

## Obstacles Hindering the Effective Governance of Universities in Uganda

S. Asiimwe and G.M. Steyn

*Department of Educational Leadership and Management, University of South Africa,  
PO Box 392, Pretoria, 0003, South Africa*

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**ABSTRACT** There has been global emphasis on improving the ability of universities to cope with the challenges of the 21st century. This article focuses on the obstacles hindering the effective governance of universities in Uganda and reports on a section of a doctoral thesis on developing and sustaining effective governance of universities in Uganda. The study adopted a mixed method approach involving both public and private universities. Phase 1 was a quantitative design while phase 2 employed a qualitative research design. The study revealed that the key obstacles to university governance in Uganda were government interference, bureaucracy, lack of commitment, conflicting values, inadequate funding and poor remuneration. The study recommends the following: (1) Universities should be given more operational autonomy and be more accountable within the Ugandan policy framework. (2) Governance challenges be reduced by maximising delegation and decision-making, increasing governance financing and balancing bureaucracy in management. (3) Appropriate structures, systems, processes and procedures for decision-making and implementation are required. (4) A mechanism for funding universities should be developed both internally and externally.

### INTRODUCTION

Studies show that there has been a renewed interest in the governance of universities and an increasing demand from governments and communities to improve the quality and accountability of universities (Trends in Higher Education Governance 2009; García-Aracil and Palomares-Montero 2010: 217; Brown 2011: 53; Marshall et al. 2011: 87). Moreover, the current global environment in which universities operate and the academic enterprise itself have changed dramatically over the past three decades. Many challenges have also been presented in the way in which universities are governed, managed and held accountable (Coaldrake et al. 2003: 8; Baldwin 2009: 93; Brown 2011: 55; Garrett and Pooch 2011: 889; Marshall et al. 2011: 89). This explains why there have been calls for adopting corporate management of universities, greater instrumentalism in curricula for workforce skilling of graduates, growth in student enrolment, and a change in the nature of academic work itself (García-Aracil and Palomares-Montero 2010: 218; Brown 2011: 54; Vidovich and Currie 2011).

Marshall et al. (2011: 89) believe that “[e]ffective leadership and management at all levels of higher education institutions are integral to institutional quality and enhanced innovation”. This is in line with the view of Baldwin

(2009: 94) who believes that academics play a crucial role in the success of universities, but that governance is required for the infrastructure and the support to realise quality and innovation. He explicitly states that governance is “the glue that holds the university together” (Baldwin 2009: 94). The challenges facing universities could be reduced by enhancing the ability of governance to sustain and strengthen the essential nature of the university and facilitate responsiveness to the needs of the people (Baldwin 2009: 93). However, to achieve this, the environment, in particular the governance under which universities operate, needs to be clearly understood.

Few studies have delved deeper into the challenges facing universities in Africa (Kezer 2008: 407), and Uganda in particular. Cloete et al. (2011) studied universities and economic development, while Bisaso (2010) analysed organisational responses to public sector changes at the Makerere University. Baine (2010) examined ways in which the privatisation of education affected the search for gender justice in Uganda’s higher education. Onsongo (2009) studied the outcomes of affirmative action policies aimed at improving access for women students to university education in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, while the state of higher education and training in Uganda is described in the Report by the

National Council for Higher Education in Uganda (National Council for Higher Education 2010). This study reports on a section of a doctoral thesis on developing and sustaining effective governance of universities in Uganda (Asiimwe 2012) and addresses the following main research question: What were the obstacles hindering the effective governance of Ugandan universities? Chacha (2001: 7) argues that the experience witnessed in many African universities during the recent past has underscored the need for better governance of universities in terms of efficiency, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and flexibility. This would enable universities to respond more effectively to the diverse and continuously changing needs of students.

At independence in 1962, Uganda had a successful higher education system, attracting many students from neighbouring countries (Musisi 2003: 10). However, the economic and political crises that occurred in the subsequent years damaged the higher education system and created problems of financing, quality and educational relevance (Musisi 2003: 10; Eupal 2009). It is political tyranny (1971–1979) and instability (1980–1985) in particular that led to a decline in educational quality and which explains why Uganda's higher education lost its competitive edge (Eupal 2009). Since 1986, a number of reforms have been undertaken to reverse this decline including liberalisation of the education sector, adoption of alternative financing strategies, the offering of demand-driven courses as well as legislative and administrative changes (Bisaso 2010: 343). Through an Act of Parliament, the National Council for Higher Education was established to regulate higher education and to ensure relevant and quality education (Eupal 2009; Bunoti 2010: 2). Two policy instruments have been introduced to change Uganda's higher education system: (1) The Education Strategic Investment Plan (1998–2003) and (2) The Education Sector Strategic Plan (2009–2015) which aim to modernise and diversify Uganda's education for the sake of competitiveness, service orientation and relevance to society, and Uganda's development objectives (Bunoti 2010: 2).

Presently, Uganda has seven public universities that are funded by the state and fully owned by it and about 24 private universities (National Council for Higher Education 2010: 9).

The university management in Uganda is guided by structures which provide the legal and organisational framework within which administrative decisions are made. These structures set the extent and limits of power of various players in the administration of the university institution. However, since 2004, a number of Ugandan universities have faced challenges like failure to pay lecturers on time, underfunding of research, high turnover of experienced professors, crumbling physical infrastructure, strikes by lecturers and students, poor international ratings and a lack of teaching materials among others (Kasozo 2003: 5). Several arguments have been put forward to explain this situation like poor governance, underfunding, business pressure more especially for the private universities and profit motivation.

### Theoretical Framework

A number of scholarly studies have been done on the concept of university governance (Asimiran 2009: 89; Trends in Higher Education Governance 2009). Relevant to university governance, five specific models were adopted for this study, namely the shared model, collegial model, political model, bureaucratic model and corporate model of governance (Trends in Higher Education Governance 2009). This study builds on the mentioned university governance models and organisational management theories as they relate to practical governance of universities.

Shared governance is based on the core values of informal and inclusive decision-making, transparency and clarity of operations and decision-making, open lines of communication between and among all components and members of the university, accountability, mutual respect and trust (Coaldrake et al. 2003: 56; Lapworth 2004: 314). Shared governance incorporates four representative bodies: the university council, the faculty senate, the staff senate and the student governance association. Shared governance also reflects and enhances mutual respect and trust in the university community for the contribution that its members bring to the educational enterprise (Kezer and Eckel 2004: 371–375; Shattock 2005: 26).

Trakman (2008: 66–70) and Kogan (2002: 40) considered the collegial model as the most reasonable instrument for a university. This model

looks at consensus in decision-making, professional authority of academics and human education. The model rests on the assumption that the university is a collegium or a community of scholars and is to be governed according to the collegiality principles and freedom that is given to university members (Ansari 2004: 9). Kezer and Eckel (2004: 282) postulate that effective success of university governance depends on collegial relationship and mutual respect among the faculty, professionals, support staff, students, administrators and representatives of external entities.

According to Altbach (2007: 19–20), a political model is based on three theoretical sources, namely conflict theory, community power theory and interest group theory. This model suggests that in analysing governance, the focus should be on organisational social structure, on interest articulation dynamics, on the legislative process and on the execution of policy. There are political activities operating, especially in the policymaking processes within the university which shape and influence university performance (Altbach 2007: 19–20; Asimiran 2009: 16).

Baird (2007: 115) postulates that the corporate model views the university as a business entity. This model looks at a university from the perspective of market orientation, that is the university is established to respond to the needs of the world around it. Chandan (2005: 35) and Baird (2007: 115) suggest that a university is established as a corporation and university education is regarded as a business in which the offered programmes are related to the industrial demands and market needs. The profit-making objective guides a university's functions and academics facilitate this objective.

Trakman (2008: 670) citing Lambardi et al. (2002) argues that one of the traditional models describing university governance is the bureaucratic model. This model hinges on the bureaucratic theory of Max Weber and focuses on hierarchy, tied together by formal chains of command, communication, organisational goals, or predetermined rules and regulations, and on maximising efficiency (Hall and Symes 2005: 212). They suggest that bureaucracy should focus on the tenure system, method of appointment, salary as rational form of payment, career-exclusiveness, lifestyle centred in the organisational culture, acceptance of rank and file, and competency as the basis for promotion.

These five mentioned models were derived by scholars to portray governance as exercised and comparatively perceived (Allport 2001: 6–10; Hall and Symes 2005: 212). Each model has its theoretical arguments based on scholarly work. It was important for this study to identify which model described the Ugandan obstacles faced.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a mixed design method combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The mixed methods have particular value when trying to solve a problem in a complex educational context (Amin 2005: 547; Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2005: 11; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2008: 101). Bergman (2010: 172) in particular states: "Mixed methods research is eminently suited for exploring variations in the construction of meaning of concepts in relation to how respondents, for instance, make sense of their experiences or report on attitudes in interviews or questionnaires, respectively." Such a systematic inquiry into participants' variations of social constructions of meaning in the interviews and the survey of respondents in the questionnaires validate the research instruments and also produce supplementary results which enrich the overall findings in the study (Bergman 2010: 172; Brown 2011). To address the research question, this study was done in two phases which included phase 1 (quantitative research design) and phase 2 (qualitative research design). The study relied more on qualitative design but was complemented and supplemented by the quantitative method. This approach emphasised the views and experiences which involved subjective and bias elements as perceived by the participants in their life worlds (Amin 2005: 546; Delliger and Leech 2007: 327).

In phase 1, quantitative data from university administrators including the vice-chancellors, registrars, deans, heads of department, academic staff and students (Sarantakos 2005: 240) were collected. The quantitative instruments on a five-point Likert scale were used to measure inter alia the obstacles affecting the effectiveness of governance in the sampled universities. The quantitative data collection preceded the qualitative phase in order to explore and test variables (Robert and Sari 2003: 43). In phase 2, the qualitative research design collected, described, explored

and showed relationships between events and meanings to increase an understanding of the phenomenon of university governance (Patton 2002: 341; Amin 2005: 186). Interviews and focus group discussions were undertaken utilising interview schedules and discussion guides to elicit data from participants. The research questions in this study were concerned with the way in which governance occurred in the universities.

For the purpose of this study two public universities (A and E) and three private universities (B, C and D) in Uganda were selected. The universities were selected purposively to obtain information from public and private universities in order to compare their governance practices. Respondents in the quantitative phase included the vice-chancellor, the registrar, a dean, and a board member from each university. The number of respondents in the different groups from each of these universities depended on the size of the university. The questionnaire design was informed by reflections from the literature review, theoretical orientation and conceptual framework. It aimed at capturing the gist of the study objectives so that responses would answer specific objectives or part of them and provide a logical flow of responses. The questionnaire was piloted on two universities for the sake of feasibility, convenience and cost-effectiveness (Amin 2005: 269), and was adapted according to the recommendations of the respondents.

Purposive sampling in the qualitative phase was done by identifying influential individuals whose work was related to the university's governance or whose activities influenced governance in the university (see Table 1). Careful consideration was given to university officers especially the administrators who had served at these universities for more than two years. Semi-structured individual interviews were then conducted with the top administrators, including the vice-chancellors and the registrars, to obtain both clearly defined information and to give room for participants to respond. The interview guide was also structured to reflect those results from the quantitative phase that required clarity. Focus group interviews were conducted with the different groups of participants (the deans, the heads of departments, academic staff and the students) and these interviews were recorded.

**Table 1: Participants in the qualitative phase**

| <i>Participants</i>  | <i>University</i> | <i>Number of participants</i> |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Heads of Departments | A                 | 5                             |
|                      | B                 | 4                             |
|                      | C                 | 3                             |
|                      | D                 | 2                             |
|                      | E                 | 2                             |
| Subtotal             |                   | 15                            |
| Academic Staff       | A                 | 7                             |
|                      | B                 | 6                             |
|                      | C                 | 4                             |
|                      | D                 | 5                             |
|                      | E                 | 3                             |
| Subtotal             |                   | 25                            |
| Students             | A                 | 15                            |
|                      | B                 | 10                            |
|                      | C                 | 5                             |
|                      | D                 | 5                             |
|                      | E                 | 5                             |
| Subtotal             |                   | 25                            |
| Total                |                   | 80                            |

Before the quantitative data analysis, the data were checked for mistakes to avoid the distortion of the results of the statistical analysis. The responses were then coded and analysed using a statistical package for social scientists (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including tallying of frequencies in the calculation of percentages, and central tendency summaries were used for data analysis. During qualitative data analysis, all the data from interviewees, field notes and relevant documents were first reviewed in a general way to obtain a sense of the data. Data were then coded for analysis according to the method of qualitative data analysis described by Gay and Arasian (2000: 239). During this process, patterns of data were identified, and descriptions were developed and interpreted to generate meaning (Amin 2005: 324). A literature control was conducted to identify similarities and differences between, and contributions of this study toward, previous research conducted. This provided structure to the data gathered and allowed for triangulation between the various research instruments used and for member-checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings. Compliance with ethical issues was done by seeking the consent of respondents and participants to ensure privacy and confidentiality of their identity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Uganda has seven public universities and around 24 private universities across the five

regions. As mentioned before, this study focused on two public and three private universities in the central region of Uganda in identifying the obstacles in implementing effective governance in Ugandan universities. In phase 1 the key constructs relating to obstacles in implementing effective university governance were examined to ascertain the level of agreement and disagreement among respondents (Table 2).

**Table 2: Obstacles faced by universities**

|                                                 | <i>N</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Standard deviation</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Internal politics                               | 98       | 4.19        | 1.367                     |
| Lack of commitment                              | 98       | 4.36        | 1.038                     |
| Bureaucracy in management                       | 98       | 4.56        | 0.85                      |
| Conflicting values in the institution           | 98       | 4.29        | 1.284                     |
| Centralisation of authority and decision-making | 98       | 4.28        | 1.361                     |
| Insufficient financing to implement decisions   | 98       | 4.18        | 1.334                     |
| Financing higher education                      | 98       | 4.18        | 1.365                     |
| Insufficient remuneration and low morale        | 98       | 4.27        | 1.359                     |
| Globalisation and increased competition         | 98       | 4.48        | 1.613                     |

There was general agreement with mean scores above 4.10 that university governance in the sampled universities in Uganda was affected by the abovementioned obstacles. Respondents revealed that universities were affected by internal politics as reflected in the mean score of 4.19. The response indicated that universities in Uganda were challenged by government interference that influenced university governance. This is in accordance with Chacha (2001: 6) and Nadeem (2008: 20) who state that lack of free internal participation leads to poor performance in universities while limited participation of employees leads to a lack of commitment. The lack of commitment reflected in the mean score of 4.36 indicated strong general agreement among the respondents. The mean score of 4.56 indicated that bureaucracy was yet another obstacle in the effective governance of universities which reduced individual morale and performance. The response to the statement conflicting values (4.29) showed that conflict was

present in universities due to a diversity of interests. Respondents revealed that centralisation of authority and decision-making (4.28) was an obstacle in effective university governance. Such a form of governance reduces staff freedom which existed in many universities in Uganda. The table also indicates that there were insufficient funds to implement decisions (4.18) and that both public and private universities were faced with the huge challenge of a lack of finances as reflected in the mean score of 4.18. In line with this response was a strong agreement among the respondents (4.27) that there was insufficient remuneration and low morale in universities. Globalisation registered the highest mean score (4.48) indicating that all the universities were affected by this challenge.

Results from phase 2 revealed that participants had various views on the type and impact of obstacles to university governance in Uganda. In general, participants echoed the views of respondents in phase 1 that the key obstacles to university governance in Uganda were government interference, bureaucracy, conflicting values, inadequate funding and poor remuneration. The data analysis in phase 2 revealed that participants had various views on the obstacles as they affect university governance. The following main categories emerged from the data: institutional governance, the internal institutional environment and insufficient funding.

### **Institutional Governance**

Findings from Table 2 indicate that there was a lot of bureaucracy in the management of universities. The vice-chancellor of university (A) succinctly remarked: "The government's bureaucracy has been found to be an obstacle to university governance." The comment by a dean at university (A) elaborated on the previous comment: "Government sets all the rules and regulations and we are not allowed to raise the issues freely and both public and private universities are facing this problem of raising issues affecting our universities." However the bureaucracy was not limited to the government, but also influenced the governance at public universities. As regards the influence of the government's bureaucracy, the vice-chancellor of university C noted: "In terms of governance, in our country there is no university governance. There is a lot of internal and external political

interference. For better university governance, politics must be separated from the universities. There is no academic freedom, no delegation and political interference or threats are usually not good for the emergence of free, original, creative and motivational thoughts. If our universities are going to play a catalytic role in transforming our country, they must exercise academic freedom."

The way in which bureaucracy manifested in universities was explained by the participants. A board member from public university (A) said: "The chairman and the secretary are obsessed with document generation and red tape though never referred to them when implementing decisions." Similar feelings were expressed by a dean from university (C) who remarked: "Minutes are a necessary formality to indicate that documents existed and were circulated to members."

The responses of participants showed that Ugandan universities' administrators, academic staff and students did not have authority and decision-making powers in matters concerning university governance. According to them decision-making processes became more controlled by executives instead of being participative, collegial and open to scrutiny. This explained why one dean from university (C) remarked: "We are not involved in mechanisms for consultations, consensus building, policy options, open discussion, delegation and spread of authority and concessions and implementation processes."

The deans from the private universities (C) and (D) remarked that everybody should understand his or her contribution toward university governance. Only then would it be possible for a university's governance to 'improve'. A dean at university (D) observed: "In our university, deans and heads of department are not given authority in deciding on some programmes like staff selection, planning and allocating budgets, formulating the academic policies and determining goals and work plans for the university." What exacerbated the situation was the ignorance of staff with regard to certain policies and rules in the universities. A dean of a private university (D) observed: "Our rules are not written down and it is hard to follow what is not written." Similar feelings were expressed by the Registrar who remarked: "It is important to understand rules and regulations but for our university, it is different. As long as the vice-chancellor

is there, there are no rules governing the university. Such a situation creates confusion, lowers staff morale, subverts staff energy from the noble cause of academic service delivery and consequently leads to poor university performance."

Centralisation was not only limited to the highest authority at universities, but also came from the government as a dean at public university (A) remarked: "The rules and regulations are set from the centre and we have limited or no direction to determine what may satisfy our particular and peculiar needs." This was confirmed by a dean at university (B) who remarked: "We are not allowed to raise our opinions without consultation with the vice-chancellor ... decisions and authority are centralised." Similarly, the Registrar at university (C) criticised their university's governance and said: "Our structures are not well organised ... the vice-chancellor is everything because he chooses the board, the council and is the final man in every aspect." Additionally, the deans and heads of department from university (C) remarked: "A lack of delegation led to ineffective university governance, since the participation by staff and other stakeholders in their university was limited. In this regard students from university (D) complained: "Lack of involvement of students and administrators in the decision process leads to negative reactions and hostile reception of university policy positions and that's why strikes are now common in our universities." As confirmed by Gayle et al. (2003: 84), centralisation of authority and decision-making had led to the exclusion of departmental-level decision-making where academic interests were being subordinated to the economics of management.

The findings show that although there were structures and bodies in place for shared governance, little stakeholder participation occurred in universities, which is considered to be an obstacle to effective university governance. Gayle et al. (2003: 35) are of the view that shared governance is at the heart of any great university in that it reflects a general commitment on the part of staff, students and administration to work together to strengthen and enhance the university. Shared governance also reflects and enhances mutual respect and trust in the university community for the contribution that all of its members bring to the educational enterprise. Likewise, there was little evidence that the colle-

gial model of governance was present, a model which is considered as the most reasonable instrument for university governance (Kogan 2002: 40; Trakman 2008: 66–70). According to Kezar and Eckel (2004: 390), the collegial model favours full participation of the academic community in decision-making processes.

The findings reveal that the political model and bureaucratic model played a more prominent role in university governance. The political model in particular reflects the dynamics caused by different groups who struggle for resources, recognition and influence within the universities. The political theory explains why university governance has to deal with different interest groups in the structure and balance of political interests before they become an obstacle in the effective governance of universities as revealed in this study. Furthermore, although larger universities reveal bureaucratic characteristics, an overemphasis of the model could be considered to be an obstacle to the effective governance of universities. Weber (1952) cited in Chandan (2005: 35–36) argues that bureaucracy has become associated with red tape and excessive rules and regulations and hence delays in getting changes implemented. From this perspective, it may be argued that authority is an important factor that works in the political model, but that it could be an obstacle affecting governance of universities more especially by reducing internal institutional efficiency and effectiveness.

### **The Internal Institutional Environment**

As indicated in Table 2, participants acknowledged the influence of internal politics in their institutions. Findings revealed that participants could not keep some matters confidential which led to internal politics, and which negatively influenced the culture of universities. A dean at university (C) remarked: “Our organisation is full of grapevines and our tongues are not controlled and there is no policy on confidential matters.”

Conflicting values as indicated in Table 2 was a threat to university governance and reduced the interests and morale of staff, students and other stakeholders as confirmed by Kogan (2000: 490). This was evidenced by the agreement of the participants that there were conflicts between managements and the academic cultures

which caused tensions and distrust within the staff and the administration. In this regard a dean at university (E) observed: “I have worked in a multinational culture and everywhere there is conflict ... Workers should know what brought them to work and they should be governed by the rules and regulations of the university.” Similarly, a head of department at university (D) commented: “If the university had written down by-laws, known by the key staff, it would have greatly improved governance.” Conflicting views made it difficult for stakeholders to pursue and achieve educational goals in their institutions. The findings are confirmed by Chacha (2007: 5–10) and Kogan (2002: 49) that conflicting values can lead to a great challenge in implementing effective governance in universities.

The commitment of staff as revealed in Table 2 was considered as yet another serious obstacle in effective university governance. These findings are also confirmed by Obondoh (2000: 3–10), Henkel (2000: 28) and Kasozi (2003: 85) who state that a lack of commitment can lead to crisis management in universities. Participants believed that most of the administrators of universities, more especially from private universities, were not committed to their work, the reason being that in private universities there was mismatch between authorities of primary management units. This view was expressed by a dean at university (C) who remarked: “Lack of commitment had created management crisis in university governance.” Its effect was revealed by a dean at this same university: “The academic registrar’s report about the insufficiency of furniture, poor grade exams, lecturers not marking, cheating in exams and time management was recurring in our minutes.”

Participants believed that a lack of commitment reduced decision-making and policy formulation and led to a lack of mechanisms for consultation, policy options, delegation and open discussions. Similar feelings were expressed by a dean at university (D) who remarked: “The staff lack creativity and innovativeness and to be committed everybody must know the vision and mission of the university ... Governance deals with a clear vision, role and instruction and all the workers have to walk the talk and everybody must know the mission of the university in order to be committed.”

Kogan (2000: 490), Scott (2001: 142), Kasozi (2003: 28) and Musisi (2003: 20) contend that

bureaucracy, conflicting values, lack of involvement of staff and insufficient remuneration reduce morale and interest of staff and also cause disequilibrium in an institution which could be considered as obstacles in effective governance of universities. The shared governance model, of which there is little evidence, in particular calls for shared responsibilities as such a model addresses the aim of a university. The shared governance model seeks to strike a balance between corporation and collegiality through five important groups in the university: the strengthened steering core, the council, the senate, the academic departments and the executives are linked together in a square-based pyramid working together to govern the university.

The findings are also supported by the political model that shows that the existence of subunits in universities emphasises the political nature of universities because they are political and can affect the effectiveness of governance (Birnbaum in Kezar and Eckel 2004: 385). As indicated by Kezar and Eckel (2004: 386) this study revealed that although a political model can work successfully in one setting, it does not mean that the model will work successfully in another setting. Moreover, the findings show that stakeholders searched for power because the group that possesses such power was assumed to have the ability to control important processes and activities (Gayle et al. 2003: 87). It is argued that in a competitive global market, organisations need to move toward participative management, teamwork, employee innovativeness and creativity as revealed in the corporate and collegial models.

### **Insufficient Finances**

Findings indicated that financing higher institutions was a huge problem. The vice-chancellor at university (C) said: "We have limited infrastructures because of this problem [poor finances] and most of our programmes are not catered for because of failure to get financing." A similar complaint was expressed by the vice-chancellor of university (B) who remarked: "All universities are experiencing financial challenges, the government's contribution is limited, students are not paying the unit cost, government subventions are less than what universities request and what is approved is not what is remitted and this problem has affected us in private

universities." As revealed by the findings, many of the funding sources of these universities were weak while the cost of higher education especially university education was very high. The increasing enrolment in government universities was not matched by a corresponding expansion of facilities as confirmed by Kasozi (2003: 30–33).

Despite shrinking financial assistance from governments, universities were expected to offer better programmes using better facilities and come up with research outputs that could better impact on economic development and that were able to remedy social ills. What was clear from the responses was that resources were shrinking in many institutions which led to control of resources at the highest managerial level possible at universities. Public universities almost exclusively depended on the government for remunerating their staff and insufficient remuneration led to a problem of lack of quality managers in universities. A head of department at university (C) observed: "Insufficient remuneration has led to poor governance of these universities." Accordingly, a similar complaint was expressed by a head of department at university (A) who said: "Quality managers are leaving the universities due to poor pay, lack of guaranteed security and perhaps early retirement." Similar feelings were expressed by a dean at the private university (D) who remarked: "Universities experience financial challenges and that's why salaries are not increased and the culture of not paying is slowly but surely turning many academic staff into knowledge hawkers and poachers." Yet another participant from this private university expressed this view: "Budgets in our university have no meaning because workers are not paid in time and some of us are moving to public universities where the budgets are respected and workers are paid."

Kasozi (2003: 68) and Shattock (2006: 40–44) confirm that insufficient funding in poor countries has opened up local academic markets to well-funded global universities which has increased competition among universities. According to participants, globalisation became a threat to university governance especially in their country. Powerful overseas on-line colleges and universities became global suppliers of education which blurred the borders that divide nations. The findings by Chacha (2007: 8) confirm that globalisation has affected effective gover-

nance and there is a threat that small universities would collapse because of fierce competition. In this regard a vice-chancellor at university (C) commented: "Because of global trends, we are likely to see more and more international universities starting off-shore programmes and campuses in Uganda and ICT capacities are expanding open learning opportunities; this may affect us who have limited technology." Young and poorly financed universities were threatened as they could not match the systems, structures, resources and processes of these more effective universities. A similar sentiment was raised by Kasozi (2003: 28) that Ugandan universities have failed to put in place good systems and structures that can deliver the quality of education and educational facilities of world-class universities due to a lack of funding caused by insufficient funds. As such, quality students and lecturers are attracted to these universities; and so the funds arising from supporting such students or lecturers in the form of grants, among others, need to increase. In most universities in Uganda, insufficient funding has demotivated the best academic staff and has opened them up to being poached by more resource-endowed developed countries. Shattock (2006: 40) and Chacha (2007: 8) observed that globalisation has created a borderless academic realm where well-established universities out-compete young and/or poorly financed universities.

The political model helped to explain the financial challenges faced by Ugandan universities. Osipian (2008: 36) observes that budget redistribution and revenue regulations are addressed not only by central government but by the different stakeholders in universities, which did not occur in this study. According to Trakman (2008: 68–69), the corporate governance model concentrates on the fiscal and managerial responsibility of those charged with governance of the university and is based on a business-case model for universities. The reality as revealed by the findings was that with insufficient funds, the effectiveness of university governance is affected. Some findings may not be implemented regardless of corporate feasibility.

From the foregoing, universities in Uganda have had serious challenges coping with governance expectations of different stakeholders. Participants indicated that the above obstacles had led to low academic creativity, lack of staff commitment, management crises, high academic staff turnover and the encroachment of the Ugan-

dan academic space by multinational universities either operating offshore or establishing physical or virtual campuses. Various studies support the findings of the study. For example, Kasozi (2003: 97) contends that decisions and authority or delegation should be shared among the university stakeholders for better university governance. Gayle et al. (2003: 85) argue that bureaucracy may cause disequilibrium in university establishments and disequilibrium leads to tying up power in decision-making processes in university governance. Chacha (2007: 7–8) confirms that insufficient remuneration leads to low staff morale, lack of commitment, part-timing (academic hawking), high staff turnover and low levels of efficiency hence poor governance. Kasozi (2003: 28) contends that due to limited funding, most Ugandan universities have been forced to operate under very tight budgets with inadequate facilities, systems and structures that cannot support a world-class academic environment. Chacha (2007: 8) confirms that globalisation has affected effective governance and there is a threat that small universities would collapse because of competition.

## CONCLUSION

The study revealed that Ugandan universities faced a number of obstacles which were limiting the effective governance of the universities. The obstacles interfering with university governance included internal politics, lack of commitment, bureaucracy in management, conflicting values and cultures in the institution, centralisation of authority and decision-making, insufficient funds, insufficient remuneration and the effect of globalisation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It was clear from the findings that a holistic approach is necessary to address the obstacles identified in the study. These recommendations provide higher education institution planners with insight into how to address the obstacles in similar types of institutions. The following recommendations are made:

- ♦ Universities should be given more operational autonomy and in return there should be more accountability measures within the allowable key policy framework set by the government. This implies organised sys-

- tems, inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes mediated by stakeholders' expectations.
- Governance challenges like internal politics, lack of commitment, bureaucracy in management, conflicting values in the institution, centralisation of authority and decision-making, insufficient financing, globalisation, financing higher education and insufficient remuneration should be reduced by maximising delegation and decision-making, increasing governance financing and balancing bureaucracy in management.
  - Appropriate structures, systems, processes and procedures for decision-making and implementation are required. These should not increase the level of bureaucracy in the organisation but should ensure that there are appropriate provisions to enable administrators and other officers involved in the management of the university to follow prudent methods of work that lead to efficiency and effectiveness.
  - A mechanism for funding universities should be developed both internally and externally. The Ugandan government needs to establish a mechanism of funding critical aspects that are important to universities and to ensuring a culture of accountability: and to this end correct financial behaviour and effective utilisation of funds should be in place. This implies the existence of positive rules and regulations, policies and budgets that will contribute to the systematic improvement of universities.

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