The Students ways of Financing the Higher Learning Education at The Open University of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the ways the students from the Open University of Tanzania finance their education by using descriptive analysis. The study involved 182 students from Manyara regional centre in Tanzania who were selected by using the systematic random sampling technique. The study reveals that only 45% of the students finance higher education by using a loan from commercial banks. The study further found that students financed their higher education by using money from SACCOS, NGO MFIs and VICOBA. This paper recommends that commercial banks and other MFIs devise ways to finance higher education in Tanzania.

Keywords: Students, Ways of Financing the higher learning education, Open University of Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) is a public higher learning institution that offers academic programmes leading to awards of certificates, diplomas, undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications since 1992. OUT delivers its programmes using the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system. The total number of students admitted into certificates, diploma, degree and postgraduate programmes by OUT Since 1999-2018 are more than 125,000 (OUT Facts and Figures, 2018). OUT's students finance their higher learning in different ways as other colleges and universities globally do. Countries globally, including the European Union, stressed the diversified funding sources of higher education, which includes developing public-private partnerships (PPP). However, the PPP strategy can be successful, if countries adopting this strategy have long term investment in higher education (Gherghina and Crețan, 2012). Pranevičienė and Pūraitė (2010) argued that despite the funding formulae are good instruments for allocation of government resources to higher learning students, they are not always good to ensure the quality and equity access of the higher education. Goksu and Goksu (2015) stated that the participation of the private sector in higher education financing in the U.S.A, United Kingdom and Korea was more important than for the public sector where they spent 1.5-2.5% of their GDPs. However, public sector participation was more dominant in most European countries. Hillman (2016) pointed out that the increase in the number of college graduates in the United States promoted the idea of using the performance-based finance model in public universities. However, meeting performance goals was difficult if a college had no adequate financial resources to support the students' achievement. Mitchell, Leachman and Masterson (2017) reported that the great economic recession of 2008 has forced the government of the United States to reduce the funds for higher education students and this has contributed to higher tuition and reduced education quality by some of the colleges. Moreover, the rising of higher education expenses troubles poor families because they can't afford to pay for it.

Therefore, Mitchell et al. (2017) recommended loans subsidization for poor students especially for those who are academically capable. Juris et al. (2006) argued that the fees for public higher learning institutions in Lativia were high comparing with affordability status for poor and disadvantaged students. However, Romanian private and public universities offered discounts and scholarships to attract potential higher learning students. Attracting sponsorship and funding from the private sector were also used as other strategies to finance higher education (Filip, 2012). Brazil finances higher education using public and private means. However, the cost of higher education was higher in the public university compared to the private university and this posed a threat to the quality of education in the private higher learning institutions (Chavez, 2017). Dunga and Mncayi (2016) argued that methods of financing higher education exclude the majority of students in developing countries. Johnstone (2003) reported that the current worldwide mechanism for financing higher education was to emphasize greatly cost-sharing which has implications on increasing the tuition fees and reduction of the levels of public subsidies. However, this increases the burden for parents and students to finance higher education, particularly in developing countries. Azmat and Simion

(2017) argued that moving from free education to cost-sharing in England has adversely affected the poor students from entering university. However, financing of higher education was done thorough using the maintenance grants and loans which were insured. Asian Development Bank (2012) argued that the expansion of higher education systems and students' enrollment in the past decade have not matched with the increment of funds for higher education in Asia. However, higher learning institutions failed to meet the education quality and equality because the universities struggle to increase income through various strategies such as the introduction of high-demand programs, increasing fees for courses, expanding international programs, and introducing executive programmes. Lee (2014) argued that the decline in the confidence in offering higher education in Asian universities for the past three decades was not caused only by lack of funding but also inadequacies of university structures that would enable the efficient use of funds and facilities. Therefore, to overcome this problem, they have formulated new policies and practices which focus on quality assurance, university governance, funding mechanism, private universities and community colleges management and internationalization.

Direct cost in public higher education at the Sultan Qaboos University in Oman was fully subsidized by the Government in the form of loan and students did not incur any direct cost and the condition was that the loans should be recovered by students in the first twenty years of their employment. However, the new policy emphasized the individual students contribute to the cost of their education without restricting their access to higher education by considering efficiency and equity (Ai-hajry, 2002). The World Bank (2010) argued that in most Sub-Saharan African countries, the enrollment rate of students in higher education was higher than the financing capabilities. Therefore, many universities have adopted the cost-sharing strategy where students finance their education through loans and financial aids; the strategy which was also used by low-income students. Oketch (2016) pointed out that African universities particularly in sub-Saharan Africa have devised new solutions for reducing the students' reliance on state funds such as private funding for supporting the bright students from disadvantaged households. The World Bank (2010) further emphasized there was a need for higher learning institutions to link the financing model and graduates' employability so that the graduates may contribute positively to the economic growth of their countries. Bitzer and De Jager (2018) contended that it is not feasible to implement free higher education in South Africa. South Africa's national student loan scheme considered larger numbers of historically disadvantaged students into higher education. In the same way, Kenyan, Botswana and Tanzanian loan schemes addressed the issue of equity (Pillay, 2010). Despite the Nigerian government finances about 90% of the total Universities' expenditure, the funds allocated to university education in Nigeria was inadequate. Because the private university depended on its proprietor and other sources of funding, charged a higher fee (US$ 9,168) compared to a State-owned university (US$ 4,835) (Ahmed, 2015). Cooksey, Levey and Mkude (2003) stated that the overreliance on state funding on higher education in Tanzania has resulted in inadequate resources, low enrolments, high unit costs, institutional inefficiency, student unrest, non-accountability and laxity.

Therefore, the Tanzania 1995 Education and Training Policy stressed not only the liberalization and expansion of higher education but also cost-sharing and continued international cooperation. The policy listed parents' contributions, students' loans and institutions sale of services as strategies towards achieving the cost-sharing in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. However, changes of the funding policy of the international organizations such as the World Bank has affected the release of funds for higher learning institution in Tanzania and this accelerated the students' inability to afford to pay the tuition fee. This has increased the burden for poor families to finance higher education for their children (Johnson, 2012). This paper concentrates on how Open and Distance Learning (ODL) students finance their higher education because the modalities of financing may differ from that of conventional higher learning institutions.

Theoretical framework: Human Capital Theory: When individuals spend financial and time resources, expect that, they will earn more than the resources used. Therefore, students pursue a certain programme because they expect that, the programme they study will result in higher lifetime earnings. Similarly, the governments decide to allocate resources to education because it expects that the resources invested will have a positive contribution to economic growth. This implies that individuals, households, and societies make rational choices and decisions to invest in education and training. The government recognizes that through learning students will develop and enhance skills that will be used to improve labour productivity. It implies that, through learning, the individuals acquire the skills which will be useful in the workplace. When hired the learned individuals increase their levels of income through wages and salaries and work; individuals promote both productivity and economic growth for their nations (Schultz, 1961; 1981). Therefore, this paper uses the human capital theory because the students at OUT spend their financial resources to acquire education in expectation of gaining more financial resources after graduation. This can be achieved by securing self-employment or being employed. Moreover, since the paper focuses on how the students finance their education at OUT; the author intends to match the human capital theory and the ways ODL students at OUT finance their higher learning education.

Methodology

This study uses descriptive analysis to explain the ways open and distance education students at the Open University of Tanzania, which is an ODL institution, finance their higher learning education. The sample size of 182 (from the total population of 471) students from the Manyara regional centre, in Tanzania, was used for the study. The study used a systematic random sampling procedure where every 3rd student from the list was picked for an interview. The study used face to face interview technique where the researcher personally asked questions to students. This was possible because the researcher was living in the centre since 2014. The participants of the research were asked to express their consents before filling the questionnaires. Also, other ethical issues such as anonymity, confidentiality, using the real data from the field and plagiarism avoidance were considered. The study was done in 2017.

Literature Review

Higher Education Financing Strategies

Dowd and Shieh (2013) stated that the community college financing strategies in the USA involved funds from state and local governments, operating grants, student financial aids from the federal government, and students themselves. Also, the private sectors were encouraged to finance higher education in terms of charities or contributions. Dalrymple (2016) found that despite the traditional approaches of financing higher education in low-income countries such as free education policies, cash transfers, stipends, scholarships and decentralization had positive effects on equity dimensions; there was a need to identify other sustainable higher education financing approaches. Students' strategies for financing higher education in the USA included saving money and earning college credits. Other strategies included choosing schools and matching the application for college and financial aids, prepaid tuition plans, studying in less expensive colleges, earning advance credits before admission in the college degree, earning rewards from shopping, securing the community colleges scholarship or fee waiver and working while attending school (Vilorio, 2013). Yang (2011) asserted that the higher education financing strategies for students in China included scholarships or grants and student loans where students were issued loans without subtracting the interest payments. McFarland et al. (2018) revealed that students in the USA financed their higher education through financial aids (grant and scholarship) and loans. The study further noted that in the academic year 2015–16 and 2016–17, the number of grants and scholarships awarded to students at private nonprofit institutions were higher than for students in the 4th and 5th year from the public colleges and universities respectively in the USA relied upon loans to cover their college expenses in 1995–96.

The study further revealed that offering financial assistance predicted significantly the enrollment of the students in courses of their first choices. Hutton (2013) found that using the loan to pay for university fees at the University of the West Indies, Mona and the University of Technology in Jamaica was uncertain because many students were unable to use other financial strategies to finance their higher education. Armstrong and Chapman (2011) argued that in Thailand students financed their higher learning education by using income-contingent loans which have advantages over mortgage-type loans because they provided insurance coverage for the loans during the repayment hardships. Hanover, Research (2014) argued that while the universities devise strategies to increase enrolment such as using branding and other marketing strategies and raising fees to expand their fundraising capabilities; numerous families experience diminished ability to pay for a college education. Alphin Jr, Chan and Lavine (2017) revealed that because of depriving the government loans in Nigeria, students struck and this forced the government of Nigeria to order the higher learning institutions (HLIs) to raise funds to supplement government funding. Therefore, the students in Nigeria financed their education through government grants and community assistance. Other sources of funds for HLIs in Nigeria were financial aids, sale of services and business enterprises. Due to inadequate fiscal resources, Akinyemi and Bassey (2012) recommended the higher learning institutions in Nigeria to find ways to enhance the effective utilization of the available educational scarce resources. They further recommended that government and private organization should increase funds for HLIs. Akinyemi (2012) asserted that the funding sources for higher education in Kenya included the government, parents, individuals, firms and cooperative bodies. The universities sources for earning income included tuition fees, endowment funds or donation, grants, private contributors, commercial ventures, alumni relations and associations, undertaking researches and consultancy services and manufacturing or processing activities. Duru-Bellat (2012) argued that if the households in Kenya financed their dependants' higher education using savings, borrowing from commercial banks and relying on friends and relatives' contributions, might face challenges because these means have limitations.

Therefore, they recommended that the government should devise strategies to ensure that students from poor families also get loans to finance their higher education. Rugambuka (2008) found that the loan scheme in Tanzania was partly not performing well in terms of application procedures, disbursement of funds to students and loan recovery. Nyahende (2013) suggested that Higher Education Students' Loan Board (HESLB) had worked successfully to disburse loans to higher learning students in Tanzania and the recovery efforts for loans from beneficiaries since 1994 was satisfactory. The study further revealed that the students' loans recovery strategies included, public awareness, publishing names of the loan beneficiaries, follow-up on job vacancies and mindset awareness change on the importance of loan repayment to the beneficiaries. Makulilo (2014) found that there was a drastic reduction in the role of the government in financing higher education in Kenya since the 1990s where the students' loans allocation from the government served 50% of students. This had negative impacts on the affordability and availability of education, especially from low-income families who depended solely on government's loans. The author further argued that cost-sharing of the higher education policy cannot suit the Tanzanian and Kenyan situations. Mussa (2015) asserted that implementation of the HESLB in Tanzania from 2006 – 2012 was inefficient and unsustainable because it lacked adequate support for poor students and it failed to recover the loans from beneficiaries. Mgaiwa (2018) similarly, found that the government funds for public university education in Tanzania from 2010/2011 to 2015/2016 were unreliable and unsustainable.

The Study Gaps

Most of the studies which analyzed how higher learning education is financed were done outside Tanzania. The literature review also indicates that few studies which have been done in Tanzania on higher learning financing mechanism, mostly focus on the effectiveness of the HESLB operations (Rugambuka, 2008; Nyahende, 2013; Mussa, 2015; Mgaiwa, 2018). The literature, therefore, to the best of the author knowledge, indicates that none of the studies concentrates on how the ODL students finance their higher education. It should be noted that the ODL students are different from conventional students because they study while working, hence the ways they finance their education may differ from the conventional students. Therefore, this study may contribute to the literature on the ways various students from higher learning institutions finance their education, including those from ODL higher learning institutions, particularly at OUT.

Results and Discussion

Bio-data of the Respondents

The data shows that 73% of respondents were males while 27% were females. The data indicates that the majority of the students who joined the university were males. Manyara region is dominated by livestock keepers, who do not prioritize many educating female children and this ultimately may result in a low enrolment rate for female students in the higher learning institutions.

Residents of the Students

The study reveals that 55% of the students were coming from rural areas while 45% were coming from urban areas. The data indicates that the Open University of Tanzania, Manyara regional centre by having the district exams centres in Mbulu, Kiteto and Kondoa; it attracts many potential students from rural areas to join the university.

Marital Status of the Students

The results reveal that 40% of the students were single while 60% of the students were married. The study reveals that OUT admit students with diverse marital status. As the data shows that the majority of respondents were married, it implies that students continued with their socio-economic responsibilities while studying and this may help them to pay the expenditures for their higher learning.

Programme of Study

Table 3.1 shows the students' programme of study at OUT Manyara regional centre. The results reveal that the majorities (41.2%) were degree students and the results registered a small number of postgraduate students. The data indicates that teachers were 71.4% of all students and the majority of non-teachers- students were from the police army (15.4%) and other professions such as bankers, administrative officers and businessmen and women were 10.5%. The degree students were higher because the majority of Diploma teachers and foundation students pursued degree after their graduation.

Table 3.1: Students' programme of the study

Programme of study	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	68	37.4
Diploma	22	12.1
Degree	75	41.2
Postgraduate student	17	9.3
Total	182	100.0

Table 3.2 shows the occupation of the student. The data shows that only 1 respondent was studying without being involved with any economic activities while 96% of students were employed by the government or private institutions while 3% of the students were doing businesses or were self-employed. The implication of these data is that, majority of the OUT students have a high probability of financing their higher education; since they engage in income-generating activities while studying. Moreover, the study reveals that the age of the students ranged from 20 to 61 with a mean of 33.64, indicating that OUT admits students with diverse age ranges. The number of dependants also ranges from 0 to 19 with a mean of 4.6, indicating that students continued with studies while at the same time handled their dependents.

Students with Accounts and Loans with Banks

Students at Manyara centre opened their accounts in National Microfinance Bank, National Bank of Commerce and Cooperative and Rural Development Bank. The study found that 95% of the students were having bank accounts. It implies that they can use the financial services such as saving, loans and insurance offered by their respective commercial banks. Mosenda (2018) reported that the president of Tanzania The president of the United of Tanzania during the official inauguration of the Parastatal Social Pension Fund office and National Microfinance Bank office in Dodoma City in Tanzania stated that "only 4.7 million Tanzanians have bank accounts." This study found that 45% of the students had loans with their commercial banks. The results indicate that more than half of the students did not have loans with banks. Therefore, they probably finance their higher education by other means such as personal savings and family or relative assistances. The study reveals that the collaterals that were used for loan application were employment (85%) and house (15%). The study further reveals that 44.5% of students had loans in SACCOS which ranged from TZS 100,000 to 5 million and the interest rate ranged from 2% to 3% per month. Moreover, the study finds that some students borrowed from VICOBA up to 6 Tshs million and the interest were 5% per annum.

The interest rate for various Microfinance institutions ranged from 4% to 48% per annum depending on the regulations of the respective financial institutions. The banking information shows that some students have joined the banks currently but there was also enough experience with the banks, where the maximum duration to stay with the bank was 30 years. The data indicates that there were students with enough experience with the bank and these could train their fellow students to use the banking services. The amount of the current loan of the students with a bank ranged from 500,000/= to 50,000,000. The data shows that there was a variation of the amount of the loan borrowed by the students based on their financial strengths and conditions sat by their banks. Frangos, Fragkos, Sotiropoulos, Manolopoulos and Valvi (2012) revealed that the most important determinants of loans taking from banks for Greek customers were marital status, customer service, shop design and interest rates. Elliott and Beverly (2011) found that students who had neither bank account nor saved money might face the challenge of not attending college education if they do not get loans to finance their education. Srinivasan and Das (2011) found that in India and postgraduate students were likely to get education loan from a bank than undergraduate students. Likewise, banks preferred giving loans to students admitted to government recognized institutions.

Financial Services used by Students

Table 3.3 presents the financial services used by the students. The results show that all students (100%) used mobile money services. The majority of students (93%) confirmed to send and receive money worth Tshs 5,000 -500,000 while 3% and 4% sent and received the amount of money between Tshs 600,000-1,000,000 and > Tshs 1,000,000 respectively. The data signifies that the majority of OUT students have relatively low income. The results also indicate that about 45%, 38%, and 22% used SACCOS, VICOBA and NGO MFIs financial services respectively. The study finds that the types of NGO MFIs used by students were Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Faidika and Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA). It should be noted that, in most circumstances, mobile money service was meant only for sending and receiving money, where a student did not have a chance to borrow while in SACCOS, VICOBA and NGO MFIs students had a chance to borrow some money.

The data shows that majority of students used SACCOS' services than VICOBA and NGOs MFIs. This was probably because SACCOS are semi-formal financial institutions that offer a relatively high amount of loan compared to VICOBA. Gichuh (2015) found that higher learning students from Kenya finance their education through their salaries or wages, higher education board loan, from families, relatives and friends and loans from bank, SACCOS and group organizations. However, the study found that financing higher education through the selling of farm and livestock products was sometimes unreliable because many farmers depended on rain-fed agriculture which was sometimes erratic. Also borrowing from commercial banks sometimes was not possible, because the commercial banks demanded the collateral; which most of the poor farmers did not have.

Table 3.3: Financial services used by students

Financial service(s)	Frequency	Percent
Mobile money	182	100
SACCOS	81	44.5
VICOBA	69	37.9
NGO MFIs	40	22.0

Students' Recommendations to the Bank and the Financial Institutions

The students provided the following recommendations to the commercial banks and the financial institutions. To improve customer service and reliability of the service from Automatic Teller Machine (ATM). It means that the bank officers should make sure that the ATM accessible all the time, improve the accessibility of mobile money network, increase the loan repayment duration, training bank customers on the importance of saving money in the bank, opening more branch in rural areas, improve the communication procedures, reduce bureaucracy, the transaction charges, loan interest rate and time for loan processing and training customers on loan management and other banks services.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper reveals that students at OUT Manyara regional centre finance their higher learning education using private based strategies such as commercial bank loans. The paper further finds that students also used various MFIs services from Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOS), Non-Government Organization Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) and Village Community Banks (VICOBA). These also play a significant role in facilitating the financing of higher education for OUT students. This paper recommends that commercial banks and other MFIs devise ways to finance the higher learning institutions in Tanzania.

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