Reimagining the Funding of Higher Education in Uganda

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Abstract

A nation’s survival in the global economy depends on its ability to utilize the available knowledge and resources to address environmental challenges. Higher education is necessary to produce a skilled workforce that can harness technology and innovate to the advantage of the community (World Bank, 2008, McMahon, 2009). However, higher education in developing economies such as Uganda is becoming problematic due to its funding. Public funding for higher education has progressively decreased while the demand for an education that is relevant to individual, national, and global needs prevails. The challenge is how to balance educational cost and quality with the cumulative demand for access. This calls for flexible funding approaches so that the value and benefits of higher education can be equitably allocated. Through reviewing literature, this paper explores substitute (to public subsidies), strategies to the funding of higher education in Uganda. I develop a description of each approach analyzing its strengths and weaknesses, and constraints and supports. Focus is on how institutions can manage tuition, and generate supplemental revenue through diversification. I conclude that, given the increasing fiscal pressure coupled with the increased demand for access, higher education in Uganda can no longer be dependent on shrinking government subsidy. Nor can it be left to competitive market forces. Alternative, practical ways of funding higher education must be explored.

*Key Words:* reimagining, funding, higher education, Uganda
Reimagining the Funding of Higher Education in Uganda

Strong internal and external forces driving change within higher education worldwide are altering its nature—its students, faculty, curriculum, pedagogy, technology, customer demands, finances, and its role in society (Rowley Lujan & Dolence, 1997; Edge, 2004; Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005; Fathi & Wilson, 2009). Rowley, et al. (1997) describe higher education as “a system under fire” (p.3). That is possibly because currently, higher education is facing challenges regarding the nature of students, the curriculum, pedagogy, learning, customer expectations, technology, and finances. Furthermore, with the advent of the information age, the academe no longer holds the monopoly of knowledge creation and dissemination, implying that it can easily lose its viability (Rowley, et al., 1997). Altbach, et al., (2005) affirm that public expectations and funding for higher education are fundamentally changing, and that internal and external changes within the academe are altering its “character—its students, faculty, governance, curriculum and very place in society” (p.115). Perceptibly, higher education worldwide is undergoing a period of considerable tension characterized by financial decline, demands for accountability, and ambiguity about educational aims (Altbach, et al., 2005). Weick & Quinn (1999) reiterate that the nature of change in the academe is changing. It is caused by extensive factors, and that the institutions’ viewpoint whether local or global will determinate the rate of change, the inertias discovered, and the accomplishments celebrated.

Higher education in Uganda specifically faces such challenges with greater gravity. For instance, there is a universal shortage of funds, instructional materials and staff; and a lack of maintenance of facilities. The quality of the education is declining, the curricula is becoming obsolete, and employers complain about graduates who cannot carry out even the simplest tasks at work. The workforce skills level is perturbing and partially accounts for the excessive
unemployment statistics (African Economic Outlook, 2014). These challenges may not be true for all institutions in Uganda but generally, finance is a big problem in any consideration of higher education (Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Devarajan, et al., 2011). In Uganda, prevailing circumstances like reduced government subsidies for higher education, and the entry policies to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have made higher education inaccessible to many children from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore policies such as privatization/liberalization, and marketization of higher education have aggravated competition for higher education, both public and private. Meanwhile, the demand for an education relevant to individual, national and global needs endures.

Education is a public good albeit with private benefits, supposed to benefit the whole society. Precisely, higher education matters, and has evolved over time from being the exclusive commodity of the elite to an important component of a nation’s global competitive edge (Barr, 2004). Higher education is distinguished as an instrument of economic growth and an agent of prestigious rewarding personal occupations (Barr, 2005; McMahon, 2009). One function of higher education is to develop a democratic society through meticulously educating all the youth in a nation to become capable and dependable citizens who can conscientiously assume political roles in society. Reversely, denying disadvantaged students higher education denies them the ability to live within the structure of a civilized society, and eliminates the possibility of their ably contributing in even a negligible way to the evolution of their countries (Labaree, 1997).

Similarly, Rawls (1985) advocates fair terms of cooperation and rational advantage or good for each participant in a democracy. This would ensure that disparity is tolerated only if it uplifts the underprivileged and never exploits. A healthy economy depends on a competent workforce; therefore, society must entirely and collectively advance the training of industrious employees.
Selfishness must be minimized as much as possible unless that self-interest can be harnessed for the public good (Labaree, 1997). In that case, hindering poor students from attending higher education, and from amending their social economic status is unfair.

Ultimately, if HEIs in Uganda want to ensure access, equity and quality, they must establish secure funding. Basing on the relationship between mission and money, where the money comes from and where it goes are intimately related to one another. If students pay more, institutions will provide a better experience to students who pay, but what about those who don’t pay? Not only are the familiar patterns of public funding to a small number of students impractical, but they are limiting and discriminating. HEIs can no longer sustain free tuition and free or highly subsidized services. Alternative funding schemes must be instituted (Altbach, 2012). Most discussions about the funding of higher education acknowledge its private and public benefits and the fact that mixed funding is better than exclusively private or public (Woodhall, 2007).

Through reviewing literature, this paper explores alternative (to public subsidies), approaches to the funding of higher education in Uganda. The purpose is to explore at least three substitute innovative and practical methods of funding higher education in Uganda. To develop a full description of each approach analyzing its strengths and weaknesses, constraints and supports, and to recommend policy considerations for future implementation. Emphasis is on how HEIs can diversify revenue sources to ensure the execution and accomplishment of their goals and missions. A presentation of the research questions is followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework. This leads to a brief review of some trends affecting the funding of higher education in Uganda. The analysis of alternative strategies leads to the conclusion that higher education can no longer depend on public funding, and it cannot be left to dynamic environmental forces, revenue sources must be diversified.
Research Questions

The review of literature is guided by the questions below among other issues;

1. With a reduction in public subsidies, what alternative strategies can be employed to the funding of higher education in Uganda?

2. How do these strategies work?

3. What are the supports and constraints of each strategy?

4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each strategy?

5. What policy environments would promote the success of these strategies?

Theoretical Framework

This paper draws from the Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978; Pfeffer). RDT proposes that; resources are vital to the success and survival of institutions, therefore depriving institutions of critical resources causes uncertainty, and threatens institutional existence. In order to survive, institutions must ensure a continuous flow of resources, and institutional administrators must maximally utilize and maintain key resource sources (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978; Pfeffer, 2005; Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004; Jaeger & Thornton, 2005; Carroll & Stater, 2009). Institutions face challenges and vulnerability when resources become scarce, and have to be sought from diverse alternative sources (Jaeger & Thornton, 2005). Therefore, with limited or non-existent alternatives to government appropriations, institutions cannot competently pursue their ideal missions and maybe forced to adopt divergent missions. This may change institutional behavior in undesirable ways, and with inadvertent consequences. Also, public institutions have to contend with the combined challenge of achieving mission-related goals while ensuring sustainable revenue to guarantee
institutional existence. For instance, HEIs are in constant competition with each other for funds especially from tuition and research grants (Weisbrod, et al., 2008; Carroll & Stater, 2009). Another tenet of RDT is that uncertainty or instability concerning a critical resource threatens the existence of institutions because it makes the stakeholders, and customers doubtful about the viability of the institution (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The stakeholders may respond by either abandoning the unstable institution, or by addressing the source of uncertainty.

**Methodology**

Through reviewing literature, my aim is to try and answer the research questions through knowledge reconstruction involving; understanding, clarification and shared meaning (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Nevertheless, it is probable that issues pertaining to the funding of higher education are heavily power-driven. “Things don’t just happen to be the way they are, they have been constructed and reconstructed by people within evolving power laden contexts” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p.20). For instance, at its initial introduction, higher education in Uganda whether private or public was not aimed at communal revolution. It was directed at the affluent who could manage to pay for it. Its major purpose was to meet the human resource needs for the colonial and post-colonial governments (Mayanja, 1998). Therefore, I will also examine the historical, and the predominant philosophies guiding higher education funding policies and strategies; the status quo that isolates and oppresses minorities through repeating dominant ideology; and the categorizations and stereotypes in higher education in Uganda (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). For instance, one key question in the funding of higher education is whether it is a public or private good, and whether it should be individually or collectively funded. Categorizations that give the impression that all students seeking higher education are the same or
similar (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011), when they are actually neither equal nor comparable also need to be probed. A race cannot be judged as fair unless the competitors are on the same footing. Therefore, access to education shouldn’t be based on socio-economic status.

**Trends Affecting Higher Education Funding in Uganda**

**Increased Demand for Higher Education**

There is excessive demand for higher education in Uganda especially because Uganda ranks second among countries with the youngest population in the world. Children aged 0-14 constitute 48.7% of the population, 49.3% of the population are aged 15-64 while those 65+ cover only 2.1% (World Bank, 2015). Furthermore, high fertility rates and the success of universal primary and secondary education has increased the number of young Ugandans seeking higher education. The number of young people who complete secondary school and seek higher education is rising at a rate higher than the current capacity of institutions (Johnstone, 2004; Devarajan, Monga & Zongo, 2011; Sanyal & Johnstone, 2011). The increasing demand for access to higher education stresses the already strained institutional resources. Institutions have had to admit more students than their carrying capacities without additional resources. Funds have in fact reduced as a result of inflation, currency depreciation, financial and administrative unrest, and organizational changes (Teferra & Altbach, 2004).

This unveils the necessity of reconsidering the financing of higher education in Uganda. Given Uganda’s limited tax base and a high dependence on external aid to cover investment budgets, the future looks bleak. The challenge is providing access to quality higher education to a competitive level globally and to satisfy the presented demand (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). Higher education policy therefore needs to address the challenge of satisfying the increasing demand for
higher education while maintaining its quality (Devarajan, et al., 2011). Institutions will require substantial, diverse and enduring sources of revenue (Sanyal & Johnstone, 2011).

**Reduced Public Subsidies**

The major source of higher education funding for Uganda over time has been government. However, governments all over the world are faced with the task of reforming higher education finance in the face of increasing demand for access and diminishing public budgets for education (Woodhall, 2007). Government subsidies for education have become inadequate as higher education has changed from being elite to massive and almost universal. The decline in public funding for higher education has various implications. It may reduce excellence in instruction and research; the ethical and physical health of the academia will be corroded, as well as the general state of the academes (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). As a result of the reduced public support, institutions face various levels of vulnerability which demand policy responses if higher education is to maintain its viability. Since previously, institutions depended rather heavily on public funding, the decline in state financial support means that public institutions must seek alternative sources to preserve stability and be able to prosecute their missions (Wangenge-Ouma & Cloete, 2008). If institutions continue to rely on insufficient public funds, they could compromise quality (Devarajan, et al., 2011).

**Privatization and Marketization of Higher Education**

Higher education in Uganda has grown and expanded with the result that where public institutions are unable to meet the demand, privatization is emerging to cover the demand. Privatization is usually accompanied by marketization—the embracing of free market strategies in the administration of educational institutions (Baine, 2010). Since 1988 when the first private university in Uganda was established by an Act of Parliament, private institutions have expanded
so much that the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act was enacted in 2001 to control the founding and administration of HEIs. Currently in Uganda, the private sector owns 73% while the government owns only 27% of the HEIs (Uganda National Council for Higher Education (UNCHE), 2011). This is worrying because, some privatization is useful and necessary to institutional funding in as far as it makes funds available from those who can afford to pay. However, excessive privatization limits access for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. In essence “too much privatization is like more water for a drowning man” (McMahon, 2009, p.326), it puts higher education whether public or private out of the reach of disadvantaged students. Furthermore, according to McMahon’s (2009) assessment of the benefits of higher education 48% of the profits are private while 52% are public. Accordingly only 48% of the costs of higher education should be borne privately and 52% publicly. With almost 100% of the cost being borne privately by private students at public institutions and all students at private institutions; privatization in Uganda is going beyond the proper balance between individual and public funding. The distribution of costs does not align with the expected benefits. That constitutes financial and civic inefficiency (McMahon, 2009). Privatization could therefore have implications on the capability of institutions to increase, or preserve the quality of education, and access to students from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Public institutions faced with the decline in government support develop market and market like behavior (marketization). They commercially vend a variety of products and services to gain income (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004). Competitive pressures are driving public institutions to become more like their for-profit counterparts as their sources of revenue shift from government to private donations. The nature of faculty public service work is shifting in scope, scale, process, and audience due to the scarcity of resources (Jaeger & Thornton, 2005). Marketization is
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gradually blurring the lines between the public and private, and the for-profit and not-for-profit institutions. It is also shifting the practices and priorities in the academy from knowledge expansion to prospective revenue generation (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004). Institutions are prioritizing revenue generation over the core educational activities of the academy, and institutional and faculty focus, and concentration are being diverted from the mission and activities of higher education (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004). Both privatization and marketization could constitute a failing of the system in terms of quality and/or accessibility with severe outcomes in the future (Ehrenberg, 2006).

**Substitute Strategies to Funding Higher Education in Uganda**

**Tuition Management**

Tuition is apparently the most direct, reliable and economically viable source of funding higher education worldwide (Johnstone, 2004; Weisbrod, Ballou, & Asch, 2008). However, Uganda must ensure that the type of tuition fee policy adopted somehow ensures access for students from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Reliance on tuition as a source of revenue should cautiously consider some pertinent questions. Such as, who should pay? How much should they pay? And when should they pay? Uganda being a poor country, making students to pay tuition and fees presents a hurdle that not only limits access to education but also hinders potential influences on the country’s economic, social, and political growth (Niwagaba, 2012). Over 90% of the students studying at public universities and 100% at private universities in Uganda are private students who have to pay their fees. For most undergraduate students, the main source of fees is their parents or guardians. Most Ugandans are subsistence farmers earning less than $100 per month. Majority of the working class in Uganda earn only about $200 (net salary) a month. Therefore the annual income for most Ugandans is about $1200 (CampusEye, 2015) Meanwhile,
the average tuition at universities in Uganda, is about $600 (tuition and functional fees) per semester minus other school going expenses such as accommodation, meals, books, transportation, etc. (CampusEye, 2015). So for an average Ugandan to send their child to university, they might have to spend the whole year paying tuition. The concern is whether institutions can institute policies that would enable average Ugandans to send their children to university (CampusEye, 2015). For instance recently students at Makerere University, the oldest public university in Uganda were demonstrating over a tuition payment policy that requires students to pay 100% of tuition within the first six weeks from the start of the semester. The policy would prevent students from doing their course works or sit exams unless they had paid all their tuition fees. It would in essence prevent many Ugandans from accessing higher education.

In the past, Uganda, has adopted the dual-track tuition-fee policy. Under this policy, students whose examination scores fall below the cut-off point for the highly competitive free government places but who are deemed able to do university-level work, and able to pay are allowed to join the university as private entrants (Johnstone, 2004). The challenge with the dual track option is that it is highly qualified and merit based and therefore selective which may isolate the most vulnerable students. Mayanja (1998) reiterates that a great fee paying primary and secondary education system stratifies educational prospects early in the system excluding many disadvantaged students except the few with exceptional educational ability. Thus although the dual-track tuition-fee policy may be useful in realizing tangible income it has disturbing consequences on equity (Marcucci, Johnstone, & Ngolovoi, 2008).

Cost sharing is another strategy that has been employed in Uganda. Cost sharing is a shift from institutions exclusively relying on public subsidies for finances to parents and/or students paying tuition fees and/or “user charges” to cover some of the costs previously borne by
governnent (Johnstone, 2004). It is based on the neo-liberal economic argument of equity or fairness, that is, higher education bears both private and public benefits and therefore it's cost should be proportionately shared (Johnstone, 2004; McMahon, 2009). However, cost sharing leads to rises in college costs and tuition prices because it necessitates a rise in tuition that exceeds institutional costs. It is “a form of zero-sum game, where the loss of funding from one source calls for an increase from one or more of the other sources” (Sanyal & Johnstone, 2011, p.160). So while the public share reduces, the parent’s and/or student’s shares rises proportionally (Johnstone, 2004). It further necessitates enrollment management in order to increase the net tuition revenue by targeting students who can pay high tuition, and are therefore more useful to the institutions (Johnstone 2001). As institutions depend more and more on tuition, the cost of higher education is skyrocketing, and as this trend continues many students especially those from low social economic backgrounds are being driven out of higher education (Doyle & Delaney, 2009).

Similarly tuition fees can only work effectively if needy students receive some sort of financial aid. Loans, the commonest form of financial aid is not new to Africa and loan schemes take different forms depending on the goal. Student loan schemes if well-structured can accomplish a blend of purposes for institutions such as; “revenue diversification or income generation; university system expansion; equity, or the targeted enhancement of participation by the poor; specialized manpower needs; and the financial benefit of students generally, expressing their greater time preference for present money” (Johnstone, 2004, p.24). That notwithstanding, student loan schemes sometimes fail especially when it comes to cost recovery.

The student loan scheme might be problematic in Uganda for several reasons. Loan recovery would work well if the loans could be collected by employers when the graduates are being remunerated. This is difficult to implement in Uganda because tax identification numbers
are yet to be implemented. Also, due to grave unemployment and low compensation, graduates typically hold numerous jobs, are unemployed, self-employed, or work in other countries (World Bank, 2010). In essence, it is almost impossible to track graduates’ income let alone tax them or recover loans. The government would need to devise a practical mechanism of determining and monitoring income data, otherwise it will remain challenging to not only assess the impact of tuition fees and the cost burden placed on students and their families, but also to track alumnae’s incomes and recover loans (World Bank, 2010). The loan option for Uganda similarly needs to be structured such that funds go to those that truly need them; institutions can increase their revenue, expand access and retain quality, and governments can recover their money and continue lending to incoming students. Johnstone (2004) advises that:

Student loan programs must be equipped with the legal authority to collect, with the technology to maintain accurate records, with collectors who can track borrowers and verify financial conditions, with advisors and repayment counselors in the universities, and with the ability to enlist both the government’s tax-collecting authority and employers in the collection of repayments (p.31).

Another approach which could be considered by HEIs and which has worked in South Africa is the tuition redistribution model. This would entail adjusted pricing of higher education basing on the existing disposable revenue of potential students or their families. With such a system, students from low socio-economic backgrounds would only pay what they are able to pay while those from high socio-economic background would pay the entire amount. Consequently the former would pay lower tuition while the latter would pay higher tuition (Mayanja, 1998; Wangenge-Ouma & Cloete, 2008). Financial aid would be used to maintain a fairly stable and affordable level of affordability for the needy students (Wangenge-Ouma & Cloete, 2008).
Supplementary Income Generation

In order to survive fiscal pressure, HEIs need to go beyond their traditional roles and functions so as to expand and diversify their revenue bases. They need to develop their capacities to generate their own resources. Institutions can produce substantial finances in various ways for instance, by offering professional development, continuing education, or specialist or research services to individuals and companies. Even in countries with free higher education, institutions can produce substantial funds. For instance in Benin, public universities raise about 40% of their operational budget from offering vocational training (World Bank, 2010). A meeting of the Association of African Universities reiterated some income generating activities that institutions can engage in including; providing training and research for companies and organizations, leasing out facilities during semester breaks, and privatizing unprofitable services like food, housing and transportation (Bollag, 2001). HEIs may also have to engage in activities that have little or nothing to do with education, for instance, there are institutions that have fully fledged grocery stores on campus, some arrange trips/travels and let out their facilities for diverse activities (Weisbrod, et al., 2008). However, to initiate change in resource production, distribution and utilization, HEIs requires flexible organizational structures. For instance, institutions would need the freedom to manage their budgets strategically, and legitimate precision to reallocate the generated income appropriately (World Bank, 2012).

The pursuit for revenue cannot be achieved single handedly by individual institutions. In their mission of expanding their resource base, HEIs have previously been involved in collaborations and partnerships with the private sector (Weisbrod, et al., 2008). Although most HEIs in Uganda currently lack the capacity to engage in research-oriented university-industry enterprises, there are other avenues that can be explored. It could be prearranged for HEIs to train
students for placement in partner organizations after graduation. With such an arrangement, the institution gains revenue while improving its employability records, the organizations acquire competent workers, and the popularity and competitiveness of both rises. Institutions should not ignore the fact that they have a lot they can sell to entrepreneurs such as students who need services, powerful alumni, facilities, and expertise (Weisbrod, et al., 2008).

Public Private Partnerships could also be a move towards eliminating costly and unprofitable services from institutional budgets. Institutions need to find ways of working with strategic partners for whom the required services such as food, accommodation or transportation is the core business. Public-private partnerships will also improve the efficiency of services provided to students. Moreover, these services are not provided wholly to the neediest students and are becoming difficult to maintain as student numbers increase. Through public-private partnerships, HEIs would delegate the provision of these services to private entrepreneurs thereby reducing the cost while refining the quality of these services.

National chains can provide cost effective business models and efficient service to students. For instance, food services would be especially lucrative, with many people returning to school to retrain for other job opportunities, the busiest time for meals is often just before evening classes start, when students can stop for a quick meal. It is very convenient if they can get their quick meal of choice on campus. HEIs can find ways of benefiting from such services. They can play the role of facilitator and supervisor delineating standards, costs and incentives. Incentives could include tax deductions or exemptions; land, services, expansion of mutual interests, and low interest loans. In the long run, institutions would draw entrepreneurs, secure a return on investments, and be able to use state appropriations for academic activities and/or research instead of spending that money on services (World Bank, 2012).
Revenue in developed institutions can also be obtained from research, however, research funds basically depend on research capacity. It is challenging to draw any capital from research without reputable research capacity. In Uganda, not a lot of funds have been generated from research previously due to the limited research capacity for some institutions. Research in Africa is overly lacking (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). The shortage of equipment and experts; the lack of research funds, and the brain drain of experts makes the possibility of developing research capacity difficult. Nevertheless, HEIs need to develop their research capacity as a component of their distinctive income which would ensure their competitive advantage and determine their achievements (Wangenge-Ouma & Cloete, 2008).

**Philanthropy**

Historically, many educational institutions were established with philanthropic backing. The provision of higher education is still such a benevolent and charitable endeavor that institutions should proudly uphold their purposes and worth, and request for civic support when necessary whether monetary or otherwise. Philanthropy has been and will continue to be a major external force affecting higher education, and as public funds for institutions continue to shrink it becomes more attractive. Philanthropy plays a crucial role in availing the necessary alternative funds or equipping institutions to efficiently use the existent meager funds. Institutions will therefore need to nurture supportive and helpful organizations (Altbach, et al., 2005).

Educational philanthropy in Africa as a continent, and in individual countries like Uganda is still evolving. In fact there is a dearth of literature on educational philanthropy in Africa, especially on institutional fundraising. Nordling (2012) blames the state of philanthropy in Africa on poor institutional leadership. She asserts that; “African philanthropy is not yet making a big impact on university budgets. Perhaps the biggest obstacle is a lack of enterprising vice-
chancellors and deans who know how to position their institutions to dip into this growing pot of money” (p.1). Nevertheless, there are potential benefactors in Africa who might give to higher education if they could be asked. With the fiscal development in many African countries, more affluent individuals are setting up organizations which can be philanthropic (Plewes, 2008). Makoni (2012) reiterates that funding from philanthropy is a reserve that is yet to be exploited by institutions in Africa. Evidence from the developed countries such as, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, shows that institutional resources can be augmented by private donations. Therefore, despite the economic situation in Uganda, institutions can tap into philanthropy especially because the nature of philanthropy itself is changing. Plewes (2008) observes that philanthropy comprises huge gifts from individuals, but can also take the form of many people giving small gifts. Moreover, philanthropy is growing past the customary givers into different nations and fresh populaces. HEIs in Uganda could therefore consider emulating their developed counterparts in deliberately and aggressively soliciting for donations. Altbach (2012), affirms that, although the probability of success and the benefits maybe mixed at the beginning, African HEIs also need to be proactive in soliciting funds from local institutions and philanthropic organizations/foundations.

The key to increasing giving is for institutions to ask, in a deliberate, professional and competent way, for donations. This entails cultural and structural changes like establishing a well-equipped expert office in each institution based on established best practices. Institutions also need to acknowledge and embrace fundraising as an important activity, and institutional leaders and administrators would need to devote a lot of time and enterprise to courting potential donors which of course has implications for the role of institutional leaders in Africa (Task Force on Voluntary Giving to Higher Education, 2004). Nordling (2012), insists that “there is money waiting to help
Africa's cash-strapped universities, but before they can access it, most of them urgently need better leaders” (p.1). Many factors influence whether or not an institution gains from asking for donations and the amount obtained. For instance, a strong reputation in scientific research, is attractive to foundations. The strength of an institution’s alumni, relationship with the environment, and the location of the institution are also important. However, all institutions have specific distinguishing features and brands which can guide them in targeting potential donors. Institutions can examine their programs, activities and achievements to identify areas that can motivate potential donors (Weisbrod, et al.; 2008; Nordling, 2012). Local businesses, employers and charitable foundations are potential sources of donations which can be reasonably courted by institutions (Task Force on Voluntary Giving to Higher Education, 2004).

The quest for donations must nevertheless be undertaken with the understanding that funds from voluntary giving are developed over a period of time, sometimes considered very long. Institutions may have to persist for several years before getting paybacks. Therefore the role of philanthropy should be to augment institutional funds, not to serve as principal funding or replace public, and other sources of funding. Furthermore, institutions should determine to earn the trust and commitment of stakeholders to support their missions and strategic plans (Task Force on Voluntary Giving to Higher Education, 2004). Furthermore, institutions should be wary of donors with ulterior motives. Given the power dynamics in philanthropic giving, it is possible that donors especially the national independent ones might coerce institutions to do what they (donors) wish. Most foundations are primarily interested in institutional change and therefore influence curriculum progress and process. Funding organizations can affect institutional trends by dictating the academic programs or research projects to support. “Acceptance of grants moves institutions in the direction dictated by funding sources” (Altbach, et al, 2005, p. 281). While that may not be
bad in itself, critics have persistently lamented the lack of educational know-how by the philanthropists.

Nonetheless, although philanthropic organizations “significantly impact institutional autonomy and academic freedom, much of this impact is positive, supportive and welcome” (Altbach, et al, 2005, p.281). At some point, even Du Bois a principal historical opponent of philanthropy, “conceded that, fundraising and associations with philanthropy might just be needed in the educational process” because those that have the ‘ears’ of philanthropists, can obtain the funds that institutions greatly require (Gasman, 2002, p. 512). HEIs must therefore endeavor to gain the trust of philanthropists so that they can eventually be able to make independent decisions in their capacity as educators. They should study the ways of philanthropists and act upon that knowledge. Furthermore, they must take the lead in educational reform by bringing ideas to the philanthropists and seeking their funding. Institutional awareness and appreciation of changes in the social and economic conditions of the nation, in addition to their perceptive understanding of the ways of the philanthropists, will enable them to direct funds toward programs that advance education (Gasman, 2012). Gasman (2012), stresses that; “educators must step up to the task of school reform if they don’t want the so-called billionaire boys club to control the agenda. Educators must bring clear, concrete ideas to the table” (p. 11).

Conclusion

Given the increasing fiscal pressure coupled with the increased demand for access, higher education in Uganda can no longer be dependent on shrinking government subsidy. Nor can it be left to competitive market forces. Alternative, practical ways of funding higher education must be explored. A failing of the higher education system in terms of quality and/or accessibility could severely affect the nation’s future (Ehrenberg, 2006). With limited or non-existent alternatives to
government appropriations for higher education, institutions can hardly pursue their ideal missions and maybe forced to adopt divergent missions. The main apprehension is that reduced public support for higher education may change institutional behavior in undesirable ways, and with unintended consequences such as isolating eligible but disadvantaged students (Weisbrod, et al., 2011). Moreover, equitable higher education is not about free education. It is about a system of education in which no intelligent student is left out because they cannot afford to pay. It is shameful to deny admission to people with the ability and need for higher education. Neither should the ability of students to study at the best institutions in the country be related to their social backgrounds (Barr, 2004). Higher education in Uganda must establish secure funding, if they are to ensure access, equity and quality. The familiar African patterns of public funding to a small number of students are limiting. Institutions can no longer sustain free tuition and free or highly subsidized services. Alternative funding method must be instituted (Altbach, 2012). That notwithstanding, institutions must carefully explore all sources of revenue bearing in mind that the pursuit for revenue can be a ‘double edged sword’; it can equally be an asset and a danger to the goals of higher education depending on the way the process is handled (Weisbrod, et al., 2008).
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