

# **Retrospect and Prospect of Private Higher Education Provision in Africa**

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# **Working conditions and job performance of academic staff in private universities in Tanzania in comparison with public universities**

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## ***Abstract:***

*This paper examines the relationship between working conditions and the job performance of academic staff in Tanzanian Universities. In all, 1000 respondents selected from 6 universities constituted the sample of the study. The respondents were selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Two instruments were used to elicit relevant information from the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count, percentage and Pearson product moment correlation. The study revealed that there was significant relationship between the working conditions and job performance of academic staff in the universities. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the management of the universities should make working conditions more conducive by giving more attention to the provision of physical facilities, information services, motivation, authority-staff relationship, participation in decision making and staff development in order to facilitate better job performance of the academic staff.*

**Keywords:** working conditions, academic staff, job performance, motivation, universities

## **1. Introduction**

Universities are the highest centre for learning where male and female citizens who have the capacity study to acquire degree. The graduates acquire different skills, which are designed to meet the demand in all economic pursuits. Universities educate future leaders and develop the high level technical capacities that underpin economic growth (World

Bank, 1994). Also, Abegaz (1994) defines a university as an institution of higher education whose principal function is to transmit advanced knowledge from one generation to another, to generate new knowledge and to train high-level skilled manpower for society, in Tanzania the university system faces a lot of problems that may not allow the system to make the expected contribution to social, political and economic development of the nation. Among the numerous problems confronting universities in Tanzania is the perceived poor job performance of some academic staff.

In recent years, stakeholders in the education industry complained about the job performance of academic staff in the Tanzanian universities. It has often been expressed by the public that academic staff are no longer dedicated and committed to the job. It appears the academic staff who are trained and expected to produce a host of cherished societal virtues such as honesty, humility, fairness, integrity, punctuality, dedication and patriotism are not dedicated and committed to their job as Sawyerr (2004) argued that conditions for research in universities have been severely compromised as manifest by the generally poor remuneration, heavy teaching loads, inability to mentor young faculty and inadequate infrastructure hence poor research performance among university lecturers.

It also appears that teaching among the expected roles of academic staff has not been accorded the necessary priority. There are instances where some lecturers do place too much emphasis on writing of papers for publications that are more likely to fetch them promotion than concentrating on teaching that can benefit students. There are reported cases of academic staff that are in the habit of rushing their lectures when examination has drawn nearer and students also complain of delay in their examination results. Some of the lecturers also have been accused of using students to mark students' examination scripts, record scores and computing student results. There are also observed cases of arbitrary award of marks and examination malpractices and further academic staff abandon their lessons at universities to chase donor-funded researches and projects and consultancies. All these perceived problems seem to

have negative effect on the quality of graduates produced into the labour market. As observed by Ochieng (2009) that university lecturers spent their time running from one institution to another claiming to be teaching while the truth is that they are hungrily chasing after money.

The various factors responsible for the poor academic staff job performance appear to be both internal and external to the universities. Internal factors include frequent strikes, lack of employees' motivation and weak accountability for educational performance and poor working condition. External factors comprise academic staff shortage, corruption, inadequate funding of the university system by government and admission based on quotas rather than merit.

Afe (1995) pointed out that teaching task is done through conscious and deliberate effort. Nevertheless, for an academic staff to carry out this conscious and deliberate effort, he needs a conducive working condition devoid of strike, inadequate motivation, weak accountability for educational programs, inadequate personnel, corruption, inconsistent funding by the government among others. In the universities, it has been expressed that academic staff lack conducive working condition with the required resources needed for their job. However good the university programs may be, if the necessary resources are not there, the staff cannot perform, no matter how much they are induced.

These points, therefore, raise question about how to identify the determinants of academic staff job performance. Opatolu (1995) had found experience, conducive working condition, possession of teaching qualification, disposition and interest in the job, dedication and commitment, among others, to be more important in academic staff job performance.

In an education system the major factor that is capable of influencing academic staff job performance and subsequently educational development appears to be the prevalence of good working condition. There had been a common belief among the scholars, researchers, educational planners and administrators that teaching as a profession deserves priority attention. It seems that no concrete efforts have been

made to actualize this free opinion in Tanzanian universities. Academic staff seem not to be enjoying working conditions in terms of physical facilities, information services, participation in decision making process, authority-staff relationship, motivation and staff development.

## **2. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to find out the relationship between working conditions and academic staff job performance in Tanzanian universities. The study will also find out whether the working conditions of the universities are favorable as well as the extent to which the academic staff perform well on their job.

Therefore the specific Objectives of the study are:

1. To determine the working conditions of academic staff in the public and private universities in Tanzania
2. To find out relationship of working conditions and academic staff job performance in the public and private universities in Tanzania

## **3. Statement of the problem**

Previous studies observed that there is a growing labor turnover intention among academic staff, particularly in public universities due to the fact that most of Sub-Saharan African countries attach less premium on the need to properly remunerate and motivate academic staff, acquire research equipment and facilities such as computers, internet facilities, libraries and laboratories or workshop facilities as well as to fund research. Besides, Mugerwa (2003) and Mamdani (2007) noted disproportionate number of academic staff whereby available academic staff carry heavy teaching load and teach large classes thus finding it hard to conduct meaningful research or effectively supervise students' research projects. This study therefore investigates the relationship between working conditions and job performance among academic staff in Tanzania universities; whether working conditions of academic staff in the universities are favorable and the academic staff members in the universities perform well in their job.

#### **4. Review of Related Literature**

Globalized society demands an efficient response from the administration in each service offered. This efficiency is understood in terms of organizational goal(s) achievement at a minimum resource cost and with a certain degree of quality (Harris, 2002) that must be permanently improved so that this competitive basis can continue to exist. More specifically, universities as well as other academic institutions have shown a greater interest and made greater efforts to try and measure the quality of their educational process as a result of a series of political, economic, social and cultural circumstances (Davies et al., 2001; Den-Brok et al., 2002) but such efforts are hampered by meager resources available to ensure attainment of university core functions of research and community services as observed in Uganda by Visitation Committee to Public Universities Report (2007), which asserted that higher education system in Uganda is confronted by severe financial crisis. Performance measurement can be implemented to this end that will allow researchers to identify strengths and areas of improvement, on the basis of which improvement actions will be undertaken. Further, Kyaligonza (2009) found that public universities in Uganda are failing to fully fulfill the functions of higher education as they lag behind in research, while emphasizing teaching at the expense of research.

To recompense the falling quality of university education as observed by Adesina (1983), it is generally agreed that prominence should be given to the element of the university working condition. This would create an endearing intellectual atmosphere which fosters attitude to teaching and learning. Adaralegbe (1983) and Akuegwu (2005) ascertained that, without a good socio-psychological, physical and intellectual working condition, the teachers and students cannot perform well in their academic activities; that is, if the working condition is bad, poor or un-conducive, it may have a great negative and lasting effect on the performance of the students academically.

On the other hand, Durotolu (2000) revealed that there was no significant relationship between the entire working conditions and academic staff job

performance. This finding seems to be at variance with the contention of Hoy and Miskel (1989), Nkom (2000), Ariyo (2000) and Aiyegbusi (2000) who identified the various components of working conditions that are determinants of job performance. In view of the contradictory findings, the study attempts to determine the relationship between the working conditions and job performance of academic staff in Tanzanian universities.

## **5. Methodology**

This study is a descriptive research of the survey type. The population of the study was all academic staff and students of one public and one private universities in Tanzania. The sample size for this study was 1000. Purposive techniques were used to select the sample.

Two sets of questionnaire were constructed for the study: these are Working Conditions Questionnaire (WCQ) for academic staff, and Job Performance of Academic Staff Questionnaire (JPASQ) for students. The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement on the items in the questionnaire.

The two sets of questionnaire were validated by experts in Educational Management and Tests and Measurement. The questionnaires were also pilot-tested using 180 subjects consisting of 30 academic staff and 150 students. The instruments were administered twice within an interval of two weeks. The two sets of responses were correlated using Pearson product moment correlation. The WCQ and JPASQ had reliability coefficients of 0.88 and 0.89 respectively. These coefficients were considered high enough for reliability. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count, percentage and Pearson product moment correlation.

## **6. Results**

**Question 1:** Is the working condition of academic staff in the universities favourable?

In answering this question, the responses to items in WCQ were used

*Table 1: Suitability of working condition of academic staff in the Tanzanian universities*

S/N	Items	Percentage	
		Favourable	Unfavourable
1	Physical Facilities	59.7	40.3
2	Information services	70.9	29.1
3	Motivation	70.7	29.1
4	Authority-Staff relationship	70.5	29.5
5	Participation in decision making	70.5	29.5
6	Staff development	73.6	26.4
<b>Mean</b>		<b>69.3</b>	<b>30.7</b>

Table 1 shows that the working conditions of academic staff in the universities is favorable in terms of physical facilities (59.7%), information services (70.9%), motivation (70.7%), authority-staff relationship (70.5%), participation in decision making (70.5%) and staff development (73.6%). On the average, the table shows that 69.3% of the respondents indicated that the working condition of academic staff was favorable while 30.7% of them indicated that the working conditions were not favorable. Therefore, the working conditions of academic staff in Tanzanian universities are favorable.

**Question 2:** To what extent do academic staff in the universities perform well on their job?

In order to answer this question, the responses to items in JPASQ were used.

*Table 2: Extent of job performance among academic staff in universities*

S/N	Items	Percentage	
		Well performed	Not well performed
	Teaching	67.9	32.1
	Relationship with students	51.5	48.5



	Research	69.7	30.3
	Counselling	53.5	46.5
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>60.7</b>	<b>39.3</b>

Table 2 shows the extent of job performance among academic staff in the area covered by the study. The result shows that the academic staff performed well in the areas of teaching (67.9%), relationship with students (51.5%), research (69.7%) and counselling (53.5%). On the average, 60.7% of the respondents indicated that the academic staff performed well in the universities sampled for the study. This means that to a large extent, the academic staff in the universities performed well on their job.

## 7. Discussion

The study revealed that the working conditions of academic staff in Tanzanian universities were favorable. This is contrary to the belief in certain quarters that the working conditions in the universities are not favorable. Taiwo and Taiwo (2002) posited that research facilities were inadequate, while Okebukola (2002) discussed physical facilities as overstretched and decaying. It is not unlikely that such school of thought based its judgment on the quantity and quality of physical facilities in the universities which is one out of many components of the working conditions. As indicated in this study, other components of working conditions include information services, motivation, authority-staff relationship, participation in decision making and staff development. These components including physical facilities were adjudged to be favorable in the universities. The favorable working conditions will enhance high productivity of the staff. The finding of this study is in line with that of Azinge (1992), Ojo (1997) and Oni (2000), while it contradicts that of Clifton (1978).

The study revealed that the academic staff in Tanzanian universities performed well on their job during the period under investigation. This might be attributed to the fact that the government committed 0.48 percent of its GDP for research since 2007. Further, academic staff are given opportunities for further education as observed at University of Dar

es Salaam School of Education alone, 42 academic staff were on PhD studies abroad sponsored by the employer, UDSM.

On job performance side, the good job performance of the academic staff would facilitate teaching, research and community services in the universities. The finding of this study agrees with that of Lindsey (1982), Ajayi and Ayodele (2002) that remuneration, cordial relationship between authority and staff, recognition, flow of information, promotion, staff development, adequate provision of facilities and funds enhance job performance. The result showed that there was significant relationship between the working condition and job performance of academic staff in the universities. It could be inferred from the result of the tested hypothesis that better working conditions would enhance better job performance of academic staff. Where the work condition is poor, there will be poor job performance. The study contradicts that of Durotolu (2000) which revealed that there was no significant relationship between the entire working conditions and academic staff performance, while it corroborates that of Kpangban and Onwuegbu (1995), Ariyo (2000), Aiyegbusi (2000) and Nkom (2000) who found out that working conditions were determinants of job performance.

## **8. Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn: the working conditions of the universities were good, while the academic staff lived up to expectation on their job. Moreover, working conditions of the universities was a determinant of the academic staff job performance.

## **9. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that the management of the universities should give more attention to working conditions of the universities in order to make it more favorable while the academic staff should continue to improve on their job performance. Since the working condition is significantly related to job performance of academic staff, government should encourage the support of parents,

students, philanthropists, and corporate institutions in improving the universities' working conditions in terms of physical facilities, information services, authority-staff relationship, and staff development in order to enhance better job performance of the academic staff.

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