this regard, Härmä (2006) found that academics were involved in counseling and guiding over ten students per week which is an indication that academia is indeed a whole series of 'bait and switch'. Ambrose et al (2010) found that such engagement was extremely critical for students' development and retention, as well as visibility, because they increased retention as well as timely graduation (Altbach, 2003). Potentially, students had various challenges relating to health, academic, social, economic aspects, which, if not well addressed could derail their progression. Similarly, Barifaijo et al (2017) found that some individual academics enabled many more students to graduate than others because of counseling. Bell and Kozlowski (2008) found that faculty members spent 17 per cent of their work week on counseling and mentoring students, which resulted in increased graduation rates. Beckers et al (2008) found this had improved web rankings due to high graduation rates and job placement. However, despite such effort, institutions never made any attempt to evaluate academics on such activities. Moreover, students' mentoring was found to be an attractive activity for in-coming and current students, as well as the alumni, and O'Brian (2014) considered it a smart move on the part of the academics.

Writing students' references

On a daily basis academics are tasked with writing reference letters for their former and current students for various reasons including career advancement, funding and employment (Maslach et al, 2001). Revell and Wainwright (2009) found that the challenge was the struggle to reach a balance between an accurate portrayal of a candidate's academic, extra-curricular and personal profile and a convincing impression of a student who would flourish in a work or academic environment. Whereas all teachers wanted to see their students flourish, Bill (2016) found challenges of lack of sufficient qualities that matched the person when it got to performance which required a lot of critical thinking on the part of the individual academic referee. French (2012) found that although each letter of reference was specific to the individual applicant, the referee (teacher) was required to address certain key factors to facilitate a favorable decision by those requiring them. This finding was supported by Maslach et al (2001) who shared their challenges of writing about the academic promise of the student, based on their personal knowledge of that student's performance, where they were required to give specific examples.

Serving on Institutional Committees

Every academic, in one way or another, gets involved in serving on institutional committees and it becomes even worse if an individual academic doubles as a college principal, dean or head of department. Ramsden (2001) found that taking part in institutional committees expands the academic's network and sharpens critical skills, since each member contributes to the discussion. It also opens doors to opportunities to pursue administrative jobs and apply for awards. Nonetheless, experts agree that the key is to seek opportunities that can add value to one's institution and align with one's interests and career aspirations; otherwise, the dizzying committees may bog down the academic's other activities. Committees, task forces and meetings can be a crucial part of our work. Sadly, renewals and promotion criteria often shirk this activity (Revell & Wainwright, 2009). Turner et al (2008) have found that the potential costs for evading recognition of such crucial activity could be disastrous, with a withdrawal of academics' involvement and the consolidation of decision making at the upper levels yet academics' active involvement is vital to ensure that meetings are productive and respectful of academic time. Vardi (2009) found that academics lamented waste of their time in meetings and failure of the management to recognize their contribution during the meetings, as well as their valuable time. Bigs (2008) shared how participating on a curriculum development committee taught him about the course approval process which helped him begin developing curricula for his department. He recommends that faculty should incorporate committee assignments into their career advancement plans and in return be recompensed to encourage academics to take on such responsibilities. Zeigler-Hill and Showers (2007) assert that participating in committee work makes one a better member of the university community and improves the community itself as well.

Media engagement

Academics have been encouraged to make an effort to publish for general audiences, because they are more informed, more knowledgeable and more researched (Dahlgren, 2009) yet most academics feel that media engagement is complex and challenging and are not comfortable writing or even talking to media. Academics often engage in different media to transmit ideological debates and to shape the thinking of their audiences in areas of their professional expertise. Usage of media can sometimes be delicate because it can send a wrong message to an audience that is not used to critique. On the other hand, an idea communicated eloquently and evidently will not only make the academic shine, but will surely enhance the image of the institution that she/he works for. The goal of media relations is to maximize positive coverage in the mass media to the target audience (Dahlgren, 2009; Biagi, 2004). More often, communication between the media and the organization can be initiated by either side. However, dealing with the media presents unique challenges because it cannot be controlled and media actors have ultimate decision whether stories pitched to them are of interest to their audiences. Institutions often compile what is known as a media list, or a list of possible media outlets that may be interested in an organization's information. The media can consist of thousands of magazine publications, newspapers, TV and radio stations. Therefore, when a "newsworthy" event occurs in an institution, a media

list can assist in determining which media outlet may be the most interested in a particular story. Working with the media on behalf of an institution allows for awareness to be raised as well as the ability to create an impact with a chosen audience. It allows access to both large and small target audience and helps in building public support and mobilizing public opinion for an institution.

Academics engage in specific media that include newspaper articles, radio and television talk-shows. A talk show or chat show is a television or radio program in which one person (or group of people) discuss various topics put forth by a talk show host. Usually, guests consist of a group of people who are learned or who have great experience in relation to whatever issue is being discussed on the show for that episode (Biagi, 2004). At other times, a single guest discusses their work or area of expertise with a host or co-hosts. These academics sometimes engage in 'a call-in show' that takes live phone calls by listeners in their homes, offices or cars. Sometimes these academics become guests and are introduced by their host institutions. Such talk shows have made guests, hosts as well as their institutions very famous (Bilal et al, 2012). According to Dahlgren (2009) talk shows play a key role in bringing change, structuring the political institutions and socializing the public on various political aspects (Bilal et al, 2012). Although this form of image building has been in place for years (Martin, 2015), Ugandan higher education institutions are getting in the limelight to debate numerous topics concerning politics, environment, economics, education, religion, morality among others. Dahlgren (2009) therefore encourages academics to publish for general audiences because they are more informed, more knowledgeable and more researched. He cites a number of self-made politicians who have appeared on radio and TV talk-shows or even written in newspapers using personal opinions and sometimes experience.

External examinations

External examination is one of the quality mechanism strategy that is globally recognized. Institutions consider external examination as one of the most objective and irrefutable quality assurance mechanisms (Barifaijo and Karyeija, 2015). External examiners are experienced academics who offer an independent assessment of academic standards and the quality of assessment. Conversely, external examiners and their overall contribution to the academic life of the institution are highly valued as they strive to develop and enhance the quality of education. For this matter, institutions carefully go through the appointment process for quality enhancement. Not every person acts as an external examiner because appointment is based on credibility in order for institutions to maintain threshold academic standards (*van den Huevel, 2016).* However, unlike peer review of research grant applications or journal articles, external examination relies on the teaching expertise of academics rather than research excellence (Shin et al, 2010). As they gain in experience and confidence however, externals tend to see their role differently and most commonly describe their conception of the role as that of 'critical friend', someone who "is encouraging and supportive, but who also provides honest and often candid feedback that may be uncomfortable or difficult to hear (Ssesanga and Garrett, 2005; Guide to the Process of External Examining, HEA, 2005).

Partnerships and collaborations

International partnerships between higher education institutions are beneficial to all, from the staff and students to the world as a whole. Forming those linkages and collaborations has perhaps never been simpler and has also never been more necessary (Mezrich and Nagy (2007). The rate of internationalization is increasingly rapid, with unhindered communication channels and inexpensive travel. The ability to scrutinize, debate and share experience is essential for academic and scientific accomplishment (Dwyer, 2001), hence challenging accepted opinions and ideas constructively is central to their development, and international collaborations help to facilitate this. Such partnerships have contributed endlessly to academic and scientific progress, as they provide a huge amount of opportunities for students and staff alike. Along with research opportunities and cultural awareness, institutions have offered international experiences for student and staff exchanges. Although HEIs have more often yearned for partnerships, the forging of meaningful partnerships is quite laborious and only those identified as able to endure can survive in the war of partnerships. This is because it takes a long time, based on understanding the culture and goals of each other's institutions in terms of ethics and standards and a lot of effort to forge a strong connection. Some partnerships are no more than fleeting encounters, lasting only as long as it takes one partner to establish (Brueckner and Mayer, 2005). In the global economy, a well-developed ability to create and sustain fruitful collaborations gives institutions a significant competitive leg up. Yet, more often than not, prolific writers spend sleepless nights writing collaboration proposals only to benefit those who never participated. Brown and Race (2002) found that institutions tout the original purpose and end up not helping initiators. Institutions often worry more about controlling the relationship than about nurturing it (Mezrich & Nagy, 2007) and end up failing to develop their institution's collaborative advantage and thereby neglect a key resource. Academic and research collaboration is a very valuable tool that accelerates the progress and enhances the quality of the work and extends the repertoire of partners. Academic collaboration, if well managed, should benefit academics in learning new teaching tools and increasing the breadth of students' knowledge and learning different approaches to problem solving. An academic culture that fosters partnerships and cooperation instead of individualism must be embraced to improve quality and accelerate progress. To encourage such efforts, individual academics must be recognized.

In fact, Robbins (2010) justifies this approach as a psychological contract, often used for higher-level professionals, because too much detail in the job description would diminish academics' enthusiasm and innovation. Rousseau (2004) espouses the usage of psychological contract which he believes strengthens trust and innovation, and believes that each party has expectations of the other, and failure to fulfil such obligations amount to breach of contract. Coyle-Shapiro et al (2008) finds this situation very costly on either side because, unlike omitted information in "story writing", omission of teaching and research activities could be disastrous in terms of productivity, quality, emotional engagement and retention on the part of the institution, and career progression and motivation of individual academics. As Bakker et al (2000) espoused, *what is never measured is never evaluated, what is never evaluated is never rewarded, and what is never rewarded is never repeated*. This quote definitely has serious implications for HEIs in terms of academics' failure to do a good job because of concerns that

it is not recognized. Unlike in a psychological contract, academics want even the minutest contribution to be recognized because they will not find any reason to repeat what they did very well, but was not recognized yet, according to Weng et al (2014), they detest being directed. Hence, the omission of academic activities in the evaluation will undermine HEIs, instead of stimulating the practice.

Implications of the omitted activities in the evaluation of academics

Teaching and research have often been viewed as separate activities with different outcomes (Venkalaram, 2010), and this separation of the two has conspicuously led to different evaluation and recognition systems for each constituent. Yet, the link between teaching and research are multiple, diverse, dynamic and discipline-specific (Barnett; 2005 and Griffiths; 2004). Moreover, there is a growing argument that faculty activities are so intermingled in their nature and intent, yet institutional accounting mechanisms have forced artificial separations between teaching and research (Clarke, 2012) which has encouraged plagiarism among staff. Further, although graduate supervision is critical and builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will, academics have tended to relegate this function and focused on paper articles instead. Nonetheless, Brew found that guiding research and projects was the most complex and finest form of education because supervisors are familiar with methods to make research effective and help students not only conduct genuine research, but also assemble credible research reports. In the same vein, Mezrich and Nagy (2007) found that the major factors in students' success was writing the thesis which demanded superior skills that include thesis supervision, promotion of skills, scientific climate, evaluation process, clarity of goals and standards and infrastructure, and students' satisfaction. They found that the supervisor was directly responsible for the supervision and mentoring of the student; and in this capacity, she/he assists the student in planning research activities and coursework. Brew (2006) and Griffiths (2004) also found that research supervisors provided counseling on all aspects, a relationship that enhances students' progress (Brew, 2006). Undoubtedly therefore, graduate supervision is one of the most critical roles in HEIs. Nonetheless, although this activity was recognized by some Ugandan HEIs, others considered it as part of daily routine, irrespective of the number of graduate students one has supervised. Whereas some institutions have specified the required numbers of supervisees, for example, one needing to supervise three students to become a senior lecturer, eight to associate professor and 15 to full professor, academics in some institutions had supervised over one hundred graduate students and were still at the level of "lecturer". Notwithstanding, Mezrich and Nagy (2007) called this exploitation, considering the hassle supervisors go through to get students to completion. They explained how graduate supervision demanded high emotional intelligence because each supervisee presents different challenges.

The famous dictum "publish or perish" evidently pressures academics to publish which has been found to be the fundamental reason for increased rates of academic plagiarism. One major mistake institutions make is to continue to regard lecture room teaching as the most important index of overall academic performance, and has been the basis for judging and rewarding performance (Jenkins, Breen, Lindsay and Brew, 2002). The traditional measures of academic reputation - research, publication, and professional

society activity - have assumed new importance (Mezrich and Nagy, 2007). Often, institutions prize and reward the visibility of published research and papers presented at professional conferences and meetings. Shin and Cummings (2010) affirm that publication is considered superior to teaching partly, perhaps, to ensure the institution stays visible; and high visibility is the name of the game today and is critical for the institution to stay in the public eye. Remarkably, institutions advertise teaching jobs for which academics are paid while, at the same time, they are rewarded for their research and publication. Nonetheless, the imbalance between research and teaching has bred mediocre researchers who have been accorded higher status than excellent teachers. What is no less important is that research prowess is more vastly valued than teaching excellence within the system, partly because more money comes into the university that way and partly because it is the way for an academic to get ahead.

Oddly, none of the institutions around the world has a comprehensive tool to evaluate the teaching activities. Turnley and Feldman (2016) attributed it to the value of psychological contracts given the difficulty in assessing some of the indicators. Turnley and Feldman's (2016) argument was espoused by Christeen (2016) who justifies the omissions that a comprehensive tool would limit individual's innovativeness. In fact, the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) in Uganda has made numerous efforts to strengthen quality and effectiveness of higher education systems. They include higher academic qualification, research and publication and active engagement with the community (Kasozi, 2006). Further, HEIs have gone ahead to conduct self-assessments as well as tracer studies in order to enhance the quality of graduates. Moreover, people forfeit better remunerating career opportunities to continuously grow into their passionate career to become accomplished scholars. For this to happen, the wholesome contribution of every academic needs to be captured through effective measures and evaluated equitably and comprehensively. Once institutions devise more realistic and comprehensive evaluation tools, quality, productivity and motivation among staff will be realized. For each area of academic work, assessment and evaluation has different facets and pose different challenges for both the appraisees and appraisers (Barifaijo, 2017). For example for an effective and equitable evaluation to take place, valid measures of the abilities or accomplishments of academics should be key indicators.

If the evaluation is to be perceived as fair, it should be interpreted in the context of institutional objectives as well as the job description of the individual academic. In this regard, effective assessment and evaluation of academics' performance should use proper and appropriate measures in each area of the academics' work – i.e., training, research and consultancy work or community service. There are many pre-requisites of this desired state. Some important ones are clarity of the constructs to be measured, knowledgeable users of assessment tools and data and effective communication between the assessed and the assessors (Kreitner, 2012). Consequently, the omission of critical measures has left academics in a state of quagmire because their efforts never get measured in order to be recognized; which has had serious implications for academics' enthusiasm, thereby inflicting harm on institutional quality and reputation.

The mandate of providing to communities (also known as the third mission) has for long been treated as periphery or a 'distant cousin' to the more dominant roles of teaching

and research (Barifaijo et al (2017). Indeed, its role, especially in Ugandan HEIs has been suffocated, presumably by inability to harness it by evaluating adequately those who provide the service. For that matter, this function has been underdeveloped, in terms of its purpose, institutional arrangement for its functionality. However, although Owobali (2005) found that institutions did not attach much significance to it because they did not find much contribution, the author attributes it to lack of measures to evaluate those who participate in it. This argument collaborates with Barifaijo's (2017) finding on the issue of internship that although there is a belief of strong linkage between what students learn in universities and what they actually do in the world of work, there has been no documented evidence or significant contribution especially in humanities, arts and social sciences, as there seems to be no systematic accountability to measure the contribution of students on internship.

Scholars found scanty evidence on the contribution of the internship function, save for students of education who do school practice (Adams, Miller-Korth & Brown, 2004). The author found that even with education whose purpose is assessment, supervisors were reluctant and did not register students' significant contribution. Actually, students reveal this challenge, where one spends a whole month on school practice without meeting one's supervisor (Kasozi, 2006). Consequently, students' attachment or internships have not benefitted students significantly. This finding was confirmed by Freeman (2013) who found that students got stranded because neither the host supervisor nor the university supervisor was keen to take on this responsibility. In fact, Tamale (2015) found that the only reason lecturers went for this exercise was the per diem allowance, and nothing more. Hence, the challenge could be the omission in the evaluation of this task. Every time the author attends conferences or workshops on education, policy makers constantly talk negatively about the quality of graduates, the quality of research papers/theses/dissertations, poor performance at all levels, etc. My question remains who is responsible for fixing quality? Available literature and scholars alike mainly focus on explaining the importance of internship in terms of future prospects and job placement.

Not much has been devoted to the planning, organization and assessment, which the author found partly responsible for failure to realize the value addition of these initiatives. Such effort would provide information on whether such initiatives added value at all, and what can be done to make things better. Internships are unquestionably very crucial given their ability to develop skills and expand opportunities for employment and the exposure that interns acquire from the community where they are attached. Industries as well as higher education institutions benefit greatly from such partnerships. However, lack of work description for students on internship, lack of clear targets, lack of performance indicators and assessment criteria are some of the barriers to successful internship (Harkavy, 2006). Because of this gap, the training (internship) many times does not add value to the students. Although quality has been a challenge, HEIs in Uganda have not labored to find out the reason and are "treating symptoms" of continuous problems with minimal attempts at tracer studies and internal assessments. The skewed evaluation in these institutions has promoted academic dishonesty where academics have continued to involve themselves in undetected plagiarism – including plagiarizing research works of their students in order to climb academic ladders (Munene, 2012).

Archibong, et al. (2017) found that in Nigeria, students' evaluations have been used for faculty tenure and career growth (Cartwright, Weiner & Veneruso, 2009). Indeed, Brew (2006) justified students' participation in the evaluation of staff arguing that everything done aims at satisfying them. This is supported by Jenkins'et al (2002) in his definition of teaching as "*making an assumption about what and how the student learns and to teach well implies learning about students' learning*". That's why HEIs have placed emphasis on students rating in faculty evaluation. Prégent (2000), for example found that student ratings have continued to be the source of information most widely used to assess teaching. Scholars (e.g. Clarke, 2012; Cartwright, et al 2009; and Duncan, 2005) have found that students are the most accurate judge of teaching effectiveness, and that students' views should be given top priority in evaluating teaching for tenure and promotion decisions. Nonetheless, although student ratings are enjoying unprecedented popularity, research has found numerous loopholes in students' evaluations such as high ratings by students associated with awarding of high grades by individual faculty; humor, less content, easy tasks and a soft personality (by Revell & Wainwright, 2009). One increasingly important source of information is self-evaluation and Archibong *et al* (2017) found that self-evaluation provides insights into the values and beliefs that help shape course and instructional objectives and, in turn, contributes to classroom competency. However, Mezrich and Nagy (2007) advance that self-evaluations is the keystone of evaluation systems, given that it is rooted in academic teaching portfolios, gives insights not found anywhere else, and is invaluable because it provides the important values and attitudes that determine why academics teach as they do.

Institutional territorialism and being possessive of technical skills and material property were found not only to prevent progress but also harm the overall higher education development structure in the country. In addition, collaboration with world-class education institutions can raise the standards of universities in developing countries through exposure to teaching, research, services and management methods. International cooperation, experience and exposure enables new researchers and educationists to expand their work, publish it in recognized professional journals, and present it at professional meetings. At the student level, institutional collaboration allows for an exchange of students that benefit both from the faculty exposure as well as academic culture and environment. One approach to encourage this culture is for Higher Education Institutions to include collaboration development as a measure for evaluation to facilitate the promotion of academics.

Conclusion

By implication therefore, most of the omitted activities could be due to the acuity of psychological contracts that are largely reliant on promises between the two parties, with trust being the basis for the social exchange, then the breach of such contract could occur if Management fails to fulfil what was promised and vice versa. In the social exchange theory however, academics might perceive a breach of contract and might respond negatively which is the immediate response of mistrust from the other side (*van den Huevel, 2016)*. Responses may occur in the form of reduced loyalty, commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors, and such feelings will always increase negative tension in the environment and total disengagement (van den Heuvel, Sjoerd, and Schalk, 2015). There is a variety of challenges facing curriculum development,

but in general they are classified into global challenges (external), internal challenges of the education systems, and country specific challenges. **Hence, the need to look at some of these problems facing curriculum development in our educational systems and proffer possible solutions promptly.** In fact, there are other critical challenges which are often ignored such as shortage of highly skilled human resources, reconciling traditional orientation of education with the aspiration for modernity, privatization of education and diversification of the economy. Yet, higher education institutions have continued to judge academics using shallow measures, leaving very critical aspects that lead to the final projects that get evaluated and rewarded, which has affected the entire education system, where HEIs have been reported to produce raw quality graduates. Consequently, this blame game has become a vicious cycle because, whereas universities blame schools for sending students with 'cosmetic grades', schools too blame universities for raw quality teachers they send to schools, and yet, the community blames both. This dilemma has been attributed to the omission of critical activities during evaluations; and, indeed, some activities are difficult to measure, hence institutions rely on psychological contract in fulfilling each party's expectations. Nonetheless, effective or excellent teaching could be evaluated in respect to construct clarity, multiple pieces of evidence of effectiveness directly linked to preparation, organization, materials used, learning activities, which should lead to learning outcomes. Regarding evaluation of research, institutions need to diversify to include the number of students supervised to completion, rather than relying only on journal articles and conference papers as the most reliable indices of overall performance for academic promotions, which has led to academics' anguish. Yet, job satisfaction that revitalizes staff motivation is undeniably critical for every institution, and all should aspire to achieve and sustain it. However, in order to enthuse academics in these institutions, the rewards must be perceived to be commensurate to their contributions, and measures for performance evaluations should be generated from the available data, be realistic and equitable. This is because the enthusiasm of academics yields commitment and quality performance because a motivated workforce builds not only individual profile, but a national workforce, as well as international reputation, which, unfortunately is wanting, especially in critical areas that lead to high standards such as excellent teaching through planning and preparation, ability to develop academic programmes, logical students' assessment and feedback, mentorship and guidance, effective and successful supervision.

Unfortunately, validating the quality of the graduate or students' learning outcomes may not be plausible considering that by graduation time, one class will have been facilitated by numerous teachers, which cannot be attributed to one individual. Therefore, in order to improve performance management and accountability in academic institutions, HEI leaders need to understand more complex systems than a simplistic set of parameters used in the evaluations. To provide interventions to validate deep teaching, institutions could develop a tool for external examiners to assess what was taught against what was examined, *vis-a-vis* the performance of the specific class or cohort. In such a scenario, institutions could recognize teams rather than individuals. Further, mentoring and counseling during supervision is a relationship that involves only two parties, hence, validating it using the measure of the number of students supervised could be another hoax considering that, other than the co-supervision systems in some institutions, there could be motivating factors that influence completion rates.

Everything that has gone amiss in the education system at all levels in Uganda, stems from ineffective performance evaluations of higher education activities; the quality of research; the quality of graduates; the quality of teachers at lower levels; poor internship performance and cosmetic grades. Given their gigantic role, higher education institutions are the only organizations with inputs, throughputs and outputs that are human – and not just materials. Yet, unlike the adage 'tip of iceberg', the omission of academic activities in evaluations because of ignorance or lack of skill to measure those activities is likely to affect quality, visibility and continuity of HEIs, which Hemingway found disastrous. Indeed, research activities are a strong pillar in profiling and create institutional image, although the assessment measures and the processes for one to move up the ladder are too bureaucratic and sometimes unrealistic. Consequently, institutions should revise and streamline the measurement tool for evaluating research activities in order to accommodate a variety of activities and inputs. This should be done to fulfill academics' expectations of rewarding their efforts, and in turn academics will fulfill the institutional and the community's expectations so they remain emotionally engaged.

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