

A Comparative Analysis of Academic Staff's Job Performance between Private and Public Universities in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study investigates the academic performance of the academic staff in Tanzania's private and public universities in the areas of teaching and research activities. The study aims to prove that there are differences between the two types of universities. An independent-sample t-test approach was employed to measure those differences. The study revealed that there are statistically significant differences between the performance in the two types of universities in terms of the number of research projects, the number of academic publications in international-level peer-reviewed journals, the number of presentations at international-level academic conferences and the number of academic books published. But with respect to the number of postgraduate students under academic supervision, the extent of teaching workloads, expressed in terms of subject units, the number of academic publications in national-level journals and the number of presentations at national-level conferences there are no significant differences.

Keywords: Academic staff, academic supervision, peer-reviewed journals, private university, Tanzania

Introduction

Academic staff are the workhorses of higher learning institution be it university or college (Luhanga 2009). The effective running of higher learning institution depends on the important contributions, effort and involvement of academic staff. No higher learning institution be it college or university can succeed without academic staff as these play a pivotal role in the implementation of the core functions of the university, that is teaching, research and community service. Materu (2007) observes that a university is only as good as the quality of its academic staff. Therefore, organizations that have goals to achieve require satisfied and happy staff (Oshagbemi 2000). The ability of any university to take off and achieve its goals is a function of its ability to attract, retain and maintain competent and satisfied and happy staff into its employment.

A university college was first established in Tanzania in 1961 as a constituent college of the University of London which subsequently became the University of East Africa in 1963 to cater for East African countries. In 1970, the University College of East Africa was transformed into three independent national universities namely; the University of Dar es Salaam, the University of Nairobi and Makerere University respectively. Later, the government has promoted the establishment of private universities through liberalization of higher education by amending the Education Act No. 10 of 1978, which was replaced with the Education Act No. 10 of 1995 and enacting Universities Act No. 7 of 2005. These Acts have provisions for the establishment of private higher education institutions. In the recent years we have seen an increase in the number of universities both private and public. Apart from University of Dar es Salaam other public universities were later established. It must be mentioned that private universities did not exist in Tanzania until 1995 when the first private university—Tumaini University, Iringa University College was established. Thus, by May 2013 there were 61 public and private universities and university colleges in Tanzania.

Statement of the Problem

While universities are seen as entities established to impart new knowledge and to respond to national demands, management of these universities has been a contentious issue but even more importantly is performance of academic staff. In Tanzania in like many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, academic staffs do not seem to perform up to the expected level. Despite the remarkable expansion of higher education in Tanzania, from only 4 universities in 1995 to 61 universities and university colleges in May 2013, there is a growing concern about deteriorating performance with regard to teaching, research and community service. As Ajayi, Awasusi, Arogundade & Ekundayo (2011) observed that in recent years academic staff are no longer dedicated and committed to the job they were expected to be honest, fair, punctual, dedicated and patriotic. It appears teaching among the expected roles of academic staff has not been accorded the necessary priority as expected. 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. With this trend, it is no doubt that universities are slowly losing their credibility as can be seen from a good number of students

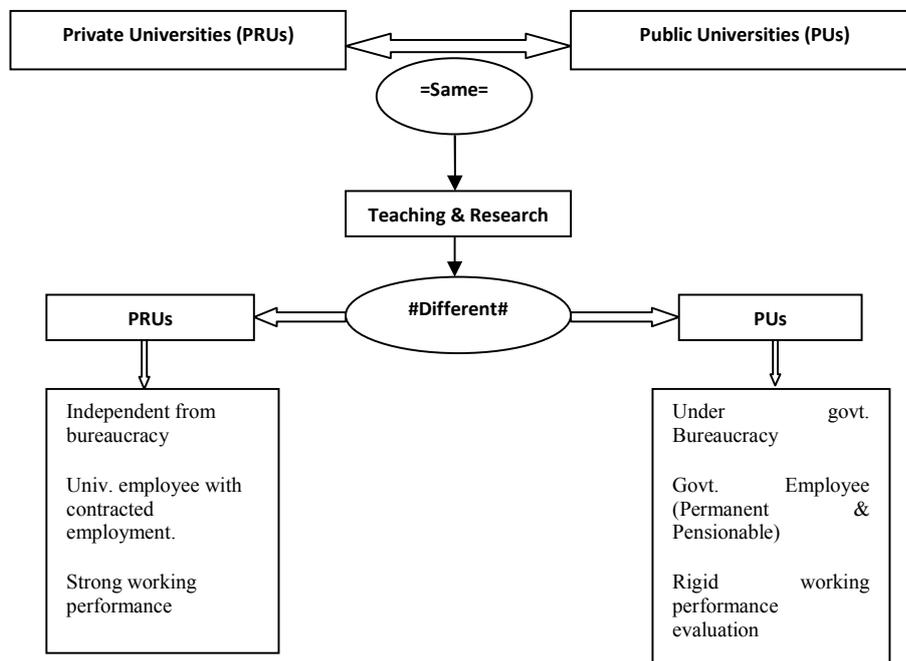
opting to pursue their studies at other universities in neighboring countries and overseas. Also, Ishengoma (2007) observed that the majority of Tanzania private universities are mainly engaged in teaching rather than in research and community services to such an extent that in some private universities the number of years an academic staff has taught at the university is a criterion for promotion rather than research and publications in peer-reviewed journals as required by TCU.

This unsatisfactory performance of academic staff has the potential to threaten the quality of education and service delivery offered by both public and private universities in Tanzania. It is in this regard that the present study intends to investigate the academic staff teaching and research performance at public and private universities in Tanzania.

Framework and Purposes of Study

Because public institutions are under the government bureaucratic system in the same way other government agencies are, all government-owned universities have been performing under the same regulations and rules. University staff are civil servants retained on the basis of permanent and pensionable (lifelong employment). Since their working conditions are the same, their work performance is supposed to be the same as well. While on the other hand, private universities which is independent from government bureaucratic system, and result-oriented it is expected their performance to be higher than those of public universities. It is generally believed that independence in the administration and management of private universities will result in greater productivity, efficiency, accountability (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Character of Private and Public Universities



This study is intended to compare two different types of universities, namely, private universities and public universities, with the assumption that the difference in ownership status makes them different in performance, or, in other words, that the ownership status of universities affects their performance. Although all public/ government-owned are entirely financed by government, in Tanzania, universities serve the nation in three major aspects, namely; teaching, research and community services, the first two activities (teaching and research) have been regarded as their original and predominant functions. Therefore, this study aims to determine and evaluate in concrete ways the academic performance of the academic staff in the two types of universities in their major tasks, teaching and research. As stated earlier, although Tanzania has about 61 universities and university colleges, majority of them are newly established hence their performance evaluation criteria are not clearly known hence this study intend to investigate.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it assessed the present conditions of academic staff in public and private universities in Tanzania. Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) may use the data as bases for policy-making and program planning for university education which will promote job performance of academic staff and professional growth of academic staff towards better education. Universities will have an idea regarding the level of job satisfaction and work performance of their academic staff. The weak and strong points of each university academic staff will be identified thus providing baseline data to be utilized in the management and operation of universities. The results may further help the university management to review existing motivational policies and practices with a hope that they can enhance work performance and job satisfaction among academic staff. This will be the basis to plan programs for academic staff development that will lead to the academic staff's professional growth. It will also help them identify specific demographic characteristics of academic staff which could influence work performance and job satisfaction of academic staff. Finally, the researcher finds this study very important because it will awaken academic staff to conduct periodic self assessment to improve their teaching and research performance.

Profiles of PUs and PRUs and their differences

University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) oldest and largest university in Tanzania established in 1961 as a constituent college of the University of London. In 1963, it became a constituent college of the University of East Africa, and in 1970 the constituent colleges of the University of East Africa became an independent national universities, namely the University of Dar es Salaam, the University of Nairobi and Makerere University. Apart from University of Dar es Salaam other public universities were later established. Tumaini University – Iringa University College established in 1995 as first private university in Tanzania. Both are the first universities in their categories, that is, UDSM (first public university) and TUICO (first private university). Furthermore, the comparison focuses on particular faculties/schools, which are the backbones of the two universities. They are the Faculty/ School of Law, Arts and Social Sciences and Business.

The difference in status between PRUs and PUs is, therefore, responsible for the differences in many of aspects of the two types of universities. Table 1 shows some characteristics of and distinctions between PRUs and PUs. It is clear that, despite the fact that PRUs are independent of the government bureaucratic system, they are still supposed to adhere with Tanzania Commission for Universities (government university quality assurance body) regulations. What makes PRUs different from PUs is its degree of the autonomy over personnel and financing issues. PRUs receive government support through financial assistance to develop infrastructures, students loans (HESLB), whereas of the grants funding PUs are in an itemized form. As a result, PRUs administrators are able to generate and allocate the budget within the campus as they see fit. Moreover, any annual surplus can be retained as the institutions own profit, which is contrary to the situation at PUs. As regards their employment status, the majority of PRUs staff are university-contracted employees whose job performance is seriously evaluated.

Table 1: Differences between Private Universities (PRU) and Public Universities (PU)

Criteria	Private University (PRU)	Public Universities (PU)
1. Ownership	Private-owned	Government owned
2. Financing	From private sources (Tuition fee, donations)	Government supported
3. Annual Surplus	Retained as its own	Return to treasury
4. Salary	Its own salary scale	Government salary scale
5. Staff status	University employee	Civil servant
6. Employment condition	Contract basis	Full-time & Pensionable (Life-long employment)
7. Personnel Management	Under its own system	Under government bureaucratic system

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is primarily concerned about job performance rating of respondents in terms of teaching load and research and publications.

Understanding Performance

Job Performance

Performance is behavior exhibited or something done by the employee (Campbell, 1990). According to Motowidlo, Borman and Schmidt (1997), job performance is the behavior that can be evaluated in terms of the extent to which it contributes to organizational effectiveness (Onukwube, Iyabga and Fajana, 2010). Hillriegel, Jackson and Slocum (1999) see job performance as individual's work achievement after having exerted effort. Viswesveran and Ones (2000) regard it as the behavior and outcomes that employees engage in or bring about that are linked with and contribute to organizational goals (Onukwube *et al.* 2010). It is clear from these definitions that job performance is related to the extent to which an employee is able to accomplish the task assigned to him or her and how the accomplished task contributes to the realization of the organizational goal.

Job performance is not a single unified construct but a multidimensional construct consisting of more than one kind of behavior. Onukwube *et al.* (2010) affirm that job performance was traditionally viewed as a single construct. However, Austin and Villanova (1992) and Campell (1990) argue that job performance is a complicated and multidimensional factor. Thus, Campbell (1990) proposed an eight-factor model of performance based on *factor analytic* research that attempts to capture dimensions of job performance existent (to a greater or lesser extent) across all jobs:

- i. Task specific behaviors which include those behaviors that an individual undertakes as part of a job. They are the core substantive tasks that delineate one job from another.
- ii. Non-task specific behaviors are those behaviors which an individual is required to undertake which do not pertain only to a particular job.
- iii. Written and oral communication tasks refer to activities where the incumbent is evaluated, not on the content of a message necessarily, but on the adeptness with which they deliver the communication. Employees need to make formal and informal oral and written presentations to various audiences in many different jobs in the work force.

- iv. An individual's performance can also be assessed in terms of effort, either day to day, when there are extraordinary circumstances. This factor reflects the degree to which people commit themselves to job tasks.
- v. The performance domain might also include an aspect of personal discipline. Individuals would be expected to be in good standing with the law, not abuse alcohol, etc.
- vi. In jobs where people work closely or are highly interdependent, performance may include the degree to which a person helps out the groups and his or her colleagues. This might include acting as a good role model, coaching, giving advice or helping maintain group goals.
- vii. Many jobs also have supervisory or leadership component. The individual will be relied upon to undertake many of the things delineated under the previous factor and in addition will be responsible for meting out rewards and punishment. These aspects of performance happen in a face to face manner.
- viii. . Managerial and administrative performance entails those aspects of a job which serve the group or organization but do not involve direct supervision. A managerial task would be setting an organizational goal or responding to external stimuli to assist a group in achieving its goals. In addition, a manager might be responsible for monitoring organizational sources.

Indicators and the selection of indicators

In measuring or evaluating any activities or performances, measurements or performance indicators are crucial. Thus, the selection of these indicators is important. According to Teichler and Winkler (1994), the use of indicators is a favorite method among economists and most indicator approaches strongly reflect the economists' views of what the 'quality' of the process or outcome of higher education means. Therefore, the use of indicators enables researchers to see efficiency and productivity of and in higher education, but the matter of 'quality' is still doubtful, since the number of publications does not necessarily attest to the quality of those publications. This study focuses on the number of academic activities of academic staff rather than on its quality.

In this study, the indicators used to measure the efficiency and productivity of the academic staff at PUs and PRUs were chosen on the basis of teaching and research activities that are relevant to the conditions and the context of Tanzania higher education. They are as follows;

1. Number of graduate students under academic supervision,
2. Extent of teaching loads (quantified by course units)
3. Number of research projects
4. Number of refereed academic paper published in national-level academic journals,
5. Number of refereed academic paper published in international-level journals,
6. Number of presentations made at international conferences,
7. Number of presentations made at international conferences,
8. Number of academic books written.

Both public and private universities have three core functions, namely, teaching, research and community services (TCU, 2007). But this study deals with only the first two functions, teaching and research, because they have been the main and most crucial roles of universities. Since the fundamental and primary functions of public universities in Tanzania are to train and educate competent and skillful manpower for national development, the teaching and research that have contributed to that development have been predominant. Teaching performance is examined through indicators 1 and 2 while research tasks are investigated by means of indicators 3 to 8.

Methods and Procedures

Data used for analysis in this study have been acquired through collected documents and questionnaire surveys. In the first phase, government policy papers, reports and published materials and annual reports and information of both PRUs and PUs were collected. These collected documents provided important data, statistics about the universities and policies of the government. 400 copies of questionnaires were distributed to academic staff members in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (currently CASS), Law and Business of PRUs and PUs, of which 137 copies (34.25 percent) were returned. Among them 65 (33 percent) and 72 (36 percent) copies of questionnaires were replies of academic staff members of PRUs and PUs, respectively. These answers have been used to analyze the academic performance of academic staff in PRU and PU in terms of teaching (indicator 1 and 2) and research (indicators 3 to 8)

Data Analysis

An independent-sample *t*-test approach was employed to analyse the returned questionnaires. The questionnaire contained 25 questions about personal data and academic performance from 2008/09 to 2010/11 academic year, with regard to the number of graduate students under academic supervision, the extent of teaching loads (quantified by course units), the number of research projects, the number of academic publications (published in national and international-level journals), the number of academic conference presentations (at the national and international levels) and the number of academic books written. Groups (PRU and PU) were considered to be significantly different if $p < .05$.

Table 3: Background of respondents

1. Faculty/ School	PRU		PU	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.1 Arts & Social Sciences	52	80	25	35
1.2 Law	11	17	24	33
1.3 Business	2	3	23	32
2. Academic Rank				
2.1 Full Professor	1	2	0	0
2.2 Associate Professor	8	12	9	13
2.3 Senior Lecturer	25	39	23	32
2.4 Lecturer	31	48	40	56
3. Employment Status				
3.1 Full-Time	33	51	61	85
3.2 On-contract	32	49	11	15
4. Working experience				
4.1 Less than 5 years	15	23	13	18
4.2 5-10 years	21	32	14	19
4.3 11-15 years	8	12	14	19
4.4 More than 15 years	21	32	31	43
5. Academic Qualification				
5.1 Doctoral Degree	5	8	30	42
5.2 Master's Degree	23	35	40	56
5.3 Bachelor's Degree	37	57	30	42
Total	n=65	100	n=72	100

Results

Table 4 shows how the academic staff of PRU and PU performs academically. Regarding the number of graduate students under academic supervision, there is no significant difference

between lecturers of PRU ($M=5.55$, $SD=7.33$) and PU ($M=6.10$, $SD=10.33$), $t(135)=-.352$, $p>.05$. In terms of extent of teaching loads (quantified by course units), staffs of PRU ($M=2.69$ range ‘more than 10 units’, $SD=.53$) and PU ($M=2.71$ range ‘more than 10 units’, $SD=.57$), $t(135)=-.171$, $p>.05$ did not differ in their performance. However, in the area of the number of research projects, the academic staffs of PRU ($M=2.89$, $SD=2.52$) have conducted significantly more research than their counterparts at PU ($M=1.57$, $SD=1.82$), $t(115.487)=3.489$, $p<.001$.

Table 4: Comparison of private and public universities based on performance indicators

Indicators	PRU		PU		Test of difference	
	M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>Df</i>
GSTUDENT	5.55	7.33	6.10	10.33	-.35	135
CUNIT	2.69	.53	2.71	.57	-.171	135
RESEARCH	2.89	2.52	1.57	1.82	3.48*	115.48
NAPAPER	.94	1.85	.65	1.51	.99	135
INTPAPER	1.15	1.80	.39	1.25	2.86*	112.82
NAPRENEN	1.02	1.80	.89	1.50	.44	135
INTPRESE	1.08	1.84	.42	1.29	2.41*	113.10
ACABOOK	.31	.73	.61	.83	-2.27*	134.87

* $p<.05$

Key: GSTUDENT= Number of graduate students under supervision, CUNIT=Extent of teaching loads (quantified by course units), RESEARCH=Number of research projects, NAPAPER=Number of refereed academic publications published in national-level journals, INTPAPER=Number of refereed academic publications published in international level journals, NAPRENEN= Number of national conference presentations, INTPRESE=Number of international conference presentations, ACABOOK=Number of academic books written.

For the number of refereed academic papers published in national-level journals, the results showed that there is no significant difference between the staff of PRU ($M=.94$, $SD=1.85$) and that of PU ($M=.65$, $SD=1.51$), $t(135)=.993$, $p>.05$. However, in international-level journals, the academic publications of PRU’s academic staff ($M=1.15$, $SD=1.80$) were significantly more numerous than those of PU staff members ($M=.39$, $SD=1.25$), $t(112.826)=2.863$, $p<.005$. With respect to academic presentation in national conferences, there is no significant difference between the academic staff of PRU ($M=1.02$, $SD=1.80$) and of PU ($M=.89$, $SD=1.50$),

$t(135)=.449, p>.05$. However, internationally, lecturers from PRU ($M=1.08, SD=1.84$) made significantly more academic presentations than their counterparts ($M=.42, SD=1.29$), $t(113.106)=2.410, p<.05$. Finally, the results showed that the academic staff of PRU ($M=.31, SD=.73$) produced significantly fewer academic books than those of PU ($M=.61, SD=.83$), $t(134.870)=2.278, p<.05$.

Discussion and conclusion

The results of this study show that there are statistically significant differences in certain aspects of the academic staff's performance in the teaching and research areas between PRU and PU. In terms of number of research projects (3), the number of international academic publications (5) and the number of international conference presentation (7), PRU's academic staff's performance is significantly better than that of PU. Brimble (1999), who performed a similar study, revealed that by introducing a contract-basis of employment private universities have provided higher salaries in return for the higher quality of lecturing, research and publications from the faculty. He had concluded that this type of competitive environment and demands for accountability are contributing factors encouraging the faculty to produce more publications than other leading public universities.

Difference in status could also explain academic staff's performance in the areas of teaching and research, as an PRUs, has been run under an administrative system of its own making. Being out of government bureaucratic system, it has independence to decide administrative and management affairs, including the staff working conditions that are most suitable for their missions, natures and needs. Specific incentives and unprecedented practices that are not available in the government bureaucratic system, for example, serious evaluation of work performances (through a contracted employment system) have been implemented in PRUs. Having greater autonomy, PRU has applied a private-style managerial approach, which is accompanied by factors such as efficiency and productivity. Being autonomous universities provides PRUs with a chance to improve their efficiency and productivity in terms of teaching and research. Thus, the performance-based evaluations and competitive working conditions that

have been employed in PRUs augment the staff efficiency and productivity. Additionally, under its own salary scale, PRUs can attract competent lecturers with higher salaries as well. Therefore, it can be concluded that the status difference results in to difference in academic performance. Being out of government bureaucracy provides PRUs with greater autonomy and specific eligibilities that under-bureaucrat public universities cannot afford. Furthermore, it is expected that these special treatments will bring about efficiency in PRUs.

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